Create a Graphic Syllabus to Show Connections

Graphic syllabi have been shown to promote greater retention of syllabus information by students (Mocek, 2017). A graphic syllabus is a visual tool—typically a flowchart, graphic organizer, or diagram—designed to show the sequencing and organization of the major topics in your course throughout the term. Think of a graphic syllabus as a visual road map for students as they journey through the course (Nilson, 2016). Graphic syllabi can help both students and instructors see the big picture of the course. Referring back to it throughout the course will also help students reinforce where they are in the course, where they are headed, and how different topics relate to each other.

It may also show the schedule for the course, including major activities, assignments, and assessments. It is meant to be a supplement to your regular text syllabus, not a replacement for it. A graphic syllabus gives students a big-picture view of your course content and shows why you chose to organize your course the way you did. Creating a graphic organizer can also help to identify holes in your organization, such as topics that are chronologically out of place, missing, or do not fit at all (Nilson, 2016).

How to Create a Graphic Syllabus

A course syllabus begins with a strong course design, including clear course outcomes, learning objectives, assignments, assessments, and learning activities. The goal is to visually represent how these course components are connected and to show students the path they will take to master each course outcome. Three examples are shown here.

The following web-based graphic design tools can be helpful in the creation of a graphic syllabus. Each allows you to create timelines, mindmaps, infographics, and other types of concept maps.

- Venngage

- Piktochart

- Lucidpress

Sources

Mocek, E. A. (2017). The effects of syllabus design on information retention by at-risk first semester college students. *Syllabus*, *6*(2).

Nilson, L. B. (2016). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.