



DESIGNING A SYLLABUS FOR HOPE, NOT DESPAIR

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SESSION DESCRIPTION

Students' first encounter with their classes is often through syllabi for them. Syllabi also help set the tone for students' expectations of learning in their classes. If this tone is too negative or punitive, students can feel discouraged out of the gate in their classes. Attend this session to learn how to check and revise your syllabi for a tone that supports student success through hope-filled language that's clear and aligned with your learning goals.

- Participants should learn three significant reasons we should create hope-filled syllabi and will be invited but not required to share their own insights as well.
- Concrete, specific examples will be given of hope-filled classroom policies, expectations for students and instructors, technology policies, other typical items found on course syllabi.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

**THREE REASONS TO
ENCOURAGE HOPE-FILLED
SYLLABI**

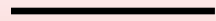
1. JESUIT CONTEXT: IT'S OUR MISSION

Four Universal Apostolic Preferences

One of them is: Journeying with the youth toward a hope-filled future

Q: How does your class—by virtue of discipline, content, pedagogical style, or other elements—respond to this charge?

2. EXISTENTIAL CONTEXT: IT'S OUR MISSION



What is the state of students today?

You Are Not Alone In Your Loneliness: Social Isolation In College

Campaign aims to help lonely university students

Amid loneliness epidemic, surgeon general asks students focus on connections

'I felt exposed and ashamed': How students battle loneliness amid mental health crisis

Smartphone addiction reduces well-being,

MENTAL HEALTH

Depression, Anxiety, Loneliness Are Peaking in College Students

Nationwide study, co-led by BU researcher Sarah Ketchen Lipson, reveals a majority of students say mental health has impacted their academic performance

o: Promote Social Connection

neral offers recommendations for individuals social connection and improve community

Ask Life: How to Beat Loneliness?

You may be lonely, but you

RESSED DURING GLOBAL STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

November 08, 2023

The New Plague on Campus: Loneliness

Surgeon General Vivek Murthy launched his "We Are Made to Connect" campus tour last month, highlighting the role colleges can play in curing the loneliness epidemic.

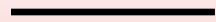
By [Johanna Alonso](#)

OPINION

Countering loneliness with connection and personal agency

by Sarah Zhang
January 29, 2024

3. IT SUPPORTS STUDENT SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS



Equity is excellence in education.

Poll: women in college more likely to feel stressed, worried than male classmates

A new Gallup poll shows that female students are more likely to experience negative feelings than male students

By Alejandra O'Connell-Domenech | Aug. 10, 2023

Opinion: The lonely reality of a first-generation student is often forgotten

Delilah Alvarado

PSYCHOLOGY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Racial minorities, first-generation college students reported higher rates of depression and anxiety during the pandemic, new study shows

Published Tue, Oct 24 2023 4:46 PM EDT



What First Generation College Students Really Need

Students who are the first in their family to attend college cite mental health support as the single most important resource schools can provide.

By Alejandra Campoverdi Contributor Nov. 8, 2023, at 2:58 p.m.

NEWS > EDUCATION

Struggling With Perceived Isolation, Many First-Gen College Students Face Mental Health Problems

WHAT A SYLLABUS DOES (AND DOES NOT DO)

What it does:

- Introduce a course in terms of content and curriculum
- Secure a blueprint for course policies
- Provide a tone and introduction to you as an educator

What it does NOT do:

- Summarize everything perfectly for an entire class or semester
- Become a document that's totally unassailable in every way
- Substitute for real, human-to-human contact and conversation about the class

DESIGNING A SYLLABUS FOR HOPE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Clarity is key.
2. Accountability—for students' actions/behaviors and your own—provides hope.
3. Use affirmative rather than punitive language when possible.
 - Help students see how they can succeed in your class, not just how they might fail.
4. Transparent and universal design—providing students with WHY they are asked to do X—is key to giving students hope and direction in your class and in their educations.
5. If possible, identify explicitly hope-filled activities and content in your class at least once. Augment their sense of personal agency as students and people in the world.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?



Classroom policies * Expectations for students
and instructors * Technology policies * Other?

DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES FOR YOU

You're in luck! See a list of different kinds of classroom policies and what should be included in a Marquette syllabus [here](#).

- Of note: *Cura Personalis* statement, religious holidays, etc.
- *Cura Personalis* video link [here](#). Can include in your syllabus, on your D2L site, and so on.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Be clear about expectations for attendance and participation.

This is a big deal on campus and across the country right now. Consider communicating why students should come to class, what they are expected to do in class, and providing ways for them to engage with course materials, their peers, and you—or whatever suitable combination—for this essential part of your class.

You may want or need to be more explicit than ever about these expectations and why students should participate in the ways you suggest.

MAKE SURE YOUR POLICY IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL LEARNERS.

Make sure that students have access to what they need to succeed in your class from the start—an important point as accommodations increase and student needs expand. Plus, it's the right thing to do.

HOPE-FILLED LANGUAGE LIKE THIS

I want you to come to class each day, and I want you to want to come to class each day. It's important for you to have a full range of educational experiences at Marquette. Regular participation and engagement can be key to having a rich education. Plus, it makes for a lively environment and encourages connections between you and your peers. And, it keeps me from talking just to empty chairs, or machines, so trust me when I say that I want you here, too.

Since I value participation and engagement in this way, and since I think you should, too, I count it as part of your grade. For high-level participation and engagement, you should focus on coming to class having prepared course materials and activities for the day. I can tell this preparation if you have notes, annotations, worksheets completed, etc. High-level engagement also means paying close attention in class to what we are doing, contributing in meaningful and thoughtful ways to our classroom community. This means remaining on task as much as possible. You can show this participation and engagement outside of class, too....(etc.)

IDEA! GRACE PASS POLICY (PSST! STUDENTS LIKE THIS, AND IT HELPS REDUCE A LOT OF UNNECESSARY PANIC ON THEIR END AND HASSLE ON YOUR END)

From my own syllabus:

This course also has a GRACE PASS policy, which is designed to allow students ONE “pass” to submit written work (not tests, quizzes, etc.) 48 hours after the deadline without penalty. This Grace Pass exists because life is messy and stuff happens, so students should email their instructor before the initial deadline to say that they would like to use the Grace Pass for a given assignment. Poof! It will be granted. Students need not give an explanation, reason, or excuse, though they can if they’d like.

A small green seedling with three leaves is growing out of a crack in a reddish-brown, textured surface. The background is a blurred, warm-toned gradient.

WHAT MIGHT A HOPE-
FILLED PARTICIPATION
AND ENGAGEMENT PIECE
LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?



EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

STUDENTS, PLEASE:

- Submit work by the deadlines, and let me know in advance if you run into troubles.
- Reach out to a peer, check D2L for updates, refer to the syllabus, or take some other action to help you get what you need in class.
- Honor your peers by staying on task in class. That means, among other things, using technology when appropriate, and not using it when it's not.

ON MY END...

- I will grade your work within one week of the deadline, barring exceptional circumstances.
- If and when I need to arrange adjustments to class or assignments, I will communicate with you as soon as I can.
- I will honor your efforts in class and that of your peers by helping maintain the focus of the class and keeping it a class worth coming back to.



**WHAT MIGHT EXPECTATIONS LOOK
LIKE FOR YOU ON YOUR SYLLABUS?**

Let's discuss!

TECHNOLOGY POLICIES

Give students hope by giving them a policy.

- Whatever your policy regarding emerging technologies is for your class, ground it in sound pedagogical and disciplinary thinking. Aim to say what you hope students will do and will learn, not what you hope they won't do (e.g., use it for cheating). [This language](#) regarding the cognitive and ethical dimensions of using emerging technologies to support student learning is helpful. (Look about halfway down the page.) Connect this policy to supporting academic integrity if possible.

Use symbols if/when necessary or desired. Some people like a red, yellow, green light symbol regarding the use of emerging technologies in their class. (Marquette offers one of these.)

- Consider flipping it around, though, if you don't want to allow machine learning in your class. The green light can be to indicate full speed ahead on students' original ideas, etc.



WHAT'S YOUR APPROACH?

How might or do you build
hope-filled technology policies
for your class?

HOPE-FILLED SYLLABUS DESIGN CHECKLIST

Where does your syllabus contain examples of:

- hope-filled course policies?
- hope-filled expectations for students and educators?
- hope-filled attitudes toward whatever your technology policy might be?
- hope-filled ways to succeed in your class?
- ways to connect with hope either by way of content or by activities?

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

- Consider connecting course content with any of the three contextualizing themes from the beginning of this presentation: Where might students be asked to think through hopefulness as a global and spiritual need, pressing reality in their college experience, and regarding justice and equity per our mission?
- Consider connecting course activities with hopefulness: Where might students be asked to contribute in positive, life-affirming ways in your discipline, in their learning, or in class activities?
 - Rightfully so, much of academic learning is challenging, and frankly, often is depressing. (Ex: Business Ethics.)
What opportunities exist to support students' own formation in your class?
- Consider your own attitude and energy demonstrated not only in the syllabus but as you go throughout the semester?

**WHAT MIGHT YOU WANT TO CHANGE
ABOUT YOUR SYLLABUS IN LIGHT OF
THESE AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS?**



Thank you for attending this session!