



SYLLABUS  
WORK  
WEEK

# Foundations for a Learning Focused Syllabus

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Wednesday, Jan 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 | 10-11am



Honoring and  
Acknowledging

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# Your Syllabus is...

1. A teaching tool.  
... assessed by your students
2. A component of your department's  
degree curriculum.  
... assessed by your colleagues and administrators
3. A document in your teaching portfolio or  
dossier.  
... assessed by search and promotion committees

It documents your scholarship of teaching!



A hand in a light-colored sleeve points to a specific location on a complex, multi-colored transit map. The map features various colored lines (blue, orange, green, purple, red) representing different transit routes. The background is dark, and the map is brightly lit, creating a strong contrast.

## The Intentional Syllabus

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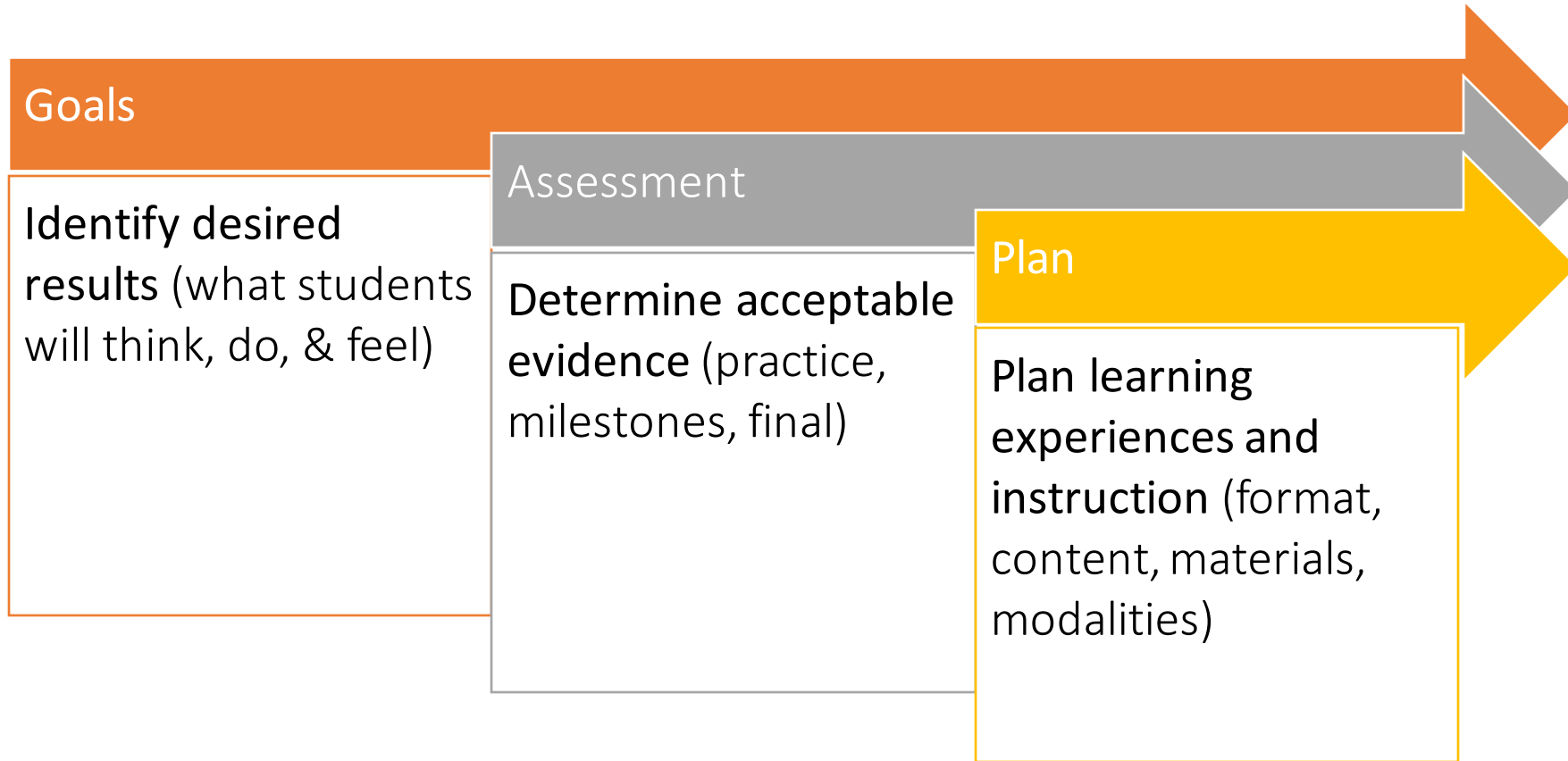
- Provides a clear road map for learning with aligned goals, checkpoints, and conditions.
- Centers the learner and learning experience.
- Clearly communicates expectations on individuals and groups (if given).
- Is descriptive and transparent about conditions and process of weekly student engagement and the assessment.
- Meets diverse learners where they are at rather than to make assumptions about preparedness or familiarity with conventions.
- Optimizes and illustrates accessibility and inclusivity.

# Foundation: Course Curriculum

# Learning- Focused Syllabus Rubric

(Palmer, Bach & Streifer, 2014)

Criteria	What to look for
Learning goals and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clearly identifiable, whether explicit or implicit</li><li>• Measurable with specific action verbs</li><li>• Addressing all dimensions (Fink, 2003)</li></ul>
Assessment activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aligned with objectives</li><li>• Evidence for formative assessment with feedback</li><li>• Summative assessments are clearly defined and scaffolded</li><li>• Evaluation criteria available</li></ul>
Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Logical sequence</li><li>• Themes/topics/units are clear</li></ul>
Overall learning environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive, respectful tone; personal pronouns</li><li>• Content as vehicle for learning (not policies/punishment)</li><li>• Promise: relevance of course; learning opportunities</li></ul>



# Backward Design

(Wiggins & McTighe, 1998; 2005)

# Designing Backward with an Alignment Grid

(Backward Design: Wiggins & McTighe, 1998; 2005)

<b>Learning Outcomes / Objective(s)</b>	<b>Independent Action (Assessment)</b>	<b>Guided Practice (Formative Assessment)</b>	<b>Instruction</b>
Designate measurable outcome of students' knowledge, skills and attitudes.	Design assessment tools that show and encourage immediate application of learning to determine successful student learning outcome.	Create practice activities or events for students to use the content material so that they may participate and contribute to learning.	Describe the strategies, tools, materials, and sequence you will use to present material to explore and explain content that will open their minds, show benefits, and integrate new learning with prior knowledge.





# Example Syllabus Structure and Sequence

New template for GE Intentional Syllabus...

1. Course Curriculum
  1. Description; Learning Outcomes; Attributes; Assessment; Schedule
2. Course Information
  1. Contacts; Communication; Format; Resources & Tools
3. Policies
  1. Institutional & Course-level

Communicating Foundations  
Meaningfully:  
Focus on Learning and Learner

# Building Learning Roadmaps



## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Course Objectives are the steps throughout the course that move students toward accomplishing the overarching learning outcomes.



## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Learning Activities and Experiences are the strategic and aligned course stops that make course objectives actionable toward the overarching Student Learning Outcomes



## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student Learning Outcomes are what students should know and be able to achieve at the conclusion of the course.

# Chat Check In

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## **Reflect: Who are your learners?**

Consider what you know about your students:

- What knowledge and experiences do they bring?
- What are their interests and goals?
- What motivates and sparks interest?  
What discourages and causes confusion?

## **Reflect: What do they need from you to "see" a successful journey through your course?**

- What are some steps you can take toward creating a map that serves all students well on the journey of learning through your course?





# Common Communication Mediums

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**While there are several means of communication- there are also multiple layers of communication. Levels of Communication are not always addressed or considered to the detriment of the original message.**



# Who is Centered in Your Syllabus Design?



<b>Written from point of view of</b>	Teacher ( <i>"I will..."</i> , <i>"You will..."</i> )	Students/Community ( <i>"We will..."</i> , <i>"You will..."</i> )
<b>Main focus</b>	Content to be covered	How to learn effectively in the course
<b>Key questions answered</b>	<b>What</b> will happen in this course and <b>when</b> ?	<b>Why</b> is this course relevant and <b>how</b> can students be successful?
<b>Tone</b>	Can range from dry/boring to punitive/controlling	Positive, encouraging, inviting, engaging
<b>Learning is viewed as</b>	Teacher-directed	Partnership between teachers and students
<b>Motivators employed</b>	Grades, punishment	Meaningfulness, curiosity, student autonomy, community

*Created by Sara M. Fulmer*

*Information adapted from Cullen & Harris (2009) and Palmer, Wheeler, & Aneece (2016)*

# For example...

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## Sample Assignment Descriptions

### Content-Centered

*Journal Article Evaluation:*  
You will be required to read three separate articles that demonstrate different research designs discussed in class. You will then be asked to answer several questions that pertain to one of the three articles.

### Learner-Centered

*Journal Article Evaluation (tied to SLOs 1 and 2):*  
This assignment is designed to assess your skills as a critical reader and to apply the concepts taught in class to published research. Becoming a critical reader will help you in your future career by enabling you to be accurate in your assumptions and predictions.

You will be required to read three separate articles that demonstrate different research designs discussed in class. You will then be asked to answer several questions that pertain to one of the three articles.

# Another example...

Place emphasis on course objectives and provide a rationale for how specific assignments support these objectives

What I Want You to Know	What I Expect You to Do
<b>The field of psychology is very broad, encompassing many different subfields. As a science, it is highly applicable to the "real world."</b>	You will differentiate between the major perspectives in psychology and apply a broad range of psychological concepts to "real world" settings.
<b>We use critical thinking and the scientific method to conduct and critique research. Psychology is not just common sense!</b>	You will demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of research and will evaluate claims using critical thinking and the scientific method.

This shifts language from a list of requirements toward offering guidance and strategies for success.



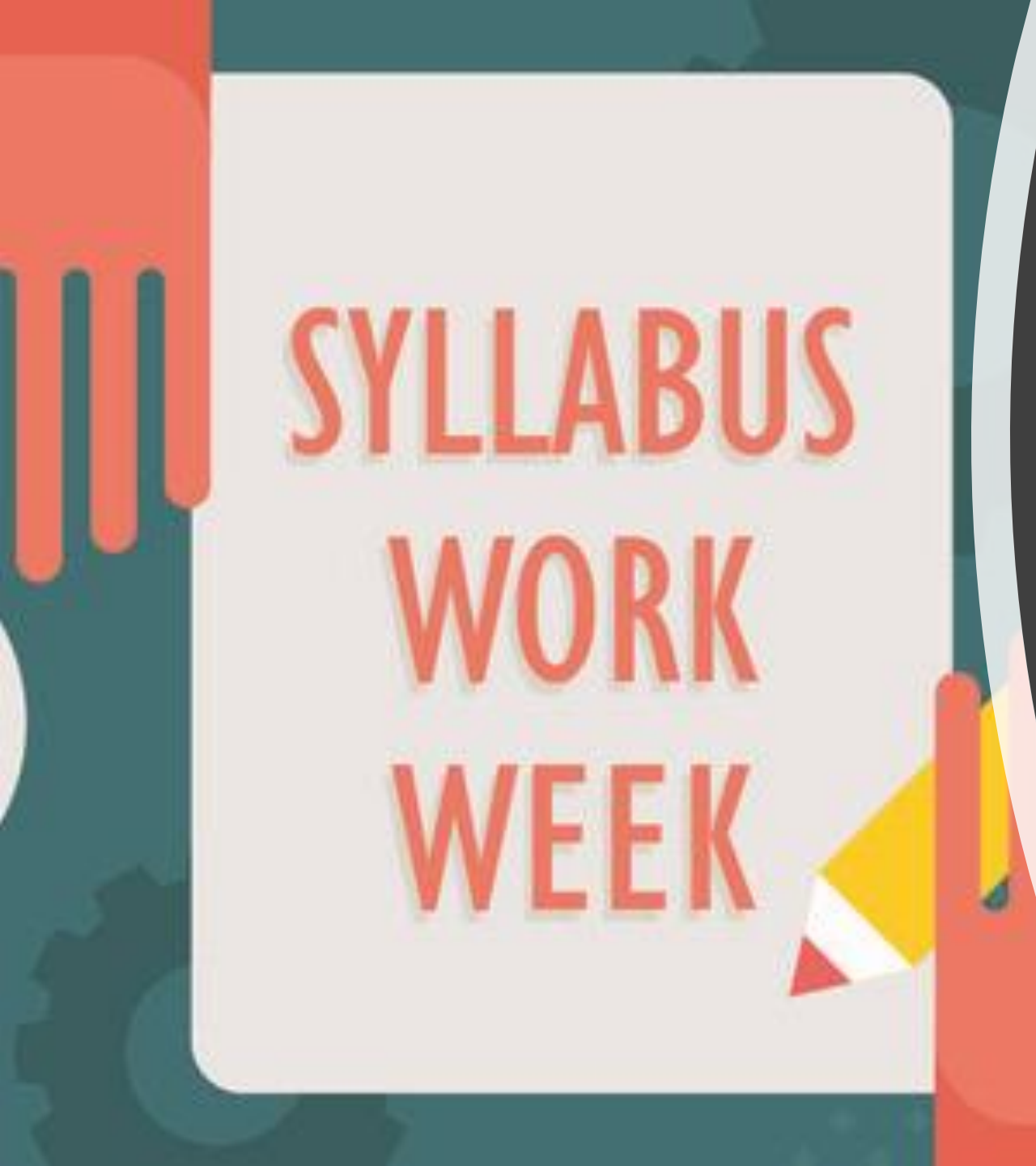


## **From Theory to Practice**

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Identify one or two concrete aspects you want to work on and apply in your syllabus between now and Friday. Please post in the chat.



**SYLLABUS  
WORK  
WEEK**

Next up:

**Composing a Student-Friendly Syllabus**

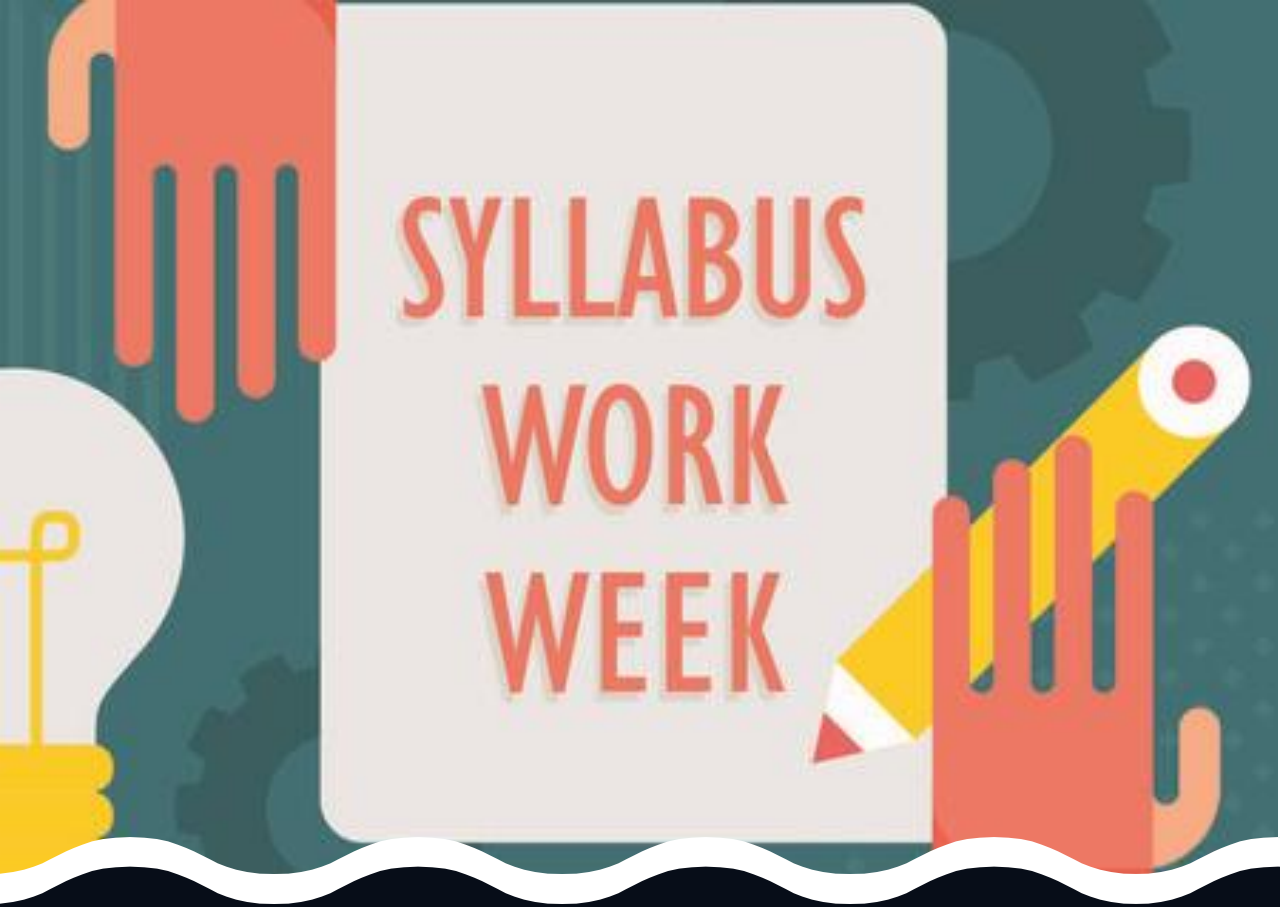
Friday, Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, 10-11am

Resources:

<https://ge.arizona.edu/support/syllabus-work-week>

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Q&A