

# Interpreting and Working with Your SPOTs Results: A Guide for Faculty

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING • FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

In collaboration with the Provost-appointed committee, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching created this guide to support you in interpreting the new SPOTs: Student Perceptions of Teaching survey report. Below, you'll find detailed descriptions of each section.

For those of you looking to use student feedback to refine your teaching, we have also included brief explanations of each state-mandated survey question, and by section theme for the new items — connecting each to research on course design or instruction and suggesting a few practical ways to respond.

If you have questions about the Student Perceptions of Teaching survey, interpreting your results, or any aspect of this guide, please contact [teach@fiu.edu](mailto:teach@fiu.edu).

\* *Section will be added to the updated guide in January 2022, once the new SPOTs dashboards are generated*

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## *The New Student Perceptions of Teaching Survey: An explanation of changes to the survey*

Recognizing the crucial role that teaching plays in student success, and the limitations of our current mechanisms for evaluating teaching, in 2017, Provost Kenneth G. Furton launched the Evaluating Teaching Project; a university-wide initiative aimed to update teaching evaluation practices at FIU.

One component of this initiative focused on a redesign of the SPOTs itself, in hopes of making the survey a more useful tool faculty could use to inform their teaching. Through a collaboration with The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and the Faculty Senate, a committee of faculty from various units designed a new survey and policies surrounding SPOTs scoring and reporting. Those changes are described below.

### **Changes to the Survey**

The prior version of the survey contained 15 closed-ended items, 8 of which were state-mandated and 7 of which were developed by FIU, as well as one open-ended item. While the state-mandated items are still required, the results of statistical analyses indicated that 7 items previously developed by FIU and used in the survey do not provide additional insight and can be eliminated.

In place of the deleted 7 items, the faculty-led SPOTs committee developed 18 new closed-ended items, categorized into 3 new sections: *Course Design, Instructional & Assessment Practices, & Student Engagement & Inclusion*. In contrast to the 8 state-mandated items, these new items are more specific in nature, and should generate useful feedback that faculty can use to inform their teaching. Moreover, based on best-practices in survey design and student feedback, the committee adopted a 5-point agreement scale for the 18 new items. Students participating in several pilot study classes overwhelmingly preferred this new scale over the previous scale.

In addition to the new closed-ended items, there are now two open-ended questions. One asking for the most successful element of the course and one asking about any aspects of the course that need improvement.

### **Changes to Scoring & Reporting Processes**

To ensure that faculty are able to use the feedback gathered from the new SPOTs to inform their teaching, changes were made in the scoring and reporting process as well. First, as of AY 2021-22, faculty's SPOTs scores—as reported to their department—will be computed using *only* the 8 state-mandated items. Second, the results for the remaining 18 items will be reported only to the faculty; Chairpersons, Deans, SPOTs Liaisons, and other designees will only have access to the 8 state-mandated items and student comments. However, faculty are free to share their extended results in their annual review if they wish.

## *Working with SPOTs Results*

First things first: Perhaps counterintuitively, we'd like to suggest that you *not* navigate directly to your SPOTs results. Your own perceptions of and reflections on your teaching are at least as important as students' responses, so we encourage you to take a few moments to ask yourself: How'd it go? Did my students learn what I hoped they would? Which elements of my course design, pedagogy, and/or interactions with students were most effective in helping them learn and thrive at FIU? By the same token, what didn't work—and why? Here, student grades, performance on exams or major assignments, as well as any feedback they shared during the term would prove invaluable. With this information in hand, you'll be in a far better position to review your SPOTs results, as you can then compare your self-assessment to your students' perceptions.

Although SPOTs are associated with many limitations (e.g., biases in responses by instructor gender, race, likeability), SPOTs are one of the main sources of information about students' experiences in our courses. As Supiano (2017) recognizes, students spend the greatest amount of time engaging with our teaching, and their learning and development are our chief institutional objectives. At CAT, we also agree wholeheartedly with teaching scholar Maryellen Weimer (2010): There is “[enormous] potential for faculty to grow and develop as teachers based on feedback provided by students” (p. 51).

When you've taken a bit of time to reflect on the semester and are ready to work with your SPOTs results, we hope this guide will be a helpful tool as you continue the essential, challenging, and rewarding work of teaching.

## *Individual Questions: Interpreting and Responding*

Student feedback is essential for reflecting on your instructional design and practices. That does not mean, however, that the moment you first see the report is the ideal time to engage in this reflective process. It may be best to step away from your SPOTs results and come back to this guide in a couple of days.

When you're ready, here are a few important reminders:

- Student perceptions of your teaching do not equal your teaching effectiveness; they're *perceptions*, not assessments or evaluations. That's why we changed the name to SPOTs!
- Again, your own perceptions of and reflections on your teaching are at least as important as students' responses to the SPOT. If you haven't done so already, consider taking a few moments to jot down what both what went well this term and aspects of the course(s) you would like to continue refining.
- If and when you encounter negative responses, resist the lure of the negative, reminding yourself that negative feedback tends to be "louder," even when it's not representative or legitimate. [This blog post](#) offers additional ways to "soothe the sting."

In this section, we explore each individual state-mandated item. Given the number of new items, rather than provide a section for each individual item, we provide information for each of the three themes for the new items (i.e., *Course Design*; *Instructional & Assessment Practices*; and *Student Engagement & Inclusion*).

First, we offer an explanation, connecting each survey question (or theme) to an aspect of designing or teaching a course, often offering our best guess as to what may have been going through students' minds. Next, we've included a brief list of possible ways to respond that are informed by research on teaching and learning. Since there tend to be many relevant sources we could cite to support the teaching practices suggested, we chose the 1-3 we would most recommend and linked to additional resources you can explore to inform specific aspects of teaching

## ***Description of Course Objectives and Assignments***

This question seeks to measure students' perceptions of how clearly you communicated *what* they were supposed to do in the course (assignments) and *why* they were supposed to do it (objectives). Making learning objectives—both for the course overall and for specific assignments—as clear and explicit as possible helps students identify the skills they can develop and the knowledge they can gain by engaging in the course. And, seeing value in the coursework increases their motivation (Ambrose, Lovett, Bridges, DiPietro, & Norman, 2010). In addition to defining the purpose of assignments, clearly defining each task, the process for completing it, and the evaluation criteria can increase student success (Winkelmes, et al., 2016).

### Possible Ways to Respond

- To complement the [course learning objectives](#) included in all of our syllabi, articulating learning objectives for units/modules, assignments, and activities—on Canvas, on assignment descriptions, and for class sessions—can help students see how these elements of the course help them build toward attainment of the course objectives.
- When communicating with students about learning objectives or the purpose of assignments, emphasize the knowledge and skills they can develop by engaging in coursework, as well as the relevance of the knowledge and skills to their lives.
- When revising assignment descriptions, the [TILT Higher Ed project recommends](#) clearly defining each task, the processes for completing the task, and the criteria for success.
- You can also [ask students or colleagues for feedback](#) on the clarity and usability of assignment descriptions. This feedback can be used as one of your sources of information for your annual review.

## ***Expression of Expectations for Performance***

This question seeks to measure students' perceptions of how clearly you communicated what they needed to do to succeed in the course. This may include the clarity of the relevant course policies (e.g., class participation, assignment completion, etc.) in the syllabus, as well as the clarity of the evaluation criteria for various coursework. Making your expectations as transparent as possible for students helps them to understand your priorities and adjust their efforts accordingly. It also gives them a clear picture of what success looks like before they begin work on each assignment (Winkelmes et al., 2016).

### Possible Ways to Respond

- In your [syllabus](#), describe course policies in a [learning-centered way](#), using student-friendly language.
- In assignment descriptions, include evaluation criteria that [define the characteristics of successful work](#).
- Give students opportunities to analyze or evaluate examples of student work, including by [providing](#) feedback on those examples.

## ***Knowledge of Course Content***

This question seeks to measure students' perceptions of your expertise in your subject area and your effectiveness as an interpreter of complex and often unfamiliar disciplinary language, concepts, and processes. Since students possess neither the disciplinary expertise nor sufficient evidence to assess your "knowledge of course content," we suggest focusing on the ways you can make your field's language, concepts, and processes as accessible as possible for students, which can be challenging work because of novice-expert differences.

Novices tend to possess shallow knowledge of subject matter; their knowledge may contain both gaps and misconceptions, and it is organized differently than the knowledge of an expert (Willingham, 2010). The process of learning to think like an expert is slow and complex, so to effectively facilitate learning, experts must investigate and respond to the needs of novices.

Even in a learning-centered class, where the professor's role is to facilitate learning, and students spend most of their time "doing the work" (i.e., actively engaged in goal-directed practice), the professor's communication of ideas and information is still critically important; we still need to clarify concepts, correct misconceptions, review main points, articulate goals, describe expectations, provide targeted feedback, and write all sorts of documents: syllabi, project descriptions, rubrics, exams, and more.

### Possible Ways to Respond

- Explore your [expert blind spots](#). What might you incorrectly assume students know or know how to do?
- [Get to know your students](#). As you communicate—whether in person, online, or in writing—keep [their needs](#) in mind as much as possible.
- Identify and summarize main points, or ask students to identify and summarize main points and give them feedback on their accuracy.
- Use suitable examples, illustrations, and [analogies](#) to help students understand complex ideas.
- [Request student feedback](#) on the clarity of your communication.

## ***Stimulation of Interest in the Course***

This question seeks to measure students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategies you used to engage and motivate them. Stimulating students' interest contributes to their learning and success because it motivates them to focus more on course content and engage more in coursework (Feldman, 2007).

### Possible Ways to Respond

- [Express your enthusiasm](#) for your subject; enthusiasm is contagious.
- Help students explore [the relevance of course content](#) to their previous experiences, as well as to later courses, a career, and/or civic life.
- Engage students in [authentic learning experiences](#). Ask them about big ideas or problems that they want to be a part of.

- [Share ownership of the course](#). Present students with options that allow them to personalize their learning experiences and connect coursework with their interest.

### ***Facilitation of Learning***

This question seeks to measure students' perceptions of how much you helped them learn. Since the question prompts them to think about their learning, students may consider whether they feel they learned what you communicated they should, as well as the significance of your role in their learning gains. Their perceptions of the latter could involve anything from whether they feel they got enough helpful feedback to whether they feel you directed them to suitable resources. Since learning is something that faculty can facilitate, but students actually do, you can help improve student learning and success by teaching students strategies for becoming more effective and self-regulated learners (McGuire, 2015; Nilson, 2013).

#### Possible Ways to Respond

- Explore the [research on learning from a variety of disciplines](#). We now know more about how people learn than ever before.
- Use [formative assessments](#) to monitor students' learning and adjust your teaching.
- Encourage students to track and [reflect on their own learning](#).
- Teach students about [effective strategies](#) for learning in your course, based on the latest research on memory and cognition.
- Direct students to suitable tools and [resources](#), and help them learn to use them well.

### ***Availability to Assist Students In or Out of Class***

This question seeks to ascertain students' perception of your accessibility. Effectively interacting and communicating with your students is essential to the learning process (Ambrose et al., 2010). Uninviting, inconsistent, or contradictory communication practices strain your relationship with your students, hinder the learning process, and limit students' ability to achieve course goals (Bain, 2004; Cavanagh, 2016).

#### Possible Ways to Respond

- Consider setting office hours after the first day of class, with input from your students.
- Rename "office hours" to something that [encourages students](#) to take advantage of them (e.g. drop-in times, check-in times, consultations).
- Tell students the best way to communicate with you. Have an email and phone [communication policy](#) in your syllabus and follow that policy.
- Give students the [opportunity to meet with you](#) right before and after class by arriving and or staying behind a few moments.

### ***Respect and Concern for Students***

This question seeks to understand students' perceptions of your desire to know and understand

them and whether you care about their learning and overall well-being. Demonstrating respect and concern are necessary for cultivating a supportive classroom environment (Bain, 2004; Hammond, 2015; Weimer, 2014). A supportive classroom environment encourages student motivation and learning (Ambrose et al., 2010).

#### Possible Ways to Respond

- Familiarize yourself with the [unique strengths and needs of Hispanic](#) and other populations of students at FIU (e.g. adult learners, first-generation, international, student athletes, etc.).
- Provide students with opportunities to participate in [decision making](#) around course policies, activities, and assignment deadlines.
- Facilitate a getting-to-know-you activity on the [first day of class](#). Include questions that will help you find out about your student's previous experience with the material; ask your students why they are taking your course, what they expect, and what topics they are anxious or hesitant about.
- Learn your [students' names](#) and make every effort to [pronounce their names correctly](#). Asking is always appreciated.
- Stay abreast of [campus resources](#), activities and community events.

### ***Overall Assessment of Instructor***

Again, it is difficult to know what this question represents or how students interpret it. As they respond, they may be driven by their affective response to you, the course material, and/or their experience in the class. Some research suggests that the response to the “overall” or “global” question is a good proxy for students' responses to the instructor, offers a good “summary” score; however, newer studies point out that the overall question maybe “most likely to activate bias, because they leave it to the student to decide which of the many components of teaching, and teachers, are the most important to them” (Sprague, 2016). Ultimately, we know it may be tempting to look only at this question, but, if your interest is in enhancing your course design or instruction, we would point you to the more detailed questions above.

#### Possible Ways to Respond:

- Participate in department and university wide discussions on [pedagogy](#) and [learner-centered teaching](#) practices.
- Seek the support and advice of colleagues regarding your [course goals](#) and student learning.
- Ask students past and present for [feedback](#) on course structure, content and student learning.
- Invite department colleagues and or consultants from [CAT](#) to observe your course and provide feedback on student engagement and learning.

## *Instructional Feedback Items by Section*

### *Course Design*

This section consists of 7 questions focused on students' perceptions of the overall structure of the course, the relevancy of the course readings and assignments, the expected workload and work pace, as well as the ease of use and organization of the Canvas shell. A well-organized course can help students understand what is expected of them, and can also help them better organize and understand connections between new concepts and information they know (Bain, 2004; Davis, 2009).

#### Possible Ways to Respond

- Begin your [course design \(or redesign\)](#) process early on, and be on the lookout for course design-related workshops offered each semester by CAT!
- Include expectations for time commitment outside of class per week on your [syllabus](#), so that students know what to expect
- Design and facilitate learning activities that highlight connections between course readings and assignments, and don't assume your students are making these connections on their own.
- If your course is fully online, reach out to [FIU Online](#) for help with reorganizing/redesigning your Canvas shell. If your course is taught through face-to-face or Hybrid modalities, reach out to [CAT](#) for help.

### *Instructional & Assessment Practices*

This section consists of 5 questions focused on students' perceptions of how clearly you've stated the expectations for the course and/or course assignments, how they could seek additional help with understanding course material, the extent to which you provided feedback to help them improve in future coursework, and whether you explained the purpose of covering specific topics. Students benefit greatly from being aware of the expectations to succeed in a course or specific assignment, and feel better prepared when this is coupled with quality feedback provided in a timely manner (Bean, 2011; Doyle, 2001).

#### Possible Ways to Respond

- Be [explicit with students](#); especially when teaching hybrid or online courses. Whether you are discussing student expectations for the overall course or on a specific assignment, be clear and concise. Students are less likely to feel unprepared when they know exactly what is expected of them (*Tip: the course syllabus is a great place to include this language!*)
- [Incorporate practice opportunities \(i.e., low stakes assignments\) and provide feedback](#) for students to help prepare for higher stakes course work.
- Creating scaffolded assignments can help students effectively build their skills up to the desired level or outcome. See these resources from the [University of Michigan](#) and [Northwestern University](#) for some ideas on how to do this.
- Highlight the purpose of covering specific topics, including how topics connect amongst each other

and how they relate to the greater, overall theme of the course

### ***Student Engagement & Inclusion***

This section consists of 6 questions focused on students' perceptions of the inclusivity of the learning environment in your course, including; the extent to which they had positive interactions with their peers as a part of the course, how comfortable they felt asking questions, and how welcomed and valued they felt as a part of the learning environment and community. Inclusive learning environments enhance student engagement and motivation (Hamilton, 2015) by leveraging diversity, encouraging collaboration with peers, and promoting respectful discourse (Gay, 2000).

#### Possible Ways to Respond

- Use CATs [Learning-Centered Syllabus Check List](#) to check for tone and comprehensiveness
- Design and encourage [collaboration between students](#) to promote a sense of community
- Facilitate connections with your students by sharing something special about yourself (e.g., your favorite foods, pets, places you've traveled)
- Learn more about—and incorporate—[inclusive teaching practices](#) in your course(s)

## *Interpreting and Responding to Student Comments*

As mentioned above, we know finding out how students responded to us, our teaching practices, course content, etc. can be an emotional, sometimes overwhelming experience. Since this response is often heightened in the case of students' written comments, here are a few more reminders (adapted from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at Syracuse University):

- Students who are very satisfied or very dissatisfied generally provide written comments;
- Pressures unrelated to you or your course can influence student comments;
- Negative comments can trigger a myriad of emotions, so interpret and respond to them with caution;
- Students do not usually write positive comments unless they mean them; consider them genuine reflections of their feelings about their experience in your course.

To help you to make the best use of the written comments, we recommend systematically organizing and analyzing them, much as we would do with other types of qualitative data. The new SPOTs survey makes organizing student comments much easier, because the open-ended items asking for student feedback are split into two, each of which ask for a more specific type of feedback than the previous, vaguely worded item. The new structure should minimize the time it takes to categorize students comments as “strengths” vs “weaknesses”.

Here are two approaches you might take:

### *Categorize Comments*

Read through all the comments and group together those that say nearly the same thing, with a list under each that begins with the most frequently made comment(s).

### *Explore Connections*

Look to the written comments for insights on the responses to the 26 Likert-scale questions by comparing your students' written comments with their responses to the forced choice questions. Reference any questions from the forced-choice portion of the SPOTs that relate to any of the issues raised in the student comments. If these questions received lower ratings, the negative comments may reflect a concern with that particular dimension of your teaching.

Syracuse University offers additional approaches to organizing and analyzing student comments in [their guide to Interpreting and Using Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness](#).

## Next Steps

After taking the time to reflect on your course(s), to engage with the SPOTs dashboard, and to read some of the sections above pertaining to select survey questions, you may be wondering: What now? What might be the most productive ways to adjust my teaching?

Here's one approach:

- Isolate the questions for which students expressed some dissatisfaction or themes in the written comments that you too had identified as areas for improvement.
- Review the “Possible Ways to Respond” provided above and select the strategy that seems most appropriate or useful for your teaching context.
- Limit yourself to implementing 1 to 3 new strategies next semester.
- Follow-up with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the new strategy--whether by checking in with students, sending them a quick survey, or reviewing next term's SPOTs results.

### ***Mid-semester Feedback***

You may not want to wait until the end of each semester to find out how students are responding to you, your curriculum, course design, and/or instructional practices. That's when mid-semester feedback comes in handy. As Laura McGrath [explains](#), “mid-semester evaluations [are] a useful way to locate potential disconnects between what I think we're doing, and what my students think we're doing. I want to know what's hitting home with them, and what's totally falling flat.” Otherwise, she admits, “I make assumptions, I jump to conclusions, I screw up. Mid-semester evaluations help me get to know my class better, and offer a helpful corrective to my own biases. And every time, every single time, my students are insightful and kind and brave enough to call my attention to my oversights. Evaluating at mid-semester, rather than waiting until the course is over, gives me the opportunity to adjust my actions, and I am so grateful for the chance.”

There are many great templates available for mid-course evaluations, from self-mastery checks to stop-start-continue. There are just two important stipulations: They need to be anonymous, so students feel free to respond frankly (*Tip: a [Qualtrics](#) survey can be a great option*). And you'll need to close the loop, addressing the results with your students and letting them know how you plan to make adjustments.

You can devise your own mid-term evaluations or invite CAT to your class, to spend about 20 minutes speaking to your students about how their learning experience is going. We will meet with you afterwards to confidentially discuss the responses and (if you'd like) help you determine how to proceed. To schedule a mid- semester evaluation, just email us at [teach@fiu.edu](mailto:teach@fiu.edu).

## ***Feedback Box***

Feedback Box is another great way to collect feedback from your students at any point during the semester. [Feedback Box](#) is a tool within Canvas that allows students to give their instructors safe, anonymous feedback at any time during the semester. Some of the benefits that come from using Feedback Box include being able to address student concerns in real-time and using it to inform your own decisions about what's working or not working in your classes. You can use the tool after your first exam, during midterm evaluations, or even when collecting data for evaluating your teaching.

## *Resources & Additional Support*

If reading student feedback (or this guide) has inspired you to reflect on your teaching, work on some aspect of a course, or learn more about research on teaching and learning and the implications for the classroom, we encourage you to explore some of the resources available at FIU and online and welcome you to attend a workshop, reading group, course design institute, or other programming [available at CAT](#). Watch out for our teaching tips and calls for participants in your FIU email inbox!

If you would like to talk more or provide feedback on this guide, we would love to hear from you! Please stop by our office in PC 237 or email us at [teach@fiu.edu](mailto:teach@fiu.edu).

### **Web Resources**

We recommend visiting the Eberly Center at Carnegie Mellon University online, particularly their [How to Solve A Teaching Problem](#) site, which provides practical strategies for teaching problems across disciplines.

If you teach with writing, [The WAC Clearinghouse](#), hosted by Colorado State University, is an invaluable resource: a searchable database of articles, e-books, and other resources on writing in any discipline.

Many of our favorite CAT book group selections are also now available as ebooks through FIU's library, so even if you aren't able to join us for a faculty reading or working group in person, you have free access to these great resources online. The links below will take you to the book's library catalog page. To download the book, click "FIU users: view content here." From there you'll be directed to the library sign-on page. Enjoy!

<b>Title</b>	<b>Access Link</b>
Learner-Centered Teaching	<a href="http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034363397">http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034363397</a>
How Learning Works	<a href="http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034398971">http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034398971</a>
Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning	<a href="http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538463">http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538463</a>
Engaging Ideas	<a href="http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538464">http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538464</a>
Teaching to Transgress	<a href="http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538465">http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538465</a>
Team-Based Learning in the Social Sciences and Humanities	<a href="http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538466">http://fiu.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?27FI034538466</a>

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## Appendix A:

### Strategies for Increasing Survey Response Rates

- **Monitor Response Rates:** You can view the response rates in your courses within the my.fiu.edu portal under your Faculty Center/Schedule link. To view the Faculty Response Rate Report tutorial, please [click here](#).
- **Remind students:** You can encourage students to complete SPOTS by reminding them in class, online, and by email.
- **Use a bit of class time:** In a face-to-face or hybrid course, you can ask students to take out their phones and navigate to the survey. Then, you can leave the room so they can complete it.
- **Explain the purpose:** Let students know why their feedback is important and how you use it to improve your courses.
- **Share instructions:** Help students understand how to access the survey.  
Here are the steps they need to take to complete their SPOTS:  
Log on to MyFIU portal at <https://my.fiu.edu>.  
Click on SPOTs.  
Select the course from the list of SPOTs.  
Click on the instructor's name.  
You will now be on the form and can share your perceptions and type comments.
- **Make it an ungraded assignment:** In a web-assisted, hybrid, or online course you can make the survey an ungraded assignment in the LMS.
- **Offer the whole class extra credit based on the response rate:** For instance, when the response rate reaches 75%, you can award a limited number of points to the whole class.

## The Learning-Centered FIU Syllabus: A Checklist

This checklist is meant to help you design or refine your syllabi so they are accessible, motivating, and learning-centered. The sections are organized around questions students might have about any college course. For official syllabus requirements, please refer to the FIU Faculty Handbook.

### Course Information: Am I in the right place?

- Course name and number
- Semester and year offered
- Pre- and co-requisites (if any)
- Course modality (hybrid, online, face-to-face)
- Classroom location and times of class meetings (if any)

### Who will help me learn?

- Instructor name and contact information
- Instructor department, office location, and office hours
- TA names, contact information, and office hours (if any)
- LA names, contact information, and office hours (if any)

### What will I learn in this course?

- A course description that communicates what students will learn and why the course is important (e.g. relevance to future coursework, career, civic life), written in student-friendly language
- Goals for student learning, covering not only concepts and skills, but also a set of perspectives, priorities, or even shifted values
- A list of ways students will be changed because they took this course

### How will I learn in this course?

- Clear descriptions of the kinds of activities students will do to accomplish the learning goals
- A schedule that shows the order in which students will build their knowledge and skills through practice and feedback
- An explanation of the purpose of the various learning activities and the rationale for the sequencing and pacing of those activities

### When and how will we measure my progress?

- A list of major assessments that will measure students' progress toward the learning goals (e.g. exams, projects, performances) with due dates
- Clear explanations of your expectations for performance on those major assessments (What does success look like?)
- A grading scheme that illustrates how you will determine final course grades, including a variety of items and their relative weights (e.g. homework, quizzes, exams, discussions, projects, reflective writing, etc.)
- A clear explanation of the rationale behind your grading scheme and evaluation practices

## What materials will I need?

- Texts (including ISBN)
- Lab supplies, artistic supplies, professional and ancillary items (if any)
- Technology (if any)

## What behaviors will help me succeed in this course?

- A clear description of students' role in the course and what active, productive participation looks like both in and out of class (taking into account the modality)
- A realistic idea of how much time students should set aside for coursework
- Tips for success, including time management, use of resources, habits of successful students, etc.
- An expression of high expectations for academic integrity, including what ethical conduct entails and why it is essential in your field
- An explanation of why attendance in class is important
- Any policies of the instructor and/or department that may impact a student's enrollment or final grade

## What are the best ways to communicate with my professor, TA, and peers?

- A welcoming invitation to communicate with you, TAs (if any), LAs (if any), and peers
- A statement of your preferred methods of communication, how you prefer to be addressed, and what

students should expect regarding response times and other details

- Tips for the best ways to communicate and collaborate with peers, especially online

## Where can I go for extra support or resources?

- Information about resources relevant to the course and/or the discipline
- Information about on-campus support (e.g. the Disability Resource Center, the Center for Academic Success, the Center for Excellence in Writing, Counseling & Psychological Services)

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## Syllabus Usability Checklist:

- Is the information logically organized?
- Are the formatting, layout, and font size, type, and color accessible for students? (Please note that some students are visually impaired or colorblind.)
- Are the tone and diction appropriate for the audience?
- Is the course information easy to find?
- Is your contact information easy to find?
- Is the grading scheme clear?
- Have you identified important dates (e.g. drop date, holidays, etc.)?
- Is the syllabus available electronically?
- Have you gotten feedback from a colleague and/or student, particularly on tone and clarity?