



Adjunct Faculty Academic Calendar

May/June:

5/30 Memorial Day – No Classes

6/25 Classes & Final Exams End

6/27 Summer Classes Begin

6/29 Spring Grades due to
Registrars by Noon

Workshops:

5/19 Canvas Open Session
10:00 AM, C150

5/24 Lecture Capture: Echo360
2:00 PM, C 150

5/26 Introduction to Outlook
1:30 PM, C 150

6/7 No Nonsense Guide to Using
e-Books
11:00 AM, Z 111

For a complete list of workshops offered for the
Spring/Summer Semesters please visit
svsu.edu/workshops

Mark Your Calendars

The Fall All Adjunct Faculty
Orientation will be held on
Wednesday, August 17th in the
Curtiss Banquet Rooms.

Invitations will be emailed to you so
check your inbox!

Creating a Kinder, Gentler Syllabus

Back in the day, a syllabus was a one page document which outlined faculty contact information, office hours, course goals, and a course calendar that included readings, exam dates, etc. Today's syllabi are different. Concerns over plagiarism, cheating, attendance, assignment due dates, just to name a few, have made it such that our current syllabi consist of multiple pages that have effectively become a learning contract. Yet many of these syllabi, no matter how cleverly the language is crafted, often go unread and, therefore, do not have the intended impact. According to Stewart (2016), an ideal syllabus should be authentic and set the stage for student learning. She contends, further that it should not be, "overloaded with verbiage, caveats or a tone that doesn't truly match the teacher's own voice."

So as you contemplate your next syllabus, you might want to consider the following:

- **Manageable length.** Syllabi should not be a daily lesson plan. It is important to understand that if it is too long, many of your students won't read it. So try to find a happy minimum length...maybe, 4 duplexed pages?
- **Focus and format.** It has been said that the language in many syllabi are consistent with washer and dryer instruction manuals. If you are writing a boring, complicated syllabus, you can be sure that your students will also find it boring and complicated. So try to spice up your syllabi with different colors, shorter language, and more pictures to engage your students in your class.
- **Who are you, really?** The tone of your syllabus reflects upon you as a person. Let your syllabus be a reflection of your values and virtues.
- **Accountability without goobleygook.** In many cases, faculty are required to have syllabi that outlines assessment, goals, outcomes, course objectives. Such requirements may be the result of internal or external assessors working to ensure that students are being taught what is necessary. It is, therefore, important to explain to your students why these are a part of your syllabus and why they are important to their learning
- **Edit and proofread with care.** It is almost impossible to build a perfect syllabus. So do try to really work to eliminate any errors, and, if you do mess up, use your mistake as a teachable moment to model how errors should be handled.

In the end, the biggest test, is for you to print your syllabus and read it from the students' perspective. If you enjoy reading it, your students will too!

Stewart, M.S. (2016, April 26). *A Kinder, Gentler Syllabus? Inside Higher Education*, Accessed from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/04/26/ensuring-your-course-syllabus-does-its-job-essay>

Lessons in Teaching Undergraduates, Part One

Andrew Pegoda began teaching History in 2007. As a part of his blog, in *Inside Higher Education*, he offers some lessons he has learned through teaching undergraduate students (2013). We would like to share some of these lessons with you. It is our thought that these lessons might confirm some feelings and ideas you have had while teaching or they might be instructive in helping you learn more about your students.

- **Teaching is about learning.** Faculty learn best when they teach. They learn about the content they are teaching and they learn about their students. This learning is a rich and satisfying experience.
- **Knowing adult learning theory is essential.** Late adolescent brains are still developing and require certain teaching methodologies so that their learning can be broad and deep. It is therefore essential to connect the student's lives as they live today with the material being taught. As Pegoda says, "Adult learners must also see the relevance of a class and a lesson to be successful, and they must have active, hands-on lessons."
- **Getting students to your office hours is difficult.** Students are often scared or intimidated by their professors so they tend not to attend office hours, even when they need help. To solve this problem, it is helpful to arrive early to class and talk to your students. Let them get to know you. Be visible in the dining areas on campus and talk to your students when you see them. You might find that by investing a few hours of your time at the start of the semester, you will cease to be lonely during your office hours!
- **Students, especially freshmen, do not truly understand what is expected of them.** After having spent some thirteen years of their lives in public schools, many students have had critical thinking and analysis skills wired right out of them. And, much of the information they have learned, has to be unlearned. To help them overcome these problems, faculty need to create opportunities for better learning to help them unlearn and then relearn. This can be done by following the next piece of advice.
- **Make your course challenging.** If your course is "hard," you will find that your students will rise to the occasion. They actually like to be challenged and in doing so they will come to class prepared, they will complete their assignments, and they will put more work into the class. If you find that your students begin to struggle, you can back off a little. Importantly, your class focus should be on learning.
- **Create as many low-stake learning assessments as possible.** College is about learning and it is difficult to assess successful learning by offering only two exams. Therefore, it is important to offer as many low-stake assignments as possible. This can be accomplished through a series of quizzes, book reviews, writing prompts, etc. Pegoda says, "Assignments are best when they are active – that is, they involve a mixture of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and moving, as they have to use their full senses. Assignments require a mixture of recall, application, and synthesis with fun and creative prompts. Using new and creative assignments every semester almost completely eliminates the opportunities for plagiarism." And remember, not every assignment needs to be graded. By simply completing assignments, students can earn credit.
- **Quizzes guarantee that students will be on time and prepared.** Pegoda learned that once he implemented quizzes in his course, his students began to arrive on time and they actually started to complete their reading assignments!

We will offer more words of wisdom from Pegoda in our next newsletter. But if you would like to read more of his lessons you can follow the link below.