



## Evaluating Syllabi Submitted for Publication in TRAILS

The following criteria are designed to guide TRAILS submitters and Editorial Board in evaluating course syllabi. The approach taken in this endeavor is that syllabi are “whole documents.” Syllabi submissions are assessed as a “map of a course” that can be used by others to learn about overall course approaches, innovations, and content. *Specific course assignments should be submitted to TRAILS separately.*

### Syllabi holistic criteria:

1. The syllabus strikes an appropriate balance in tone, content and construction between being a “contract” between professor and students and an “invitation” to the course learning experience.
2. The learning objectives/goals/outcomes for the course are clearly stated and appropriate. The course or topic schedule includes sub-learning outcomes for each major topic/unit. Usage notes on ways the instructor effectively assesses the learning will strengthen the submission.
3. The syllabus represents current knowledge in the subject area and is appropriate to the level and purpose of the course. All assigned reading/videos are listed with complete citations so that adopters can locate the resources.
4. The syllabus is in some way unique or of particular value as a potential resource. There are many effective courses in our institutions, thus to be published in TRAILS a syllabus needs to reflect some useful value-added dimension.
  - a. Qualities that might make a syllabus unique or of particular value could include: the subject area is somewhat rare overall, or simply under-represented in TRAILS; the syllabus brings new readings and content to TRAILS that are not well-represented in existing syllabi in the TRAILS collection; the syllabus is especially well-designed in terms of content and invitation; it is organized in a particularly effective way in terms of concept and usability; it represents an alternative approach to teaching the subject.
  - b. NOTE: If a specific assignment or activity is identified in the syllabus, the reviewer should encourage the author to also submit it separately, with Usage Notes for both resources referencing the other.
5. The accompanying Usage Notes from the submitter provide all the critical information. Usage notes should make clear where the course fits in a sociology curriculum (is it required? elective? general education? cross listed?). The submitter should also provide an overview of his or her approach to the course and a brief rationale. Finally, we suggest that submitters make sure the Usage Notes briefly address each of the 4 criteria above in order to help reviewers and potential users understand the key

features of the syllabus, including balance, course-level learning objectives, content, and value-added qualities. Usage Notes should provide rationale for course design decisions.

6. Is the resource well-written, well-organized, and well-presented? Because syllabi shall be evaluated on a holistic level, with an emphasis on their use value for faculty teaching a similar course, reviewers will not address campus-specific policies or requirements. TRAILS reviewers will not review plagiarism policies, ADA requirements, late policies, etc., even though there are good practices associated with these issues that may be demonstrated on some of the syllabi submissions. We will leave it to each adopter to follow his or her own campus syllabi expectations. Authors may opt to remove campus-specific boilerplate policies and dates from their submission.