



# The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach

By Judith Grunert O'Brien, Barbara J. Millis, Margaret W. Cohen

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When it was first published in 1997, *The Course Syllabus* became the gold standard reference for both new and experienced college faculty. Like the first edition, this book is based on a learner-centered approach. Because faculty members are now deeply committed to engaging students in learning, the syllabus has evolved into a useful, if lengthy, document. Today's syllabus provides details about course objectives, requirements and expectations, and also includes information about teaching philosophies, specific activities and the rationale for their use, and tools essential to student success.

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**Editorial Review**

Review

“I can’t imagine how many times I’ve recommended this book—to new faculty, to part time teachers, to experienced pedagogues and faculty finding their way to more learner-centered approaches. I can’t imagine a book more deserving of a second edition. And, I can’t imagine a second edition better than the first, but this one is, thanks to the able efforts of two new authors.”--Maryellen Weimer, professor emeritus, Penn State, editor, the *Teaching Professor*

“New and veteran college teachers alike, in all types of institutions from the community college to the university level, will benefit from this highly thoughtful, scholarly and persuasive argument for the critical role of the ‘learning-centered’ course syllabus. The authors clearly and convincingly demonstrate how to create a learning-centered course syllabus that becomes a dynamic, essential part of a course that encourages student engagement, active learning, and critical thinking. A ‘must read’ for anyone committed to teaching today’s college students to maximize their skills and knowledge for a changing world!”--Angela Provitera McGlynn, professor emeritus of psychology and author of *Teaching Today’s College Students* and *Successful Beginnings for College Teaching*

“It’s obvious that Millis and Cohen have extensive backgrounds in college teaching and learning. Their work on the syllabus as a fundamental component of good teaching is supportive, insightful, current, and practical. This is a masterful updating of Grunert’s classic, relevant across all disciplines.”--Nancy Chism, Professor of Higher Education, Indiana University

“All individuals involved in instructing today’s (and tomorrow’s) college students facing twenty-first century academic challenges should read this book for helpful suggestions on how to prepare an enhanced blueprint for learning and academic success—the course syllabus.”--James E. Groccia, director, Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning; associate professor, Educational Leadership; and past president, POD Network in Higher Education

“This book is unusually good. Comprehensive, clear, practical, and immediately useful, it should be read by every department chair and faculty member.”--Peter Seldin, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Management, Pace University

“This update of *The Course Syllabus* includes, among other fine features, an excellent review and incorporation of ideas from the literature on college teaching that have been published since the original version.”--L. Dee Fink, national project director, Teaching & Curriculum Assessment Project

“The syllabus is much more than a course description; it is a working document for both the instructor and

the students. In *The Course Syllabus*, Grunert, Millis and Cohen have provided a well-documented, very up to date road map for using it effectively by teachers and learners alike, by emphasizing the value of the learner-centered approach.”--Marilla D. Svinicki, Ph.D., professor, Department of Educational Psychology, The University of Texas at Austin

#### From the Back Cover

Creating a well-crafted syllabus is the first step in helping students understand the goals of a course, their responsibilities, and the criteria that will be used to evaluate their performance.

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This new and thoroughly revised edition places the syllabus within the context of (1) today's students, including "millennials" and nontraditional; (2) current and emerging campus technologies which offer, among other innovations, course management systems for online and hybrid delivery; and (3) contemporary faculty goals to nurture lifelong learners, teach students how to learn, assess learning outcomes, and prepare students for a changing workplace. In addition, *The Course Syllabus* includes:

- Updated research literature on faculty development and higher education
- A revised resource list and bibliography
- A new selection of syllabus excerpts from campuses across the nation representing a range of disciplines from a variety of institutions

The book's examples illustrate topics faculty are including in learning-centered syllabi such as civility, academic honesty, safety, and tools to support successful learning.

"I can't imagine a book more deserving of a second edition. And, I can't imagine a second edition better than the first, but this one is, thanks to the able efforts of the two new authors."

—**Maryellen Weimer**, professor emeritus, Penn State and editor, *The Teaching Professor*

#### About the Author

**Judith Grunert O'Brien** has retired from her work at Syracuse University to focus on sculpture, drawing, and writing. She was a member of the School of Art faculty, College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University, when she wrote the first edition of a Learning-Centered Syllabus in 1997.

**Barbara J. Millis** is director of the Excellence in Teaching Program at the University of Nevada-Reno.

**Margaret W. Cohen** is director and associate provost for professional development at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

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