

A MOTIVATIONAL MAKEOVER FOR YOUR SYLLABUS

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By the end of today's session, you will be able to:

1. Evaluate your syllabus using a motivational framework.
2. Revise syllabus language to foster student belonging and support.
3. Clarify expectations and success criteria to build student confidence in their ability to succeed.
4. Incorporate purpose and opportunities for choice to increase student motivation and ownership.

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First Impression Activity

PSY 101: Introduction to Psychology

Section: 01
 Meeting Time: Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:00-11:15 AM
 Location: Room 204, Academic Building
 Instructor: Dr. Taylor Smith
 Email: tsmith@university.edu
 Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 PM (or by appointment)



Welcome to Introduction to Psychology! I'm excited to learn with you this semester. This course is designed to help you better understand yourself and others while building skills you can apply in your academic, personal, and professional life. I am here to support your success, and I encourage you to reach out, ask questions, and stay engaged.

Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance will help you stay on track and get the most out of this course. If you need to miss a class, please communicate with me so we can work together to keep you moving forward.

Assignments & Deadlines

Staying on schedule is important for your success. However, I understand that unexpected situations arise. If you anticipate needing extra time, please reach out before the deadline so we can discuss options.

Classroom Environment

Our classroom is a space for respectful discussion and learning. Please come prepared to participate and support one another's learning.

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IMPORTANT: THIS SYLLABUS CONTAINS REQUIRED POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE WILL IMPACT YOUR GRADE.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is **REQUIRED** at every class session.
 More than 2 absences will result in a grade reduction.
 More than 4 absences will result in **FAILURE** of the course. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
 Being late will count as an absence.

Late Work Policy

NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.
 Assignments must be submitted **ON TIME** or will receive a **ZERO**.
 Technical issues, personal problems, or other excuses are **NOT ACCEPTABLE**.

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to come to class prepared.
NO PHONES. NO SIDE CONVERSATIONS.

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According to Self-Determination Theory, Students are Motivated When....



They feel they **belong**

- Relatedness



They believe they can **succeed**

- Competence



They see **purpose** and have some **choice**

- Autonomy

Deci & Ryan (2000)

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RELATEDNESS AND BELONGING

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How can faculty foster a sense of belonging through the syllabus?



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Drum Roll Please..... The Top 6 Answers were:

Communicate care and approachability

Use personalized language ("you")

Use inclusive and representative readings and resources

Share information about yourself and why you care

Show compassion and understanding

Highlight campus and peer support networks

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Supportive Statements

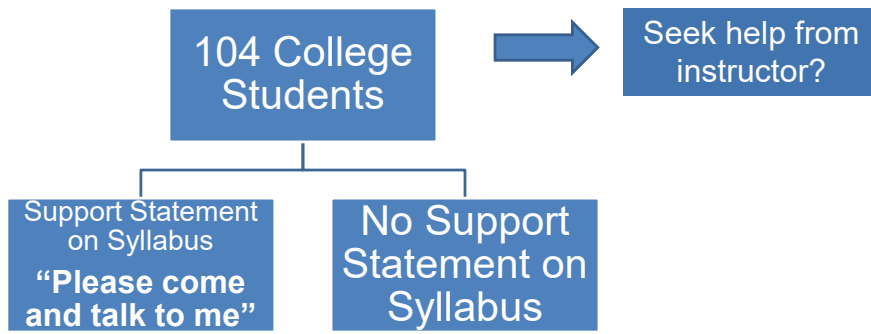
Please come and visit me!

Welcome to the course! I am excited to be your instructor and can't wait to get to know you. Throughout the semester, we will be talking about your goals and career plans and strategies that will help you be successful. I hope that you will view me as part of your support team. In addition to teaching you research-based success strategies, I am here to help you plan for success, problem-solve as needed, and celebrate successful experiences. My official office hours are listed above, but I'm more than happy to find a different day and time to meet if these do not work well for your schedule. I believe that it's really important for us to talk outside of class so please connect with me before or after class, stop by my office (or make an appointment), and e-mail me!



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The Power of 6 Words



Perrine et al. (1995)

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Results- Willingness to Seek Help

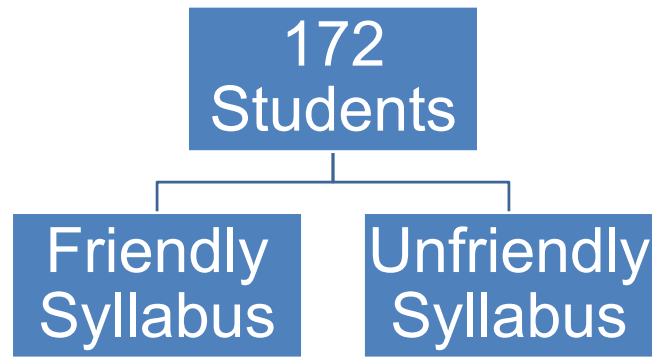
| Potential Problem | Supportive | Neutral |
|-------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Trouble understanding textbook | 4.7 | 3.7 |
| Low grade on first exam | 4.8 | 4.0 |
| Hard to hear instructor's lectures | 4.4 | 3.8 |
| Study skills ineffective for course | 4.7 | 3.6 |
| Thinking about dropping course | 4.9 | 3.8 |
| Trouble understanding major topic | 5.3 | 4.2 |

All significantly different!

Perrine et al. (1995)

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The Tone of the Syllabus



Students thought they were evaluating an adjunct.

Harnish & Bridges, 2011

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Examples from Syllabus

Unfriendly

- If you need to contact me outside of office hours, you may e-mail me....
- Come prepared to actively participate in this course. This is the best way to engage you in learning....


Friendly

- I welcome you to contact me outside of class and student hours. You may e-mail me....
- I hope you actively participate in this course. I say this because I found it is the best way to engage you in learning....

Directly quoted from Harnish and Bridges (2011)

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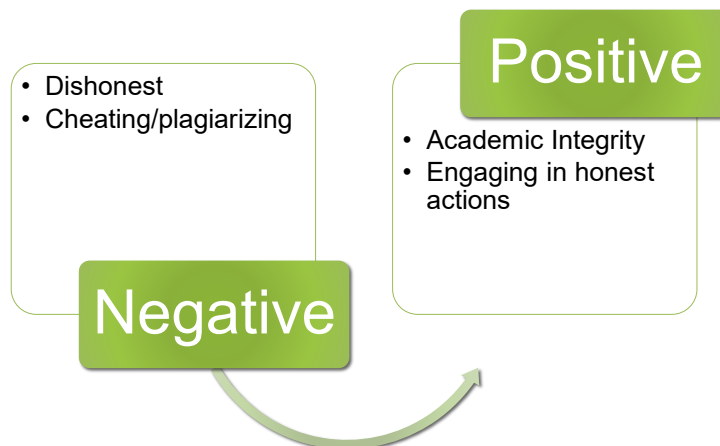
The Results!

| Topic | Friendly Average | Unfriendly Average |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Approachability | 4.07 | 3.77 |
| Faculty Level of Motivation to Teach | 3.6 | 3.07 |
| Difficulty  | 3.34 | 3.72 |

Harnish & Bridges (2011)

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Let's Talk Policy Language



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Late Work Policies
Pasadena City College, Bombardier (2019)

57% of students said more flexible deadlines would help them be successful (Flaherty, 2023)



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Late Work Options

Low Stakes Only

- No late work on low stakes assignments

Free Pass

- Give one or two opportunities for students to submit late work without penalty

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Policies that Communicate Care

Caregiver Policy

(College Transition Collaborative, The Student Experience Project 2022)



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Campus Resources

Students say giving them wellness and academic resources would help them be successful (Flaherty, 2023)

Available Help and Support:

Successful people access support from others as needed. Middlesex County College has many supportive services that can help you as you strive to achieve your goals. I encourage you to reach out to me or other professionals on campus. Here's some information about the resources available to you:

| | |
|---|--|
| Your Professor | E-mail me at charrington@middlesexcc.edu or stop by my office RH 111. |
| Librarians | The library offers assistance with finding and evaluating information. Visit the library, call 732.906.4253, or visit their website for online options. |
| Personal, Career, Transfer, and Disability Counselors | The Counseling and Career Services department offers confidential individual counseling and offers several workshops throughout the semester. Visit Edison Hall Room 100, call 732.906.2546, or visit their website for more information. |
| Tutors | The Johnson Commons Learning Center, located in IRC 241, offers support for developmental courses. Call 732.548.6000 X3222 or see website for details. The tutoring center, located in JLC 240, offers tutoring support in many subjects. Call 732.906.2631 or see website for details. |
| Academic Advisors | The Academic Advising Center offers drop-in advising services. Visit CH 109, call 732.906.2596, or visit their website . Full time students are also assigned an advisor. |

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How to Promote Belonging?

Communicate
care and
approachability

Use personalized
language (“you”)

Use inclusive and
representative
readings and
resources

Share information
about yourself
and why you care

Show compassion
and
understanding

Highlight campus
and peer support
networks

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TRY & APPLY

- Choose one of the following:
 - Write a welcome statement that communicates that you value, support, and believe in students.
 - Revise a policy (late work, participation, etc.) to better convey care and compassion.

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COMPETENCE AND SUCCESS

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What percentage of students say they usually understand how their professor grades?

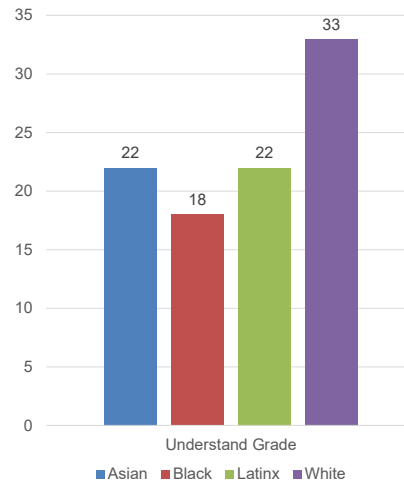


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Grades

- Only 25% of students say they “usually understand how my professor grades”
- (Flaherty, 2023)



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Structure and Success

[Sathy and Hogan \(2019\)](#)

**“The more structure,
the better for all
students. ”**

**“Too little structure
leaves too many
students behind. ”**

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Transparent Expectations

TILT (Winkelmes, 2013)

- Purpose
- Tasks
- Grading Criteria



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What are the Essential Components of a Motivational Syllabus?

Core Components

- Course Information
- Instructor Information
- Grading Information
- Policy Information

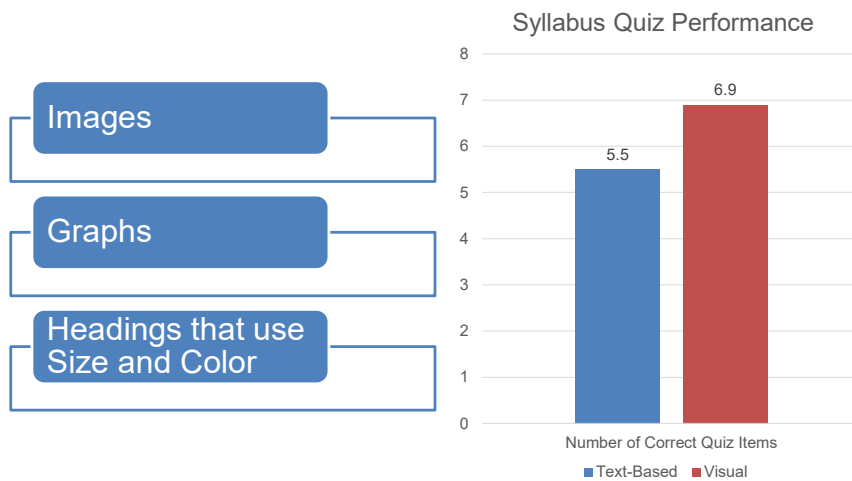
Refer to Syllabus Checklist

Additional Components

- Welcome Statement/Instructor Positionality/pronouns
- Rationale for Assignments
- Grading Rubrics
- Accommodation Information
- Resources
- Tips for Success

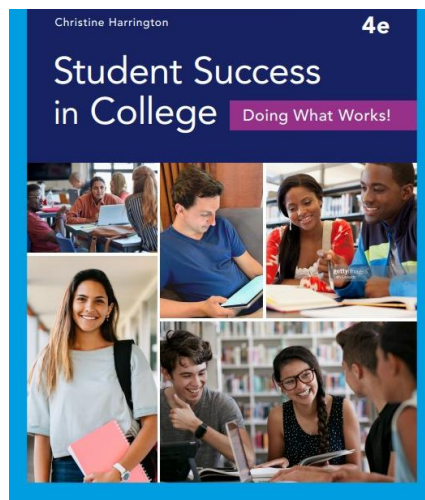
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A Visual Syllabus (Yarosh, 2021)



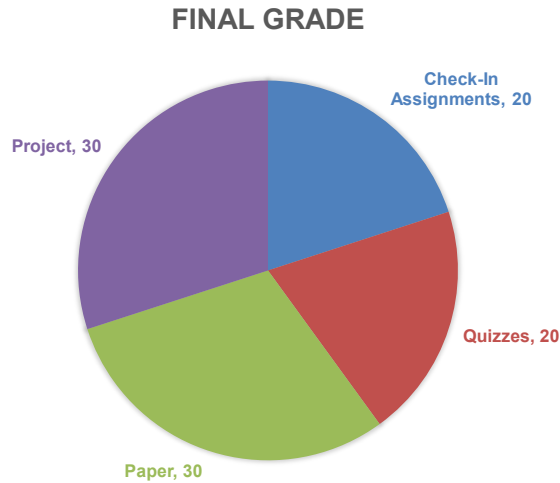
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Photo of Textbook



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Graphs



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Rationale for Assignments

Assignments:

Academic Integrity Assignment:

To help you avoid unintentional dishonesty, all students are expected to view the [Academic Integrity Narrated PowerPoint presentation](#) (link also in Campus Cruiser) and take a 25 question on-line quiz in Campus Cruiser. You can take the quiz as many times as necessary but will need to achieve 100%!

Reading Assignments:

To accomplish all of our learning goals, you will need to be engaged in lots of learning outside of the classroom. You will be expected to read the text and articles. To help you actively engage with the text, you will be completing reading assignments- typing answers to the questions posed (see back of syllabus). While we will be reviewing some of the concepts from the text in class, we will simply not have enough time to cover everything. As a future educator, all of the information is important!

Quizzes:

Practicing retrieval is a very effective learning strategy. To maximize your learning experience, you will be taking a quiz on every chapter. Quizzes are online (in Campus Cruiser), open book, and are not timed. You can take each quiz up to three times (lots of retrieval practice!) and the highest score will count. These are called formative assessments—they are designed to help you learn.

Presentations/Teaching Opportunities:

Since this is a course that is preparing you to become an educator, doing presentations is important! You will have the opportunity to do 2 presentations.

1. For one presentation, you will work with a few other students and will lead an exercise on one of the **research articles from the packet**.
2. For the other presentation (**literature review**), you will work in a small group of 3-5 students and you will review the research on an **educational topic** (topic must be approved). Your presentation will provide the class with an overview of this research along with the impact of these findings on the classroom. Note- this will be the topic for your paper too!

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Details about Assignments

Power Point Slides Rubric

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>area</p> <p>"A" Work (90-100%):</p> | <p>Visually effective slides. Images, charts, graphs, Smart Art were used to organize information. Grammatically correct, good organization, free of spelling errors, cited source appropriately</p> <p>Completely described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Introduction- Clear explanation of purpose of study and what question researchers were seeking an answer to ✓ Method- overview of how study was conducted; description of participants and what participants had to do ✓ Results- answer to research question; clear explanation of the key findings ✓ Discussion- description of value of study and how students can use this information to their advantage |
| <p>"B" Work (80-89%):</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well organized slides - grammatically correct, good organization, no more than a few spelling or grammar errors • Addressed all areas above with general responses; not a lot of details provided • Minimal use of visual tools such as Smart Art, graphs, images |
| <p>"C" Work (70-79%):</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally well organized, some spelling and grammar errors • Answered most questions (bulleted above) with general responses; not a lot of details provided • Little to no use of visual tools |
| <p>"D" or "F" Work (0- 69%):</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not well organized, many spelling and grammar errors • Did not answer most questions (bulleted above); • Missed key research findings; • Minimal or no details provided or use of visual images |

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Feedback
Taras (2006)

Undergraduates do not get to
benefit enough from feedback



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How to Promote Competence?

Clearly communicate expectations

Provide a clear road map for success

Break down complex tasks and give feedback

Offer strategies for success

Normalize that learning is challenging

Clarify how to get help

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TRY & APPLY

- Choose one of the following:
 - Write a purpose statement for one assignment.
 - Draft a tips for success section of the syllabus.

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AUTONOMY, PURPOSE, AND CHOICE

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Learning Outcomes

What do you want students to know, think, or do?

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What percentage of students recall more than 2 of the course learning outcomes?



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Do Students Recall the Learning Objectives?

| Course Objectives | Percent Recalled |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| One objective | 60% |
| Two objectives | 8% |
| More than 2 objectives | 3% |
| No objectives | Almost 30% |



Smith & Razzouk (1993)

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An Example...

Introductory Psychology Syllabus

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will learn how to read and study psychology concepts effectively, maximizing learning efforts.
- Students will learn how to conduct effective literature searches.
- Students will effectively apply concepts learned to experiences or situations that are meaningful to him or her.
- Students will discover the relationships among psychology concepts.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast theories, research findings, and other psychological concepts.
- Students will be knowledgeable about cognitive processes such as critical thinking and decision making and will apply these concepts to himself or herself.
- Students will develop a passion for learning.
- Students will be enthusiastic about applying concepts learned to their own lives and the lives of others.
- Students will highly value the role of psychology in today's world.
- Students will understand the important role of culture in learning.
- Students will be able describe the different types of research methods used in the field of psychology.
- Students will be knowledgeable about the functions of the brain, the process of sensation

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A Better Example...

Introductory Psychology Syllabus



Learning Outcomes: What You Will Know!

Upon successful completion of PSY 123, you will be able to:

1. Recognize psychological theories and concepts and will be able to summarize the contributions of psychologists.
2. Describe the various research methods and apply this knowledge to evaluate psychological research studies.
3. Articulate the importance and value of psychology in today's world.
4. Deliver clear and organized presentations and documents using APA style.

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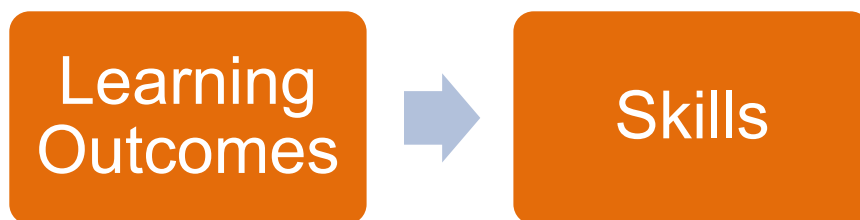
Using Innovative Assignments

(Winfield, 2024)



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Use More Meaningful and Accessible Language



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Choice



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Types of Assignment Choice

(Dabrowski & Marshall, 2018)

Content

- Topic
- Sources

Product

- Format
- Menu

Process

- Due dates
- Individual or Group

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How to Promote Autonomy?

Explain the
purpose of
the course

Design
meaningful
assignments

Highlight skills
students will
develop

Offer
assignment
choices

Use
invitational
language

Invite
reflection

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TRY & APPLY

- Choose one of the following:
 - Revise how you communicate the purpose and value of the course.
 - Add one assignment choice to your course.

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What was your key take-away from today's session?



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THANK YOU



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