

Evaluating Syllabi Submitted for Publication in TRAILS

The following criteria are designed to guide TRAILS submitters and Area Editors in evaluating course syllabi as one of the key resources TRAILS publishes. The approach taken in this endeavor is that syllabi are “whole documents.” Syllabi submissions are assessed as a “map of a course” that can be used by others to learn about overall course approaches, innovations, and content. Specific course assignments should be submitted to TRAILS separately.

Syllabi holistic criteria:

1. The syllabus strikes an appropriate balance in tone, content and construction between being a “contract” between professor and students and an “invitation” to the course learning experience.
2. The learning objectives/goals/outcomes for the course are clearly stated and appropriate. Usage notes on ways the instructor effectively assesses the learning will strengthen the submission.
3. The syllabus represents current knowledge in the subject area, appropriate to the level and purpose of the course.
4. The syllabus is in some way unique or of particular value as a potential resource. There are many effective courses in our institutions, thus to be published in TRAILS a syllabus needs to reflect some useful value-added dimension.
 - a. Qualities that might make a syllabus unique or of particular value could include: the subject area is somewhat rare overall, or simply under-represented in TRAILS; the syllabus brings new readings and content to TRAILS that are not well-represented in existing syllabi in the TRAILS collection; the syllabus is especially well designed in terms of content and invitation; it is organized in a particularly effective way in terms of concept and usability; it represents an alternative approach to teaching the subject.
 - b. NOTE: If a specific assignment or activity is identified in the syllabus, the Area Editor should encourage the author to also submit it separately, with Usage Notes for both resources referencing the other.
5. The accompanying Usage Notes from the submitter provide all the critical information. Usage notes should make clear where the course fits in a sociology curriculum (e.g. required? elective? general education? cross listed?). The submitter should also provide an overview of his or her approach to the course and a brief rationale. Finally, we ask submitters to make sure these notes briefly address each of the 4 criteria above in order to help the Area Editor and potential users understand the key features of the syllabus, including balance, course level learning objectives, content, and value-added qualities.
6. Is the resource well written, well organized, and well presented?

Because syllabi shall be evaluated on a holistic level of providing a valuable resource for those teaching a similar course, Area Editors will not address campus-specific policies or requirements. Whether or not plagiarism policies, ADA requirements, late policies, etc. are included or appropriate will not be relevant to the TRAILS review, even though there are good practices associated with these issues that may be demonstrated on some of the syllabi submissions. The goal of publishing syllabi as TRAILS resources is to provide a conceptual and practical tool. We will leave it to each adopter to follow his or her own campus syllabi expectations.