Common Errors/Suggestions for Course Syllabi Development

After your course has been approved by the Distance and Blended Learning Committee you must complete the UMW Online Course Authorization form and obtain the necessary signatures (i.e., Department Chair, College Dean, Provost, etc.). Then, submit to Betty Bradshaw in the Registrar.

The Distance and Blended On-line Learning Committee has identified some common syllabus errors that often emerge during the review process of online courses. The information below is designed to provide faculty with suggestions and ideas related to your online course development and syllabus:

• Course Number and Title.
• Semester Offered and Length of Course.
• Instructor Contact Information.
  o Instructor Name
  o Office
  o Office Hours
  o Email
  o Phone

• Course Website/Canvas Information.
  o Provide online course information as to where students may find your course (Canvas, WordPress, etc.).
  o Provide Canvas Help Information (http://technology.umw.edu/canvas/)
  o Explicitly provide information on course features (announcements, calendar, content area, communication area, assignments area, student project gallery, etc.) and how these features support learning goals of your course.
  o If you are using a module approach to your course design consider providing an overview on how your modules are organized or structured and how to navigate within the module.
  o We have found it helpful if faculty include a brief welcome or description that explains how your course will begin. You should include information that states how a student should begin your course, how they will be notified a course has begun, and what students should first do upon beginning your online course.
  o Explicitly identify the technology tools you are using in your course. How will you ensure that students are familiar and can be successful using them? You may want to crate a task/introductory activity that students need to complete early on in the course to ensure they are able to use your technology tools.

• Required Materials and Course Resources.
  o If using an online textbook be sure to provide a link(s) for students to access.
  o Students have found it helpful when faculty provides a link to UMW libraries homepage.
  o Other online resources or databases should also be identified and linked.
  o What types of online technology tools will you be using and where can students access information on how to use those tools (if unfamiliar)?
• **Course Overview.**
  o Provide a clear course overview, specifically, expectations of this online course. What does communication, collaboration, community, and active involvement look like in your online course.

• **Purpose of Course.**
  o Why is this online environment relevant and appropriate for your course?

• **Objective(s) of Course or Learning Outcomes (as they apply to an majority online course format)**
  o How will students receive formative feedback?
  o What will you use for your summative course feedback?
  o How will you assess student learning?
  o How will you assess course features/processes/structures that hindered/supported student learning?
  o What information will you solicit and analyze to explore course impact on student learning?

• **Scope of Course (if applicable).**

• **Course Instructional Methods.**
  o Identify the ways in which students are expected to participate in your online course. If using a Webinar, what does this mean? Are students accessing the webinar as a group at the same time (synchronously) or individually at their own time (asynchronously)? What will the webinar contain? How will students access it? What information will be available to them in the Webinar? Etc.
  o Describe your role as a faculty in terms of course content delivery and role in the course. How will you interact with students in your majority online course? How will students interact with you, the instructor, and other students? Etc.
  o If students, are expected to actively participate explicitly and clearly convey those expectations.

• **Coursework/Class Schedule.**
  o Include a course schedule that shows what material will be covered each week and due dates.
  o Include assignment due dates. How will you handle late work? Be sure to convey this to students.

• **Grading.**
  o If you are going to grade online class participation be sure to provide the specifics so students have a clear sense of how they will be assessed. What does online participation involve, require, etc.?
  o How will you address quality and quantity aspect to this work? It is helpful to provide students with examples?

• **Grading Scale.**

• **Exams and Exam policies.**
  o Be sure to provide information on where and how students will access exams
• Identify what is expected from students. Such as the honor code.
  • Convey to students whether the exams will be timed or not.

• Honor System.
  • Your syllabus should include a reference/link to the UMW honor code.

• Disability Statement.
  • Your syllabus should include a link to UMW’s Disability Resource website.
  • With regard to accessibility/disability issues:
    - You might want to consider captions for videos for folks who can’t see the videos, and/or OCR for pdf files (image-based pdf may not be able to be read by all students)
    - Seek out Disability Resources as a reference for help with video captions, OCR.