

Safe Environment

"The syllabus is a small place to start bringing students and faculty members back together.... If students could be persuaded that we are really interested in their understanding the materials we offer, that we support their efforts to master it, and that we take their intellectual struggles seriously, they might respond by becoming involved in our courses, by trying to live up to our expectations, and by appreciating our concern." Rubin

The importance of a well written syllabus is to provide students with a concise outline of the course, what is expected of them and what they can expect from you.

Course Declaration

Declare upfront what you will and will not do for the course. For example: 1) I will strive to keep course content current and relevant. 2) During the week I will respond to all email within 12 hours. 3) I will not respond to email from 6 PM Friday evening to 9:30 AM Monday morning.

Goal: Let students know what they can expect as a course participant

Membership Rules

Create guidelines for student-to-instructor, student-to-student, and student-to-content interaction. These guidelines can include expected behaviors, a netiquette guide and consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Goal: Outline what is expected of the learner in relation to interaction

Learner Role

Provide the students with a list of course expectations. For example: 1) I expect you to complete and submit your assignments on time. 2) I expect that you will contact me immediately if you are having problems with the course.

Goal: Outline what is expected of the learner in relation to the course

Contingency Plan

Develop a plan of action in the event that the tool you are using is unavailable. ECU Academic Outreach provides information for developing a contingency plan at:
<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/learningplatforms/contingency.cfm>

Goal: Advise students of their responsibilities and what to expect when a tool is unavailable

Safe Environment

“In CMC classrooms that are satisfying to participants and in which collaborative learning thrives, researchers have found that participants establish communication conventions and participant structures that promote interactivity, provide a safe environment, allow for diverse perspectives as well as shared aims, and maintain a task focus.”
Lapadat

Creating a safe environment is important to building trust which increases collaboration and communication within online courses.

Have the Students Read Information About Being an Online Student

Information made available by ECU Division of Continuing Studies will help students determine if taking an online course is right for them. For those who chose online instruction, this information will help prepare them to be a successful online student.

http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/options/internet_course/index.cfm

Goal: Help students understand what it takes to be an online student

Tools you can use

- Webpage

Create a Pre-Lesson

Create an initial assignment that will require the students to use many of the tools you'll be using during the course. This will help the students to become comfortable in the course environment without the pressure of being graded. As an added benefit, it will provide the instructor with an opportunity to address issues early on.

Goal: Expose students to course environment and tools

Tools you can use

- Webpage
- Discussion Board
- Chat
- Web Conference
- Wiki
- Groups

Use Owned Messages

Help students communicate more effectively by providing examples of owned messages in order avoid or help resolve conflicts. An owned message is one that focuses on “I” instead of “you”. Example: Jennifer when you do not complete your portion of the group assignment I get frustrated because I feel like I have to complete the assignment.

Goal: Improve student interaction

Tools you can use

- Webpage
- Discussion Board
- Chat
- Web Conference
- Wiki
- Groups