Syllabi Suggestions for Remote Teaching

Created by ETM, March 31, 2020

What follows are syllabi suggestions for remote teaching. They are intended to complement the standard [Sample Syllabus](https://spu.edu/~/media/administration/faculty-life-office/documents/sample-syllabus.ashx).

There are sample paragraphs about *Class Recordings* and about *Communication Policies* (both come with notes). There are also notes on adopting the *Participation in Community* paragraph from the Sample Syllabus for the context of remote teaching.

# Class Recordings. [syllabus paragraph]

Meetings of this course might be recorded. Any recordings will be available to students registered for this class. This is intended to supplement the classroom experience. Students are expected to follow appropriate university policies and maintain the security of links or passwords used to access recorded lectures. Recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments. Doing so would be a breach of academic integrity and a disciplinary issue. If the instructor or any Seattle Pacific University office plans any other uses for the recordings beyond this class, students identifiable in the recordings will be contacted to request consent prior to such use.

[Adapted from William & Mary]

## Notes on the above.

An FAQ about FERPA and class recordings is in process but here’s my interpretation provided for your interim understanding.

The university has contracts with Zoom and Panopto. As a result, they and their services are university officials for FERPA purposes. [As an aside the Getting Started section in our [Remote Teaching Template](https://lor.instructure.com/resources/f763d88199e34061947e0bfc826bf257) also has privacy and accessibility information about these and other tools.]

My bullet point version:

1. The Zoom meeting is equivalent to the classroom;
2. The meeting and recording of it are FERPA - protected records if students are identifiable;
3. Consent is not required to record or share that meeting with anyone enrolled in the class;
4. Students should be notified if the class is being recorded;
5. Sharing the meeting or recording outside of the class (a given cohort) requires documented student consent and a student can decline to give consent; [Note: We’re still working out if other permissions are needed to share FERPA-protected recordings].
6. Students should be aware of the consequences of sharing FERPA material;
7. Unauthorized sharing outside of the class is a FERPA breach and treated as an academic integrity issue.

# Communication Policy [syllabus paragraph]

“My office hours this quarter will be held by [Zoom + LINK] on [Tuesdays 12:00 - 2:00]. I'll be available during most of those times or you're welcome to schedule an appointment at another time by [Preferred method of communication] .

I'll endeavor to respond to emails within [48 hours during the working week]. [However, if your question is of relevance to the whole group, I'd invite you to post it in the course Q&A board so that we can all be informed or take part in the discussion]. I’ll endeavor to provide feedback on assignments [within five working days]”

## Notes on the above

This is a suggested addition to your syllabus to describe how you plan to manage your communication with students. Its goal is to help manage student expectations, communicate your office hours, and address related questions like netiquette. I can’t stress enough how much giving students a timeline for your responses will help manage their expectations and corresponding attitudes.

You will notice that this title overlaps a page in the Getting Started module of the Remote Teaching Template we shared in Canvas Commons – this duplication is intentional. Although that section in no way replaces the syllabus, including the information in the Getting Started module makes it more visible.

Netiquette – students will have had access to a basic definition of netiquette in the Student Readiness for Remote Learning course and we have a sample set of guidelines you can use in the Remote Teaching Template.

## Participation and Attendance

The sample syllabus from FLO offers a helpful example of syllabus text titled *Participation in Community*. Although your students will have been invited to think about their participation in the Student Readiness for Remote Learning course (and you’ll be able to self-enroll to see that content), it will be important for you to think through and make clear what participation looks like in your course this quarter.

We know that the flexibility of online courses can make it be easier for students to fall behind, struggle to self-regulate their time, and fall off the radar, and that it’s important to notice these things and intervene. However, one necessity of this unusual circumstance is that, depending on their context, a student may not be able to always join a course session at a given time. To respond compassionately to your students, you may need to reconsider your normal attendance policy.

I would offer three thing to consider as you formulate your policy:

1. In Canvas you can easily see if a student has not submitted work, and also see if they have not logged in or not logged in recently. We’ll be updating our guides on understanding Canvas’ analytics and, although I wouldn’t yet use those analytics to measure participation actively, the analytics do indicate when participation is missing. This can be a warning signal for you that a student needs help.
2. I would suggest that you incorporate a low-stakes assignment early in the course as a way to gauge student engagement. If you don’t already have assignments distributed throughout your course (for example - scaffolding the parts of an essay), you may want to consider setting this up as a way of helping students engage and providing you with feedback on how they are doing. Remember - you would need to reduce work elsewhere if you add new assignments to your course.  This is necessary both for your students and for your grading workload. Perhaps an early assignment could be complete/ incomplete to make your workload manageable but still provide an opportunity to track student participation.
3. If you are holding your course partly or entirely as Zoom meetings, I would suggest that taking attendance formally for frequent meetings could be burdensome. As an alternative, considering creating a way for students to demonstrate their understanding of the meeting’s content outside of the meeting. One idea might be a simple check for understanding question as a Canvas quiz or Poll Everywhere response at the start or end of a session.