Creating a Syllabus for Spring 2021

By Suzanne Tapp

A syllabus sets the tone in your class and establishes expectations and communication for you and your students. As we consider teaching in times of change given COVID-19, your syllabus is an even more critical way to help students know what to expect in your class and how to handle possible disruptions and policy changes. A great place to start is this TLPDC white paper that includes an overview, recommended TTU language regarding religious holidays, ADA accommodations, campus safety and allyship for LGBTQIA students.


Your syllabus also provides an opportunity to humanize the reality of our unusual circumstances. After all, we seldom have departmental or disciplinary conversations that do not address the changes and challenges we face. Let’s do the same for our students and acknowledge what is happening by including required statements that remind our students of what do to if they have health concerns, what happens in the event of changes in campus operations and also consider suggested statements about facial coverings, engagement expectations in online courses and more. If you have questions about your syllabus, please feel free to reach out to Suzanne at suzanne.tapp@ttu.edu.

REQUIRED ADDITIONS TO SYLLABI: Spring 2021 TERM

Contingency Statement: (please place at or near the top of your syllabus)

If Texas Tech University campus operations are required to change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. Should that be necessary, students will need to have access to a webcam and microphone for remote delivery of the class. Additionally, students will need to have access to (here, IoRs should list any specific software or equipment requirements that students would need for online delivery of this course): a. ________ b. ________ c. ________

1. Illness-Based Absence Policy
   If at any time during this semester you feel ill, in the interest of your own health and safety as well as the health and safety of your instructors and classmates, you are encouraged not to attend face-to-face class meetings or events. Please review the steps outlined below that you should follow to ensure your absence for illness will be excused. These steps also apply to not participating in synchronous online class meetings if you feel too ill to do so and missing
specified assignment due dates in asynchronous online classes because of illness. If you are ill and think the symptoms might be COVID-19-related:

a. Call Student Health Services at 806.743.2848 or your health care provider. After hours and on weekends contact TTU COVID-19 Helpline at [TBA].

b. Self-report as soon as possible using the TTU COVID-19 Reporting Form. This website has specific directions about how to upload documentation from a medical provider and what will happen if your illness renders you unable to participate in classes for more than one week.

c. These notification occur if student tests positive: Lubbock County Health Department, Student Health Services (SHS), Student Housing (for Students Living On Campus)

d. If your illness is determined to be COVID-19-related, all remaining documentation and communication will be handled through the Office of the Dean of Students, including notification of your instructors of the period of time you may be absent from and may return to classes.

e. If your illness is determined not to be COVID-19-related, please follow steps 2.a-d below.

2. If you are ill and can attribute your symptoms to something other than COVID-19:

a. If your illness renders you unable to attend face-to-face classes, participate in synchronous online classes, or miss specified assignment due dates in asynchronous online classes, you are encouraged to visit with either Student Health Services at 806.743.2848 or your health care provider. Note that Student Health Services and your own and other health care providers may arrange virtual visits.

b. During the health provider visit, request a “return to school” note;

c. E-mail the instructor a picture of that note;

d. Return to class by the next class period after the date indicated on your note.

Following the steps outlined above helps to keep your instructors informed about your absences and ensures your absence or missing an assignment due date because of illness will be marked excused. You will still be responsible to complete within a week of returning to class any assignments, quizzes, or exams you miss because of illness.

**SUGGESTED ADDITION FOR TTU SYLLABI: SPRING 2021 TERM**

The Texas Tech University System has implemented a mandatory Facial Covering Policy to ensure a safe and healthy classroom experience. Current research on the COVID-19 virus suggests that there is a significant reduction in the potential for transmission of the virus from person to person by wearing a mask/facial covering that covers the nose and mouth areas. Because of the potential for transmission of the virus, and to be consistent with the University’s requirement, students in this class are to wear a mask/facial covering before, during, and after class. Observing safe distancing practices within the classroom by spacing out and wearing a mask/facial covering will greatly improve our
odds of having a safe and healthy in-person class experience. Any student choosing not to wear a mask/facial covering during class will be directed to leave the class and will be responsible to make up any missed class content or work.

Links that Might be Included on Your Syllabus
Student Health Services
Student Affair COVID-19
Student COVID-19 Protocol
Texas Tech Commitment

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS THAT MAY NEED TO BE ADDRESSED:

• How can students expect to navigate through asynchronous content (how will it be arranged)?

• Where can students find assignments and how they should submit them?

• How and where will online assessments will take place?

• How will comments and grades will be posted/shared and how long they should expect to wait for grades and feedback?

• How should students plan to participate in class (attendance, polls, chat, break-out rooms, etc.)? How will you grade their engagement/participation/attendance in the course?

• How will you hold office hours?

• How will you communicate with the class? (Email, announcements, discussion board, etc.)?

• How will you reply to student questions (how often, via TTU email or the Blackboard course message tool, reasonable expectation for a reply, etc.)?

• If you are teaching face-to-face or hybrid, how will your seating assignments work?

• Do you have expectations about their netiquette or Zoom/Collaborate/etc. etiquette?

• If you hold synchronous classes using Zoom/Collaborate/etc., do you have a “back channel” so that students can contact you if they are having problems getting connected? In other words, how do they get in touch with you?