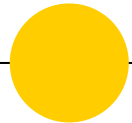


# **Dogfooding Syllabi** (times four)



Rachael Barlow  
Wesleyan University  
Lilly East 2017

*Eating your own dogfood is time well spent, a simple way to take your practice one step closer to perfection.*



“



# The syllabus

An artifact of instruction, albeit an imperfect one.  
The articulation of the *what*, *when*, and *why* for a course.  
Used to plan, document, communicate, set the tone, inspire,  
establish authority...



# Syllabi systems

Artifacts of instruction that coexist in the same temporal space.



## The student **perspective**

What does it feel like to be a student navigating the syllabus system?



## Anatomy of a syllabus

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### Basic information

Course time, how to contact the instructor, books, course packs, etc.

### About the course

Course content and objectives, the instructor's teaching philosophy and pedagogy.

### Assignments

Kinds of assignments and associated learning goals and prompts.

### Calendar

List of course topics, when readings and assignments are due.

### Grade components

How assignments, participation, attendance, etc. contribute to final grade.

### Policies and rules

Policies for attendance, tardiness, behavior, technology, student integrity, accommodations, etc.



## The syllabus in three modes



- **Printable syllabus:** Relatively stable. Easy for the student to scan and annotate.



- **Oral complement:** Reinforces some written statements, but can deflect others (Thompson, 2007). Happens on first day, but also later.



- **Learning management system:** Flexible as the semester develops. Usually supplements printable syllabus. 2-way dissemination tool.

*When the syllabus is revisited  
over the course of the semester, or  
frequently alluded to as a  
resource, those activities  
communicate its privileged and  
active role.*

“

(Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014)

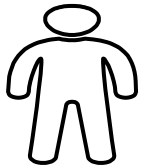




## The syllabus in three modes



**Printable syllabus:** Relatively stable. Easy for the student to scan and annotate.



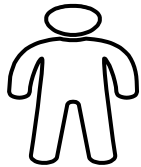
**Oral complement:** Reinforces some written statements, but can deflect others (Thompson, 2007). Happens on first day, but also later.



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## Three modes, one system



# 4 to 5 courses

For a full time student

# 2 to 3 modes

For each course

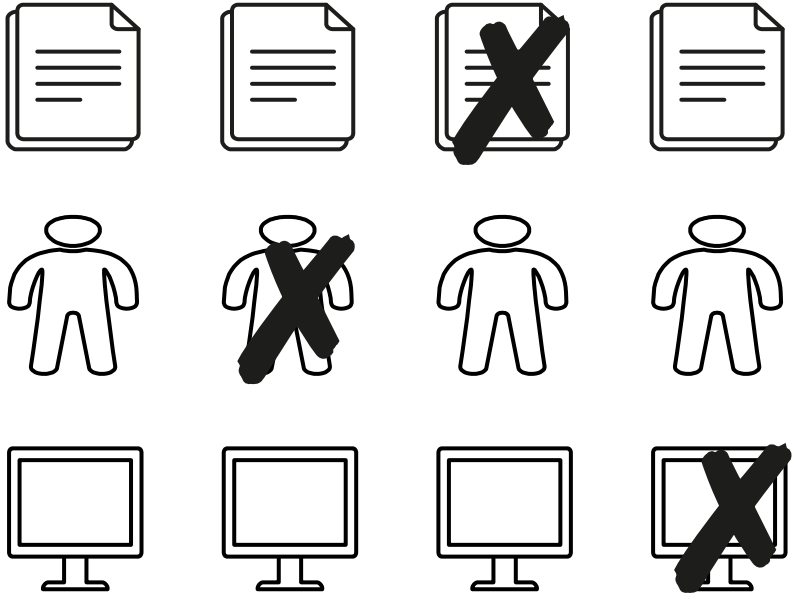
# 8 to 15 modes

That's a lot to process!





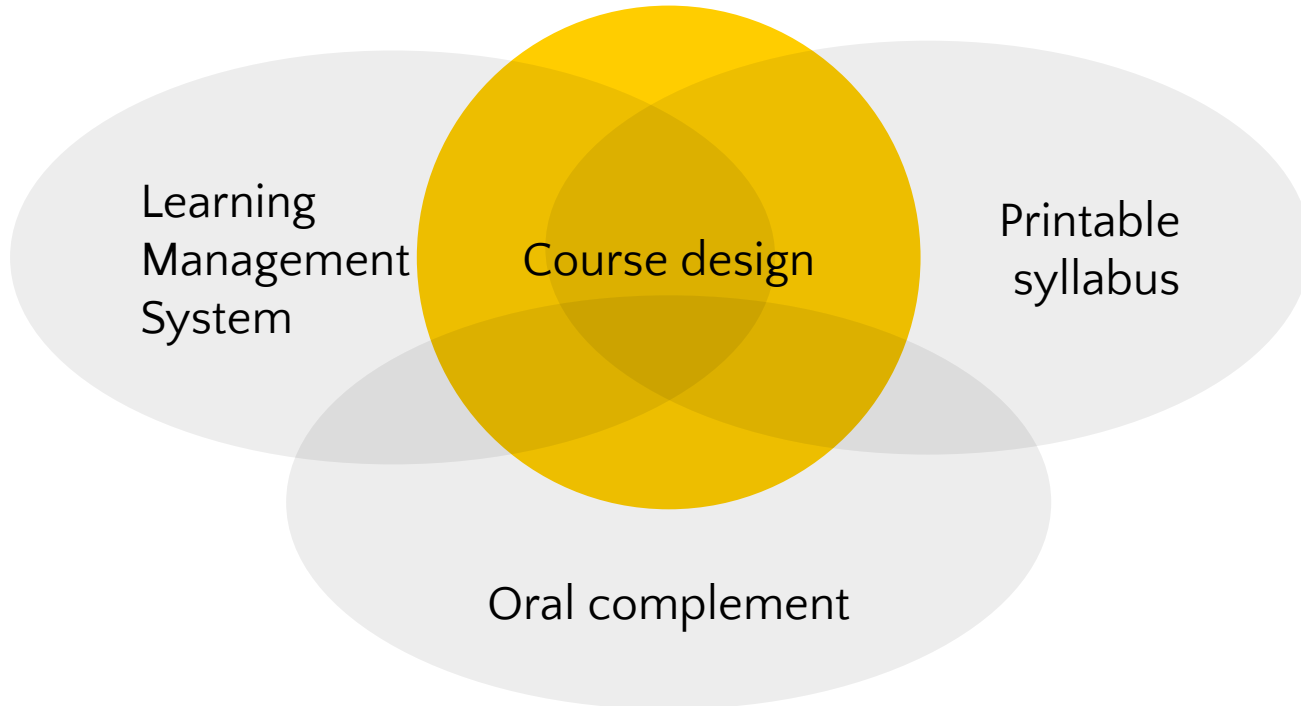
## Three modes, one system



- What modes are in use?
- How is each mode used?
- How much reinforcement occurs across modes?



## Syllabus modes & course design





## Two approaches

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- **Universal Design:** Create learning experience that is initially accessible to as many individuals as possible
- **Learner-Centered Design:** Use research on learning. Acknowledge that learners are unique and can be more or less motivated



## Universal Design

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### Flexibility

“Instruction is designed to accommodate a wide range of individual abilities. **Provide choice** in methods of use.”

### Simple & intuitive

“Instruction is designed in a **straightforward** and **predictable** manner, regardless of the student’s experience, knowledge, skills or concentration level. Eliminate unnecessary complexity.”



## Learner-Centered Design

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### Intrinsic motivation

“Intrinsic motivation is stimulated by tasks of **optimal novelty and difficulty**, relevant to personal interests, and providing for personal **choice** and **control**.”

### Individual differences

“Learners have different strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are a function of **prior experience** and heredity.”



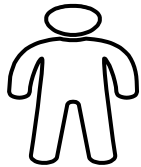


# Syllabi systems

Artifacts of instruction that coexist in the same temporal space.



## Questions



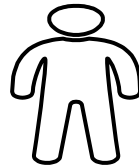
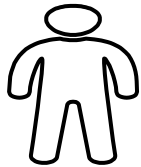
Is this system...

- Flexible?
- Simple and intuitive?
- Inspiring motivation?
- Taking individual learners into account?

*From plenary: is it transparent?*



## Questions (continued...)



If we were to change the system, what would...

- Individual instructors do?
- Departments do?
- Institutions do?
  
- Students do?



## Questions (continued again...)



What are the learning outcomes of...

- A specific course?
- Navigating the system?

*[The syllabus] mediates the interaction both between students and instructors and between instructors and their colleagues.*



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(Afros & Schryer, 2009)



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