

## ***About This Document:***

A Course Plan is the foundational document for sustainable course design. It can be completed individually or in collaboration with instructional designers, course assistants, or others on a course team. A course plan document will help you keep track of and organize the many moving parts involved in building a course or improving an existing course. Most importantly, this document will give you a place for doing that work that is separate from learning platforms, such as Brightspace, so that your work can be easily modified and re-used for future offerings.

This plan is designed for courses that focus on **Content Mastery**, which includes survey and pre-requisite courses, as well as most large format courses. The format and features of such courses include:

- Course structure organized by topic
- Written/video/audio content focuses on explanation of concepts, including instructor-created content. Example: Weekly short lecture segments with Google Slides, either in-class or [flipped](#).
- Assignments focus on demonstration of and feedback on content mastery: knowledge checks, short answers, problem sets, and discussions.

Language and prompts in this template will help guide you through the design process. You will record two types of information in this document. The first, found primarily in the Structural Overview section, consists of your design notes that capture your choices about course structure and experience; these are notes just for your reference.

The second, found in the Weekly Unit Plan, consists of all of the student-facing elements (pre-class student learning exercises, in-class learning activities, links to course materials and assignments, etc) that you will need to build your course site and learning activities.

Once your course is under way, any changes you make to your live course site or during your in-class sessions should be recorded here as well. By keeping a primary document of your course materials separate from the platform hosting your course, it will be easy to update courses from semester to semester.

This template was originally generated to be used in conjunction with the following document from the FAS Office of Educational Technology:

[Live Syllabus Template](#)

\*\*Please create a separate copy of this document for each of the courses that you are teaching. Click File > Make a Copy. It's recommended to copy and save as a Google Doc.

# Course Plan

Course Title

School/College	Example: CAS or GSAS or LS
Level	Example: Upper/Lower Level Undergraduate; Masters/PhD Graduate
Expected Enrollment	
Teaching strategies	Example: Flipped Classroom, Discussion, Guest Lecture
Course Length	X weeks
Expected Launch	Session/Year

## Course Description

*Can be taken from your syllabus or course proposal*

## Assignments

List all of the ways students will be asked to engage with course materials and each other. This list will help in your choice of tools and pacing of activities.

*EXAMPLE:*

*In-Class Discussions*

*Weekly Quizzes*

*Discussion Forums Posts*

*Problem-Solving Handouts*

*Student Presentations*

*Collaborative Learning Activities*

*Midterm Exam*

*Final Exam*

## Structural Overview

Use this area to make explicit what the interactions between learner and instructor will look like during the course.

When reflecting on the questions below, it can be helpful to use a table to visualize the rhythm of your weekly expectations.

Potential course rhythm formats

Template: **Class Session Focus**

	Pre-Session Student Learning Expectations	In-Class Session	Post-Session Student Learning Expectations	Supplemental Assignment Time
<i>Student</i>				
<i>Instructor</i>				

	Supplementary Assignment Time	Pre-Session Student Learning Expectations	In-Class Session	Post-Session Student Learning Expectations
<i>Student</i>				
<i>Instructor</i>				

Template: **Weekly Focus**

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Student</i>							
<i>Instructor</i>							

### Student Experience Plan

How will you have students use your Brightspace course? What do you expect them to do before and after class sessions? How will you provide them with feedback throughout the semester through low and high stakes assessments?

*Example*

*On a weekly basis students will be expected to complete assigned readings and complete graded writing assignments in Brightspace. Students will participate in peer critiques and broader discussions in class. Students will then be assessed on a portfolio of assignments.*

## Instructor Experience Plan

What will the responsibilities of the instructor(s) be? If you are teaching with a team, this is a good place to plan out what each member's role will be.

*Example:*

*Each week the faculty member will facilitate independent and collaborative learning experiences during in-class sessions and provide feedback to students during group discussions and 1:1 through Brightspace feedback on assignments. The instructor will also engage with students in the form of hosting open office hours. The faculty member will be required to review and grade certain assignments within 7 days of submission, and will assess discussion participation summatively.*

## Course Segment Scheduling Logistics

What will the pattern of engagement look like each week? It's important to be consistent so that students can plan their time accordingly.

*Example:*

*Lecture video and assignment will be released a week ahead of their respective in-session date. Video engagement assignments will be due each week by Tuesday at 9:00PM EST and assignments will be due Sunday at 9:00PM EST.*

## Weekly Breakdown/Flow

What are the types of instructional materials and learning exercises you will use each week to build out the week's activities? Think about what will be made available to students through Brightspace for out-of-class completion so students will be prepared for active learning during your in-class sessions.

*Example of items you might include:*

- *Instructional text written by faculty member*
- *Faculty recorded lectures*
- *Readings*
- *Reputable third-party videos*
- *Repurposed graphics*
- *Discussions*

- *Low-stakes writing assignments*
- *Low-stakes quizzes/knowledge checks*
- *Group/Individual Projects or Presentations*

## Unit/Lesson Format

Each weekly unit will consist of a main introductory statement and a series of sub-units (called “Lessons” in Brightspace) students will complete sequentially. The activities and assignments associated with each sub-unit will include specific due dates.

The question of “What is a unit?” and “What is a sub-unit?” may come up for those who don’t usually make this level of distinction in their courses. The divisions in this format are derived from the backward design process, which has instructors begin from what mastery of the week’s topic looks like, the learning objectives, and work backwards from that goal to articulate the learning activities that will help students reach those objectives.

In this template, the Unit Overview section for each week is the place to put the higher level view of the week’s topic(s), the learning objectives associated with them, and any instructional materials that will be used. The Activity Overview portion of that section contains a general statement about how students will engage with the instructional materials over the course of the week.

The sub-unit sections are often where the real work of backward design comes into play. Here instructors have the opportunity to unpack the Activity Overview into the individual steps that students will need to take to reach the week’s learning goals. Separating the week’s activity out into clearly articulated sub-units allows instructors to ensure there are not any implicit elements in their assignments or expectations of student learning. Having a complete map of all of the expected steps in each week’s activities also gives instructors a way to ensure consistency in efforts and practices across the span of their course.

Some of these materials and activities will take the form of assignments, quizzes, or other activities in Brightspace. Other materials and activities will be better suited for your in-class sessions. Keeping your plan organized in this way will enable you to find the right balance of in and out-of-class learning activities and will help you make expectations clear for students. Further, when it does come time to build your Brightspace course, you will be able to keep the weekly flow of course materials and assignments well organized and create clearer communication for students.

## Course Unit Plan

Please include as many subunits as necessary. Each unit represents a week in your course. The number of subunits may vary from week to week. It can be helpful to keep each in-class session organized as a subunit.

You may also want to design a subunit or several subunits to determine what out-of-class learning expectations you have for your students before and after particular in-class sessions. These out-of-class subunits may be actual assignments or they may be ungraded independent learning experiences. It helps to make these expectations explicitly clear to students to aid them in their development of independent learning skills. Please copy/paste blank lesson templates as necessary, based on the number you will need for your course.

### Unit Overview

Unit Number	Week 1
Unit Title	
Unit Date	Week of
Number of Subunits	
Learning Objectives	
Instructional Materials	
Introduction Text	
Activity Overview & Due Dates	

### Subunit

Subunit Number	
Subunit Title	
Linked Learning Objective	
Instructional Text	
Activity	


Subunit

Subunit Number	
Subunit Title	
Linked Learning Objective	
Instructional Text	
Activity	

Subunit

Subunit Number	
Subunit Title	
Linked Learning Objective	
Instructional Text	
Activity	

Unit Overview

Unit Number	Week 2
Unit Title	
Unit Date	Week of

Learning Objectives	
Instructional Materials	
Introduction Text	
Activity Overview & Due Dates	
Number of Sub Units	

Subunit

Subunit Number	
Subunit Title	
Linked Learning Objective	
Instructional Text	
Activity	

Subunit

Subunit Number	
Subunit Title	
Linked Learning Objective	
Instructional Text	
Activity	

***Continue repeating the Unit/subunit template as needed.***