# Course Syllabus Design Review

Share  
**C**  
This is the course syllabus for a new course I am designing. I would like to see if there are internal inconsistencies or references to previous iterations of the design that create echoes that could prove problematic to students. Do you see any such issues:  
Edit  
I'd be happy to review your course syllabus for internal inconsistencies and problematic references to previous iterations. However, I don't see the syllabus content in your message. Could you please share the syllabus text so I can analyze it for:

* Internal inconsistencies (conflicting information, mismatched dates/requirements, etc.)
* References to previous course versions that might confuse students
* Outdated information or "echoes" from earlier designs
* Any unclear or contradictory policies or expectations

Once you provide the syllabus, I'll give you a thorough review with specific feedback on any issues I identify.  
Retry  
**C**  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vRrZbgu0x2VjOBtYuzWdONd_odduJd7nFU1fdS_FLWlLkkWVqB0TTCanqtD_qxKIdxti2bHTSI79xmc/pub>  
Edit  
I'll fetch and review your course syllabus for internal inconsistencies and problematic references.  
favicon  
Fetched Working with AI as Your Thinking Partner  
google.com  
After reviewing your course syllabus, I've identified several internal inconsistencies and potential issues that could confuse students:

## **Major Inconsistencies and Issues:**

### **1. Course Title Confusion**

The document title is "Working with AI as Your Thinking Partner" but this appears to be an ethics course. This fundamental mismatch could confuse students about what course they're actually taking.

### **2. Grading Philosophy vs. Traditional Elements**

You state "There are no quizzes, tests, or points in this course" and emphasize self-assessment, but then include traditional syllabus elements like:

* Standard grading policies
* Course withdrawal dates
* Traditional academic expectations This creates confusion about whether this is truly an alternative assessment course.

### **3. Technology Platform Inconsistencies**

* You mention "ClickUp tracking" as a core feature, but later acknowledge students might not be familiar with it
* The troubleshooting section suggests ClickUp might be unreliable ("ClickUp won't load... try a different browser")
* This undermines confidence in a system you're positioning as essential

### **4. AI Tool Contradictions**

* You emphasize AI as a "thinking partner" but then include extensive warnings about AI limitations
* The checkpoint system seems overly complex for what's supposed to be intuitive collaboration
* Platform memory issues are presented as normal rather than problematic

### **5. Workload Expectations Mismatch**

The course appears to require:

* Sustained semester-long project development
* Regular AI conversations with checkpoint documentation
* Podcast participation
* Multiple framework analyses
* Extensive self-reflection

This seems like a very high workload for what's presented as a flexible, student-centered approach.

### **6. Assessment Clarity Issues**

* Self-assessment criteria are vague ("authentic engagement," "self-awareness")
* No clear connection between the extensive work required and how final grades are determined
* The collaborative grading conversation is mentioned but not well-defined

### **7. Structural Problems**

* Multiple "Back to Top" links that won't function in a Google Doc
* Table of contents references sections that don't clearly exist
* Some sections feel like they were copied from different course iterations

## **Recommendations:**

1. Clarify the course title and ensure it matches the actual content
2. Reconcile the alternative assessment approach with traditional elements
3. Simplify the technology requirements or provide better justification for their complexity
4. Provide clearer workload expectations upfront
5. Better define the self-assessment process with concrete examples
6. Clean up formatting issues and broken references
7. Consider whether some elements are holdovers from previous course versions that no longer fit

The core concept is innovative and potentially valuable, but these inconsistencies could significantly undermine student confidence and clarity about course expectations.  
Retry  
**C**  
Thank you for the feedback. I'd like to do the same thing for a separate freshman composition course with many similar design features...  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vRt8uBk2pF9es-ntyj0YwD8k9R4Gk3ir8SRz-BSaM9jQO4n7lHlhizCu0vmMTYs53MpxCqJAEJSHqYO/pub>  
Edit  
I'll analyze your freshman composition course syllabus for internal inconsistencies and problematic references.  
favicon  
Fetched Course Syllabus  
google.com  
After reviewing your freshman composition course syllabus, I've identified several internal inconsistencies and issues that could confuse students:

## **Major Inconsistencies and Issues:**

### **1. Course Identity Crisis**

* The syllabus claims to focus on "authentic, career-relevant writing" but then includes traditional academic requirements like general education objectives and standard composition outcomes
* You emphasize "no homework" but then require extensive AI documentation, Kanban tracking, and weekly conferences outside class time
* The innovative approach doesn't align with the traditional institutional constraints listed in the back sections

### **2. Workload Contradiction**

You repeatedly claim "All work happens in class—no homework stress" but the course actually requires:

* Daily AI conversations with documentation
* Executive summary "save points" every 20 minutes
* Weekly conference preparation
* Continuous Kanban board updates
* Comprehensive self-assessment evidence collection

This is arguably more work than traditional courses, not less.

### **3. Technology Platform Problems**

* Heavy reliance on ClickUp/Kanban but no backup plan if students can't access it
* AI tool dependency with acknowledgment of platform limitations (memory loss, switching platforms)
* Multiple complex systems (AI, Kanban, scheduling) that could overwhelm students
* The "executive summary save point" system seems overly complex for freshman writers

### **4. Assessment Confusion**

* Claims "no traditional grading" but includes detailed institutional grading policies
* Self-assessment approach contradicts the extensive tracking and documentation requirements
* The relationship between "no grades on assignments" and final course grades is unclear
* Conference-based evaluation seems to conflict with the emphasis on student autonomy

### **5. Structural Inconsistencies**

* Schedule problems: Shows Monday/Wednesday classes but mentions Tuesday/Thursday dates
* Time contradictions: Claims 75-minute sessions but also mentions 105 minutes for P-section
* Broken links: Multiple "Back to Top" links that don't function in Google Docs
* Duplicated content: Several sections repeat information with slight variations

### **6. AI Integration Issues**

* Extensive AI prompts that seem more complex than the writing projects themselves
* Transparency requirements conflict with the claimed flexibility
* The collaborative drafting section essentially has AI write student reflections (problematic for composition pedagogy)

### **7. Professional Writing Claims vs. Reality**

You claim students will do "authentic professional writing" but examples include:

* Academic rhetorical reflections
* Self-assessments for the instructor
* Conference preparation documents

These aren't genuine professional documents but academic exercises.

### **8. Class Management Confusion**

* Group work: Mentions peer groups but unclear how they function in a no-homework environment
* Conference logistics: Weekly 7-minute conferences for all students seems impossible time-wise
* Lab time: Unclear what students actually do during 75-105 minute "lab" sessions

### **9. Institutional Misalignment**

The innovative approach conflicts with:

* Required general education learning outcomes
* Standard composition course expectations
* Traditional academic calendar constraints
* Institutional grading requirements

## **Recommendations:**

1. Clarify the workload reality - Either truly eliminate outside work or acknowledge the extensive documentation requirements
2. Simplify the technology stack - Choose fewer tools and provide clear alternatives
3. Fix scheduling inconsistencies - Align dates, times, and logistics throughout
4. Reconcile assessment approaches - Clarify how self-assessment produces final grades
5. Address professional writing claims - Either use genuinely authentic professional documents or reframe the course focus
6. Streamline AI integration - Reduce complexity and focus on truly valuable applications
7. Clean up structure - Remove broken links, consolidate repeated information, fix formatting
8. Align with institutional constraints - Better integrate innovative approaches with required standards

The core vision of student-centered, professionally relevant writing instruction is valuable, but the current syllabus promises more flexibility and simplicity than it actually delivers. Students may feel misled by the "no homework" claims when facing extensive documentation requirements.  
Retry  
**C**  
OK. Thank you for these questions; there's a lot to parse here, so let me address them 1 by 1.

1. Identity Crisis - a) I don't have any autonomy to remove or reduce the role of traditional academic outcomes for the course, especially since this course serves as a general education credit within the university system, but I have done everything within those constraints to reflect the needs of my own students. I teach at a CTE college within a 4 year institution and so I have to serve both the interests of CTE students wanting practical skills and outcomes and a 4 year institution bound by history and tradition. I know, for instance, that diesel technicians have little future use for traditional 5-paragraph essays, so I have tried to replace those with more authentic writing activities, while still honoring the spirit of the outcomes since this course is taught through the auspices of the English Department. I can have some autonomy in my own teaching, but not enough to completely throw off those expectations. b) All of the activities you mentioned are intended to occur only during class sessions; I have tried to create parameters that will dissuade students from feeling the obligation to spend additional time working on course outcomes outside of class periods. Since I am removing the pressure of highly polished drafts as the primary evidence of learning, and replacing it with self-reflection about what was learned in the production process, it is my hope that even unfinished or less polished work can still provide evidence of learning that can be valued by external auditors looking at the expectations implied in those learning outcomes and objectives. c) I will admit that I have taken extraordinary license with the interpretation of what is meant by those learning outcomes, but I still believe that the course design and learning artifacts that will be created within this course design will still satisfy them, if an external observer demonstrates even a bit of an "open" mind to what is being asked and produced. Does it align with traditional academic approaches - not even close. But as I mentioned earlier, neither my students nor I align with those approaches in the first place, but the demands of the institution do not, in my mind, preclude this kind of innovation.

Edit  
Thank you for that context - it significantly changes how I read the syllabus. You're navigating a genuinely difficult institutional constraint: serving CTE students who need practical skills while satisfying English Department requirements designed around traditional academic writing. That's a sophisticated balancing act, and I can see how you're trying to thread that needle.  
Your point about diesel technicians not needing 5-paragraph essays is spot-on, and reframing the learning evidence from "polished drafts" to "documented learning process" is actually quite clever within those constraints. You're essentially arguing that the *thinking* and *process* skills embedded in the traditional outcomes can be demonstrated through reflection and documentation rather than through traditional academic products.  
Given this context, let me refocus on issues that might still create problems for students navigating this innovative-but-constrained approach:

## **Refined Issues to Consider:**

### **Expectation Management**

Students entering the course may expect either:

* Traditional composition (based on course title/catalog description), OR
* Complete freedom from academic constraints (based on your framing)

Neither expectation matches reality. Could you add a brief section that explicitly acknowledges this tension? Something like: "This course innovates within required institutional frameworks - you'll do authentic professional writing while still meeting university composition requirements."

### **Workload Clarity**

The "no homework" framing might be technically accurate (everything happens in class) but could mislead students about the intensity of in-class documentation and reflection. Consider reframing as "all work happens during class time, but class time will be intensive and focused."

### **Success Metrics for CTE Students**

How will a diesel tech student know if their safety protocol documentation or incident report is "successful" within your system? The self-assessment approach is great, but CTE students often want concrete benchmarks for professional competence.

### **Technology Backup Plans**

Given your CTE population, some students may have limited technology access/comfort. What happens when ClickUp fails or AI platforms are unavailable?  
The institutional constraint you're working within actually makes your approach more impressive, not less. You might consider adding a brief "Why This Course Works This Way" section that acknowledges the constraints while explaining how your approach still serves both CTE career preparation and composition requirements.  
Does this reframing help identify the real friction points that need addressing?  
Retry  
**C**  
To be honest, I don't believe many students will be that concerned about whether the course satisfies those outcomes - most of them don't even realize the outcomes exist. They often just trust that as a professional, I have taken these things into account and that any responsibility for the course failing to meet those outcomes will land on my head, which is accurate.  
I do agree with the workload clarity idea. We'll circle back to that edit after we finish this conversation...  
I intend to resist those urges for benchmarks as much as possible, even though I realize why they exist. Here are a couple of reasons why:  
1. Most of these students are products of 12 or more years of standardized instruction that tell them that writing, along with other intellectual processes, is something finite, objective, and measurable, while most adults outside of education realize that those kinds of expectations are illusory, and often are producing graduates ill-equipped to deal with the ambiguity and challenges of life outside of school. While I can't change the entire system, I can change my own approach to what I do in my own classrooms to address these issues.  
2. Current systems fail to address the needs of many students who have experienced what I term educational trauma in the past. This can take many forms, but so many of my students come into my courses with trauma mindsets that prohibit any kind of learning, especially the formalized learning processes most favored in higher education. Most of the time, composition courses like mine favor students with deep educational resources to call upon, lots of discretionary time to devote to learning, and practiced skills in producing academic prose and thinking. Students without these resources are already far behind the starting line before they even begin, and ethically, I don't see how I can continue to play a role in further injuring or holding students to account for issues far beyond their control. Instead, I am trying to build an approach that allows a student who engages in meaningful, demonstrable effort, that makes progress, that albeit modest, is impactful as it relates to their ability to compose and express thoughts in professional settings to receive the same recognition as students who already come into the class possessing all the skills and abilities need to assure an A before they even begin.  
3. In terms of technology back up plans. Great question! One of the meaningful benefits of teaching a class face-to-face is the ability to communicate directly with students, especially students facing challenges, like logging into a system or facing other technological issues. I will admit that AI access is a critical precursor to this class design; should it be taken away, much, if not all, of the class design will be thrown into chaos. But the fact that a specific Ai model or interface is not required, I believe, reduces some of that stress. Click-up, while providing valuable tracking data for me to gauge student involvement and progress, isn't a critical element for the class to succeed; analog options could be implemented should the need arise. However, I don't think it wise to suggest such alternatives exist unless absolutely necessary. For instance, the inclusion of a kanban system is intended to foster executive management and self-regulatory skills that I believe are critical for graduate success in any number of industries, and is a common source of complaint from employers about the preparation level of current students. Allowing students to immediately opt-out of such activities misses an opportunity to help them, even if they are not immediately in favor of it.  
Edit  
Your reasoning is compelling and shows deep pedagogical thinking. You're essentially designing a course that serves students who have been failed by traditional systems, while still meeting institutional requirements - that's both ethically motivated and strategically sound.  
Your points about educational trauma and starting-line equity are particularly important. The traditional benchmarks you're resisting often reinforce existing inequities rather than measuring genuine learning or professional competence.  
I appreciate your nuanced view on technology backup plans. You're right that mentioning alternatives too early could undermine skill-building goals. The Kanban system teaching executive function is a perfect example - those are exactly the "soft skills" employers consistently cite as missing in new hires.  
Given this deeper understanding, the remaining structural issues I'd focus on are:

## **Remaining Friction Points:**

### **Schedule Alignment Issues**

* The Monday/Wednesday vs Tuesday/Thursday dates still need fixing
* Conference logistics: You mention 7-minute weekly conferences for each student. In a class of 25, that's nearly 3 hours per week. Is this sustainable, or should the syllabus reflect the actual time allocation?

### **AI Documentation Expectations**

The "save transcripts of all AI conversations" requirement might create anxiety for students worried about being judged for their AI interactions. Could you reframe this as "documentation helps you reflect on your learning process" rather than seeming like surveillance?

### **Class Session Reality**

What do students actually DO during those 75-105 minute lab sessions? Some students thrive with unstructured time; others need more guidance about how to use it productively. A brief "typical class session" description might help.

### **Self-Assessment Preparation**

Students traumatized by traditional grading may panic about self-assessment, fearing it's a trick or that they'll accidentally argue themselves into a lower grade. How do you help them understand this is genuinely collaborative and supportive?  
Your approach is ambitious and principled. These are just implementation details to help students navigate what you've designed. The core philosophy is sound - you're treating students as capable professionals while giving them space to develop those capabilities.  
Retry  
[Claude can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.](https://support.anthropic.com/en/articles/8525154-claude-is-providing-incorrect-or-misleading-responses-what-s-going-on)  
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