THE SYLLABUS
A KEY ONLINE TOOL

The syllabus, when well designed and developed, is the backbone of the course, traditional face-to-face as well as other types (See Syllabus items in the "Course Management" section elsewhere in this site). When placed online, the syllabus can become one of the most powerful teaching tools available.

There are several advantages to having the syllabus placed online:

1. It provides for continuous access by students.
   - The online syllabus serves as a reference document throughout the course.
   - The online syllabus cannot get lost.

2. It allows the instructor to expand and refine on an ongoing basis.
   - If put together as a set of documents rather than as a single document, parts of the syllabus such as the schedule can be modified as necessary without affecting the rest of the syllabus. Not only is this convenient for the instructor, but students don’t have to reprint the whole syllabus to get to the revised part (most students still print an online syllabus...).
   - As new information and/or resources become available, they can be easily referenced and integrated.

3. It can serve as a gateway to teaching/learning resources.
   - By establishing external links within the online syllabus, it can be transformed from simply a course guide to a teaching/learning tool. Two kinds of external links are possible:

     **External Link I** --- This type of link allows linking of the syllabus to other documents maintained by the instructor. These can include materials developed by the instructor, lecture notes, etc.

     **External Link II** --- This type of link allows linking of the syllabus to sites and documents outside the instructor's documents. These can include primary source materials such as documents found at the Smithsonian or art work found at museums; they can also include web sites maintained by professional organizations, library sites (including the university's own library), other instructors' web pages, etc.

4. It can serve as a communication tool.
   - By creating 'mailto' links, the online syllabus provides a communication tool between instructor and students. It provides for the transmission of assignments, a forum for questions and answers, and a course management tool for information on attendance etc.

5. It saves trees.

(For technical instructions on creating links, contact your unit’s technology support staff of the Instructional Development Center.)