

# Who! WHY do my teachers keep giving me these SYLLABI!?

At the beginning of every semester, in every class, every student is inevitably handed a multiple page packet of everything that's going to happen in that course. It's a lot of paper to carry around and a lot of students simply throw this packet away—but successful students learn how to use them and know exactly why they have a syllabus!

## WHAT IS A COURSE SYLLABUS?

A roadmap! Most course syllabi will tell you a few key things: What you're supposed to get out of the class by the end of the semester, what materials you need, contact information for your instructor, and a heads up about large projects. Many syllabi even include a course schedule and homework due dates. They're directions to get you to the end of the semester with ease!

OKAY.  
I READ IT.  
Give me  
**A** GOOD reason  
**not** to just  
**G** throw it out.

How about I give you four good reasons?

- Syllabi can be used as a reference to check due dates. It's disrespectful to the teacher who put a lot of work into their syllabus for you to completely ignore them and send them twenty emails asking for due dates throughout the semester.
- You can use it to gain the advantage in your class! Have an extra hour before class time? Take a look at your syllabus- you'll be able to know what topics will be covered in that class ahead of time and be able to do a preview of the chapter. By having that knowledge in class, you can increase your participation. Many teachers nowadays count participation as a part of the grade, so doing this will guarantee success both in preparation and participation.
- If you have a question about classroom policies or student learning outcomes, most of the time the information will be in the syllabus. This protects both you and the teacher- if the instructor isn't teaching anywhere near what they said they would, you have a hard copy of what they claimed should happen available to prove it.
- Many instructors will put instructions for large projects in there that they won't bring up in class except to tell you that it's due the next time you meet. Make sure that you keep that information so you don't fall behind on any class projects and you can prevent your grade from suffering because of it.

## SOMETHING HERE DOESN'T make a whole lot of sense!!

Ask your teacher! They'll be more than ecstatic that you've been reading and keeping up with the syllabus than they will be worried about taking a little time to answer your question. Asking questions is a great thing to do and a huge part of being a successful learner. The syllabus might be a map, but everyone needs a little help reading them once in a while.