CONSTRUCTING THE AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE COURSE SYLLABUS

While a syllabus is primarily designed to inform students what standards, requirements, and outcomes will be expected of them in the course, it also expresses an “informal agreement” between the professor and the students. Students will ordinarily hold professors to the content of the syllabus throughout the course, and professors can hold students to the policies and requirements established in the syllabus. A syllabus also informs other colleges and universities of the content of a course so that they may determine if it is equivalent to a similar one offered at their university.¹

For policies specific to Agnes Scott College, please refer to the Academic Program and Policies sections of the Current Agnes Scott College Catalog. Also see the Student Handbook (p. 8-) for information on the Honor System.

Every course syllabus should contain:

1. Key course data:
   a. course number, title, section and credit hours; semester and year; location, days and hours of class meeting, course co-requisites and pre-requisites;
   b. clear expectations of readiness/skills needed;
   c. instructor’s name, office location, office hours, telephone numbers and e-mail;
   d. a workload statement indicating preparation hours outside of class; our classes are typically 4-credit hours, but “seat time” is usually less than 4 hours per week—so a clear indication of additional “course time” should be included (part of accreditation);
   e. instructions on scheduling appointments and indicating whether or not you may be contacted at home.

2. Clear statement of the purpose/rationale of the course:
   a. introduction to the subject and its disciplinary orientation;
   b. explanation of how the course fits into the department and college curriculum, including whether the course satisfies a particular specific or distributional standard;
   c. reasons why students would want to learn this material.

3. Clearly stated course goals and learning objectives (by topic or meeting):
   a. 3-5 major learning objectives you expect students to achieve;
   b. specific skills and/or competencies you wish to develop in students;
   c. explanation of how assignments relate to course objectives.

4. Course requirements and penalties:
   a. attendance policy, including tardiness, and specific penalty policy for each;
   b. honor code/academic ethics/plagiarism statements and penalty; pledging papers; (see Appendix A for examples of syllabus statements on plagiarism);
   c. test policies and procedures, including make-up and take-home tests;

¹ Please note the following policy concerning syllabi in the Agnes Scott College Faculty Handbook: “At the beginning of each semester, instructors shall provide in electronic format copies of syllabi for each of their courses to the first floor Buttrick office of faculty services. Faculty services staff will print out one copy of each syllabus to be placed in the central syllabi file housed in the office of faculty services as a resource for faculty, students, and staff.” [These can be sent electronically to sdougherty@agnesscott.edu]
d. procedures for submitting work—i.e., will you have students use the file upload feature in Moodle to submit work, is it acceptable to email papers? (note: it is useful to remind students that it is not acceptable to slip papers under the office door!); 

e. final examination policies and procedures;

f. deadlines for assignments and policy/penalties for submitting assignments late;

g. laboratory requirements if applicable;

h. acceptable and unacceptable classroom behavior (i.e., eating in class, cell phones in class, rules for discussion, respect for others, etc.);

i. outside assignments;

j. extra credit policies;

k. Required submission of course evaluation at the end of the semester (students will receive an e-mail near the end of the semester asking them to submit an online evaluation of the course; see Appendix B for examples of statements used by faculty members on the course syllabus to indicate the expectation of students to complete course evaluations).

5. Required textbooks (including author and publication information) and course materials, optional textbooks, and library reserve list (please note that we now provide textbook information to students within the AscAgnes course information and registration system).

6. The grading/evaluation system:

   a. grading scale;

   b. grading areas used (projects, cases, midterm exam, final exam, papers, presentations, etc.) and relative weight of each;

   c. do you grade on a curve or use an absolute scale?

7. Course outline and schedule:

   a. sequence of topics and dates topics will be covered;

   b. test dates;

   c. due dates for projects and presentations;

   d. holidays and dates when class will not meet (posted on the Registrar’s web page; e.

   e. important academic dates for withdrawal, pass/fail options, etc. (posted on the Registrar’s web page.

2 Grades are assigned the following quality points at Agnes Scott: A = 4 quality points per semester hour, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3, B- = 2.67, C+ = 2.33, C = 2, C- = 1.67, D+ = 1.33, D = 1, D- = .67, and F = 0.

3 Note the following Faculty Handbook policy: Faculty determine grading policies for their courses. Grading policies must be made available to students at the beginning of each semester. In the absence of any other scale announced by an instructor or department, the grading scale given below will apply for converting numerical grades into final letter grades.

93 to 100 A
90 to less than 93 A-
87 to less than 90 B+
83 to less than 87 B
80 to less than 83 B-
77 to less than 80 C+
73 to less than 77 C
70 to less than73 C-
67 to less than 70 D+
63 to less than 67 D
60 to less than 63 D-
Less than 60 F
8. A statement inviting students with disabilities to meet with them in a confidential environment to discuss making arrangements for accommodations (see example below). There are several reasons why this syllabus statement is critical:
   a. it both normalizes the accommodation process and helps to create a positive and welcoming environment for students with disabilities;
   b. it creates a collaborative vehicle for making legally mandated accommodations;
   c. it serves as a reminder to students who need the accommodations that these arrangements need to be made.

At Agnes Scott College incoming students are informed that if they need disability accommodations, they need to register with the Office of Academic Advising and meet with our Disabilities Services Coordinator Kelly Deasy, Assistant Director of Academic Advising. Once they have done so, an accommodation checklist will be sent to each professor whose course the student is enrolled in. Thus you might include in your syllabus a version of the following statement:

Agnes Scott College seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, please contact Kelly Deasy in the Office of Academic Advising (X6150) to make complete the registration process. Once registered, please contact me so we can discuss the specific accommodations needed for this course.

A syllabus may also include:

1. An introduction to the discipline, its mode of inquiry, its relationship to or use in other disciplines.
2. Instructional strategies to be employed (discussion groups, simulations, case studies, role plays, ...) and how these relate to learning the discipline.
3. An explanation of study procedures or lab procedures to be utilized.
4. A list of links to student resources:
   a. Academic Advising: http://www.agnesscott.edu/academicadvising/
   b. The Writing Center: http://writing_center.agnesscott.edu/
   c. The Speaking Center: http://speaking_center.agnesscott.edu/
   d. McCain Library: http://library.agnesscott.edu/
   e. Educational Technology Center: http://www.agnesscott.edu/its/educational-technology/
   f. Wellness Center: http://legacy.agnesscott.edu/studentlife/wellnesscenter
   g. Academic Catalog: http://www.agnesscott.edu/academics/academic-catalog/index.html
   h. Academic Calendar: http://www.agnesscott.edu/registrar/academic-calendar.html
   i. Registrar: http://www.agnesscott.edu/registrar/

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4 Key dates you may want to include on your syllabus: Sept 2—last day to add or drop using AscAgnes; Sept 6—last day to add a fall class or change to audit; Sept 17—last day to drop without a W; Oct 30—last day to drop with a W or change to pass/fail.
Appendix A: Examples of Statements Regarding Plagiarism Taken from the Syllabi of Agnes Scott College Faculty

From Christine Cozzens (English; please note that this statement is used in English 110, a foundational writing course for first-year students):

THE HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM. Intellectual communities are founded on principles of honesty and fair use. Teaching, learning, and the advancement of knowledge all depend on these principles. One of the most important things you will learn as an Agnes Scott student is how to use the writings of others in combination with your own ideas and research to create thoughtful papers that make contributions to the world of knowledge with full credit to all the minds that have participated.

For many reasons, including the explosion of information available on the Internet, plagiarism is on the rise in colleges and universities across the country. In recent years it has become easier to find and copy or download papers or parts of papers and easier to find sources of papers or other works that are for sale. Of course it has also become easier for such crimes to be detected. Most of you will not be tempted to pass off others’ work as your own, yet it is also possible to inadvertently use others’ work in an improper way. One of the goals of this course is to teach you how to avoid making such mistakes and how to use sources properly and effectively in your written work.

Nothing is more important in a college course than adherence to the Honor System. You have all signed the Honor Pledge, and its principles should govern all of your work for this course as for any other. If you directly (direct quotations) or indirectly (paraphrases, other borrowings) borrow ideas from others—whether those ideas appear in books, articles, or online, or develop during conversations—you must give proper and full credit to the original sources.

Please pledge individual papers and exams as a reminder for all of us that you are committed to upholding the Honor System. To make sure everyone understands how this system and its principles provide the foundation for all course work, we will spend a substantial portion of class time—including a required class session on September 11—discussing academic and intellectual honesty and conducting a thorough examination of the proper use of sources in informal and formal writing.

At any time during the semester, I will be happy to answer questions you may have about the Honor System, academic and intellectual honesty, the proper use of sources, or any related topic.
From Jennifer Lund (International Education, from the International Student Handbook):

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s ideas or words without giving them credit. This can mean using someone’s ideas without proper acknowledgement in papers you are writing for class, copying a sentence directly from a book or journal without citing the source, or turning in the same paper or assignment for different classes without the professors’ knowledge. In the United States, there are specific requirements for documenting sources and ideas. You can learn about these standards by consulting your professors or by visiting the Writing Center. Plagiarism is a serious offense and the penalty ranges from warnings to probation or suspension.

Many professors do not mind if students work together and discuss their ideas, but students are expected to prepare assignments and write papers independently unless otherwise instructed. If you are not sure of your professor’s preference where group work is concerned, check with her/him to be certain.

**Appendix B: Samples of course evaluation statements for syllabi**

The following statements have been used by faculty members on the course syllabus to indicate the expectation of students to complete course evaluations.

**Course Evaluations:**
At the end of the semester you will receive an e-mail asking you to submit an evaluation of the course. Please give feedback! Your input is very important to the college as a whole and to me as a teacher. I take your comments very seriously.

**Course Evaluations:** Near the end of the semester you will be notified by e-mail and provided with a link to follow to complete course evaluations online outside of class. I want you to know that your feedback on the course is extremely valuable to me, the department, and the administration. In particular, I take your comments very seriously and use them to improve the course the next time I teach it. Please do fill out a course evaluation when you receive the e-mailed link at the end of the semester.

**Course Evaluations:**
Course evaluations are completed by students online rather than in class. It is an expectation of this course that you will complete the course evaluation. These evaluations are very important to me and I look forward to student comments every semester to see the ways in which I can improve the course. PLEASE help me by completing the evaluation thoughtfully!

**STUDENT EVALUATIONS**
Course evaluations are completed online. Near the end of the semester, you will receive an e-mail message that will provide a link to follow in order to complete the evaluation online, outside of class. Student evaluations provide feedback that is valuable to the instructor, and I hope that all members of the class will complete this form.