Model Syllabus

Faculty will remember the one page syllabi they received when they were students. These syllabi often featured no more than the title of the course, the topic headings, chapters from the textbooks, and the dates of the Midterm and the Final. Today's syllabi are typically more complete. They can be 3-5 pages long and feature a course description, a breakdown of the grade, contact hours, and topic descriptions.

Course description
This should be rooted in your department's official description, but you can also add sentences detailing your particular approach.

Learning objectives
This is a breakdown of the essential skills students should learn in your course. Ideally, you should have some way of measuring each of these skills so you know when students aren't picking them up. It's also helpful to tweak your learning objectives every semester in light of last semester's experiences so you can build on what worked and change what didn't work.

Breakdown of the grade
A list of assignments for the course with their contribution to the overall grade. Conventionally, in the humanities and social sciences, the breakdown of the grade has looked something like this:

- Quizzes 10%
- Midterm 30%
- Final 30%
- Term paper (20 pages) 20%
- Participation 10%

Faculty also experiment by substituting a project for the midterm or the final or the term paper. There are many alternatives: The Internet enables faculty to set up asynchronous assignments that students can work on at their own pace; some faculty like to use group projects in or out of the classroom or to take students on field trips; and now faculty can participate in a service learning option by which students can earn credit for internships in fields related to their studies. Experimentation renews the challenge in teaching and can provide an enriched learning experience for faculty and student alike.

Contact information
This would include the room number of your office and the day and times of your office hours. You might also include your email address and your office telephone number where students can leave you a message. Whatever you prefer to do, it's best to be clear to students about how you want to be contacted. Do you prefer them to make appointments before they see you in office hours (so you can be prepared) or do you just want them to show up (even if that means they have to come back)? Do you prefer a message on your office answering machine or an email? Lastly, a lot of what happens in office hours also happens when students talk to you as they're entering and leaving class. Since that's the case, what means do you have for taking notes on what students ask you to do? Never neglect the low tech solution: a clipboard, a sheet of paper, and a pencil might serve you just as well as a fancy PDA.

Requirements
This is your chance to state clearly what you expect from your students if they are to do well. Many requirements, such as keeping up with the reading, attending regularly, and turning the
assignments in-on time, are obvious - which is why it's often a good idea to spell them out so that when you have a problem, a student can't turn around and claim "well, there's nothing about that on the syllabus". If you are using a web site to orchestrate the course then the obvious requirements might be checking the home page once a week or checking their email regularly so that they can receive your replies to their inquiries.

**Textbooks**
A list of the books you have ordered at the bookstore. Author, title, publisher, date, and the ISBN are helpful to the bookstore. Books are the backbone of the course, but picking the right books for a course is always a challenge. You have to think about how you're going to use the reading: in which topics and in what assignments? How will you know students have bought the books in the first place, and how will you know they've read them? Even when a course is up and running, you have to decide which books to add and which to drop, and whether you want to keep the textbook or change it.

**Course Calendar**
You could note the dates of the in-class Midterm and the in-class Final or the due date for the term paper. Pencil in short essay dates, field trips, group projects, stages of the term paper, and so on. Remember Field Trips need rain dates!

For each Topic on the Syllabus
it's helpful to students if you give the:

- Topic number and title
- A short topic description
- The required reading
- Any additional recommended reading

Thus, as they read it from top to bottom on the first day, the syllabus shows students how the course will unfold over the course of the semester.