

Pacific School of Religion

Guidelines to Writing Student Learning Outcomes in Syllabi

In 2007 the Graduate Theological Union distributed a helpful set of instructions among core doctoral faculty to help modify the way in which faculty write syllabi to include student learning outcomes. The following guidelines may help instructors include student learning outcomes in their syllabi.

The following brief instructions are modified from a presentation given by Barbara Green and Marty Stortz on "Assessment's Long Reach: Mission Statement to Feedback Loop."

1. Reflect on the [PSR Direction Statement](#) (see PSR catalog or website)
2. Consider the "Objectives" specified for students in your area (go to the GTU website for a description of the objectives in your area at <http://www.gtu.edu/admissions/m-a-programs/m-a-areas-of-study>).
3. Decide which of these program and area objectives your course is designed to address.
4. Write student learning outcomes for your course syllabus, using the form "At the end of this course, the student will be able to:"
5. Design course assignments and assessment methods that will show both you and the students how well they are accomplishing the learning outcomes for the course.

Note that "student learning outcomes" are different from "course objectives". To illustrate:

Under the old paradigm, a course objective on my syllabus might have read something like this:

"This course will study the spiritualities of various Christian traditions."

Under the new paradigm, this becomes:

"After successfully completing this course, students will be able to describe the spiritualities of six different Christian traditions with reference to their sources of authority, devotional practices, and engagement with social issues."

Hopefully, it is apparent how the second way of stating a course objective gives students a better idea of what is expected of them, and also indicates something about what I will consider important when it is time for assessment (grading) of their work.

If you need some help in constructing learning outcomes for your courses, I recommend the section on "Course Aims and Objectives" in a handbook on "Constructing a Syllabus" available on the Brown University website at:

http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/publications/syllabus.html