

The Teacher and Course Planning

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish”
(Luke 14:28-30).

Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to...

1. Design a syllabus for any course or training program one is teaching.
2. Differentiate between a syllabus and a course report.
3. Develop learning objectives for any unit of study to be taught.
4. Identify and implement the four basic areas of instructional design.
5. Outline what should be included in a syllabus and a course report.
6. List and explain the categories of the simplified and revised Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning contained in this lesson.
7. Justify the need of a syllabus and course report within an instructor’s context or educational setting.
8. Distinguish between the three categories of objectives.
9. Identify or state the three functions of objectives.
10. Recall the three areas teachers or teaching brings about change.
11. Utilize Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning in assisting students in reaching higher levels of thinking skills and in the preparation of educational objectives.

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Introduction

You can help your students grow by carefully planning and preparing for each course you teach. A famous discussion in the story of Alice in Wonderland asked, “Would you tell me, which way I ought to go from here?” The response, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

In planning for your course a syllabus is recommended and beneficial (for both the students and the instructor). It is one way of telling students which way they ought to go to reach the destination (end of your course). The word “syllabus” means “label” or “table of contents.” It communicates what the course is about, why the course is part of the big picture of the overall curriculum, the educational journey planned by the instructor for his students, and what are the expectations from the students in order to receive a good grade. The syllabus is a road map to guide the teaching and learning process. It tells the students upfront, on the first day of classes, the importance the instructor places on instructing and helping students; that he is well prepared and enthusiastic about his subject. Going over a syllabus is an excellent thing to do on the first day of your class. It sets the tone for the class. It is an effective communication and organization tool. Whatever the instructor feels students need to know at the beginning of a course could be included. The syllabus should also give a glimpse of the relationship of the course to the school’s overall program of study.

Designing a Syllabus

A good syllabus includes the following:

Course Information	This includes the course title, level, course number, number of classroom or credit hours, and any prerequisites required. Make sure the semester number and year are written on the syllabus.
Textbooks	A listing of textbooks to be used in the course, along with the name of the authors. Also include a list of any handouts, articles, or supplementary materials being used. Some instructors, not using a particular textbook, put together a packet of materials to be used. We call this a “Course-pack.”
Faculty Information	Name of Instructor, cell number, e-mail address, and office hours (if appropriate). If you provide any of these, let your students know the boundaries, and any restrictions. Indicate if you have a teaching assistant working with you, and his pertinent contact information.
Marking Scheme	A breakdown of the various types of evaluations and the grade subscribed to each. Any factor that has a bearing on the final grade should be communicated and documented in the syllabus.
Objectives	Six to ten clearly stated, reasonable, measurable, attainable course objectives give a clear indication of expected learning outcomes. The

	question is asked, “What will students be able to know, be, and do as a result of taking this course?” Each lesson or unit could have specific goals but this would likely be part of textbook design or lesson planning. The objectives should enable the student to study for tests. More information on objectives is provided in this lesson.
Lessons	A day-by-day or week-by-week breakdown of the general lessons to be covered.
Assignments	The breakdown should include a calendar or indication of all required readings, assignments, quizzes, tests, exams, essays, etc. Ensure that all assignments relate to the course purpose and objectives. No one enjoys “busy work” that merely takes up time but has no relevance to the course. Integrate the assignments with the objectives and lesson plans.
Teaching Methods or Styles	Indicate the various teaching methods to be used that minister to the different learning styles represented by students.
Course Policies	A listing of any policies specific to the instructor, that students should be aware of.
Bibliography	A listing of books or articles that would encourage the student toward further or more developed study of the course content. This is important since one of our goals is to equip students for lifelong learning.
Disclaimer	Include a statement that the schedule is tentative, subject to change, depending on the progress of the class, or the needs of the students. Assuming it is permissible by school administration; adjust the course to meet realities you find. The syllabus is meant as a guide, not a taskmaster.

It is easy to dream that your course is the only course your students are taking, or that yours is more important than that of anyone else. However, students may be taking several other courses in the same semester. Fulltime schools may be offering ten or more other courses to the student in a given time period.

W. J. McKeachie in *Teaching Tips* advises a realistic studying week is about forty hours. Divide this by the total number of courses being taken and you should come up with the allocated time for your course. A fair assessment would be for every hour spent in your class, it is likely that there is equal time or double time spent in out-of-class learning. Two extremes should be avoided. One is to provide the students with no out-of-class learning. The other is to overload the student with useless and fruitless activities that limit learning. Avoid busy work. Avoid no work. The point is: when planning out-of-class activities keep the big picture in mind.

The basic structure of the course calendar could be set up as follows:

Week Number or Date	Lesson Topic	Lesson Objectives	Teaching Methods	Readings, Assignments,
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				Tests, Evaluations (including due dates)
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Typically, the basics of instructional design for one’s course covers four major areas. They are:

Objectives	Where are we going? Why am I going to teach this? (Why we teach). Who will I teach?
Content	What am I going to teach? (What we teach)
Methods	How am I going to teach? (How we teach) What instructional strategies will be used?
Evaluation	How will I know I succeeded at teaching this?

At the end of the course, a course report is recommended. A standard form or format can be established by each school. Attached to this form, the instructor adds the syllabus, attendance sheet, grading sheets, copies of all handouts, assignments, quizzes, tests, and exams; along with answer keys for all. This provides a record of what has been covered or utilized in the course. This assists future instructors of the course with useful material to assist in planning their teaching.

Curriculum by Objectives

Remember the curriculum for the Global Association of Theological Studies will be: Biblically-rooted, cross-cultural, values-driven, **Objectives-based**, criterion-referenced, and transformation-oriented. This section deals specifically with one aspect of our curriculum: objectives-based.

Each course for GATS will contain a minimum of ten objectives covering the course. Each e-lesson developed for the Global University of Theological Studies using the Knowledge Presenter software will have specific objectives at the beginning of each lesson. Any textbook developed for GATS will contain course objectives covering the course, and then lesson objectives at the beginning of each unit of study.

As we design each course we realize we are about to take a trip. Our instructors and students need to realize where they are going. Then they will have a better chance of getting there, and know when they have arrived. Having such a plan is what we call “objectives” or expected outcomes. Objectives are like:

Pictures



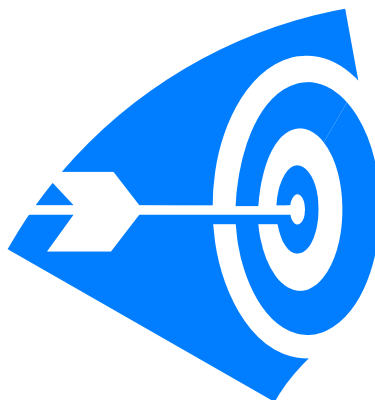
Allow a learner to see what he will be able to know, do, or be after the learning experience.

Maps



Answer, "Where are we going? What route will we take?"

Targets



Focus learner toward what he should hit.

Blueprints

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Guide the learner and instructor in teaching and learning what is necessary. (Mager 1997, 73)

Road Signs



Direct the learner as he travels the road to effective learning.

Students expect us “to lead them somewhere—to new discoveries, new skills, new attitudes, and values....We give them a better impression of the journey if we know where we’re going and what we expect on the way” (Yount 1996, 131).

Objectives are the intended results of the learning trip. They reveal what learners should know, do, or be once they reach their destination. Without them “Instructors simply function in a fog of their own making.” (Mager 1984, 5)

Kemp, Morrison and Ross identify three functions of objectives. They are as follows:

1. *Focus*: Objectives help instructors choose teaching methods, activities, and content that simplify the learning process. They give a sense of direction and purpose. A learner learns best when he understands what he is learning is useful.
2. *Framework*: Objectives provide the skeleton for evaluating students and the effectiveness of instruction. This permits a learner to know the behavioral change he should demonstrate after

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the learning experience. It also allows instructors to test student performance according to intentions. Students usually perform poorly on tests when they don't know what to expect. They do better once they know what the objectives are.

3. *Funnel*: Objectives guide the learner in what he should master. (Kemp et al. 1996, 69-70) Funnel all instructional activities and content through the learning objectives.

There are three types of educational objectives:

- Cognitive
- Affective
- Psychomotor

Did those three terms leave you in confusion? Let me simplify. At the end of the learning journey there are things that a learner should:

- Know
- Be
- Do

1. *Cognitive (know)*—deals with recall and recognition of knowledge.
2. *Affective (be)*—deals with a change in interests, behavior, attitudes, or values. This is very important in theological education. However, it is difficult to write objectives that define behaviors that show attitudes. Jesus had this in mind when He said, “Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:20, *NIV*). Most of the New Testament qualifications for ministry fall in this domain (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 1:6-9). Knowledge is seldom mentioned. This is disturbing since most evaluation in theological education focuses on knowledge rather than character formation.
3. *Psychomotor (do)*—deals with skills.

Teaching brings about life transformation. We teach for change.

- Change Learner's Mind
- Changed Learner's Heart
- Changed Learner's Behaviors

See the document entitled “Three Categories for Learning” for further information on the domains of learning within the theological education setting. This should be provided with this lesson.

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Objectives require action to achieve. Therefore, we need clear action verbs. Objectives are written from the learner’s point of view. They cause us to focus on the student rather than the content. They help us answer, “What will the learner specifically be able to do?”

Bloom’s Taxonomy Verbs

Exercise 1. Ask three or four volunteers who consider themselves good marksmen to come to the front for a contest. Give each volunteer a sheet of paper. Instruct the marksmen to crumple their papers into balls. At the signal, they are to throw their balls to determine who the best marksman is. Give the signal.

Talk about it. Did the marksmen throw their balls? Where or why not? What was missing? Why did they need a target? How does this relate to teaching?

When developing objectives here is a handy shopping list of action verbs. They are arranged according to levels of anticipated learning. Objectives often start with: “At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to...” or “At the end of this unit the student will be able to...” or “At the end of this lesson the learner will be able to...”

Knowledge	Arrange, Choose, Count, Define, Describe, Draw, Find, Group, Identify, Label, List, Match, Name, Quote, Recall, Recite, Sequence, Tell, Write
Comprehension	Conclude, Define, Demonstrate, Discuss, Explain, Generalize, Identify, Illustrate, Interpret, Paraphrase, Predict, Propose, Report, Restate, Reword, Review, Summarize, Tell, Translate
Application	Apply, Change, Choose, Compute, Dramatize, Interview, Prepare, Produce, Role-play, Select, Show, Transfer, Use
Analysis	Analyze, Characterize, Classify, Compare, Contrast, Debate, Deduce, Diagram, Differentiate, Discriminate, Distinguish, Divide, Examine, Include, Inspect, Outline, Relate, Research, Separate, Uncover,
Synthesis	Combine, Compose, Construct, Create, Design, Develop, Form, Integrate, Invent, Make, Organize, Perform, Plan, Produce, Propose, Rewrite, Structure
Evaluation	Appraise, Argue, Assess, Choose, Classify, Conclude, Critique, Decide, Determine, Evaluate, Judge, Justify, Predict, Prioritize, Prove, Rank, Rate, Reject, Select,

This table was taken from: http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/time_savers/bloom/ Expanded by James Poitras

Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning has been widely used by teachers designing objectives, test questions and in

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promoting higher level thinking skills. Notice the second chart uses action verbs rather than nouns. This slight change and a couple others were made by L. W. Anderson and his team when they proposed the revision of educational objectives below. Each skill level builds on the previous level.

Thinking Skills	
Remember	Retrieve important facts from long-term memory.
Understand	Build new material by mixing it with existing ideas or things one has learned.
Apply	Use procedures to solve problems and/or complete tasks.
Analyze	Subdivide content into meaningful parts and relate the parts.
Evaluate	Come to a conclusion about something based on criteria.
Create	Rearrange elements into a fresh pattern, structure, or purpose.

This table was adapted from *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips* (Twelfth Edition), Pages 320-322.

Conclusion

Sitting down and planning a course or semester saves. The instructor is saved from aimlessly advancing through the course clueless of what turns and bumps exist on the road ahead. Students are saved from the guessing game of what will happen next and are better prepared for the journey. At the end of the trip, through the preparation of a course report, the teacher looks back on the road travelled and can sigh with relief, “I succeeded. My students succeeded. The preparation of this course report will be helpful in preparing this educational journey the next time this subject is offered; whether taught by me or someone else.” All educational pilgrims are helped on their way to lifelong learning.

Bibliography

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Lesson in Review

1. What is a syllabus? _____

2. Why is a syllabus important to students? _____

3. What does a syllabus communicate? _____

4. Why do students not enjoy “busy work” type of assignments? _____

5. What should a syllabus contain? _____

6. Why is it important to provide a bibliography within a syllabus? _____

7. What is a course pack? _____

8. How many course educational objectives should be included for each course? _____

9. What two extremes should be avoided in planning assignments for a course? _____

10. List and explain the four basics of instructional design. _____

11. What is a course report? _____

12. What should be included in a course report? _____

13. What are objectives? _____

14. What are the three functions of objectives? _____

15. What are three types of objectives? Offer a brief explanation for each. _____

16. Teaching is designed to change what three things about a learner? _____

Assignment

You have been asked to teach a course on the Book of Acts for a leadership group in a local church. The group will meet two hours per week for twelve weeks. The pastor wants to give a certificate to participants but requests there to be some form of evaluation. Design a syllabus for the course. Outline ten objectives for the course, for which you are designing the syllabus.