Syllabus Makeover

The purpose of a syllabus is, among other things, to clarify for students what they should be able to know and do by the end of the course. Many faculty are using syllabi that are missing this critical information. This guide demonstrates how easy it is to "makeover" your syllabus to include course learning outcomes using information already at your disposal. This guide also demonstrates how to create course maps from this information.

For the purpose of this demonstration, we have created a sample syllabus for a fabricated course, CD 101: Child Development. At the end of this document you will find two versions of this sample syllabus. On page 3 you will find the "before" version and on page 5 you will find the "after."

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In creating student learning outcomes, you first want to review the Course Description for ideas. Right now, this description offers a vague overview of the course, explaining what the course will provide.

"This introductory course provides an overview of multiple aspects of child development. We will examine the major theoretical perspectives of development and how they explain our physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development from conception to adolescence. The relationship between genetics, environmental factors, and societal influence will be considered. This course is designed to allow this basic information to be applied to various fields of study as well as personal application and understanding."

You can use this course description to create your student learning outcomes.
Course-level student learning outcomes clarify what students will be expected to know and do by the end of the course. They specify a specific action that faculty can both observe and measure (avoid "demonstrate" and "understand"). You can write student learning outcomes by completing the following sentence: "At the end of this course, students should be able to…."

Think about the actions you're asking students to do to demonstrate their learning. Then choose a verb that matches the level of thinking you are requiring. Do you want your students to:

♦ **Spit:** Students must remember or recall concepts you have taught them.
   {Define, Identify, Match, Name, Recall, Recognize, State, Describe}

♦ **Synthesize:** Students must place concepts within a larger context.
   {Analyze, Discuss, Distinguish, Compare, Explain, Apply, Classify}

♦ **Speculate:** Students must generate new knowledge based on the individual concepts and larger context.
   {Plan, Design, Generate, Compose, Propose, Transform, Critique, Create}

For example, at the end of this course, students should be able to discuss the biological, environmental, and cultural influences on human development.

In this course description there are three major concepts. Students should know the major theoretical perspectives, understand our physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development, and understand how biology, the environment, and society influence environment. You cannot really observe or measure understanding, so you would take a look at the spit, synthesize, and speculate verbs. This is an introductory course so you are going to stick to the "spit" and "synthesize" verbs. The "speculate" verbs require more high-level thinking, which is not really suitable for this introductory course.

The following are examples of possible learning outcomes:

> **Students who complete this course will be able to:**
> ♦ Identify and describe the major theoretical perspectives addressing human development.
> ♦ Explain the developmental stages for children from conception through adolescence in the areas of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development.
> ♦ Discuss the effect of biological, environmental, and cultural influences on human development.

COURSE MAP

Course maps depict how you will assess each course learning outcome. They show which assignments (or parts of assignments) you will use as direct evidence for student learning outcomes.

To create a course map, you can look at your course outcomes and the course assignments. For this course, there is a midterm, final, and a series of discussion board questions. You want to tie certain questions from these assignments to each of the learning outcomes. You can create a chart that lists the three student learning outcomes on one side, and which exams, papers, or activities will address that outcome on the other. Below is an example of a course map for CD101.

Learning Outcome	Assessment
Identify and describe the major theoretical perspectives addressing human development	Midterm Q's 4, 7* Final Q's 3, 10, 11, 16
Explain the developmental stages for children from conception through adolescence in the areas of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development	Midterm Q 6 Final Q's 5, 9, 18 Discussion Questions 1,2,3,4**
Discuss the effect of biological, environmental, and cultural influences on human development	Discussion Question 5 Final Q 19

* The midterm occurs during week 3, when all of the major theoretical perspectives or stages of development have not yet been covered. Therefore, you are only going to assess those outcomes with a few midterm questions. The majority of assessment will happen in the final, after all the material has been presented.

** Each discussion question evaluates student's understanding of the developmental stage we covered that week. Discussion question 5 is designed specifically to have students demonstrate the third learning outcome.

Note: It can be helpful to let your students know, in the syllabus, exactly where within the course they will be assessed on each learning outcome. An example of a more "student-friendly" course map is included in the sample post syllabus at the end of this document.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: BEFORE

Hunter College of the City University of New York
CD 101: Child Development
Mondays and Wednesdays 4:00pm-5:50pm
Summer 2013

Instructor: Nicole Nagler
Email: assessment@hunter.cuny.edu
Office: Room 1008 East
Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 pm -4:00 pm, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory course provides an overview of multiple aspects of child development. We will examine the major theoretical perspectives of development and how they explain our physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development from conception to adolescence. The relationship between genetics, environmental factors, and societal influence will be considered. This course is designed to allow this basic information to be applied to various fields of study as well as personal application and understanding.

TEXTBOOK

Cook, G., & Cook, J. (2013). *The World of Children* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

GRADING

Midterm Examination 30%

Final Research Paper: 30%

Participation and Attendance: 15%

Discussion Questions on Blackboard: 25%

HUNTER COLLEGE POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or TTY (212) 650-3230.

SCHEDULE

Date	Topic(s)	Assigned Reading and Assignments
Monday 7/16	Syllabus and Introductions	
Wednesday 7/18	Introduction to Theories, Methods Lecture and discussion	Chapter 1
Mon 7/23	Lecture: Prenatal Development Lecture and discussion	Chapters 2 and 3 Discussion Question #1
Wednesday 7/25	Lecture: Infants and toddlers: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development Lecture and discussion	Chapters 4 -6 Discussion Question #2
Monday 7/30	Midterm #1	
Wednesday 8/1	Preschool children: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development Lecture and discussion	Chapters 5-7 Discussion Question #3
Monday 8/6	School Aged: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development Lecture and discussion	Chapters 8-10 Discussion Question #4
Wednesday 8/8	Adolescence: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development Lecture and discussion	Chapters 11-13 Discussion Question #5
Monday 8/13	Wrapping it Up: Exploring Themes	Chapters 13-15
Wednesday 8/15	Final	

Office of Assessment

HUNTER

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: AFTER

Hunter College of the City University of New York
CD 101: Child Development
Mondays and Wednesdays 4:00pm-5:50pm
Summer 2013

Instructor: Nicole Nagler
Email: assessment@hunter.cuny.edu
Office: Room 1008 East
Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 pm -4:00 pm, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory course provides an overview of multiple aspects of child development. We will examine the major theoretical perspectives of development and how they explain our physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development from conception to adolescence. The relationship between genetics, environmental factors, and societal influence will be considered. This course is designed to allow this basic information to be applied to various fields of study as well as personal application and understanding.

Students who complete this course will be able to:

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♦ Explain the developmental stages for children from conception through adolescence in the areas of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development.
♦ Discuss the effect of biological, environmental, and cultural influences on human development.

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Monday 8/13	Wrapping it Up: Exploring Themes	Chapters 13-15
Wednesday 8/15	Final	

COURSE MAP

Learning Outcome	Assessment
Identify and describe the major theoretical perspectives addressing human development	Midterm exam and Final paper
Explain the developmental stages for children from conception through adolescence in the areas of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development	Midterm exam, Final, and Discussion questions 1,2,3,4
Discuss the effect of biological, environmental, and cultural influences on human development	Final paper, Discussion question 5

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