

A "High Hope" Syllabus:
How to Encourage Student
Success from Day 1

Grossmont College:
Academic Senate
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Welcome!

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@ONE Equity & Culturally Responsive Teaching Online Course
SDSU Cultural Competency for Educators Certificate

Campus Context

- 12 Gateway Courses
- Equity Institute
- AB 705
- Guided Pathways



This is a practical way to close achievement gaps and adopt equity-minded principles, starting with the very first document your students ever see!

The Role of the Syllabus

The syllabus acts as a **contract** between students and the instructor and as a **record** of what courses cover and how student outcomes and performance are evaluated for accountability purposes...

However, syllabi are also **learning tools** that can help students develop effective learning practices and strategies and **communication devices** that share how teaching will be approached (USC Center for Urban Education, 2016).

“

A learning-centered syllabus requires that you shift from what you, the instructor, are going to cover in your course to a concern for what information and tools can provide for your students to promote learning and intellectual development.

- R. M. Diamond

Barriers

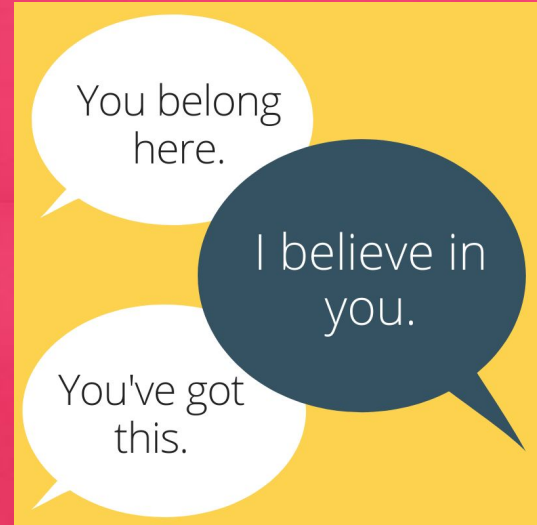
Minoritized students experience challenges and barriers that result in lower completion rates and inequitable outcomes. A study by the California Community College's RP Group highlights factors our students must constantly rise above. Those factors include:

- financial stress
- being a first generation American
- negative perceptions of academic potential
- lack of helpful guidance and career support
- difficulty transitioning into higher ed
- lack of familiarity with academic culture and practices
- academic systems are sometimes alienating or hostile
- academic systems tend to displace and exclude the cultural knowledge, skills, and capital of certain groups of students

*Adapted from @ONE Equity and Culturally Responsive Online Teaching Course, 2019

Why the Syllabus Matters

- Sends the first impression of the instructor. Are they approachable? friendly? supportive?
- Shows faculty's attitude toward learning and students
- Tells students whether or not instructors expect them to be successful and clarifies how they can achieve success



BEFORE AND AFTER #1: Welcoming First Page



Course Description

English 124—Advanced Composition: Critical Reading and Writing—is a 3-unit course designed to develop critical thinking, reading and writing skills beyond the level achieved in English 120. The course focuses on the development of logical reasoning and analytical and argumentative writing skills. In order to take this course, students must have received a “C” grade or higher or “Pass” in English 120 or equivalent.



Teaching Philosophy

Welcome to English 124—Advanced Composition: Critical Reading and Writing! I believe all students have the capacity to succeed in pursuit of their educational goals, and I find so much joy as an educator in helping students achieve these goals. I strive to provide the correct learning tools so that they can overcome any barriers that arise throughout the pursuit of their education. Because I have found purpose and empowerment through education, it is my passion to foster this in others as well. This semester, we will learn a lot from each other, and I hope you will find this course to be an enriching and rewarding experience.

BEFORE AND AFTER #2: Late Work Policy

- **Due Dates:** All work is due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays. The specific due dates are listed in the Course Assignment Schedule located at the end of this document. Students can also view the “Course Summary” in the Syllabus tab on Canvas for deadlines and important dates. Students should save all work to their computers in case there is ever a discrepancy on Canvas. **If students encounter issues with Canvas, they should contact the 24-Hour Help Desk immediately: 1-844-600-4953. However, students need to avoid procrastination so that ample time is available to get an issue resolved before the assignment deadline.** Computer issues are not a valid excuse for submitting an assignment late; therefore, I will not accept work submitted late via e-mail or submission comments. While there will be some opportunities for students to work ahead, **this is not a self-paced course.** Homework assignments, quizzes, and discussions will not be accepted late. However, since essays are such a large part of students’ grades, **one essay** will be accepted up to one week after the original due date and will receive a 10% grade deduction. No coursework will be accepted after 5/29/19.

Late Policy: Because I understand that sometimes, students face obstacles in their lives, homework assignments, quizzes, and discussions will be accepted late up to 48 hours and will incur a 25% grade deduction per day (up to a 50% grade deduction). However, unless students contact me with an extenuating circumstance, I will not accept those assignments beyond the 48 hour mark. Furthermore, because essays are such a large part of students’ grades, **Essay #1 and Essay #2** will be accepted up to one week after the original due date and will incur a 2% grade deduction per day (up to a 15% grade receive deduction). Essay #3 may not be accepted beyond three days late since no coursework will be accepted after 12/11/19.

BEFORE AND AFTER #3: Behavioral Policy

CLASSROOM PROFESSIONALISM:

To create a positive learning environment, we need to all show mutual respect for one another.

Disrespectful and disruptive behavior that will affect your participation grade includes the following:

- Whispering or talking excessively during lecture and/or when other classmates are speaking.
- Making discriminatory remarks. Since this is a discussion-based class in a diverse classroom, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. Discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated.
- Answering a cell phone or texting in class. Please keep your phone in your bag and on silent—NOT on your desk. If you need to take an important call or text, you are free to step outside.
- Using your laptop or tablet at inappropriate times and/or for inappropriate purposes.
- Smoking, including e-cigarettes.
- Arriving late, leaving early, or returning late from the break.
- Napping in class or doing homework for another class.
- Refusing to participate in class discussion and group work.
- Wearing headphones in class.

Classroom Policies:

Creating a Positive Classroom Community:

To help create a positive classroom environment, be successful in this course, and earn a strong participation grade, please keep the following guidelines in mind:



- **Group work:** We will engage in a lot of collaborative activities in this classroom. Please participate fully in group work and be an engaged team member. You all have valuable thoughts and perspectives to share.
- **Productive conversations:** Since this is a discussion-based class in a diverse classroom, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. Consider all perspectives and be open-minded to new ideas. Please do not talk or whisper during lecture and when other classmates are speaking.
- **Technology use:** At times, I will ask students to take out their smartphones during activities, but otherwise, please put your phone away so you can focus and be successful in class. If you need to take an important call or text, you are free to step outside. Laptops and headphones should be stored away during class time, unless an exception is made.
- **Overarching Policy:** Any behavior that interrupts learning or negatively affects the classroom environment breaks the Grossmont College Student Code of Conduct. In this case, the steps below will be taken.

Be a "warm demander."

From *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*
by Zaretta Hammond

Ac
Demander



THE WARM DEMANDER

- Explicit focus on building rapport and trust. Expresses warmth through non-verbal ways like smiling, touch, warm or firm tone of voice, and good natured teasing.
- Shows personal regard for students by inquiring about important people and events in their lives.
- Earns the right to demand engagement and effort.
- Very competent with the technical side of instruction.
- Holds high standards and offers emotional support and instructional scaffolding to dependent learners for reaching the standards.
- Encourages productive struggle.
- Viewed by students as caring because of personal regard and "tough love" stance.

Types of Changes?

What types of changes can you make to the syllabus, and how do you think these changes will positively impact your students' perception of and ability to succeed in your course?

Types of Changes

- Tweaking language/tone: leaving students feeling hopeful (“high hope” vs. “low hope” syllabus) and avoiding advanced academic language
- Adding in campus resources and other resources
- Explaining the purpose of a policy and its link to student success
- Improving aesthetics, such as
 - Images--a great way to engage your students' emotions, describe complex ideas, and appeal to non-native English speakers.
 - Headings and bulleted lists on a page to clearly organize your content.
- *Sometimes* changing policies--e.g., late work

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