Best Practices for Teaching Online: *Creating an Online Syllabus*

THE UNIVERSITY *of* TEXAS

HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON

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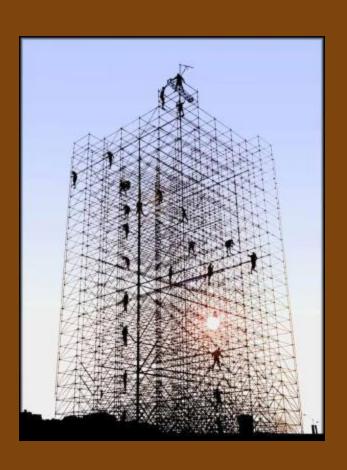 *Associate Professor*

Objectives

- Identify crucial components of an effective online syllabus.

- Incorporate "best practices" in the design of an online syllabus that will insure attainment of course goals and objectives.

- Identify "best practices" in the design of an online syllabus that will enable faculty to acquaint students with the course as clearly and comprehensively as possible.

- Convert a traditional syllabus to an effective online syllabus.

Creating an Effective Online Syllabus

" A good syllabus

serves as a scaffold
for the course…"

(Simon 2000, p. 3)

On-Campus Course Syllabus

The classroom course syllabus course can be abbreviated since a ***verbal explanation*** is usually given by the course director in a ***face-to-face*** format.
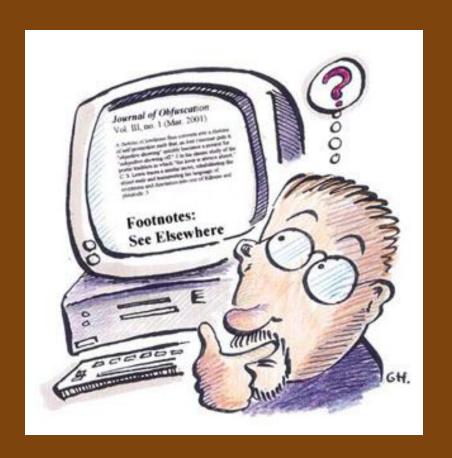
Online Course Syllabus

The online course syllabus must *require no verbal explanation*.

It *must stand alone* and serve as a guide for the student.

Online Syllabus Components

- Welcome to Course
- Course Information
- Faculty information
- Course Goals/Objectives
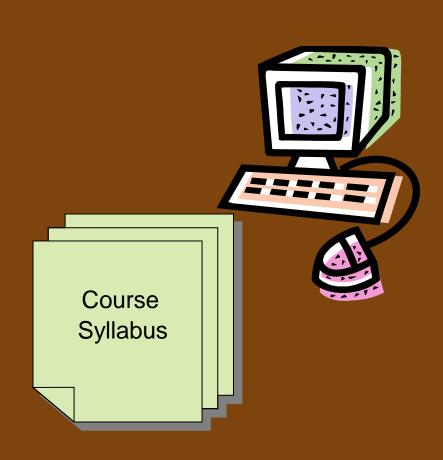- Faculty/student roles
- Expectations
- Time commitment

- Library information
- Resources
- Required text & materials
- Technical Contacts & Requirements
- Assignments
- Due dates
- Evaluation

Comparison of Online and Classroom Syllabi:

Similarities

- Course Description
- Goals & Objectives
- Required Texts
- Grading Scales
- Honor Code
- Academic Policies

Course Syllabus

Comparison of Online and Classroom Syllabi:

Differences

- Faculty/Student time commitment is *much* more online
- Instructor availability is different…
    Weekends? Nights? Holidays?
- Course pacing must be stated
- Due dates must state time zone
- Assignments are submitted differently
- Links can be placed within syllabus

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Comparison of Online and Classroom Syllabi:

Differences

- The Online Environment must be defined
- Syllabus must explicitly define:
  - Instructor's role: Facilitator, evaluator
  - Student's role: Active learner, peer reviewer, facilitator
- Responsibilities and Expectations must be stated

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Developing an online syllabus

Let's take a look at some examples of how to develop these components for online syllabi

Welcome students to the course

- Send a welcome e-mail the week before class begins
- Emphasize the importance of them reading the syllabus
- Give a quiz over information in the syllabus during first week

Faculty Information

- Photo
- Contact Information
- E-mail (include personal e-mail address line)
- Telephone (Office, Cell Phone, secretary – for emergency)
- Hours for Synchronous and Asynchronous activities
- Specifically state available or unavailable days/times

Oral Health Research DHDC 4504

Course Description | Instructor | Rubrics | Calendar

INSTRUCTOR

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Associate Professor

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Office Location:
University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston
Suite 1.085, 6516 MD Anderson Blvd.
Houston, TX 77030

Office hours: Monday - Friday 9am-5pm, CDT

I log on to our classroom several times a day. The majority of my time online will be in the afternoons. If you need to communicate with me privately, please send me an email through blackboard and I will respond as quickly as possible, definitely within 24 hours.

I am not available online on weekends, but you may contact me by phone if absolutely necessary!

Include a bio to introduce yourself

Notes: This is my third year teaching a course entirely online! I am very excited to be able to offer you this mode of instruction. I learned a lot from the last two years and am sure you will teach me a lot this year too! I hope that you will have a good time learning about research too.

I have been at UT Houston since 1993 and have most likely taught you or someone you know! At least this time, you don't have to "listen" to me in class! Heck, you don't even have to see me if you close this page! And better yet, I can't see if you are nodding off...

Coming from UNC where I taught for 10 years, and Ivanhoe Institute in Pittsburgh where I taught for 3 years, I have almost 30 years of teaching behind me. I graduated form UNC with my Certificate in Dental Hygiene, BS in Dental Auxiliary Teacher Education and M.Ed. in Adult and Higher Education. So, I guess you might say that I have traded in my "ram horns" for "long horns" and my color from Carolina Blue to Longhorn Orange!

My qualifications to teach a course in Oral Health Research include participation in several research studies over the years with 21 publications in major dental and dental hygiene journals. I strongly believe in "evidence-based" practice documented with scientific reports. The foundation of any profession is a scientific body of knowledge specific to it. I want you to be able to read scientific dental journals with understanding and yes even interest!

Learning online is going to be a *very different* experience for some of you. Please do the tutorials and keep the UTTC information handy for help when you hit a snag! Also, don't expect online to be an easier form of taking a class. There is just as much work if not more since you have to be independent and serve as your own instructor some of the time. I function more in the role of facilitator with you and your classmates doing much of the "teaching". Warning:

Course Description, Goals & Objectives

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Online Learning Experience
What this course is **NOT**:

- Self-paced

- Independent study

- Easier or less time than face-to-face courses

This course examines the theory and practice pertaining to important aspects of learning and teaching. Also included are instructional strategies, methodologies and assessment of student learning.

A prerequisite for this course is a certificate in Dental Hygiene from The University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston, School of Dental Hygiene. Also required is the completion of Texas general education core courses.

Broad Course Goals

This course will help the student develop a basic understanding of educational psychology, principles, and theory. The student will learn the basics of instructional design and understand the importance of a well prepared topic presentation. The student will learn different teaching methods and learn to think more critically about the educational process.

More specific goals - through readings, written assignments and online discussions the student will:

Embedded Objectives

Module IX - Teaching for Higher Level Learning; Lifelong Learning for the Teacher

Lesson 1 - Teaching Thinking

As you read Chapters 24 in McKeachie, keep the following objectives in mind.

Objectives:

- Contrast content-centered instruction with learner-centered instruction.
- Compare and contrast Bloom's original taxonomy with the revised taxonomy.
- Discuss ways to improve critical thinking.

Getting students to think beyond memorization and apply concepts to practical applications can be a challenge. Research shows us that more profound and lasting learning takes place if a student is presented with situations in which they are encouraged to think in more meaningful ways.

Critical thinking "Critical thinking "refers to the use of those cognitive skills or
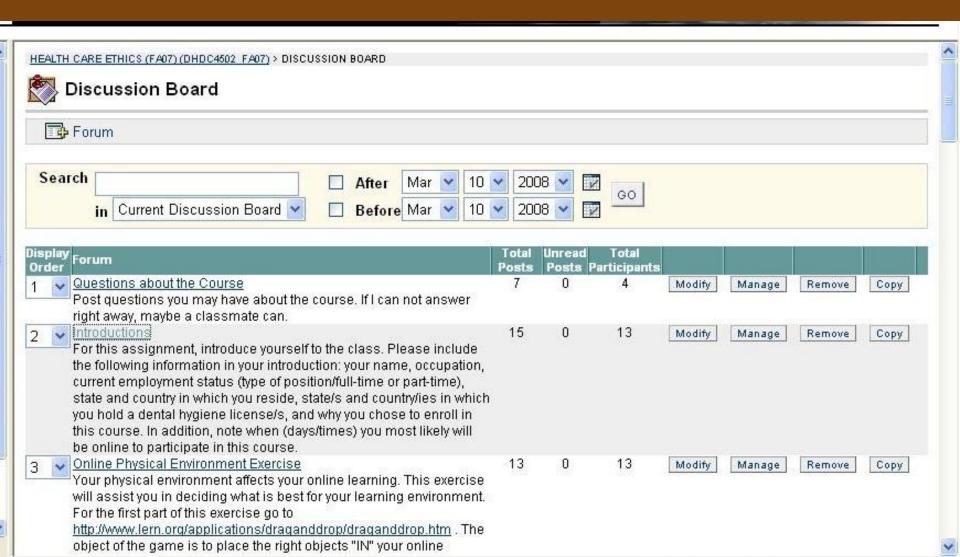
First Assignments to orient students to online and each other

Discussion Board

Forum

Search [   ]   □ After [Mar ▼] [10 ▼] [2008 ▼] 📝   [GO]

in [Current Discussion Board ▼]   □ Before [Mar ▼] [10 ▼] [2008 ▼] 📝

Display Order	Forum	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants				
1 ▼	**Questions about the Course** Post questions you may have about the course. If I can not answer right away, maybe a classmate can.	7	0	4	Modify	Manage	Remove	Copy
2 ▼	Introductions For this assignment, introduce yourself to the class. Please include the following information in your introduction: your name, occupation, current employment status (type of position/full-time or part-time), state and country in which you reside, state/s and country/ies in which you hold a dental hygiene license/s, and why you chose to enroll in this course. In addition, note when (days/times) you most likely will be online to participate in this course.	15	0	13	Modify	Manage	Remove	Copy
3 ▼	Online Physical Environment Exercise Your physical environment affects your online learning. This exercise will assist you in deciding what is best for your learning environment. For the first part of this exercise go to http://www.lern.org/applications/draganddrop/draganddrop.htm . The object of the game is to place the right objects "IN" your online	13	0	13	Modify	Manage	Remove	Copy

Describe how the Online Learning Environment is different

Online Learning Environment

Learning is a process of change that is often times difficult for the learner. Dealing with the emotional side of learning is something that students may not be prepared to handle. I hope to have a learning environment in this course where I work with students to build a learning community that provides guidance, support and a humanized online experience.

There is responsibility with the online environment that is somewhat different from the on-campus environment. Both students and faculty have outside lives and cannot be expected to be available 24/7. Please allow 24-48 hours for responses. Likewise, please be responsible with your responses. Logging on at least three times a week is minimally necessary for us to be productive. Posting at the last hour of the deadline, does not give your classmates ample time to respond. In the past, I have had to change students who were consistently late posters to a "remedial" group.

An online course requires 3 hours of work for each course credit; therefore, you should expect to spend about 12 hours each week on this course.

My role as an instructor in this course is very different from a lecture course. My "lectures" are the weekly lessons. Your forums will involve discussions of course material. I will monitor these discussions and provide input as I deem necessary or when asked to do so by you or your group members. Think of me as a facilitator in this process. Students who are used to instructors guiding them may feel insecure at first until they catch on to the process.

Expectations

- Participation
- Responsibilities
  - Individual
  - Group
- Time Commitment
- Course Dues Dates
- Discussion Boards
- Rubrics

TIME COMMITTMENT

Since online courses are different, you need to figure out the amount of time to devote to this course. The traditional view is that for every hour of "in-class" work, the student is expected to do at least one hour of "out of class" work. If this course were in a traditional college setting, we would meet face-to-face for 3 hours per week for 16 weeks. The total, then would be approximately 48 hours of "in-class" work. Since we are not meeting face to face, it is assumed that the amount of "computer" time each week would amount to those 3 hours per week. Add to that the minimum 3

hours of "out-of-class" work time expected each week for an approximate total of 6 hours per week that should be devoted to this course. If you are not prepared to devote this amount of time, then you might want to reconsider enrollment in the course.

Readings

There are additional journal references that you may be assigned to read and comment on throughout the course. I have tried to select readings dealing with clinical teaching to supplement the McKenzie text and, hopefully, they will give you a more up-to-date view of this topic.

Some thoughts on Cooperative Learning

In this course, you will not be a passive learner and I will not be feeding you information as you might have experienced in the past. In order for this course to be successful, you will need to interact, and my role will be one of facilitator for this interaction. You will be a "knowledge-generator" and be responsible for constructing and managing your own learning. You will be an active partner in this generation of knowledge so that, as you are learning, so are your course mates. You will be both teacher and pupil. In doing so, you will need the cooperation of your course mates. We all need to be committed to this new learning environment and establish a connection. The success of this learning community depends on the amount we give and take from one another. If we succeed, we will all benefit.

Define Expectations

Online Participation Evaluation Rubric

Class Participation Guidelines:

Each student is expected to post the weekly assignments to the discussion board each week. Additionally, a response to each group member's posted assignment should also be posted weekly (this may be in any discussion thread for the week in question). However, you are welcome to post above the minimum -- The more effort exerted by all of us to read and interact with the postings, the more meaningful and dynamic the learning experience for all. The goal of this exercise is to collaborate and learn from each other.

Class participation is worth 30% of your grade.

Active participation for this course means posting your response to the discussion question(s) asked, reading other posted responses, and responding back to your classmates' work in a way that furthers the discussion and/or provides additional resources relating directly to the topic under discussion. Discussion responses should be submitted to the appropriate weekly forum in the Discussion Board (located in the Communication area of the classroom) within the week assigned. Students may receive partial credit for responses posted up to one week late. No credit will be given for responses posted beyond two weeks after the discussion assignment is due. Please remember to be courteous in your replies to your fellow classmates. Points for your weekly participation grade will be awarded as follows by either me or one of your classmates designated by me:

Internet

Course Pacing and Due Dates

Course Pacing and Due Dates

You must take the test over the syllabus by the due date. Failure to do so will result in point deductions. Discussion activities must be completed or submitted during the times/dates shown on the Course Calendar.

The discussion activities that will be due each week cannot be submitted in advance. If you are one that doesn't like to leave things until the last minute, go ahead and do the activities and turn them in when they are due. Since this is a virtual classroom, so to speak, we all need to be in the discussion together. So, imagine you are in a classroom when we are having these discussions.

The discussion activities associated with each module have points assigned to them so they are due within the week they are noted on the Course Calendar. Failure to complete these activities within the time frame will result in loss of discussion points. You will receive a zero for missed discussion deadlines. Pay special attention to the end of discussion dates on the course calendar. All **response** postings are due no later than 24 hours after the initial discussion due date. This is to give you time to respond to those who like to post discussions at the last minute.

Projects will be due no later than the time/date shown on the Course Calendar. Please send these as attachments in MS Word format, 1.5 spacing, and 12-point Arial font. In the header, put the team member's names on each page. There will be more information to come later about projects.

Rubrics help define expectations

For discussion contributions posted to the appropriate weekly discussion forum within the week assigned:

10 Points	6 Points	3 Points	0 Points
Student responded at least once to each member of the group on posted topics and/or lessons. .	Student posted a minimum of two times to the discussion board, but missed either a) an original response or b) a reply to a classmate.	Student posted a minimum of one time during the week to the discussion board.	Student did not post during the week to the discussion board
Comments/questions were responsive to the discussion question.	Comments/questions were reasonably responsive to the discussion question.	Comments/questions were reasonably responsive to the discussion topics.	Comments were not reasonably responsive to the discussion topics.
Comments/questions provided evidence that the student had read and considered a substantial number of classmates' postings before responding.	Comments/questions provided evidence that the student had read and considered at least some classmates' postings before responding	Comments/questions provided evidence that the student had read and considered at least some classmates' postings before responding.	Comments/questions did not provide evidence that the student had read and considered the classmate's postings before responding.
Comments or questions significantly	Comments or questions enhanced the quality of		

Discussions

For the discussion portion of the grade, you will be given points for the time and thought that goes into your participation in the discussions. You need to consider how you respond to the question I post and how you reply to others' posted responses so that a meaningful learning event occurs. You will receive E/Q Points (E=effort; Q=quality) for posting to the discussions. The postings will occur as a threaded discussion that will usually start on Sunday evening or Monday morning. You will have 1 week to complete the discussion activities. The discussions require that you post at least one opinion (substantiated by the readings) and respond to the postings of others in the class. There are 12 discussion activities and you will receive up to 3 E/Q points for posting and responding to the discussions (see rubric). Whether or not you earn the points depends on the effort and quality (E/Q) of your response. Obviously it must contribute to the learning experience or zero E/Q points will be earned. Also, no posting will count as a zero. The course feedback is also worth E/Q points.

Quality	Relevance	Contribution	Global Picture	Points
Appropriate comments: thoughtful, reflective, and respectful of other student's postings	Clear reference to assignment or prior posting being discussed	Furthers the discussion with questions, or statements that encourage others to respond. Participates beyond the required number of postings.	Clearly connects the posting to text or reference points from previous reading. Activities, and discussions.	3
Appropriate comments and responds respectfully to other student's postings	Some reference but not taken out of context the reader would not understand	Participates, but does not post anything that encourages others to respond to the posting. Participates with the required number of postings.	Vague or possible connection to reference points from previous readings, activities, and discussions	2
Responds, but with minimum effort (i.e. "I agree with Susan.")	Posting is attached to the right discussion board, but does not clearly reflect the assignment	Less than required number of postings or does not further any discussions	Does not mention the text or does so without logical link to topic	1-0

Course Requirements

- Online learning should engage the learner
  - Interpersonal collaborative activities
- Higher level learning experiences are best
  - Critical thinking
  - Reflective assignments
  - Cumulative assignments

Course Requirements

Requirements

The 3 major requirements for this course are listed below. Review of journal articles and development of the research proposal for a "Virtual Study" will be the focus of your work in this course.

Analysis of a Journal Article

- Students will begin their study of research by analyzing scientific journal articles. Each student will post their journal article and related weekly assignments for their Discussion Groups' review.
- Additionally, each student will respond to their group members' postings giving constructive feedback on his/her analysis.

Design of a Virtual Study

- Each student will choose a topic for the design of a "Virtual Study". Approval of the research topic must be made by the course instructor before beginning the development of the proposal. You may submit your research topic, in writing, anytime before the due date. This will constitute the majority of the coursework.

Research Proposal

- Ultimately, a research proposal will be developed by each student for the "Virtual Study and submitted in the final week. The research proposal will include a review of Journal articles and follow a prescribed format. Parameters for the proposal are given in Week 13-16 and will be presented later in the course.
- The research proposal will include a *Background* or historical perspective of the problem. This section will establish the need or significance of the current study and provide a critical review of the current relevant literature.

Objectives Exercise

This is an exercise designed to get you comfortable with writing objectives and testing from them. You will be required to select a reading from which you will develop objectives and test questions. It also involves giving feedback to a course mate and receiving feedback about your objectives. Points will be given for both the exercise itself and the review done by you for a course mate. Please give specific feedback. Again, the quality of the objectives and the feedback given will be taken into consideration. This assignment will not be accepted after the due date, so please check the course calendar carefully.

Final Teaching Project

This will be the culmination of all you have learned in this course. You will be placed in groups of 2 or 3 to prepare one (1) lecture with one (1) lab. You will select a topic (approved by me), select a text, and readings from that text. You will prepare a lesson plan for the lecture and lab, which will include specific objectives, appropriate teaching methods for the topic, a lab assessment tool and a topic evaluation (test).
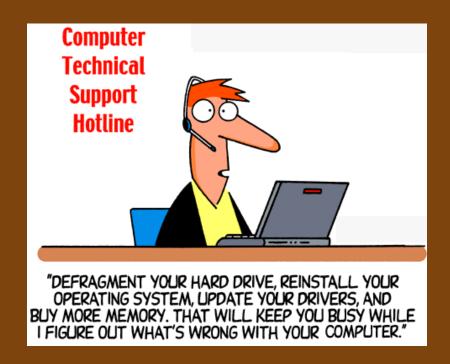
You will also develop a short exam (10 questions) from the topic presented that should include multiple choice, short answer and 1 essay question. Various parts of the final project will be due during the semester for me to review so I can give you feedback. This is not required, but might be helpful to you for guidance.

Project Rubric Grading Criteria:

Technical Requirements

- Include both hardware and software considerations
- Technical support contact info
- Contact information for and any other resources whether text or web based

Computer Technical Support Hotline

"DEFRAGMENT YOUR HARD DRIVE, REINSTALL YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM, UPDATE YOUR DRIVERS, AND BUY MORE MEMORY. THAT WILL KEEP YOU BUSY WHILE I FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR COMPUTER."

Technical Requirements

Technical Requirements:

- **System Requirements:** Since your entire course will be accessed through your computer and Internet connection, it is imperative that you have the proper computer configuration. The following website lists the minimum and recommended computer configurations for participation in a TeleCampus course.
  http://www.telecampus.utsystem.edu/index.cfm/4,0,83,69,html
- **Browser Configuration:** UT TeleCampus courses make extensive use of Java, JavaScript, cookies, and plug-ins. These features must be installed/enabled in your browser for optimal viewing of the features and functions of your online course. For Browser Configuration, please go to http://www.telecampus.utsystem.edu/index.cfm/4,0,83,70,html

Academic Honesty:

Students are bound by the University of Texas Dental Branch standards of Professionalism, Academic Integrity, and Student Conduct and Discipline that are listed in the UTDB Student Guide to Academic Studies (under Policies and Responsibilities) found at: http://www.db.uth.tmc.edu/student-acad/StudentGuides/Student_Guide_2006-2007.pdf.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in a failing grade in the course or result in suspension from the program and/or University.

Required Textbooks/Course Materials/Additional Equipment

- Required texts or materials: any books or other materials, such as software

- Required Auxiliary Devices
  - Chat Room Headset
  - Web cams
  - Microphone

Assignments and Due Dates

- Considerations
  - Time commitment required for completion
  - Instructor unavailability prior to due date
  - Consider concurrent courses
- Firm due dates
- Adjustments due to unforseen problems

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course is divided into modules with lessons included in each module. Module 1 is the introduction to this course that includes the syllabus and "get acquainted" exercises. We will cover approximately one module per week with assignment due dates posted throughout the semester. Please refer to the Course Calendar frequently. Format your personal Blackboard page to show the due dates. It is your responsibility to know when the due dates occur.

Module	Topics	Discussions and Projects Due Dates
Module I - Syllabus and Getting Acquainted		
	Exercise and discussion	Jan. 13
Module II - Still Getting Acquainted; Some Educational Background		
	Lesson1 - Posted readings from the Encyclopedia of Education; McKeachie Ch 1; Mackenzie , Unit 1, Test on syllabus	Both due on Jan. 20 Syllabus Test due
	Lesson 2 - Principles Behind Behavior Mackenzie Unit 2, 3	
	Lesson 3 ? Accreditation	
Module III - Responsibilities in College Teaching		
	Lesson 1 - McKeachie Ch 25	Jan. 27
Module IV - Course Development		

Class	Topic	Date
	Class Begins	**August 13**
Unit 1	**Introduction**	**August 13 – August 26** • Read and complete assignments from 8/13– 8/19 • H. Henson will facilitate starting 8/20 through 8/24 • H. Henson will assign participation grades from 8/25 through 8/26 • Journal Entry 1 – Due 8/26 at midnight • APA Exercise – E-mail directly to H. Henson – Due 8/26 at midnight. • PubMed Exercise – Post in BlackBoard – Due 8/26 at midnight.
Unit 2	**Origins of the Profession**	**August 27 - September 9** • Read assignments from 8/27–9/2 • Respective teams facilitate from 9/3 – 9/7 • Respective team facilitators conference on

Course Assignments and Due Dates

Unit / Topic	Assignments / Possible Points	Due Date
Unit I / Introductions: August 13-20	• Read the course syllabus, includes review of UT TeleCampus Student Orientation and Handbook • Quiz 1 over Course Syllabus – 10 points • Discussion Board exercise "Introductions"–10 points • Discussion Board exercise "Online Physical Environment Exercise"–10 points	August 20, 2007
Unit II / Ethics, Professionalism, Theory, and Philosophy: August 20-27	• Read text - Chapters 1 & 2 • Quiz 2 over Chapters 1 & 2 – 10 points • Discussion Board exercise "Accreditation Standards"–10 points	August 27, 2007
Unit III / Ethical Principles and Values and Code of Ethics: August 27-September 4	• Read text – Chapters 3 & 4 • Quiz 3 over Chapters 3 & 4 – 10 points • Discussion Board exercise "Code of Ethics"-10 points	September 4, 2007
Unit IV / Ethical Decision Making and the Law: September 4-17	• Read text – Chapters 5 & 6 • Quiz 4 over Chapters 5 & 6 – 10 points • Discussion Board exercise "State Practice Acts"-10 points	September 17, 2007

Course Calendar
is the only place where dates exist—easy to change next year!

Week One: January 7-11, 2008
Introduction to Oral Health Research

1

Reading: Chp. 1, 4

Activities:

- Introduce yourself in the "Virtual Student Lounge."
- Complete the "Pre-course Survey"
- Complete the "Self-assessment Quiz" for Lesson I.
- Post your comments to your group's Discussion Board by Wednesday: What kinds of oral health research are unethical?
- Respond to your classmates' comments by Sunday.

Week Two: January 14-18, 2008
Identification of the problem

2

Reading: Chp. 1, 2

Activities:

- Complete the Tutorial for Online Searches if you have not done so in another course.
- Virtual Study: Compose a "Research question" and post it on the Discussion Board with an explanation of why you chose your topic. Here, you and other students will respond to each other with suggestions or helpful directives. Post by Wednesday.
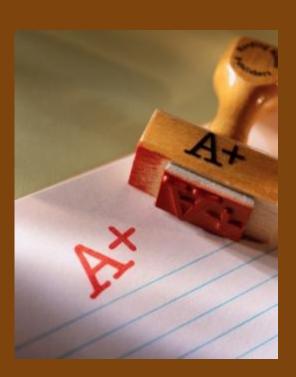
Student Evaluation

- Explanation of grading criteria and components of total grade.

- Grade percentages or points for all quizzes, exams, graded assignments, and forms of class participation (discussion board and group participation).

- Criteria for a passing grade

- Policies on late assignments

- Academic dishonesty policies

- Objective or Subjective

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Objective vs. Subjective Evaluation
What style facilitates course goals?

Objective Evaluation

- Quizzes

- Exams

- Rubrics

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Objective Rubric

Level of Performance	High (9 points)	Middle (6 points)	Low (3 points)
Use of the Literature	• Learner uses 5-10 references in the paper to argue his or her point. • Learner demonstrates strong familiarity with the literature he or she cites.	• Learner uses 3-4 references. • Learner demonstrates only limited engagement with or understanding of the literature.	• Learner uses less than 3 references from the class. • Learner demonstrates very little engagement with or understanding of the literature.
Themes explored in the Literature	• Learner identifies trends or themes according to the topic he or she choses. • Learner uses the literature to convincingly demonstrate his or her argument. • Learner creates a coherent argument centered around	• Learner identifies some themes, but they need more work. • Learner sometimes uses the literature to convincingly demonstrate his or her argument, and sometimes fails to do so.	• There is very little attempt at identifying themes. • There is very little attempt to use literature to build the argument.

Subjective Evaluation

- Peer evaluation
- Self evaluation
  - Rubrics

Peer Evaluation Rubric

Final Project Team Rubric:
Score each of your group members according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Points			
	0	2	3	4
Cooperation	Did not listen to and did not value the opinion of others	Listened to but did not value the opinion of others, or valued the opinions of others but did not listen to them	Actively listened to but it was not evident that he or she valued the opinion of others	Actively listened to and valued the opinions of others
Contribution	Did not contribute to the completion of the project	Contributed to the project but work was inferior or inadequate	Contributed to the completion of the project with adequate work	Contributed to the completion of the project and submitted high-quality work
Participation	Did not participate in the group	Occasionally participated in the group	Often participated in the group	Consistently participated in the group

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Remember...

Online Course Syllabus = Traditional Syllabus *PLUS...*

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Online Syllabi Must Communicate for YOU!

Thank you!

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Online Courses