Preparing your course syllabus for Fall semester

[created by Gary Taghon and Silke Severmann of Marine Sciences]

Most students do not know what to expect from remote instruction in the fall.  This makes it essential that we provide as much information as possible before the semester begins.  Details about courses before September will help to decrease anxiety among students and assure them (and us) that we are prepared.

Syllabi for courses that were previously face-to-face will need substantial revisions.

* There were many lessons learned from the mid-spring semester switch to remote.  Some common comments from students were:
	+ Unable to communicate with professors and TAs as much as they would like
	+ Trouble keeping track of deadlines and due dates
	+ Dealing with higher workload than expected
	+ Trouble concentrating at home because of interruptions from family
	+ Technical problems including internet access, hardware issues, etc.
* These concerns and potential problems should be addressed explicitly in your syllabus.  We need to assure students that they will still be engaging with us, despite remote delivery of course material.
* How will you evaluate student learning?  What will be the format for quizzes, exams, etc.?  Timed?  Open-book?  How will grades be assigned? There are alternative methods of assessment that can replace standard exams, and that might be more suitable to online learning. CTAAR and the SEBS toolkit offers some advice.
* If your course is **synchronous**, include what arrangements will be made for students who have internet or other difficulties throughout the semester.  For example, how will you provide recordings of your live presentations in the event a student is ill or has technical difficulties during class time?  This is also the time for flexibility and understanding in attendance policies.
* If your course is **asynchronous**, include information about how students can have synchronous interaction with you throughout the semester.
* Support for Sakai is being discontinued and Canvas will become the default platform.  Even though Sakai will be supported this Fall, it will not have the functionality of Canvas.  For example, Zoom is now integrated into Canvas, but will not be integrated into Sakai.  Going forward, it is in our best interests to make the move to Canvas asap.
* Silke draws our attention to the SEBS toolkit on Canvas; it has templates for Canvas course design, easy to find instructions, suggestions on student engagement, and instructions for how to build a “Sandbox” site, which is basically a site to try out different things.  Anything generated in Sandbox can be exported into a course site.
* The schedule is particularly weird this semester, especially the change in class days due to Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

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| **Event** |  |
| Fall Semester Begins | Tuesday, September 1 |
| Changes in Designation of Class Days | *(Monday, Sept. 7 is Labor Day, no classes)*Tuesday, September 8 (Monday Classes) |
| Wednesday, November 25(Friday Classes) |

* The default in Canvas is for course sites to become available to enrolled students on September 1st, which is also the first day of classes.  That is nuts.  You can make your Canvas site visible to students who are enrolled in your courses before that date, and I encourage you to do so.  This will also likely cut down on the number of questions you receive via email.  Here’s how to do it:

1. Log into Canvas and go to the course where you want to adjust the course dates.

2. Click on “Settings” in the course navigation (left-hand menu).

3. Under the “Course Details” tab, add an extended date in the “Starts” field.

4. Make sure the box is checked next to “Students can only participate in the course between these dates” (under the Ends field), or else the default term dates will override your input.

5. Scroll to the bottom and click the “Update Course Details” button.

Note: Confirm who has access to your course site by clicking on “People” in the course navigation (left-hand menu).