

The Ins and Outcomes of Writing an Effective Syllabus

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Introduction

The course syllabus,¹ perceived perhaps as a routine and unimaginative administrative requirement, offers rich opportunity as a planning-for-teaching tool. It serves as a map for the “organized and meaningful journey”² upon which professor and students embark with each course. In addition, an effective syllabus introduces relationships,³ establishes expectations and planned outcomes, and evidences a well-thought-out teaching design.⁴

This article explores the purposes of a syllabus,⁵ followed by the parts of a syllabus.⁶ The next section sets out the range of choices that will determine the tone and implicit messages contained in the syllabus.⁷ Finally, the article concludes with creative possibilities that go outside the box of typical syllabus

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1. In this article, “syllabus” refers to a document that may contain several subparts, such as a schedule of classes and readings and a notice of policies and procedures. The website for the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver includes a selection of law school syllabi. *Resources*, U. DENVER: INST. FOR ADVANCEMENT AM. LEGAL SYS., <http://iaals.du.edu/educating-tomorrows-lawyers/projects/resources/category?category=795> (last visited March 1, 2018).
2. Jeanne M. Slattery & Janet F. Carlson, *Preparing an Effective Syllabus*, 53 C. TEACHING 159, 159 (2005).
3. The syllabus could begin the relationship-building by containing a brief biography or resume of the professor and by seeking information about the student with an attached student information sheet for students to fill out and return to the professor. JUDITH GRUNERT O’BRIEN et al., *THE COURSE SYLLABUS: A LEARNING-CENTERED APPROACH* 41-44 (2d ed. 2008).
4. *Id.* at 5-6, 13 (“[C]omposing a learning-centered syllabus is an important stage in the process of crafting educational experiences for your students.”).
5. *See infra* Part I.
6. *See infra* Part II.
7. *See infra* Part III.

drafting.⁸ Throughout, this article advocates for the thoughtful and intentional drafting of a document often approached by its drafter as obligatory and rote.

I. Purposes of a Syllabus⁹

A syllabus can serve multiple functions: as a set of instructions, as an enforceable agreement, as evidence, and as a notice of system-mandated rights and responsibilities.¹⁰

A. As a set of instructions to execute teaching AND learning

As part of planning a course, drafting the syllabus should occur later in the process, because the course must be constructed¹¹ before it is deconstructed and organized into an effective syllabus. As the rest of this article demonstrates, an effective syllabus sets out much more than reading assignments and due dates; it sets out course goals, objectives, and outcomes; teaching methodology; assessment methods; policies; and more. When it is finished, the professor should have a clear vision of how the course will be taught, and students should have a clear sense of what and how they will learn.¹²

Hence, an effective syllabus may not be a short document: a one-page syllabus that lists course and professor information, text, meeting dates, reading assignments, and assessment method(s) is unlikely to serve as a set of instructions for either teaching or learning and indeed demonstrates at best a basic plan. By drafting a clear and pedagogically thoughtful syllabus, then, a professor creates an accountability document.¹³ Just as the professor has set out what is expected of the students, the students should feel confident in their

8. See *infra* Part IV.

9. Thirty years ago, Howard Gensler compared the syllabus to a budget, meting out course time, and a guide, sending students to valuable reference information such as treatises and law review articles, rather than commercial outlines. See Howard Gensler, *The Compleat Syllabus: An Exemplar*, 30 N.Y.L. SCH. L. REV. 677, 677-78 (1985).

10. One article suggests that a syllabus may serve one of three different roles—as a contract, as a permanent record, or as an aid to student learning—and that the purpose determines the content. Jay Parkes & Mary B. Harris, *The Purposes of a Syllabus*, 50 C. TEACHING 55 (2002). Another article explores syllabi in terms of three overarching goals: motivational, structural, and evidentiary. Slattery & Carlson, *supra* note 2, at 159.

11. A good syllabus requires and reflects thoughtful course design. Jessica Riviere, Danielle Picard & Richard Coble, *Syllabus Construction*, VAND. U.: CTR. FOR TEACHING, (2016), <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/syllabus-design/>.

12. GRUNERT O'BRIEN, *supra* note 3, at 5-6. As one article put it, both the teachers and the student should be “read[ing] from the same script.” Mary F. Smith & Nabil Y. Razzouk, *Improving Classroom Communication: The Case of the Course Syllabus*, 68 J. EDUC. FOR BUS. 215, 216 (1993).

13. Darlene V. Habanek, *An Examination of the Integrity of the Syllabus*, 53 C. TEACHING 62, 62 (2005). Habanek’s analysis of twenty-five syllabi showed that only three “met [her] criteria for an informative syllabus in which the instructor modeled enthusiasm and provided all the information needed to make the document convey the accountability agreement between students and instructor.” *Id.* at 63.

syllabus-conveyed expectations of the professor.¹⁴ They are accountable to one another.

B. As an enforceable agreement

Students often view a syllabus not as a set of instructions, but as a contract¹⁵ (regardless of whether courts do¹⁶). To the extent that law professors can protect themselves against a lawsuit or be well-situated to defend against one, their thoughtfully and self-protectively setting out clear and complete syllabus provisions is wise.¹⁷ Even if the dispute does not escalate to litigation, holding a professor to stated policies as set out in the syllabus is facially reasonable.

A blogger points out that a syllabus should be considered a reciprocal agreement with rights and obligations on both sides.¹⁸ However, he concedes that “students actually treat syllabi more as End User License Agreements (EULAs)—something for which one glances at the first page, clicks ‘agree to terms,’ and moves on to the product without reading any of the document.”¹⁹

C. As evidence in cases of challenge, review, promotion, and accreditation²⁰

When a student turns in a paper late, does not complete an assignment, or is unprepared, a well-written syllabus provides the rule that establishes the consequence. A late penalty, grade reduction, or final-grade assignment scheme that is set out in the syllabus is harder to challenge in any formal process than is one created ad hoc and in response to the transgression.²¹

When the ABA site inspection team visits or regional accreditation review occurs, a law school may be asked to produce evidence of compliance with

14. *Id.* at 62.

15. Amber R. Comer, *The Syllabus as a Contract*, CHRON. OF HIGHER EDUC. (July 27, 2016), <http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Syllabus-as-a-Contract/237251>.

16. *Cf. Gabriel v. Albany Coll. of Pharmacy and Health Scis.—Vi. Campus*, 2012 WL 4718678, at *7 (D. Vt. Oct. 3, 2012) (finding that “a syllabus does not constitute a contract.”).

17. Terrence Leas, *The Course Syllabus: Legal Status and Implications for Practitioners*, 177 EDUC. L. REP. 771, 778-79 (2003). Setting no expectations, rights, or obligations as a protective mechanism seems risky at best.

18. David Perry, *Syllabus as Contract*, HOW DID WE GET INTO THIS MESS? (Mar. 7, 2014, 6:00 AM), <http://www.thismess.net/2014/03/syllabus-as-contract.html>.

19. *Id.*; see also *infra* section IV.A. (making the syllabus relevant). Note also that some professors have their students sign a statement that they have read and agree to be bound by the syllabus. See *infra* note 83.

20. See Slattery & Carlson, *supra* note 2, at 160.

21. See, e.g., *Final Course Grade Challenge Policy*, ILL. ST. U. (April 2012), <https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/academic/4-1-20.shtml> (requiring the challenging student to prove an arbitrary and capricious grade assignment by showing that, inter alia, “the assignment of a final course grade [was made] in a manner that substantially or unreasonably departed from the instructor’s articulated standards.” Relevant supporting documentation includes the course syllabus. *Id.*

articulated standards.²² For example, Standards 301(b) and 302 require stated learning outcomes; Standard 308 requires, *inter alia*, regular class attendance; Standard 310 establishes the required number of hours of work per credit hour; and Standard 314 requires both formative and summative assessment methods.²³ A well-written, comprehensive syllabus evidences meeting those standards.

D. As notice of system-mandated rights or responsibilities²⁴

Many educational institutions now mandate the inclusion of certain information in all syllabi.²⁵ Examples include ADA and disability accommodation information²⁶ and religious holy day absence policies.²⁷ A professor who is unaware of institutional requirements or ignores them may face a range of sanctions, including being fired.²⁸

22. See generally AM. BAR ASS'N, STANDARDS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF LAW SCHOOLS 2017-2018 (2017) [hereinafter ABA STANDARDS], https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/misc/legal_education/Standards/2017-2018ABASStandardsforApprovalofLawSchools/2017_2018_aba_standards_rules_approval_law_schools_final.authcheckdam.pdf.
23. AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 301: Objectives of Program of Legal Education*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 15; AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 302: Learning Outcomes*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 15; AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 308: Academic Standards*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 20; AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 310: Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 21; AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 314: Assessment of Student Learning*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 23.
24. In 2009, the Texas Legislature passed a law mandating the Internet publication of undergraduate course information, including syllabi with specified contents. See TEX. EDUC. CODE § 51.974 (2017).
25. One law school has eleven required provisions and a twelfth recommended. See *Texas A&M University School of Law Minimum Syllabus Requirements*, TEX. A&M U. SCH. L., <https://law.tamu.edu/docs/default-source/faculty-documents/tamu-law-school-minimum-syllabus-requirements-20jun16.pdf> (last visited March 9, 2018).
26. See, e.g., *ADA Syllabus Statement*, TEX. TECH U., <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/sds/facultyresources/syllabus.php> (last visited March 9, 2018).
27. See, e.g., *Observance of Religious Holidays and Absences from Classes and/or Exams*, U. OF COLO. BOULDER, <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams> (last visited March 9, 2018).
28. One professor ultimately retired rather than yield to demands that his syllabus contain learning outcomes satisfactory to his department chair—who argued that the college's accreditation could be at stake unless the professor complied. Colleen Flaherty, *Who Decides What Must Be on a Syllabus?*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Aug. 8, 2016), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/08/08/should-professor-lose-his-job-over-refusing-put-learning-outcome-his-course-syllabus>; Robert T. Dillon Jr., *Why I'm Sticking to My 'Noncompliant' Learning Outcomes*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC. (Mar. 28, 2016), <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-I-m-Sticking-to-My/235874>.

II. Parts of a Syllabus

Every text on syllabus construction suggests categories of information to include.²⁹ The obligatory and following list includes the most common categories, but not necessarily in the order in which they will appear in the syllabus.

A. Goals, objectives, and outcomes³⁰

The mutual accountability discussed above is reinforced by including learning outcomes in a syllabus, for the inclusion of learning outcomes should clarify what the professor intends students to take from a course. Fidelity to accountability starts with establishing clear learning outcomes (“where are we going?”) and then creating a course path to getting there.³¹

Therefore, this is the most important part of a syllabus: The course outcomes affect all other non-rote syllabus content. ABA Standard 301(b) requires law schools to “establish and publish learning outcomes . . . ,”³² while Standard 302 requires specific minimal outcomes.³³ Those identified institutional outcomes should lead to professors’ developing course outcomes relating to those broader outcomes³⁴ that offer specific, observable, and measurable

29. See, e.g., GRUNERT O'BRIEN, *supra* note 3, at 39.
30. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, each has a distinct meaning in educational jargon. See *What is the difference between course objectives and learning outcomes?*, S.F. ST. UNIV., https://ucap.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/assets/docs/student_learning_outcomes.pdf (last visited March 9, 2018). “A goal is a broad definition of student competence[.]” “[a] course objective describes what a faculty member will cover in a course[.]” and a student learning outcome is “[a] detailed description of what a student must be able to do at the conclusion of a course.” *Id.*
31. Barbara Glesner Fines, *The Power of a Destination: How Assessment of Clear and Measurable Learning Outcomes Drives Student Learning* (Feb. 13, 2014) (unpublished manuscript), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2529086>.
32. AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 301: Objectives of Program of Legal Education*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 15.
33. A law school shall establish learning outcomes that shall, at a minimum, include competency in the following:
 - (a) Knowledge and understanding of substantive and procedural law;
 - (b) Legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication in the legal context;
 - (c) Exercise of proper professional and ethical responsibilities to clients and the legal system; and
 - (d) Other professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.
 AM. BAR ASS'N, *Standard 302: Learning Outcomes*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 15.
34. Indeed, the ABA requires student learning outcomes (“SLOs”) to be published in each course syllabus. See AM. BAR ASS'N, *MANAGING DIRECTOR'S GUIDANCE MEMO: STANDARDS 301, 302, 314 AND 315 4* (2015), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/governancedocuments/2015_learning_outcomes_guidance.authcheckdam.pdf. The ABA standards may mirror requirements of institutions and their accrediting bodies. Compare *id.*, with *SLOs and the Syllabus*, UNIV. OF MARY

knowledge acquisition or skill mastery.³⁵ While myriad resources discuss drafting effective course goals, objectives, and outcomes,³⁶ a professor drafting learning outcomes (assuming preference for the ABA's terminology and meaning) should remember the basics: Be focused and specific;³⁷ remember that outcomes can involve subject matter, skills, or values and attitudes;³⁸ and use verbs that create measurable levels of proficiency to facilitate assessment.³⁹

Here is an example:

Less effective learning outcome:

To understand the role of the judiciary and judicial decision-making in the United States.

This learning outcome is less effective because measuring understanding is difficult and open to interpretation and because "role of the judiciary . . ." is quite broad. In fact, this is more an objective—what the professor will cover—or even a goal—a broad definition of student competence—than an outcome.

More effective learning outcome:

To identify and describe state- and federal-level court systems and their jurisdiction.

To analyze a fact pattern and correctly 1) determine which court is the most appropriate for resolution of a legal issue and 2) explain why.

WASHINGTON, https://provost.umw.edu/files/2016/07/SLOs-and-the-Syllabus_fall2016.pdf (last visited March 9, 2018).

35. "Student outcomes are the abilities, knowledge base, skills, perspective, and personal attributes which the school desires the students to exhibit on graduation." GREGORY S. MUNRO, OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT FOR LAW SCHOOLS 17 (2000) (citing A.B.A. SECTION OF LEGAL EDUC. & ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR, LEGAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT—AN EDUCATIONAL CONTINUUM 138-40 (1992) (commonly referred to as the "MacCrate Report")). See also *Tips on Writing Course Goals/Learning Outcomes and Measurable Learning Objectives*, IOWA ST. U., <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/preparing-to-teach/tips-on-writing-course-goalslearning-outcomes-and-measureable-learning-objectives> (last visited March 9, 2018); Larry Cunningham, *Syllabus Examples*, LAW SCH. ASSESSMENT (Aug. 8, 2016), <https://lawschoolassessment.org/2016/08/18/syllabus-examples/>.
36. See, e.g., Barbara Glesner Fines, *Five Problems to Avoid in Writing Student Learning Outcomes*, BEST PRACTS. FOR LEGAL EDUC. (Dec. 10, 2014), <https://bestpracticeslegaled.albanylawblogs.org/2014/12/10/five-problems-to-avoid-in-writing-student-learning-outcomes/>; *Writing and Assessing Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes*, TEX. TECH U., https://www.depts.ttu.edu/opa/resources/docs/Writing_Learning_Outcomes_Handbook3.pdf (last visited Mar. 9, 2018); see also AM. BAR ASS'N, *supra* note 34.
37. *Student Learning Outcomes*, TUL. U., https://www2.tulane.edu/liberal-arts/upload/Student_Learning_Outcomes.pdf (last visited March 9, 2018).
38. Glesner Fines, *supra* note 31, at 6.
39. Rather than "Students will appreciate the importance of correct citation," try this: "Students will correctly use Bluebook citation form when citing primary and secondary sources." It's easier to assess correctness than to assess appreciation!

This learning outcome is more effective because the abilities to identify, describe, and analyze are more measurable and amenable to assessment and because the information to be learned is specific and concrete.

Here is an easy sequence to developing course-specific learning outcomes:⁴⁰

1. Ask yourself, what do I want my students to know at the end of this course? (Hint: “All about criminal law” is too broad—that is more likely a goal.)
2. Next, are there identifiable subparts to that content? And what do I intend to cover in the course? (Now you are getting to learning objectives—the content that you, the teacher, plan to cover.)
3. Does each subpart identify specific content knowledge, skill(s), or values?
4. What level of proficiency do I expect students to reach? Can I describe each outcome using a clear, specific verb setting out an expectation that can be assessed? (With 3 and 4, now you are developing learning outcomes.)
5. Given the constraints of my course and students, have I set out an appropriate amount of content and appropriate goal proficiency levels?
6. Having answered the first five questions, ask the following: Can I design assessments to determine whether my students have arrived at the identified learning destination(s) and with the identified level of proficiency?

As a planning tool, then, this section of the syllabus is vital. Once a professor knows what she wants her students to take from the course,⁴¹ everything else should more easily fall into place: The teaching methods and the assessment methods should all support the learning objectives.⁴² Decide the outcomes and work backward to create the path toward meeting them.

40. See generally Glesner Fines, *supra* note 31, at 6-16.

41. See Barbara Glesner Fines, *Twenty Questions to Identify Learning Outcomes*, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/profiles/glesnerfines/BGF20Q.htm> (last visited Mar. 9, 2018).

42. To use a nonteaching and nonlegal example, decide where you want to go on vacation, look at a map, then figure out how you want to get there from where you are. (Admittedly, planning ahead is less exciting than just starting out on Day One to see where you’ll end up. It’s also less dangerous.) See *also id.*

B. Course information, professor information, contact information

Start with the basics: What is the name/title of the course, and when does it meet?⁴³ Who are you,⁴⁴ and where can you be found? This latter orienting information, basic though it may sound, gives a professor an early chance to start building the student-teacher relationship.

Consider all the ways that students can contact you—and that you want them to be able to contact you. The obvious possibilities are office, office phone and work e-mail. The more challenging options depend both on you and your school's culture. Personal cell phone, text, alternative e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, home phone number, home address—you need to know your comfort zone and the relationship that you want to convey.

Extreme accessibility suggests being a student-centered professor. Limited access can convey professionalism and life-work balance or a lack of concern for student needs. You may also need to specify limits on access. At what times may students contact or come to see you? If the contact is not face to face, when and how should they expect a response?⁴⁵ Realize that if you establish an expected response time, students will expect you to abide by it.⁴⁶

C. Course description

The way that you describe your course sets an expectation for students not just about the course or its coverage (also covered in the goals/objectives section of the syllabus), but also about your attitude toward the subject matter. While you might want (or be required) to start with the catalog's course description, you might also choose to personalize it. For example, a tax professor might choose to anticipate his student's apprehensions about a tax course with a

43. Include any unexpected variations, such as starting late some days, not meeting one week, anticipated makeup class plans, etc. If the "where" is hard to find or may vary, include that information too.
44. For example, how do you set out your name? Compare the following:
 - * Linh "Lindsay" Nguyen
 - * Lindsay Nguyen, J.D., LL.M.
 - * Professor of Law Linh Nguyen

Each version creates a slightly different picture of the professor—presenting as formal or casual, concerned with title, or needing to impress with credentials. In addition, if your name is difficult to pronounce, provide the correct pronunciation to your students. They will appreciate your thoughtfulness and won't let mispronunciation reticence interfere with their using your name.

45. *See generally* Steffen Wilson & Dan Florell, *What Can We Do About Student E-mails?*, OBSERVER (Apr. 27, 2012) <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/what-can-we-do-about-student-e-mails> (including categories of message types and ways to respond appropriately—"encourage student ownership" and "refer to the syllabus" being particularly apropos to this article).
46. *See* Natalie Houston, *When Should You Reply to Email?*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC. (Mar. 29, 2016), <http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/when-should-you-reply-to-email>; nick_carbone, Comment to *id.* (in the comments section, one professor advocates setting specific "read-and-respond hours," somewhat like office hours, in the syllabus).

creative description of that course.⁴⁷ This section can be used to kindle interest or kill it, so take the opportunity to set a fire-igniting passion for your course.⁴⁸

D. Texts and materials

Having identified your course outcomes and assessments, consider what resources students need to meet them.

First, identify and distinguish required and optional texts. Then consider supplementing that information from the students' perspective⁴⁹: Can they get by with a different edition? Do they need the recommended annotated code, or can they use statutory materials found online? Does your law library have texts that they can check out? Do you recommend any study aids?

In short, think through the texts and materials from the perspective of a budget-minded and diligent student: What do I need to do well in this course? What must I buy, and how much (or little) will I pay? Realize that many students rent, borrow, share, order online, or otherwise acquire their texts in ways far different from the traditional go-to-the-bookstore method.

If you use—and they need—technology as part of your planned formative assessments, tell them now. Do they need to purchase response units (“clickers”)? Do you assume they all have smartphones (perhaps because you use a clicker-type app)?⁵⁰ Laptops? Calculators (separate from their phones)?

E. Methods/means of meeting the learning goals

The professor should plan what teaching methods to use in helping the students to achieve the course outcomes. In this section, then, a professor might describe a typical class or the range of teaching activities planned.⁵¹ A student will have a different experience in a Socratic course than a flipped classroom.⁵²

47. See Bryan Camp, *Fall 2016 Basic Federal Income Tax Class Course Information and Policies* (on file with author).
48. For a syllabus that includes in the course goals a definition of “passion,” see Stephen Cribari, *Criminal Law (Law 615)*, 2 U. OF ST. THOMAS (Dec. 9, 2009), <http://www.stthomas.edu/media/schooloflaw/pdf/syllabus/615.pdf>.
49. For an example of a syllabus that describes texts and materials from the students' perspective, see Hillary Burgess, *Property Syllabus*, U. DENVER: INST. FOR ADVANCEMENT AM. LEGAL SYS., http://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/resources/t1_property_syllabus_burgess.pdf (last visited March 20, 2018).
50. See, e.g., Jonathan Emmen, *Top 5 Student Response Systems that Work on Multiple Platforms*, EMERGINGEDTECH (Sept. 10, 2015), <http://www.emergingedtech.com/2015/09/top-5-multi-platform-student-response-systems>.
51. See Camp, *supra* note 47; Burgess, *supra* note 49 (explaining that class time is devoted to lecture, discussion, and exercises, and detailing the importance of participation and how it is determined).
52. A professor who decided to flip his classroom distributed in December his newly drafted “shock and awe” syllabus to let students know about the grand experiment in which they

A professor who forewarns students of a heavy discussion component or the frequent use of small groups not only gives notice, but also demonstrates the planning that hallmarks a well-constructed course with a clear path toward the stated outcomes.

F. Methods of assessment

As legal education steadily marches away from the “one final determines all” approach of the past, including a section on assessment (and grading) becomes even more important. Indeed, ABA Standard 314 requires formative⁵³ and summative assessments in the program of legal education,⁵⁴ so planning and then including those assessment methods in the course syllabus provides an easy proof when a site team comes to visit.

Moreover, learning outcomes and assessment methods should and must interrelate.⁵⁵ Most basically, the assessments should demonstrably relate to and assess whether each outcome was met. If the learning outcomes for a constitutional law course mention the Commerce Clause, then the professor should develop a corresponding assessment that specifically addresses that clause. A skills course that establishes an outcome related to client interview

all were about to engage come January. Craig Forcece, *Flipping the Classroom: Week 1*, CRAIG FORCESE (Feb. 7, 2013) <http://craigforcece.squarespace.com/bleaching-law/2013/2/7/flipping-the-classroom-week-1.html>. Professor Forcece notes, “Immediately after circulation of this document, about 15 students dropped the course.” *Id.*; see also Judith Lihosit & Jane Larrington, *Flipping the Legal Research Classroom*, 2 PERSPECTIVES 1 (2013).

53. David Thomson, *ABA Standard 314—What is Formative Assessment?*, LAW SCH. 2.0 (Feb. 23, 2016), <http://www.lawschool2.org/l2/2016/02/aba-standard-314-what-is-formative-assessment.html>.
54. A law school shall utilize both formative and summative assessment methods in its curriculum to measure and improve student learning and provide meaningful feedback to students.

Interpretation 314-1

Formative assessment methods are measurements at different points during a particular course or at different points over the span of a student’s education that provide meaningful feedback to improve student learning. Summative assessment methods are measurements at the culmination of a particular course or at the culmination of any part of a student’s legal education that measure the degree of student learning.

AM. BAR ASS’N, *Standard 314: Assessment of Student Learning*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 23, at 23. In addition, institutions and accrediting bodies may require that information about methods of assessment be included in syllabi. See, e.g., *UB Course Syllabi Requirements*, U. OF BUFF., <http://www.buffalo.edu/ubcci/resources/essentials/syllabus-toolbox/syllabi-ub.html> (last visited Mar. 15, 2018) (including excellent resources such as a syllabus checklist and rubric).

55. See LORI E. SHAW & VICTORIA L. VANZANDT, *STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND LAW SCHOOL ASSESSMENT: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MEASURING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS* 7-13 (2015). For an excellent general discussion of the interplay between SLOs and assessment, see *Writing and Assessing Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes*, *supra* note 36.

skills should offer a means of assessing whether that specific skill was met. And face it: Nothing signals “important” to a student more than an affirmative yes to the question “Will we be tested on this?”

Students need to know the planned formative and summative assessments and how each contributes to the final grade. A professor who offers a “practice midterm” or “advisory grade” should explain exactly how that works in her class. In addition, students often appreciate help understanding how a professor’s or school’s overall grading system works.

G. Schedule of meetings and assignments

In addition to the specifically assigned reading for each class (or week), a professor might want to include general guidelines: Do you anticipate a certain number of pages or chapters, whether by class period or week or completed course? Are there materials that students can skim, or materials that they might have difficulty with? Adding context and annotations for assigned readings helps students to know what to expect, how to allocate their time, and how experienced the professor is with the materials.⁵⁶

Finally, in providing context for the class times and readings, consider this: ABA Standard 310(b)(1) defines the amount of work expected per credit hour earned;⁵⁷ translating that standard for students in terms of time spent preparing for class may be enlightening.

H. Policies⁵⁸

In addition to system- or school-based policies,⁵⁹ include your professor-specific policies:

* What is your attendance policy? How do you handle late arrivals or early departures?

* Do you allow or ban technology? What if a student’s cell phone goes off in class?

* What are acceptable methods and places for turning in assignments?

56. One professor annotates the reading assignments with notes about what to focus on or advice as to what content might need extra attention. Charles Donahue, Jr., *Property (Section 2): Tentative Syllabus and Assignments*, HARV. L. SCH., <http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/cdonahue/courses/prop/syll/syll.html> (last updated Aug. 8, 2017).

57. AM. BAR ASS’N, *Standard 310: Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework*, in ABA STANDARDS, *supra* note 22, at 21.

58. For suggested language for a variety of policies, see *Suggested Standard Syllabus Policies*, U.N.C. CHARLOTTE, <http://legal.uncc.edu/legal-topics/classroom-policies-and-practices/suggested-standard-syllabus-policies> (last visited March 15, 2018).

59. Discussed *supra* Section I.D.

* Are assignments due anytime on the due date, or by a specific time?⁶⁰

* Do you have a penalty for late papers?

* What happens if a student is late? Unprepared? Must leave during class?

* Are students permitted to eat in class?⁶¹ Wear a cap? Sit to recite?

Your syllabus may contain more (or fewer) sections because of the nature of your course⁶² or your preference as to syllabus length. Just remember that what you don't specify, you will be likely be asked to explain; alas, you will likely also be asked to explain that which you did specify.

III. Syllabus Drafting: Choices Made and Messages Sent

A. Tone and word choice

Incorporating the desired tone into a syllabus involves two steps: choosing the appropriate tone and then infusing the syllabus with that tone through carefully selected words.

The tone you choose usually goes hand in hand with your teaching personality or philosophy.⁶³ Are you a student-centered teacher? An authoritarian teacher?⁶⁴ Are you passionate about the subject(s) that you teach?

60. Comer, *supra* note 15 (discussing the challenges of allowing electronic submissions and the need to specify time, including avoiding the term "midnight" and suggesting "11:59 p.m." instead to avoid ambiguity).
61. See Shane Rodriguez, *Criminal Law Syllabus—Fall 2015*, MASS. SCH. L., <http://www.mslaw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Criminal-Law-Fall-2015-Syllabus-Thru-the-Midterm.pdf> (last visited Mar. 15, 2018).
62. I teach a first-year skills course. In our program syllabus, I include a FAQs section to address common concerns and misunderstandings about the course. See Legal Practice Program, *Legal Practice I Syllabus, Fall 2017* (on file with author).
63. Daniel Pratt's Teaching Perspectives Inventory is a good starting point for professors who are not sure how to categorize their teaching personality or philosophy. See DANIEL D. PRATT, *FIVE PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING: MAPPING A PLURALITY OF THE GOOD* (2d ed. 2016) (describing transmission, developmental, nurturing, apprenticeship, and social reform perspectives); TEACHING PERSP. INVENTORY, <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/> (last visited Mar. 15, 2018).
64. "[T]he authoritarian syllabus is just the visible symptom of...the breakdown of trust in the student-teacher relationship." *Using the Syllabus to Lay Down the Law*, 19 *TEACHING PROFESSOR* 7 (2005) (quoting Mano Singham, *Moving Away from the Authoritarian Classroom*, 37 *CHANGE* 51 (2005)). Singham has also experimented with starting the course with only a rudimentary syllabus and letting students shape its refined content by asking, "What do you expect from an instructor who is giving 100% to the course?" Maryellen Weimer, *What Students Expect from Instructors, Other Students*, FAC. FOCUS, (Mar. 23, 2010) <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/what-students-expect-from-instructors-other-students/>.

Consider the following examples of different ways to convey the same content and the variation in tone based on word choice, especially pronouns⁶⁵:

Example 1 Ten percent of the course grade is allocated to professionalism and appropriate behavior. This category is worth fifty points. Each time you behave inappropriately or unprofessionally, I will subtract points.

Analysis *This example uses a negative tone and seems to expect students to behave badly. The use of the second-person “you” is finger-pointing. The consequence seems punitive and sets up an antagonistic relationship between professor and student, with the first-person “I” setting up a stark “I will punish you” tone. (On the other hand, the professor is very clear about who will do it—no “false we” here!)*

Example 2 Ten percent (or fifty points) of the course grade is allocated to professionalism. Law school is designed to prepare you for the expectations of law practice, and we want you to succeed in your new environment. We begin with the assumption that in general, you know how to behave well, so you will start with all fifty points. If you slip or misunderstand professional expectations, points will be deducted, and we can discuss what happened so that you can make a better choice next time.

Analysis *This example uses a positive, teachable-moment approach. It explains the reasoning behind the grade allocation and takes a positive tone. It ascribes the potential bad behavior to slips and misunderstanding, rather than choice. While the “points deducted” provision is in passive voice, the potential for learning is stated positively with the plural “we” and the confident forecasting of a better future choice.*

B. Amount and clarity of information

As to length, a syllabus can be written as an outline or as a novel.⁶⁶ The following guidelines may assist in deciding the best amount of content for your

65. See Diann L. Baecker, *Uncovering the Rhetoric of the Syllabus: The Case of the Missing I*, 46 C. TEACHING 58 (1998). Baecker discusses pronouns as signaling differences in power and authority and points out that “we” can both signal community and diminish individual responsibility. *Id.* at 58-59. She analyzed a group of syllabi, hypothesizing a fairly even ratio of “I” to “you” in them, and found that by far the most-used pronoun was “you.” *Id.* at 60. She also points out the common use of the false “we”: If you tell your students that “we will learn the basics of common torts principles,” you are using a false “we,” as presumably you (the professor) already know them. *See id.*

66. Indeed, both a too-short and a too-long syllabus are alleged to be warning signs of a bad professor. Jeremy S. Hyman & Lynn F. Jacobs, *10 Warning Signs of a Bad Professor*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP. (Jan. 6, 2010), <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2010/01/06/10-warning-signs-of-a-bad-professor>. Of the ten warning signs, at least four relate to course aspects that a well-designed syllabus would address. *See id.*

syllabus—keeping in mind the purposes⁶⁷ and the standards-set expectations regarding assessments and outcomes.

Examine the draft syllabus from both a self-protective perspective and a student’s perspective. A professor may want full clarity and disclosure in some provisions, but flexibility in others. For example, a professor might want a very clear and specific late policy but leave some “wiggle room” on a professionalism expectation.

But even more than those perspectives, consider the message conveyed by the outline and novel approaches. An outline approach could convey that the professor is hiding the ball, hasn’t yet planned the course, or is simply succinct. A novel approach could convey that the professor is thorough, controlling, or verbose. The outline approach gives a hint of things to come but leaves much to anticipation and imagination. The novel approach leaves nothing to chance or doubt.

Even if a professor includes everything he can think of, it’s likely that he can’t and won’t think of everything that will happen. Keep track of what you need to add or change in the syllabus to make it even better the next time.

*C. Teaching personality*⁶⁸

Sometimes, a syllabus is the first “personal contact” that a student has with a professor. A posted/provided syllabus before a course starts is the effective beginning of the teacher-student relationship.⁶⁹ A thoughtful professor, then, chooses how much personality to reveal.

For example, a professor may choose to include humor in the syllabus. A tax-course syllabus that begins with a humorous saying about paying taxes⁷⁰ may not only reveal the professor’s personality, but ease student concern about the challenges of the course. A professor who includes lighthearted examples in the syllabus (e.g., “What to do if your dog really does eat your take-home exam”) similarly conveys personality.

Another professor may choose to focus on professionalism with examples that illustrate how a judge or a senior partner would react to a student’s behavior

67. See *supra* Section I.

68. See HOWARD E. KATZ & KEVIN FRANCIS O’NEILL, STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES OF LAW SCHOOL TEACHING: A PRIMER FOR NEW (AND NOT SO NEW) PROFESSORS 30 (2009); LawProfBlawg, *Hey Law Students, Read the Syllabus First*, ABOVE L. (Jul. 28, 2015), <http://abovethelaw.com/2015/07/hey-law-students-read-the-syllabus-first/> (humorously presenting the syllabus as a psychological profile).

69. Ken Matejka & Lance B. Kurke, *Designing a Great Syllabus*, 42 C. TEACHING 115(1994) (describing the syllabus as offering the opportunity to make a “profound first impression” and suggesting some ways to make the first class meeting be a good class meeting). A first impression of the syllabus, course, and professor as technically detailed, unimaginative, and cold should be corrected. See *id.* at 116.

70. See Camp syllabus, *supra* note 47. Professor Camp also requests that students not knock on his closed door “to see if [he] is alive in there” and warns them that he brings an alarm clock to class to help him to stop on time. *Id.*

(e.g., “extensions will be granted only under circumstances that would be acceptable to a judge”). That focus suggests a personality or approach that acculturates students to the legal profession.

Another professor may choose to show a student-centered teaching personality with numerous contact methods⁷¹ or suggested study aids. That professor has considered student concerns and attempted to forestall them by early providing information that students might later seek.⁷²

D. Modeling of professional behavior

Your syllabus will likely set out some expectations for professional behavior, whether being on time or turning in assignments or using technology appropriately. Recognize that your expectations, on some level, are seen as reciprocal by your students, who will expect similar behavior from you.

For example, a syllabus that establishes an expectation of students’ turning in proofread and error-free papers should itself have been proofread and be error-free.⁷³ A requirement that students be on time establishes an expectation that the professor also should be on time. An expectation of timely submission of assignments establishes an expectation that assignments be timely returned.⁷⁴ No matter how much you can analogize yourself to a judge who promulgates “local local” rules for her courtroom, the students in your classroom likely view the relationship as not quite so hierarchical, and in the absence of your recognizing reciprocal professionalism, they will likely mention your perceivedly unprofessional behavior and address it in their student evaluations of you and the course.⁷⁵

71. Gerry Beyer, “Wills and Trusts Syllabus” (on file with author). Professor Beyer includes numerous contact methods, including both cell and home phone numbers. A parenthetical after his home phone number reassures students not to worry if a woman answers—that “nice person on the other end of the phone is my wife, Margaret.” *Id.*
72. For a good example of addressing iL anxieties directly in a syllabus, see Don L. Doernberg, *Constitutional Law*, § 300: Syllabus, PACE U. SCH. L., <http://lawweb.pace.edu/dld/Constitutional%20Law/2014%20Syllabus.pdf> (last visited Mar. 15, 2018). In the class preparation section of that syllabus, Professor Doernberg points out, “I expect you to be on time, thoroughly prepared, and ready to participate in classroom discussion. (If you think about it, that’s probably pretty much what you expect from me.)”—a lovely example not only of personality, but also of reciprocal expectations and obligations. *Id.* at 2.
73. I reviewed dozens of syllabi in preparing this article. Perhaps fifteen percent had no obvious typos. The most common error was missing words in longer narrative sections. I had a colleague many years ago who gave her students bonus points if they found errors in her materials.
74. A colleague includes not only late penalties for students, but late penalties for herself if she fails to return assignments as announced.
75. See David D. Walter, *Student Evaluations—A Tool for Advancing Law Teacher Professionalism and Respect for Students*, 6 J. LEGAL WRITING INST. 177, 192-97 (2000).

*E. Visual appeal*⁶

Make your syllabus look like a document that you wouldn't mind reading. Use adequate margins; offer adequate space between sections and paragraphs. Use headings to distinguish sections. Use an interesting (but still readable) font,⁷⁷ perhaps varying with bold or italics. Try presenting your syllabus in newsletter format; avoid large blocks of text.

Consider a border around stand-alone sections. My schedule of class meeting times is set up as a table, with one column for date, one column for topical coverage, one column for assigned reading, and one column for assignments (assigned, distributed, due).

Add pictures, a cartoon, or other graphic material. Adding color or gray tones can also break up the sea of black and white. The truly adventurous can do a complete makeover on a syllabus, taking it from visually boring formal academic dress to visually enticing high fashion.⁷⁸

When you are done with your syllabus, show it to someone else, asking, "What is your first reaction to this document?" If that reaction is not positive, work on the visual appeal.

IV. Additional Ideas and Tips*A. Students tend not to remember or use the syllabus, so make it relevant*

While it may seem contradictory to write an entire article about a document that is not fully utilized,⁷⁹ a professor can encourage students to use the syllabus, rather than the professor, as the primary resource for basic class information.⁸⁰

76. See Cameron Romney, *Improving the Visual Appeal of Classroom Handouts*, in JALT2005 CONF. PROC. (Kim Bradford-Watts et al. eds., 2005), <http://jalt-publications.org/archive/proceedings/2005/E121.pdf>.
77. See Linda L. Berger, Document Design for Lawyers: The End of the Typewriter Era, GA. B. J., Feb. 2011, at 62, 63.
78. See Lara Lomicka Anderson & Gillian Lord, *Extreme Makeover: Using Technology to Redesign the Traditional Language Syllabus*, LANGUAGE EDUCATOR, Aug./Sept. 2014, at 52, 53 (advocating "stylish, exciting and informative syllabuses for our students"); Jason B. Jones, *Creative Syllabuses*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC.: PROFHACKER (Aug. 7, 2012), <http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/creative-syllabuses/42114>. For an astonishing array of creative syllabi at all levels of education, see *Syllabus Ideas*, PINTEREST, <https://www.pinterest.com/explore/syllabus-ideas/> (last visited Mar. 15, 2018).
79. An empirical study twenty-five years ago showed that students do not use the syllabus as intended. Smith & Razzouk, *supra* note 12. Indeed, the authors concluded, "Overall, students manifested serious difficulties in remembering relevant syllabus information." *Id.* at 218. Their advice includes reducing the length of the syllabus, improving the syllabus's content by removing what may seem to be a "hodgepodge" of material, reinforcing the syllabus's content in class, and giving students reminders of the next class session's coverage or activities. *Id.* at 218-19.
80. Emily Grant, *Helicopter Professors*, 53 GONZ. L. REV. (forthcoming 2018) (manuscript at 30), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2904752> (suggesting that professors decrease redundancies and hand-holding and encourage students to appropriately find and consult the syllabus for

First, a professor can refer the students to the syllabus for all information found there—not answering questions, the answer to which is in the syllabus. This approach is defensible both as a preparation-for-practice skill (you need to READ the rules of procedure!),⁸¹ as well as a reduction-of-annoyance-level mechanism.

A professor might also make the syllabus assigned reading for the second or third class, then give a quiz on the contents of the syllabus.⁸² Another option is to embed rewards in the syllabus—an excellent way to learn who has read it. (Simply insert a parenthetical somewhere that says, “The first person to read this provision and e-mail me gets a Starbucks gift card.” For \$5, you will learn a lot about your students’ diligence and close-reading ability.)

Another syllabus-reading professionalism lesson is to talk to students about the importance of calendaring and options for managing multiple assignments and expectations. The activity of transferring all interim assignments, formative assessments, and midterms to a master calendar may help them to manage their time and does require them to read the syllabus at least once.

B. Let students help to create the syllabus

Law students, as adult learners, may benefit from contributing to the development of the course and their learning experience.⁸³ Hence, a professor may take the bold step of involving students in finalizing the syllabus to establish positive and learning-supportive feelings early on.

Student participation in creating the syllabus can vary from tweaking details to establishing assessment methods. Students might appreciate input on due information—rather than use the professor as backup for administrative detail reiteration).

81. I have a colleague who deducts points from the professionalism score if a student asks a question that could have been answered by reading the syllabus.
82. Professor Hillary Burgess includes the following in her Property syllabus:

Syllabus Acknowledgement

Students often score lower in their classes because they don’t read or attempt to understand the syllabus or the course requirements. To encourage you to familiarize yourself with the syllabus, you will read this entire syllabus and turning [sic] in the following handwritten statement: “I have read the syllabus in its entirety. I understand the syllabus, including the learning objectives, time expectations, and the grading rubric. I have resolved any confusion I had prior to signing this acknowledgement.”

Syllabus Quiz

. . . To encourage you to actively engage with the syllabus, you must take a syllabus quiz and earn 100% on it.

Burgess, *supra* note 49.

83. Beyond positive feelings, andragogy (the study of adult learners) suggests that contributing to the syllabus supports better learning for this group. See Michael Hunter Schwartz, “Learning Theory,” 2017 AALS Workshop for New Law School Teachers (podcast available from AALS).

dates or might prefer a paper option to an exam option. They might want a say in establishing the penalty for missing deadlines.⁸⁴

Of course, a professor need not give students free rein in drafting the entire syllabus. Students' goals and priorities may not be institutionally or pedagogically sound. First-year law students may well be too novice to contribute helpfully. Part of their learning experience may come from the professor's walking them through a well-written syllabus step by step so that they can understand why and how thoughtfully it was written. (And if it was indeed thoughtfully written, it will also preview the course in a positive way!) A professor who takes the time to explain the course outcomes, the assessment methods, and how the course works as a whole should expect to reap the benefits of a less skeptical and slightly less scared sea of 1L faces.

However, owning some of the creation of the shared classroom experience is a learning experience in itself. Letting upper-level students, especially in a smaller-enrollment course, help draft the syllabus (and thereby the content of the course⁸⁵) creates a powerful sense of classroom community.⁸⁶ It also allows for a guided consideration of the assessments/outcomes relationship.

C. Never let the syllabus become the beast⁸⁷

Some syllabi evolve over the years, responsive to the needs and circumstances of the students for whom they are designed. As they evolve, they grow—sometimes to unwieldy length and overly detailed content.⁸⁸ Indeed, that content may overshadow core material.

Many law professors prefer a substantial amount of control over their classrooms and students.⁸⁹ They also prefer to avoid bad situations. They establish that control and avoidance by trying to anticipate and forestall any bad choices and outcomes that might occur. Doing so causes problems beyond killing lots of trees: It creates a negative learning environment for students who correctly infer that the course is filled with the possibility of many wrong

84. One professor lets her students establish a late penalty for her if she fails to return an assignment as promised; doughnuts for the class is a popular choice. Interview with Nancy Schultz, Professor of Law, Chapman University School of Law, Orange, Calif.

85. See Parkes & Harris, *supra* note 10, at 55-56.

86. See Mano Singham, *Death to the Syllabus!* LIBERAL EDUC., Fall 2007, at 52, 56.

87. See *id.* (arguing that many syllabi, in tone and rule-bound length, are like the instructions one might receive upon being incarcerated ("controlling syllabi") and suggesting a minimal, tentative outline of a syllabus until the students and teacher have formed a relationship).

88. Comer, *supra* note 15; Paula Wasley, *The Syllabus Becomes a Repository of Legalese*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC. (Mar. 14, 2008), <http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Syllabus-Becomes-a/17723> (setting out examples of the sometimes surprising level of detail included in syllabi).

89. See Mehra Baradaran, *Teaching While Woman*, PRAWFSBLAWG (Mar. 11, 2014), <http://prawfsblawg.blogs.com/prawfsblawg/2014/03/teaching-while-woman.html> (blog post and comments covering a nice range of perspectives on control and authority in the law school classroom).

choices and is taught by a professor who is determined to nip such behavior in the bud.

One way to reserve discretion while restraining the beast is simply and explicitly to include it. Here is an example:

This syllabus sets out policies and guidelines to cover reasonably foreseeable and commonly occurring situations. It does not attempt to cover all possibilities. Rather, the professor reserves the right use her discretion to deal with situations not described.

Another option is to distribute several documents over the semester or at least over the first week or two, rather than front-loading the course, or take the content that you collectively call “the syllabus” and separate it into several less overwhelming handouts.⁹⁰

D. Consider the merits of an online syllabus with links

An online syllabus⁹¹ can range from a simple upload to Blackboard or TWEN to a component of a full professor blog.⁹² Recognize the inherent flexibility of an online syllabus—the ability to modify and append, the ability to link to valuable resources, etc.⁹³ Finally, appreciate that an online syllabus precludes the excuse of “I lost the syllabus.”

E. Create an administrative syllabus

The administrative syllabus is not a syllabus designed for students; rather, it is a syllabus designed for the professor. Occasionally a professor will put together two excellent syllabi for the two courses that he plans to teach, and all will go well until he realizes that the assignments or midterms or conferences for both courses occur at the same time. Oops.

An administrative syllabus tracks all course-related, time-consuming tasks related to a semester’s course load—from the professor’s perspective. It is especially important when teaching skills courses and courses that include substantial (in number or professor’s time) formative assessment.⁹⁴ For it to be

90. See Camp syllabus, *supra* note 47.

91. The University of Northern Colorado’s “EQUIP” (Educational Quality through Universal Instruction Principles) program has developed a workshop on the interactive online syllabus, showing that an online interactive syllabus benefits both teachers and students. *Interactive Syllabus Improves Course Accessibility*, ONLINE CLASSROOM, June 2005 at 4 (June 2005).

92. See, e.g., Josh Blackman, *Classes*, JOSH BLACKMAN’S BLOG, <http://joshblackman.com/blog/classes> (last visited Mar. 15, 2018); Gerry W. Beyer, *Resources for Law Students*, WEBSITE OF PROFESSOR GERRY W. BEYER, http://www.professorbeyer.com/Law_Students.html (last visited Mar. 15, 2018).

93. See Amy Cavender, *ProfHacker: Why Use an Online Syllabus?* Chron. Higher Educ. (September 16, 2013).

94. For a professor who teaches two doctrinal courses with only summative assessments (finals), an administrative syllabus may not be necessary. For a professor who teaches a first-year legal writing course (typically including multiple assignments and conferences) and an upper-

most helpful, the professor needs to draft it while the underlying course syllabi can be tweaked.

Another type of administrative syllabus is used to keep track of how to improve the current syllabus itself. By annotating what classes worked (or didn't), what readings were confusing, what topic required more time, etc., a professor can draft an even more effective syllabus the next time.⁹⁵

V. Conclusion

Writing an effective syllabus is an integral part of teaching an effective course. The act should be thoughtful, with clear pedagogical goals—always relating to specified course outcomes. It should be selfish, in its consideration of protecting the professor. It should be selfless, in its consideration of students' needs and concerns (and institutional needs and concerns). And it should be fun, in its conveying far beyond the mere information about the course to setting the stage for a fulfilling and effective teaching and learning experience.



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

It's in the Syllabus, PHD (May 10, 2013), <http://phdcomics.com/comics.php?f=1583> (used with permission).

level paper course (typically including multiple drafts and conferences) or multiple courses with multiple formative assessments, it can be a lifesaver.

95. Slattery & Carlson, *supra* note 2, at 163.