Using the Syllabus to Document the Scholarship of Teaching

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THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING*

This article addresses the problem of constructing a syllabus to function as a pedagogical tool and as an artifact of scholarship. Two approaches, based on the work of Shulman, are offered for using the syllabus to document the scholarship of teaching. Constructing a syllabus that conveys scholarly course development has three benefits. First, the syllabus can provide hiring and review committees with a picture of the research and of the reflection involved in a scholarly course design. Second, students benefit from a syllabus built on scholarship because it has the potential to organize, integrate, and direct learning. Third, teachers benefit from creating a syllabus built on scholarship because it aids them in planning classroom activities based on curricular, subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge.

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DURING THE PAST DECADE, sociologists have been reconsidering the nature of academic scholarship. Central to their dialogue is Boyer's (1990) notion that the reading, thinking, and writing involved in course development can be a form of scholarship. This paper addresses the problem of using the course syllabus to document the scholarship involved in course design and in course implementation while maintaining its function as a pedagogical tool.

Although teaching is an integral component of many academic positions, most professors of sociology begin their academic careers with little formal education in the processes of teaching and learning. One of the first pedagogical challenges faced in academia is developing a course syllabus that will be an effective guide for learning and instruction. With little preparation for the task, new sociology professors are likely to turn to outlines from courses they have taken, examples from the American Sociological Association (ASA) Syllabi Sets, or content structures presented in commercial text books for models of syllabi and course content.

Increasing numbers of sociologists are considering the benefits of approaching course development and other tasks associated with teaching as scholarly undertakings. The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) has provided the impetus for much of this work by challenging faculty to extend the expanded notion of scholarship advocated by Boyer (1990). CASTL promotes the scholarship of teaching and learning by encouraging academics to employ their research skills to develop a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning process. This initiative has involved over 200 campuses in exploring ways of stimulating and rewarding the scholarship of teaching and learning. In the summer of 2000, 45 sociologists participated in a workshop supported by the American Sociological Association and CASTL, at James Madison University. The goal of this workshop was to

identify strategies to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology. One of five "missing, but important pieces" identified at the workshop was "ways to evaluate, via peer review, [the] products [of scholarship of teaching]" (Howery 2000). This paper addresses the need to consider ways to document the scholarship of teaching and learning by suggesting criteria for recognizing the considerable investment of time, energy, reflection, and scholarship involved in designing a course.

The first two sections of this paper, which discuss using the syllabus as an instructional tool and course artifact, highlight the dual purposes of the syllabus that can be reviewed during faculty evaluations. The third section examines the potential of a syllabus to represent the scholarship of teaching and learning. Finally, the fourth section discusses the constraints of documenting this form of scholarship via the syllabus. The paper concludes with an outline of the three main benefits gained through crafting a syllabus that can serve as a pedagogical guide for students and teacher while also conveying the amount of scholarly investigation involved in designing a course.

THE SYLLABUS
AS A TEACHING TOOL

Traditionally, a syllabus is useful both to students and the instructor as they embark on a course of study. Matejke and Kurke (1994) suggest four ways a syllabus can be used as a teaching tool:

Contract. The atmosphere of litigation and accountability that increasingly constrains the educational process has placed a new emphasis on the syllabus as an agreement between students and instructor. For example, a statement of the students' and instructor's roles and responsibilities, regarding class procedures, grading, and attendance policies illustrate the contractual nature of a syllabus.

Communication device. The syllabus also communicates succinctly to readers the expectations and experiences integral to a given course. The instructor uses the syllabus to convey the overall purposes and the strategies of the course that will enable students to reach these goals. The experience of reading through the ASA Syllabi Sets illustrates this communicative potential. Authors who are skilled in maximizing the communication aspect of the syllabus stimulate reactions such as: "That's interesting, I never thought of it that way," "I wonder who wrote this: he or she sounds like someone I'd like to talk to," or "I wouldn't mind taking this course myself." A syllabus that makes a human connection typically employs a "voice" that communicates the instructor's intention, but also personalizes the document.

Plan. As teachers plan a course, they face decisions regarding content and organization as well as teaching and learning strategies. The selection and sequencing of topics in the syllabus conveys to students what the professor finds important and in what order these topics will be addressed. The teaching and learning strategies crucial to the course need to be outlined broadly to show students the manner in which they will be engaged and how they can achieve the course goals.

Cognitive map. An effective syllabus can go beyond merely listing subject matter; it creates a thematic framework that assists students in organizing the component parts of a course into a conceptual whole. The syllabus serves as a cognitive map that helps students locate the final destination for the course and the markers that will keep them on track. Also, it shows them how the pieces of the course fit together and how the assigned work will lead them to the final goal.

These suggestions guide the sociology teacher in syllabus preparation and aid professors in implementing the course. Also, these four functions motivate students and keep both the teacher and the students focused on course objectives.

THE SYLLABUS AS A TOOL FOR
EVALUATING TEACHING
EFFECTIVENESS

More recently, the syllabus has come to

function as both a teaching tool and an arti-
fact for teacher evaluation. This situation
presents new opportunities and challenges
as such a document must accurately convey
a teacher's beliefs, knowledge, and prac-
tice.

The importance of the syllabus in docu-
menting teaching is conveyed in teaching
evaluation and employment. Teaching effec-
tiveness is judged at various career points,
including job applications, contract renew-
als, and tenure and promotion reviews. The
September 2001 edition of the American
Sociological Association's Employment
Bulletin listed 199 positions in academic
settings. Fourteen of those position an-
nouncements specifically required the sub-
mission of course syllabi as part of the ap-
plication materials and three positions re-
quired teaching portfolios, which are as-
sumed to include syllabi. An additional 14
announcements asked for "evidence of
teaching ability," and 20 specified
"evidence of teaching effectiveness." These
two statements usually indicate that student
evaluations of teaching are an expected ele-
ment of the application materials. The Em-
ployment Bulletin verifies that paper repre-
sentations of teaching, such as a syllabus,
are used to evaluate individuals before they
are accepted for a position.

The hiring process may be the first of
many times that professors are required to
provide evidence for the assessment of their
teaching abilities. In today's climate of edu-
cational reform and accountability, institu-
tions of higher learning are rethinking the
ways that contract renewal, tenure, and
promotion reviews are conducted. Conse-

quently, the process of evaluating teaching
effectiveness is under consideration,
prompting questions about who judges
teaching effectiveness, what process they
use, and what evidence they scrutinize.
Many institutions are using new forms of
documentation, such as portfolios, for fac-
ulty evaluation.

In many departments, portfolios are
evaluated by a committee of colleagues who
may not be familiar with the candidate's
teaching. Developing a teaching portfolio
involves gathering a broad swath of evi-
dence to document pedagogical skills. Se-
lecting representative paper, video, and
electronic examples that accurately reflect
the complexities of the classroom can be
frustrating, and the result is inevitably a
montage. While the review process usually
allows for a candidate's statement, which
provides an opportunity to put the various
components of the dossier in context, a can-
didate's statement does not provide evi-
dence that the elements of practice included
in the teaching dossier are linked to a teach-
ing philosophy. Also, it is difficult to dem-
onstrate whether or not both philosophy and
practice are built on sound scholarship. A
well-structured syllabus can provide coher-
ence to a portfolio, as well as demonstrate a
critical link between the classroom experi-
ence and the theoretical position presented
in the candidate's statement.

A study by Seldin (1998) indicates a trend
toward the greater use of course syllabi and
exams to evaluate faculty teaching. This
study surveyed academic deans of accred-
ited four-year, undergraduate liberal arts
colleges in 1988 and 1998 to determine

Table 1. Selected Information Used by Liberal Arts College Academic Deans to Evaluate Teaching

Source of Information	1988 N=604	1998 N=598
Systematic student ratings	80.3%	88.1%
Self-evaluation or report	49.3%	58.7%
Classroom visits	27.4%	40.3%
Course syllabi and exams	29.0%	38.6%

Source: Seldin, Peter. 1998. "How Colleges Evaluate Teaching: 1988 vs. 1998." AAHE Bulletin 50:3-7.

what sources of information were used to evaluate overall teaching performance (Table 1 presents selected data from this study). Although the grouping of syllabi with exams does not provide conclusive evidence, the increasing use of this source of information suggests continued reliance on the syllabi to evaluate faculty teaching. As Seldin (1998:6) concludes, "increasingly, teaching competence is deduced from careful analysis of course syllabi and examinations."

Of the four sources of information identified in Table 1, student evaluations and classroom visits may be influenced by agendas and circumstances that are out of the instructor's control. Also, administrators often determine when and how student ratings are gathered. Likewise, classroom visits are subject to the interpretations and reference criteria of observers who may bring their own personal agendas and expectations into the evaluation. However, while classroom visits and student evaluations are controlled by others, self-reports and course syllabi provide a vehicle for individuals to document their efforts to approach teaching as a scholarly activity.

POTENTIALS OF THE SYLLABUS AS A TOOL FOR DOCUMENTING SCHOLARSHIP

Most teachers have days or weeks when everything they do in the classroom works well, but to sustain that success for an entire teaching term requires substantial planning, research, and work. In short, the well-integrated course with clear, meaningful goals and content organized and presented in ways that will help students reach those goals requires scholarship on the part of the teacher. Hutchings (1996:51) suggests that the "course is a powerful unit of analysis for documenting teaching because it is within the course that knowledge of the field intersects with knowledge about particular students and their learning."

The notion of applying scholarship to teaching was first presented by Ernest Boyer (1990), who challenged academics to broaden the idea of scholarship to include scholarship of integration, application, and teaching in addition to the traditional idea of scholarship as discovery. He argues, "surely, scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one's investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice and communicating one's knowledge effectively to students" (p. 16).

The syllabus is one of the few tools available for documenting the scholarship required for integrating isolated learning activities into a coherent meaningful whole. However, this idea is just taking hold. Before this representational capacity of the syllabus can be accepted, teaching as a scholarly endeavor has to be accepted. In addition, academics will have to find ways to identify the quantity and quality of scholarship represented in the syllabus.

Acknowledging the Scholarship of Teaching

A recent survey of contributors to two of the ASA Syllabi Sets provides some evidence that institutions are beginning to acknowledge the scholarship of teaching. In the fall of 2000, I developed a survey to assess whether an individual's contribution to teaching resources was viewed by his or her institution as scholarship, teaching, service, or as something else. Also, I wanted to identify institutional and individual characteristics that were common to situations where contribution to teaching resources was counted as scholarship.

The editors of the two ASA Syllabi Sets had solicited and reviewed teaching resources for potential publication. The editor of *Teaching Sociology of Aging and the Life Course* (Fifth Edition) sought contributions through a mailing to approximately 500 members of the ASA section on Aging and the Life Course. Forty-two submissions were received from 29 authors. Two of these were determined unsuitable for publication, so the published set represents the work of 27 authors. The coeditors of *Intro-*

ductory Sociology Resource Manual (Fifth Edition) placed a call for submissions in Footnotes and in ASA Undergraduate Education in their section newsletter (VUES), distributed flyers at professional meetings, posted a notice on the teachsoc listserve, and mailed the call directly to ASA's Undergraduate Education section members. About 33 contributions were received. Two of the submissions were websites, which are cited in the preface, and five were considered unsuitable for publication. Thus, the publication represents the work of 28 authors.

The sample for my survey was determined by seeking the electronic and postal addresses of the 55 contributors to these two resource sets through contact information provided in the publications and the ASA membership directory. The survey was mailed to 46 contributors for whom accurate contact information could be obtained. The response rate after one follow-up mailing was 84.8 percent. Participants were asked the following key question: "When you listed your contribution [to the syllabi set] for your annual report, for discretionary pay, or for contract, promotion, or tenure review, did you list your contribution as scholarship, teaching, service, or other? (check all that apply)." The data from the surveys were analyzed for descriptive purposes only.

Table 2 indicates that a contribution to

Table 2. Survey Respondent Contributions to American Sociological Association Teaching Resources

When you listed your contribution for your annual report, for discretionary pay, or for contract, promotion, or tenure review, did you list your contribution as scholarship, teaching, service, or other? (check all that apply)

	YES	NO
Contribution listed as teaching	25 (64%)	14 (36%)
Contribution listed as scholarship	16 (41%)	23 (59%)
Contribution listed as service	14 (36%)	25 (64%)
Contribution listed as other	3 (8%)	36 (92%)
N=39		

Respondents were allowed to check more than one response. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

Source: See text pages 4-7.

Table 3. Survey Respondent Categorization of Contribution to ASA Syllabi Sets

Contribution listed as scholarship and in two other categories	6 (37.5%)	
Contribution listed only as scholarship	5 (31.5%)	
Contribution listed as scholarship and in one other category	4 (25%)	
Contribution listed as scholarship and in three other categories	1 (6%)	
	YES	NO
Contribution listed as scholarship and as teaching	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)
Contribution listed as scholarship and as service	7 (44%)	9 (56%)
Contribution listed as scholarship and as other	1 (6%)	15 (94%)
N=16		

Source: See text pages 4-7.

teaching resources is generally regarded as teaching rather than scholarship or service. However, 41 percent (n=16) of the respondents did categorize their contribution as scholarship. In addition, Table 3 shows that just under one-third of those who counted their contribution as scholarship listed it solely in that category. Contributions listed more than once were most likely to be viewed as both scholarship and teaching.

My second goal for the survey was to look for common characteristics among the individuals and institutions that acknowledged syllabi contributions as scholarship. Institutional characteristics included in the survey were institutional classification, institutional sponsorship, number of majors in the department, and number of tenured and tenure track faculty. Individual characteristics included previous publications, number of total years in academia, number of years working in full-time academic positions, and number of years in current position.

As Table 4 shows, those who listed their contribution as scholarship were more likely to work in institutions that:

Table 4. Characteristics of Institutions Where Survey Respondents Listed Their Contribution as Scholarship

	Listed Contribution as Scholarship	
	YES	NO
Institutional classification		
Community college	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)
Four year institution	11 (48%)	12 (52%)
Doctoral granting	3 (23%)	10 (77%)
Institutional sponsorship		
Public	9 (35%)	17 (65%)
Private	7 (54%)	6 (46%)
Mean number of majors	129	202
Mean number of tenure/tenure track faculty	10	14
N=39		

Source: See text pages 4-7.

Table 5. Professional Characteristics of Survey Respondents Who Listed Their Contribution as Scholarship

	Listed Contribution as Scholarship	
	YES	NO
Mean number of publications		
In refereed journal	18.37	3.32
Non-refereed publications	3.31	2.43
Sole authored books	.87	.14
Edited books	.46	.24
Contributed chapters in books	6.19	1.57
Mean number of years in academic positions	18	12
Mean number of full-time years in academic positions	17	10
Mean number of years in current academic position	14.56	8.45
N=39		

Source: See text pages 4-7.

- are community college or four-year institutions rather than doctoral-granting institutions.
- are private rather than publicly funded.
- have smaller numbers of sociology majors.
- have fewer sociology faculty on tenure lines.

As Table 5 shows, those that listed their contribution as scholarship:

- have more previous publications.
- have worked in academia longer.
- have worked longer in full-time positions.
- have worked longer in their current position.

This limited study suggests that the individuals who count their contribution to the American Sociological Association's teaching resources as scholarship have longer and more productive academic records. In addition, they have worked longer with the colleagues who are reading their reports.

Two additional pieces of information would be useful in interpreting these data. First, is the respondent categorizing the work himself or herself, or is someone else categorizing it? The information in Tables 2 and 3 is based on self-reports. However, respondents were asked if they had encountered any objections to the way they chose to classify their contributions. Only one person answered yes; however, this person did not indicate the original or requested reclassification categories. One respondent who listed the work in all three categories—scholarship, teaching and service—did encounter objections, but did not answer the follow-up question regarding instructions for reclassifying the contribution. Individuals in five institutions who listed their contribution solely as scholarship did not have that decision challenged. Another eleven individuals listed their contribution as scholarship in addition to at least one other category without being questioned on their decision.

The second piece of useful information for interpreting these data would be whether the scholarship of teaching and learning is a new aspect of the individual's research agenda or if it is a continuation of previous work. This issue was not addressed in this survey and represents an area with great potential for further study. Without this information, it is difficult to know why more established professionals were more likely to classify their contribution as scholarship of teaching. Is it because colleagues are willing to use a more inclusive definition of scholarship with established researchers? Or is it because more established researchers are more likely to extend their research agenda into the scholarship of teaching?

The survey also indicates that those who list their publications in the ASA teaching resources as scholarship are more likely to work in a four-year institution, particularly one that is privately funded. This finding raises two questions regarding the relationship between institutional characteristics and scholarship of teaching. First, do private, four-year institutions have a more inclusive definition of scholarship than other institutions, or is more scholarship of teaching being conducted in these settings? If so, why? Second, do privately funded and four-year schools promote a scholarly approach to teaching, or are faculty who are already inclined to meld teaching and scholarship more attracted to working in private, four-year colleges? The data from my limited survey cannot address these important issues. Such questions might direct more extensive investigations as more sociologists add the scholarship of teaching and learning to their research agendas.

Assessing Scholarship in the Syllabus

The information that was gathered through my survey provides some insight into the characteristics of individuals and institutions where contributions to the syllabi sets were viewed as scholarship. However, these data do not address the very central question of whether the contribution *should* be regarded as scholarly work. This issue, as noted at the summer 2000 ASA workshop discussed earlier, is of importance to advancing the

scholarship of teaching and learning within sociology. Understanding current thinking on criteria for identifying the scholarship of teaching and learning is the first step in knowing when the course development represented by the syllabus is scholarly work.

In elaborating on the scholarship of teaching, Boyer (1990:23) suggests several criteria to be met. First, the scholarship of teaching begins with what the teacher knows; therefore, being "widely read and intellectually engaged" undergirds good teaching. Second, teaching is steeped in the ability to "build bridges between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning." Thus, the scholarship of teaching requires a constant monitoring and nurturing of the linkage between teaching and learning. Third, the process of teaching "means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well." Effective teaching, therefore, involves the production of knowledge, a commonly agreed upon characteristic of research.

Building on Boyer's definition, Lee Shulman (1986; 1998) contributes two schemas for understanding and communicating the scholarship of teaching: (1) approaching teaching as a scholarly argument; and (2) reflecting on the curricular, subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge used in teaching. These two approaches are useful tools in determining whether course development and the resulting syllabus reflect scholarship.

Shulman's (1998) first schema, approaching teaching as a scholarly argument, applies concepts from scholarly research to course preparation, delivery, and evaluation. The assumption is that effective teaching requires the ability to pose problems, test hypotheses, measure outcomes, explain unexpected discoveries and create knowledge—in short, the same skills that apply to sociological research. Although graduate school education seldom encourages the application of research skills in teaching, it is possible to do so (Burroughs, Holly and Marden 1990). The strategy of using the syllabus to build a scholarly argument is

particularly well suited to the role of the document in faculty assessment (Lang and Bain 1997).

A teaching initiative by the American Association for Higher Education (2002) offers guidelines for critiquing the scholarship reflected in a syllabus. These suggested questions are equally suited for consideration while writing syllabi:

1. Think of your course as a scholarly argument. How does it begin? Why does it begin where it does? What is the thesis of the argument? What are the key points of the argument? What evidence is provided to support the argument? How does your course end? The intent of most scholarly arguments is to persuade. What do you want to persuade students to believe or question?

2. What is your perspective in this course? How does your focus influence the particular topics you cover? Why do you sequence topics as you do?

3. In what ways does your course teach students how scholars work in your field and the methods, procedures, and values that shape knowledge claims in your field? How does the course introduce students to critical dialogue and key arguments in this field?

4. How does your course connect with other courses in your field? To other courses in students' curriculum? Does it build on or provide a foundation for other courses that students are required to take?

5. What elements of this course will connect to students' experience? What elements will be the most foreign to them? How do you address their need for relevance in the structure of the course?

Considering these questions when developing a course and writing a syllabus will help identify the scholarly argument and rationale for selecting and sequencing course content. Most importantly, such questions can be used to evaluate whether the syllabus

accurately reflects the convictions and scholarship involved in designing the course.

A syllabus written by Morten Ender for the 2000 edition of ASA's *Introductory Sociology Resource Manual* (Fifth Edition) offers an example of how answers to such questions can be used to provide a compelling scholarly argument. Ender's course is taught to future Army officers at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point. This context gives meaning to the stated purpose of the course: "to develop an ability to use sociological concepts, theory, and research to think critically and act intelligently in interactions with individuals, groups, institutions, and societies." Ender (2000:55) articulates a course goal clearly related to his purpose. "Given contemporary situations that involve social interaction, use sociological concepts, theories, and research to: 1) explain what is taking place in each situation; 2) identify common threads and patterns across the situations; and 3) determine the personal and social significance of your analysis." The syllabus details Ender's interpretation of each of these three elements of the goal to create a common understanding about the focus of the course.

In Ender's syllabus, behavioral objectives are set out that will help students reach the course goal, and assessment items are related to the stated goal. Students are also provided with a grading rubric that illustrates how the instructor and student will determine whether or not the course goals are met. This document is useful to Ender, his students, and his peers in providing a picture of a uniquely constructed course with a clear focus and clear guideposts.

In contrast, the second schema offered by Shulman (1986) for understanding the scholarship of teaching—reflecting on the curricular, subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge used in teaching—helps to identify key elements in the teaching and learning process.

Curricular knowledge. An instructor's conviction about the importance of the course is the basis of the specific course goals. The syllabus can clearly convey the worth of these goals and how they are related to contemporary issues in the field of sociology. Students might also be told how a specific course fits into the educational goals of the institution or of higher education in general. Course goals that reflect curricular knowledge illustrate to colleagues how a course contributes to the mission of the department and the institution.

Subject matter knowledge. Course content that is carefully selected and sequenced can provide evidence of subject matter knowledge. Faculty members who spend considerable time and energy keeping abreast of developments in their field should make sure their syllabi reflect the fact that they are well informed and up-to-date. Presentation of course content in a syllabus also provides an opportunity for the instructor to demonstrate the ability to organize a course in a logical way, providing a framework for students to understand how sections of the course are related. The content of many sociology courses does not imply an inherent organization. However, the framework provided in the syllabus helps students link specific content to overarching themes that contribute to student comprehension and retention of material. In addition, the amount of time allocated to each topic in the course indicates to students its relative importance (Beaudry and Schaub 1998).

Pedagogical knowledge. At the core of teaching is "learn[ing] to translate highly sophisticated and frequently abstract concepts into teachable components, which are meaningful to the particular group of students with whom the professor interacts" (Kreber and Cranton 1997:8). This ability to build bridges between course content and student learning indicates an understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning. A syllabus can be used to show that a course includes strategies that "stimulate active, not passive, learning and encourage students to be creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over" (Boyer

1990:24). As an example, a syllabus written by Howard Sacks for the fifth edition of ASA's *Introductory Sociology Resource Manual* (2000) offers a succinct, comprehensible description of his pedagogy. The introduction to the Classroom Activities section of his syllabus states:

> I hope to maintain a liberal mixture of discussion and lecture in the classroom. Learning is an active process; none of us can expand our understanding without an active exchange of ideas. All of our experiences are potential resources in this course. Through classroom discussion we can crystallize our ideas and formulate them into well-articulated questions and assertions. At the same time, we can weigh our own experiences relative to those of others to gain a broader perspective on the issues at hand. Our discussions will be amplified through lectures, interviews with local residents, outside readings, and research projects. The anticipated result of this process is the integration of a sociological perspective with our experiences toward an understanding of identity and society.

Sacks reinforces this focus on group development of knowledge by making all four graded assignments group projects. By gathering data from members of the community, the local media, the local environment, and other group members, students learn to value resources available in their rural community. For Sack's students, data analysis is a team effort, consistent with the focus on the communal production of knowledge.

The following prompts can be used to determine whether a syllabus adequately reflects curricular, subject matter and pedagogical knowledge:

1. What are the goals and rationale of this course? What do you expect students to be able to do intellectually as a result of taking your course?

2. What are the most important concepts for students to grasp in order to reach these goals? What are the relationships between these concepts? How can they be sequenced or grouped to facilitate understanding?

3. What teaching and learning strategies

will enhance students' understanding? What do you do that makes learning possible? How are these strategies related to the course goals? What is your role (expert, facilitator, coach, mentor, etc.)?

Incorporating the answers to these questions into a syllabus provides students, teacher, and colleagues with evidence of a scholarly approach to teaching.

A more extensive discussion of indicators of curricular, subject matter and pedagogical knowledge is provided by Kreber and Cranton (2000). Their article deals with a wider range of the scholarship of teaching than this paper. However, many of the criteria they identify can also be applied to a syllabus.

CONSTRAINTS ON CONVEYING SCHOLARSHIP THROUGH THE SYLLABUS

Constructing the syllabus as a scholarly argument or using it to document teaching knowledge has its pitfalls. One potential concern is that a syllabus projects a teacher-centered, static picture of teaching and learning. However, several techniques can be used to reflect a student-centered pedagogy in a syllabus. Judith Grunert (1997) offers many models of syllabi built around students' learning. She proposes that a learning-centered syllabus can promote "active, purposeful, effective learning" (p. 3) by "help[ing] students to achieve some personal control over their learning, to plan their semester, and to manage their time effectively" (p. 15). Furthermore, advanced planning and careful course construction does not preclude responsiveness to the interests of a specific group. Using the syllabus to describe optional activities, flexible scheduling, and extensions of content to address student interests are all ways of responding to student capacity, interest, and initiative. In fact, incorporating a variety of nontraditional pedagogies into a syllabus may ensure responsiveness in the classroom. Today's students are accustomed to

viewing the syllabus as a learning contract. If student-based pedagogy is included in the syllabus, students are likely to object if the course is run otherwise.

A second potential pitfall revolves around institutional dictums regarding the format of the syllabus. In the push toward accountability, and perhaps in reaction to the lack of pedagogical training among faculty, administrators are increasingly mandating the components and form of the syllabus. These requirements are intended to create institutional consistency and increase understanding between faculty and students regarding course parameters (Matejka and Kurke 1994). Given that course syllabi are used in faculty evaluation, it would be foolish not to comply with such institutional demands. Nonetheless, such guidelines should not dictate the overall form of a syllabus to the extent that it no longer conveys the unique character of a course. The syllabus introduces students to the teacher as well as to the course, and it should be constructed to reflect individual philosophy and practice within the constraints of bureaucratic guidelines.

A third potential pitfall in a syllabus designed to document scholarship is that it addresses two audiences, students and peer evaluators, who bring to their reading different levels of sophistication and familiarity with the course material. However, if the traditional interpretation of scholarship is expanded, a syllabus can successfully serve two different audiences. Treating the development of a syllabus as a scholarly argument does not mean constructing a course outline that reads like a journal article. It means working out the content, the sequencing, and the flow of a course with the same logic and reasoning that we use when building an argument for colleagues, but doing so in a language that is intelligible to students. A syllabus constructed in this way, when presented as evidence of scholarship of teaching, should be evaluated by academic peers for its potential impact on students. In short, the document needs to be written for the student audience.

CONCLUSION

A soundly-crafted syllabus, based in curricular, subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge, demonstrates the research and reflection put into the course's construction. It reveals both the instructor's mastery of the subject matter and ability to make this subject matter accessible to students.

Three major incentives provide the motivation for approaching the syllabus as evidence of scholarly activity:

1. Paper representations of what takes place in the classroom are used to determine teaching accomplishments at many points in an individual's career. Hiring committees often use syllabi to determine a person's teaching proficiency; job candidates who undertake course development with scholarly rigor should ensure that their syllabi accurately reflect this work. In addition, committees of peers who conduct faculty evaluations for renewal, promotion, or tenure typically face myriad documents in the typical teaching portfolio or dossier. Evaluators need a framework to see how all the component parts fit together. A candidate's statement serves this purpose, but a syllabus has more credibility. Colleagues know that students are encouraged to view the syllabus as a contract. If a professor does not adhere to his or her side of the contract as set out in the syllabus, students are likely to make the lapse known.

2. Students respond to a well-organized, thoughtful, and meaningful syllabus (Hockensmith 1988). They face time and organization problems, a result of coordinating the workload from multiple classes with demands from their work and personal lives. Students look to the syllabus in the beginning of the semester to provide an accurate, easy to follow, enticing snapshot of what is ahead. Many students make drop-add decisions in the first week of classes based on first impressions of instruc-

tors, the student grapevine, and the course outline. Furthermore, as the semester progresses and the work pace picks up, a well-crafted syllabus can provide continuing support, keeping students focused and on track. The syllabus is both a road map guiding student learning as well as a globe helping them understand how the course's journey fits into the bigger picture of their education.

3. The syllabus can be a powerful teaching tool. The time and effort put into the scholarship required to craft a quality syllabus has an enormous payoff as the semester progresses. In the hurried life of an academic, preparation for teaching often gives way to other pressing tasks, but taking the time to craft a syllabus that answers questions like those provided in this paper optimizes course planning. With a well-crafted syllabus in hand, instructors can approach each class with a better understanding of how the day's activities contribute to the whole picture. In other words, by constructing an effective syllabus, the instructor's curricular, subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge will more likely drive teaching, learning, and assessment.

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