

5.95 In-Class Exercise #4

Creating a Syllabus

For this exercise, you will again work in groups of 3 to 4.

Each group will be given a book. (You'll notice the books are non-scientific. There are two reasons for this: first, to level the playing field so that one person doesn't know more about the subject than other members of the group; and second, because we want you to focus on the *process* of putting together a syllabus. Content can often distract you from focusing on *how* something is done.)

Your goal, then, is to create a syllabus for a course that would be based upon the material in the book. Assume that approximately 30 MIT undergraduates will be enrolled in the course, that it will meet twice a week for 1 ½ hours, and that it is an elective.

Here are parts of the syllabus you are responsible for:

- *Course overview.* Write a paragraph that provides an introduction to the course and the subject matter. The “course overview” should also discuss the format and approach the course will take (lecture? discussions? in-class exercises?) and the value of the course to the students
- *Course objectives.* Remember Davis writes about both “content” and “noncontent” goals. You should include both.
- *Course content.* List the topics to be covered in the order they are to be discussed. Be sure to make clear the conceptual structure used to organize the course.
- *Course assignments.* List the papers, exams, projects, etc. students will be expected to complete for the course. Think about how these assignments reinforce the objectives of the course. Sketch out when these assignments will be due to make sure they are distributed evenly throughout the course.
- *Course policies.* State your policies regarding, for example: class attendance; late work; missed homework, tests, or papers; class participation; classroom behavior. Why have you decided on these policies? How do they reflect the “teaching philosophy” statements you wrote for tonight’s class?

After you have finished constructing your syllabus, we will come back together to discuss what you have learned about the process of constructing a syllabus.