PUT YOUR BRAIN ON PAPER?

The Graphic Syllabus
--an element of “transparent course design”

Suggestions from Crossing the Disciplinary Divide:
Innovative Pedagogy & Course Redesign X

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A course syllabus should provide--

• a “contract” between professor and student
• for communication
• provisions for special accommodations
• the course “plan of action”
• relationship between this course and other courses, the curriculum or discipline
Syllabus for BLAH 3000—Something I Gotta Take

Week 1: Overview of Something I Gotta Take
Week 2: The Composition of Apple Peel
Week 3: Introduction to Giraffe Consciousness
Week 4: Cooking with Sugar and Eggs
Week 5: Sugar and Eggs Continued: Challenges and Solutions
Week 6: The Modern Car: The Carburetor
Week 7: The Modern Car: Seat Belts
Week 8: Advanced Giraffe Consciousness and Introduction to Pineapples
Week 9: The Relationship Between Pineapples and Buses
Limits of Text Syllabus

Entries seem to be a list of things to do

Connections between the syllabus and purpose of course is not apparent

*Students don’t read them!*
“Sad syllabus syndrome”: some warning signs

- grows longer every year
- resembles a legal document more than your plans for the course
- fails to answer student questions

: a Graphic Syllabus supplement
Definition: a graphic syllabus

A visually formatted tool that shows the organization of and interrelationships among the topics in your course.

It helps students make and evaluate sound and useful connections between ideas and experiences in this course, in other courses and disciplines, and their own lives.
10. Merge onto I-40 N via EXIT 106 toward GADSDEN / ATLANTA.

11. Merge onto I-59 N via EXIT 33B toward GADSDEN (Crossing into GEORGIA).

12. Merge onto I-24 E toward CHATTANOOGA (Crossing into TENNESSEE).

13. Merge onto I-75 N via EXIT 185B on the LEFT toward KNOXVILLE.

14. Take I-40 E toward AIRPORT / LEXINGTON / DOWNTOWN / UNIV OF TENN.

15. Merge onto I-81 N via EXIT 421 on the LEFT toward BRISTOL (Passing through VIRGINIA, WEST VIRGINIA, and MARYLAND, then crossing into PENNSYLVANIA).

16. Merge onto I-78 E via EXIT 89 toward ALLENTOWN (Crossing into NEW JERSEY).

Advantages of graphic syllabus:

I. Appeals to nonverbal learning styles

II. Provides a model for learning

III. Facilitates long-term retention

IV. Forces tighter course organization
   - Gives priority to most important information and concepts
   - Avoids issue of “coverage” over content

V. Enriches course design and learning environment
Advantages of graphic syllabus:

Addresses visual learning style

Shows “the big picture”
Advantages of graphic syllabus:

Reinforces “dual coding”

Facilitates knowledge transfer to long-term memory (a.k.a. learning)
If we do not have a framework for absorbing new information we will create our own—even if it is wrong.

*A Private Universe* (2005)
Advantages of graphic syllabus:

- Forces tighter course organization
- Clarifies relationships between course units
- Emphasizes essential content over “coverage”
Advantages of graphic syllabus:

- Releases creativity
- Stimulates emotions
- Allows a personal touch
How To Start

1. Concept Map
   - Must Know
   - Ought to Know
   - Could Know

2. Outcomes Map:
   - How will they show me they have learned?

3. Flow Chart
   - What activities will help them learn this?
   - How are these connected to student understanding?
Prioritizing “BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE” for Effective Course Design
"Enduring Understanding"?

Important to Know and Do?

Worth being familiar with?

Students spend time in activities that allow them to discover knowledge themselves.

Students are exposed to things they will benefit from knowing.

Course concepts.
A Graphic Syllabus in Progress
Graphic Syllabus Models

- Competing / Complementary Theories
- Parallelism
- Process
- Chronology / Sequence
- Categorical
- Hierarchical
- Self-created

Following examples are from Nilson (2007) *The Graphic Syllabus* So students can see what you are doing..
Traditional Text Syllabus

Complementary Graphic Syllabus for course using Process Model
Figure 3.3
Graphic Syllabus of SOC 123: Social Stratification,
Dr. Linda B. Nilson, Circa 1980.
Type of Organization: Competition and Complementarity

COURSE ORGANIZATION AT A GLANCE
Social Stratification

Week
I - II
Theory - general explanations for inequality
Functionalism

Opposed and talking past each other
Conflict Theory

Lenski's Synthesis

Findings, Research, Data

Economic Inequality

Power Inequality

MIDTERM

Prestige Inequality

Opportunity Inequality

How Strat. Persists: Political System


Human Psychology

Composition and Complementarity Model
Process Model
Figure 3.6
Graphic Syllabus of PSYC 439: Clinical Practicum,
Dr. Jan Williams Murdoch, 2000.
Type of Organization: Parallelism

Psychology 439: Clinical Practicum

Professional Relationships
Supervision
Peer Supervision
Risk Management
Stress
Self-Care
Finishing the Internship

Weeks One and Two
Week Three
Week Four
Weeks Five and Six
Week Seven
Weeks Eight and Nine
Week Ten
Weeks Eleven and Twelve
Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen
Week Fifteen

Working as a Psychologist
Relationships with Clients
Ethical and Legal Issues
Clinical Writing
Record Keeping
Closing Cases

Composed by Dr. Jan Williams Murdoch, Psychology, Clemson University, 2000.
Reprinted with permission.

Parallelism Model
Figure 3.12
Type of Organization: Sequence/Chronology

Sequence /Chronology Model
Figure 3.15 Categorical Model

Designing a Graphic Syllabus

Categorical Model of ME 404: Manufacturing Processes and Their Application, Professor Laine Mears

Type of Organization: Categorical Hierarchy (multiple layers)

Laine Mears - ME 404 – Fall 2006
Clemson University Mechanical Engineering
"Enduring Understanding"

Important to Know and Do

Worth being familiar with?

Prioritizing “BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE” for Effective Course Design
Innovation = Rejuvenation + Inspiration!

Basic elements of a Graphic Syllabus

Tools and Resources are available!
Examples of Enduring Understandings

• READING/LITERATURE
  Reading is a process by which we construct meaning about the information being communicated by an author within a print or non-print medium.

• HEALTH
  Health-related conditions and behaviors are not distributed uniformly in a population.

• SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY
  Examining cause and effect help us understand relationships between people, places, ideas, and events.

• MATH
  Math is a system for organizing the world quantitatively.

• INFORMATION LITERACY
  All information sources does not have equal value; the of information is relative to an the information needed.


Lessons Learned
Q&A
Comments, Concerns, Clarifications