



THE FLEXIBLE SYLLABUS

Assignments, Assessments, and
more



THE METAPHOR

Flexibility in your syllabus is going to come from a solid foundation. Just as a tree is firmly rooted in the ground so it can bend in the wind and continue achieving tree goals, your course syllabus should be grounded so it can be flexible in the winds of change and still achieve your course goals.



SIGNIFICANT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Start with a theme or significant learning outcome for your class. What is the one big thing you want your students to remember five years after they have completed your class? What are the 3-5 outcomes/goals that will help them to achieve and remember that one big thing?



UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

After you identify the elements of success in your class you can think about what students will do so they can show you they “get it.” It could be that they can show you they “get it” in a variety of ways; that it is not tied to a specific action. For example, a student can show you they “get” *Bartleby the Scrivener* via a traditional essay. They might also show you they “get” it by providing an oral presentation, a poster presentation, interpretive dance, or even a shadow-puppet presentation. If that is the case, then you are on your way to a flexible syllabus.



NO 0 POLICY

This is a handy way to build in some flexibility in your syllabus by having a policy in which a student will get no less than a set amount for any assignment; even if they miss it. For example, I have a policy by which no one receives less than 50% on any assignment. It helps those students who are having a tough week by preventing them from getting so far behind that they either fail the class or think they have to withdraw. Those students who are slackers, in my experience, tend to still get the grade they earn.



ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS

Allow students to electronically submit all evaluated work via BbLearn. That way you won't end up handling a bunch of papers that who knows how much COVID they've soaked up. It also helps keep an electronic record of when students submitted their work.



LATE WORK POLICY

While due dates help students stay on track and creates a manageable schedule for you, students may face challenges adapting to hyflex-type schedules or if schedules are again disrupted by COVID-19.

If you choose to retain due dates with penalties for late work, consider being flexible on when those penalties begin to accrue.