

To: Professor Ilan Mitchell-Smith
From: Joseph Okonoboh
Subject: Syllabus Memo
Date: June 04, 2015

Summary

In this memo we shall prescribe ways in which the class syllabus can be better formatted into a more user-friendly document. We shall first analyze the rhetorical situation in which this syllabus functions and then proceed to describe the global and local choices that influenced our decisions.

Rhetorical Situation

We shall analyze the rhetorical situation in terms of purpose, audience, and constraints.

- **Purpose**

The main goal of this syllabus is to unambiguously state to the students what the class will entail and the expectations of the student from the instructor. Typically students will be interested in what tasks they will have to accomplish in order to earn a particular grade, what textbooks---if any---that they will have to buy, and the due dates for assignments. Thus, these information must be included in any syllabus intended to be taken seriously.

- **Audience**

The audience are college students. These students will want the syllabus to be accessible, in that they will like to easily and quickly locate information regarding grading and textbooks, if any.

- **Constraints**

As expected of college syllabuses, this syllabus must use precise and formal language, especially since it is contract between the instructor and the student.

Global Choices

- **Whitespace**

The first noticeable---and arguably chief---problem with the syllabus is its lack of proper indentation and white space. Although the capitalized headings divide the syllabus into logical sections, students will be hard-pressed to distinguish between different sections of the syllabus. In fact, some students will resort to using their hands to trace out lines so that they know where subsequent sections begin.

- **Section Headings**

The section headings should be contrasted from the rest of the text. We shall achieve this distinction by bolding the headings.

- **Consistency and Order**

Two of the headings were underlined and centered while the others were not. The part of the syllabus that dealt with “Academic Honesty” should have been under the “Academic Integrity” section. Also, some of the sections may need to be rearranged, with the more important ones placed before the less important ones.

Local Choices

- **Grammar and Spelling**

Some sentences are not capitalized and some sentences are ambiguous because they are either grammatically incorrect or are suspected to be missing one or two words.

- **Formality and Tone**

In the tentative schedule, the syllabus uses inappropriate words such as “totally” and “man”. In an informal setting, this would be appropriate, but since we already specified that we would only allow formal language in this syllabus, we must not use these words.