

DEVELOPING COURSES AND SYLLABI:

UWO Classics Dept. Graduate Proseminar Series, Fall 2014 (E. Greene)

Things to think about ...

When do you need to think about developing courses?

- When you're TAing courses as a graduate student, MA and PhD
- In preparation for teaching classes as a PhD student
- When going on the job market
- When starting a teaching job

What is the difference between real course syllabi and imagined ones?

- Developing syllabi to propose teaching a course to your department chair
- Developing syllabi for a teaching dossier for job applications

Things to consider when creating course subjects:

- Title
- Level of course and how to shift for different levels
- Appropriateness for department in which you will teach (or hope to)
- Fitting into an already existing system of courses and programs

Things to think about when organizing a course:

- Text books
- Appropriate reading and assignments for course level (e.g. 2000, 3000, 4000)
- Chronological or topical?
- How much info do I give them? (less is more)
- The common thread
- Assessments: What and how?
- Remember when you were just one of them (i.e. don't be overly demanding)

Things that need to be found on syllabi that have more to do with current expectations than the actual course:

- Pointing students to campus resources
- Disclaimers (cheating, plagiarism, attendance, etc.)
- Learning objectives and outcomes
- Skills attained
- Clear expectations!

Some useful Resources

For thinking through what and how you would like to teach, here are some places to start:

You can always scan the web to find ‘Sample syllabi’ either in Classics or in a different field just to get a sense of how people organize classes. Remember to make your syllabus your own (i.e. don’t grab a syllabus from the internet whole cloth and use it as your own), but there is no reason not to get inspiration from others in our field and in academia. You might always find things that others do that you like, or it is also useful to see things that others do that you know will not work for your teaching style.

<https://sites.google.com/a/nyu.edu/jconnolly/home/job-market-handbook>

- This is a fabulous guide to all things about being a graduate student in Classics specifically. Among other things, Connolly discusses developing a teaching dossier and thinking about answering teaching questions in a job interview. (But there are actually many more gems in this document, well worth the time it takes to read!)

http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/graduate_student_programs/index.html

- The teaching support center at Western has useful programs for teaching support aimed particularly at graduate students. Sometimes these things can feel like a waste of time, but remember that you’ll want some items on your CV showing that you’ve thought about teaching to a certain degree.

Erika Falk (2012) *Becoming a new instructor: a guide for college adjuncts and graduate students* (New York: Routledge)

- This is just one (and a recent example) of many books available to help you plan your teaching career. They will include various chapters on aspects of teaching, usually including developing courses and writing syllabi.

There are also loads of free resources online that will help you focus on things such as learning objectives and outcomes, skills attained, appropriate assignments, and much more. Most universities will have something online about developing courses (though you may not be able to access everything, there will be plenty to help you out). Here are just a few examples of places to turn, most with internal links to other useful sites:

<http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/Syllabus/>

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/syllabus/>

<http://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/designing-your-course/writing-a-syllabus.html>