

# The Center for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning

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## Growing Your Syllabus from Good to Great!

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UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHERN COLORADO

ET 650 Spring 2009  
3 Credit Hours  
TIMES: Monday 7:00pm - 9:45pm  
Professor: William Smith  
Contact Information: phone, email,  
personal website  
Office Location & Hours

**Case Studies in  
Instructional Design**

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**Course Description/Purpose**

State course description. Ensure that it aligns with or matches the current catalog course description.  
Explain how this course fits into the overall program of study and the larger field of concentration.

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**Prerequisites/Technology Use**

List courses, knowledge or skills students should already have obtained prior to this class.  
Clarify expectations of technology use by your students for class work and management. You may also include course requirements (provided by students such as using their computer or cell phone for recreation, outside class work, etc. during class time).

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**Required Textbooks/Equipment**

List all required textbooks, technology, and other materials (speakers, programs, internet access, etc.) with information about editions, volumes, and other details. Also include where difficult materials may be found.

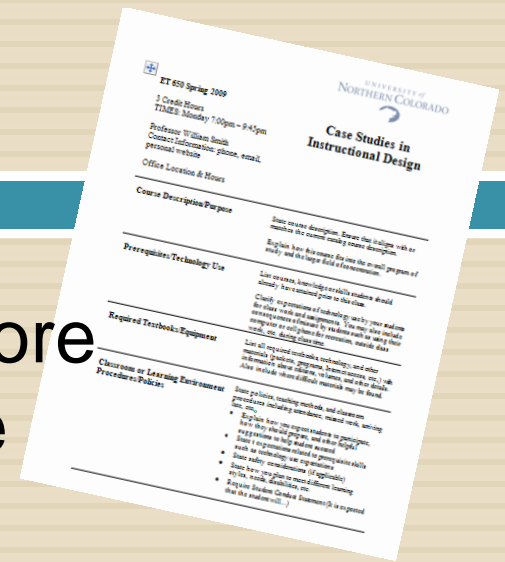
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**Classroom or Learning Environment  
Procedures/Policies**

State policies, teaching methods, and classroom procedures including attendance, missed work, writing late, etc.  
• Explain how you expect students to participate, how they should prepare, and other things.  
• State suggestions related to prerequisite skills such as technology use (if applicable).  
• State safety considerations (if applicable).  
• State how you plan to meet different learning styles, needs, disabilities, etc.  
• Require Student Conduct Statements (it is expected that the student will...)

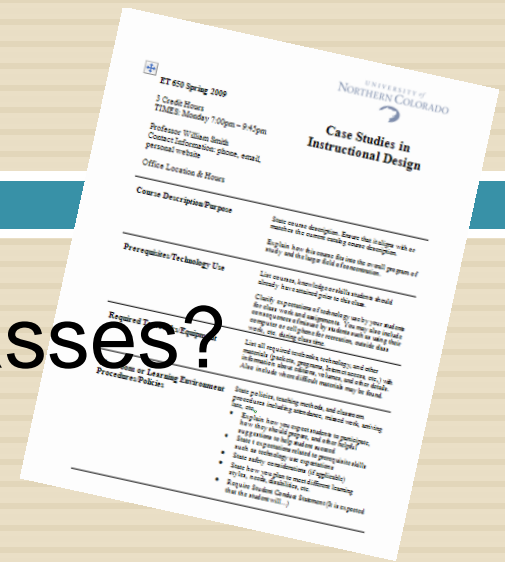


# Workshop Objectives



- Create or edit a syllabus to be more learner centered using clear, course objectives that align with your assignments and assessments
- Articulate student expectations in your syllabus (without sounding like a lawyer)
- Use your syllabus as a living, interactive document (communication tool) between you and your students

# Why Syllabi?



## Why do we have syllabi for our classes?

- Roadmap for the content
- Explain assessments, assignments, grading criteria (rubrics)
- Define student and instructor expectations

# Why Syllabi?

## What constitutes a good syllabus?

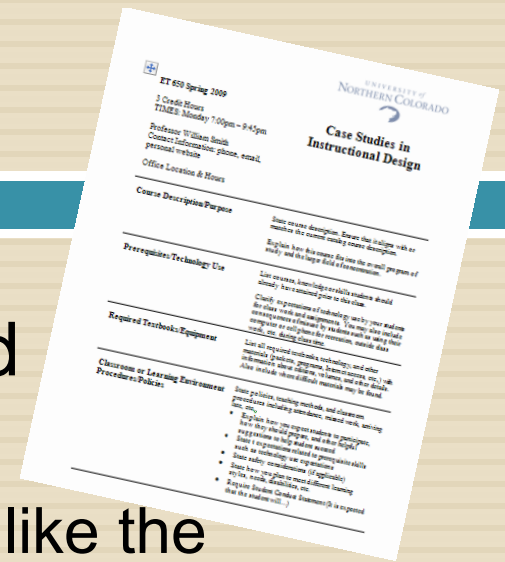
- Logistical information..such as?
- Explanation of how course fits with overall curriculum
- Well written concrete learning objectives
- Expectations for success clearly explained
- Clear presentation of course's structure



# Learner-centered Syllabi

## What does creating a learner-centered syllabus mean?

- Take the learner's perspective...think like the student ...WII-FM (What's In It For Me)
- Try to anticipate student questions
- Focus on what students need and what they can expect to take away from your class
- Include information that facilitates the academic success of your students



# Learner-centered Syllabi



Present *yourself* in the syllabus

(critical for online environments)

How ?

Introduce Yourself.

Write a short statement of your teaching methods/philosophy

Clarify and set high expectations (positive intent)

Describe what you will do to help students achieve objectives

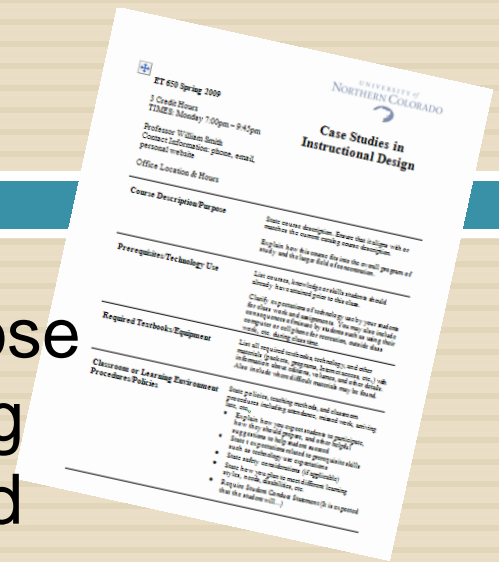
Informal tone, use first person; more formal tone use third person.

# Syllabus Drives Content

Parkes and Harris (2002) posit the purpose of syllabus is to drive the content, serving as a contract, a permanent record, an aid to student learning.

As a contract, it sets forth expectations during the term and should delineate responsibilities of the students and the instructor(s).

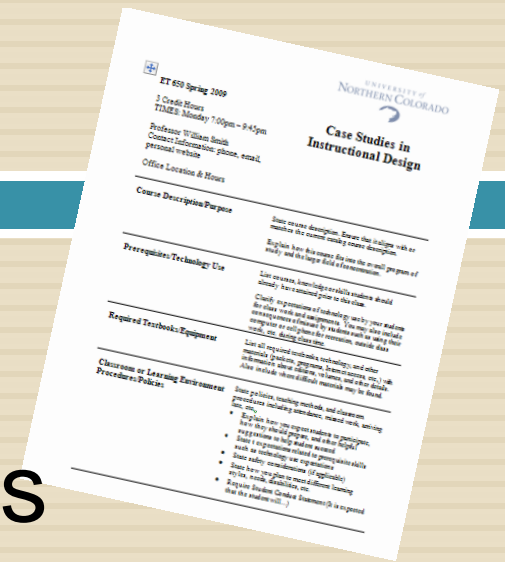
What do some of these responsibilities look like?



# Syllabi Drive Content

As a **permanent record**:

Include all the details such as title, date, course description and learning objectives, required texts, assessments, credit hours earned, instructor names & title, etc.



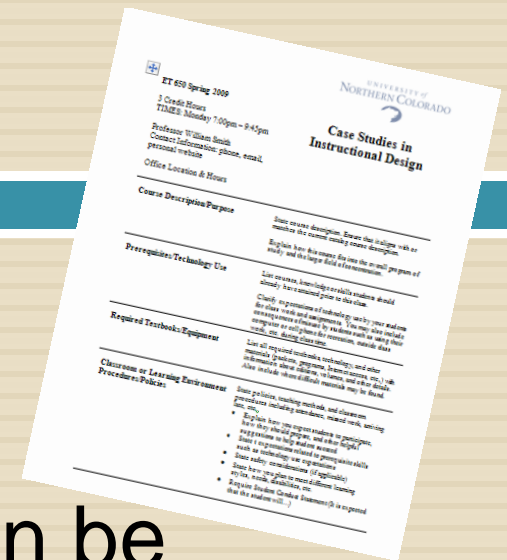
(Parkes and Harris, 2002)

# Syllabi Drive Content

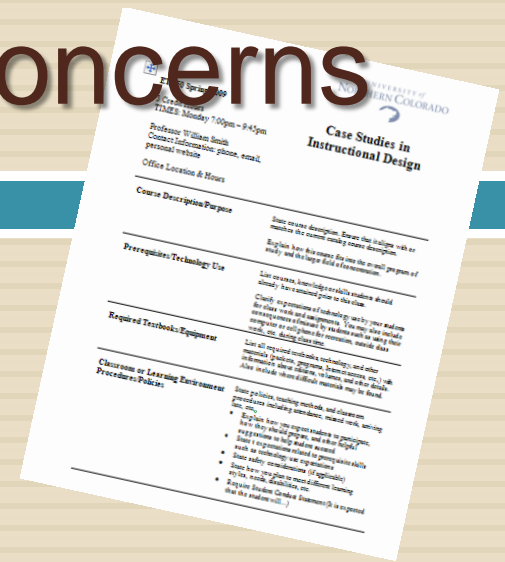
As a **learning tool**:

Include tips on how students can be successful (planning & self management skills), available resources, relevance and importance of the course to students, common misconceptions or mistakes, where to find examples of high quality work.

(Parkes and Harris, 2002)



# Syllabi Address Student Concerns



Will I be able to do the work?

Will I like the professor?

Will the subject matter interest me?

Is it relevant to what I want to do?

Do I have the prerequisite skills/ knowledge to succeed?

Is it possible for me to get a good grade?

Can I handle the workload?

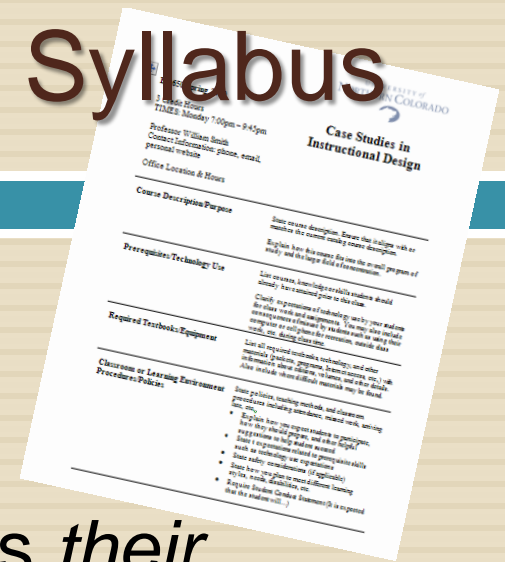
What policies does this instructor have regarding attendance, late work, participation, written assignments etc.?

# The *Living* Learner-centered Syllabus

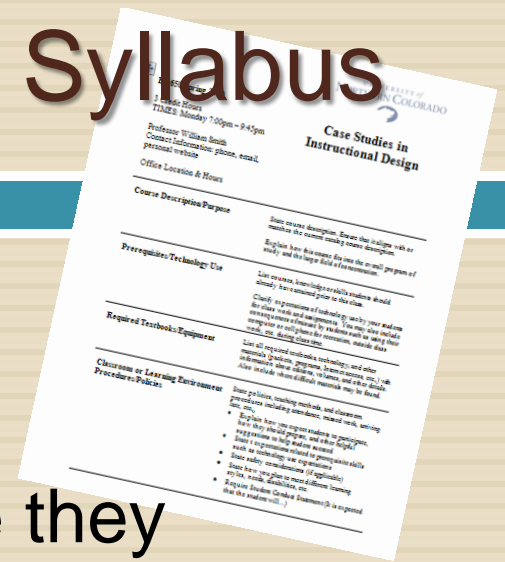
**Ask** students to provide 2-3 learning outcomes *they* want to achieve

**Ask** them to discuss what *they* see as *their* role and *their* responsibilities in your class

**Consider** asking how they would like their learning progress to be measured (papers, presentations, blogs, projects, tests etc.)



# The *Living* Learner-centered Syllabus



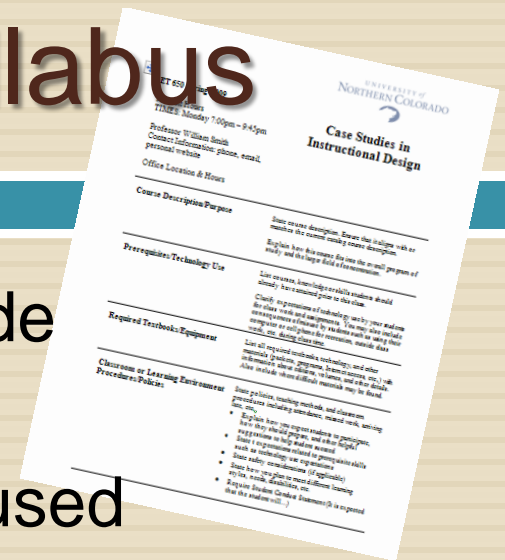
## Positive effects of student input:

Students feel empowered because they have some say in the matter (but *you* have the final say)

The idea works to engage students; they feel they have some control over *their* learning and *their* desired outcomes.

# The Learner-centered Syllabus

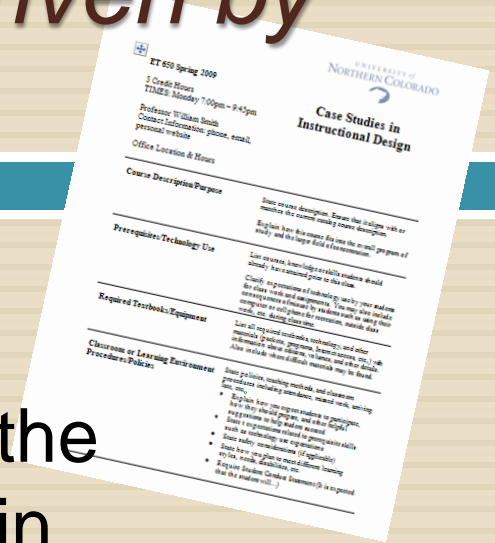
A learner-centered approach can provide meaningful discussion which may help you refine the syllabus so it is more focused on the needs of the learner.



Considering adding a statement such as:

*“I reserve the right to update this syllabus as class needs arise. Be assured that I will communicate to you any changes to our schedule, syllabus or policies quickly and efficiently through the ...”* (name the vehicle)

# Assignments, assessment driven by course objectives



## What is a good course objective?

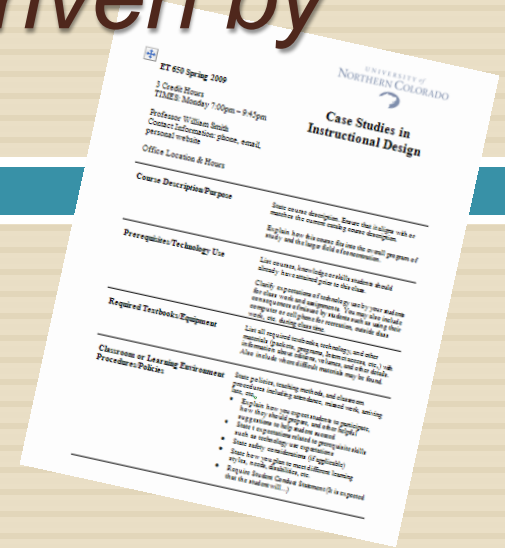
- ❑ Declarative statement about what the student should be able to do, explain, demonstrate, create, write, etc. at the completion of the course
- ❑ Written in active voice, usually starts with an action verb
- ❑ Must be demonstratable and measureable

# Assignments, assessment driven by course objectives

Assignments and assessment s should tie back to the learning objectives/stated outcomes.

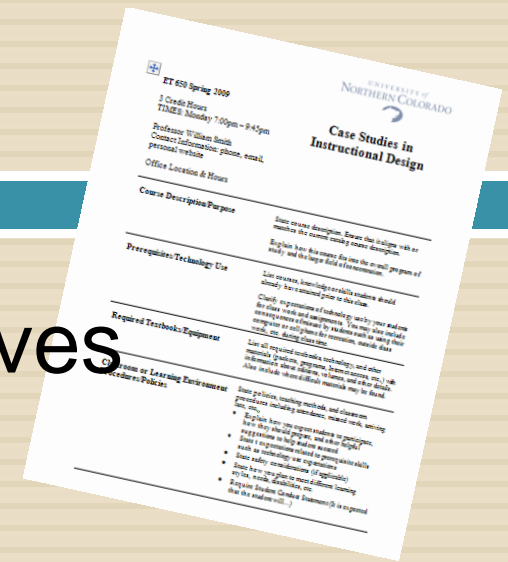
*What* you evaluate needs to be determined by your learning objectives.

Evaluate to what extent the learning objectives have been attained



# Components of a Well Written Objective

## ABCD approach to writing objectives



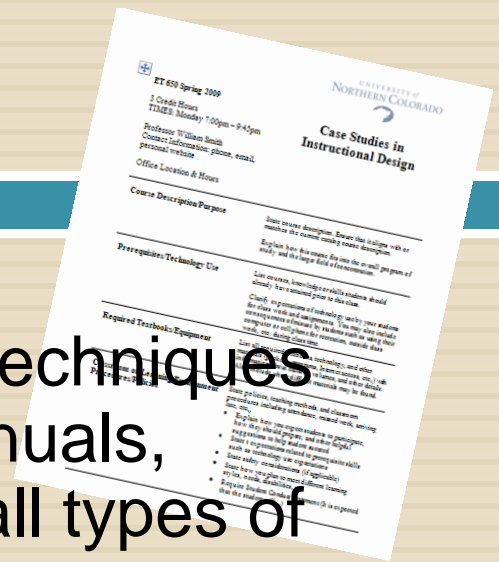
**A**udience (who is the learner)

**B**ehavior to be learned (and demonstrated)

**C**onditions (instructional strategies)

**D**egree – how will you determine the extent to which learning is achieved?

# Components of a Well Written Objective



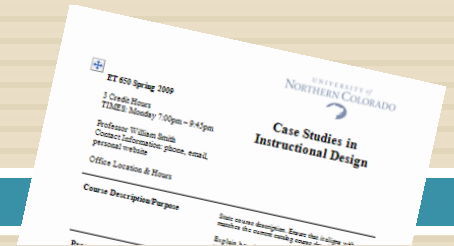
**Course Description:** This class examines techniques used to prepare and write operator manuals, maintenance and service manuals for all types of consumer products.

**Learning Objective:** At the completion of this class, you should be able to identify and appropriately use safety warnings in a product manual.

**Written Assignment:** Critique a hardware manual

*Upon completion of this assignment you (A) should be able to: Identify and comment on the use of (B) safety warnings in a consumer product manual.*

# Components of a Well Written Objective



Use the assigned readings, discussion postings and information from the textbook (**C**) to critique the attached hardware manual for a Hamilton Beach blender.

Successful completion of this assignment (earning a grade of 70% or higher) (**D**) supports the following learning objective from the syllabus: *At the completion of this class, you should be able to identify and appropriately use safety warnings in a product manual.*

# Syllabus Appearance

Sample syllabus template located at <http://www.unco.edu/cetl/syllabus/>

ASK:

Is my syllabus easy to read? Well organized?

Did I use a variety of organizational devices (headings, subheadings, boldface, bullets, numbering and white space) to guide the learner & chunk information for ease of use?

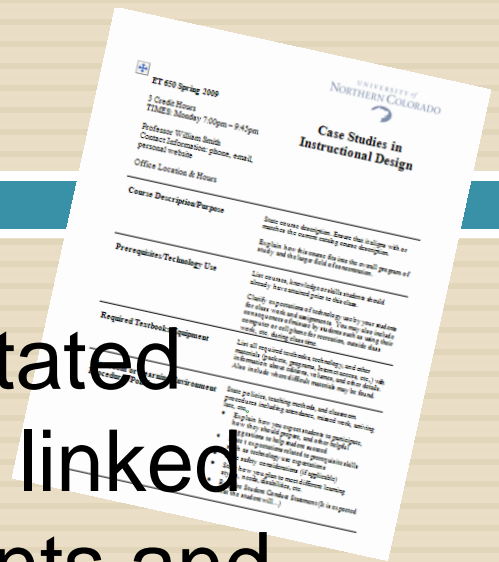
Can I place the schedule or calendar of assignments and readings in a tabular format?



# Final tips. . .

Ensure learning outcomes and stated objectives are supported by, and linked directly to, the student assignments and assessments.

Ensure students know and understand the acceptable levels of proficiency and how they are to demonstrate their learning and knowledge.



# Final tips. . .

Clearly explain how you grade assignments, assessments.

Let students know what you expect of them, what they can expect from you.

Don't be afraid of too much detail :-,)

The syllabus can be a learning tool supporting the knowledge, skills and attitudes you want students to achieve relative to the content of the course.

