**Planning your course: Things to consider**

# **How does this course fit into the larger curricular context?**

# **How does this course fit into the department, the institution, the profession?**

# **Do you have recommended or required pre-requisites for your course? What are they?**

# **By the end of your course, what do you expect students to…**

# **a) Know? (What key concepts/ideas/theories will students know and understand?)**

# **b) Do? (What skills will they be able to apply)?**

# **c) Possess in terms of: attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values?**

# **Another way of approaching this question: Imagine it is two years from now and you've run into one of your students who had taken your class this year. S/he's telling you that the most important thing s/he learned in your class was X. What do you hope the X is? Try to give an immediate response. Write it down. What would that look like in practice?**

**Course Design Working Document**

This working document is meant as a resource for participants taking the Course Design Intensive (University of British Columbia).  We encourage participants to adapt this to their own needs. This document is largely based on the work of Wiggins & McTighe (2005).

Wiggins, G.P. and McTighe, J. (2005). Understanding by Design (2nd Ed.). Alexandria, VI: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

**Part 1: Learning Context & Enduring Understandings**

**Key Question 1: What factors influence the design of the course?**

**Why is this important?**Effective course designacknowledges the context in which it is embedded. Context includes considerations about the learners (who they are and how they learn) and about the broader goals and outcomes defined at the departmental, faculty or societal level (professional bodies).

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| **Broader Goals & Context** | **Learner Considerations** |

**Guiding Questions for Key Question 1**

**Learners:** What do you know about the learners who might take your course? What do you need to find out? What aspects of the course will allow for learner choice?  How will learners participate in assessment of their own learning?

**Broader Goals and Context:**

**Place:** What place does your course have in the curriculum (foundational, elective, etc)?

Are there pre-requisites? Is it part of a program or set curriculum?

**Space:** what role will technology/online spaces have in your course?

**Context**: In what ways is your field or discipline changing and how might this be important?

**Constraints and Known Factors**: class size, teaching assistant support, technical support, administrative support, technological support, time, experience, etc.

**Key Question 2: What core understandings guide the learning?**

**Why is this important?** Understanding happens when learners actively make sense of what they are learning through inquiry, application and reflection. Big ideas and essential questions act as scaffolding for learners - from which they build connections between concepts and ideas to support their thinking. Understanding leads to transfer - which refers to the ability to determine when and how to apply what has been learned in different contexts (the ultimate aim of meaningful learning).

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| **Big ideas** | **Essential Questions** |

**Guiding Questions for Key Question 2**

**Big ideas/Enduring Understandings:** What are the linchpin ideas in your course (ie. they hold together the related content knowledge) ? For example, in the photography example above” the essence of photography is capturing light” serves as an organizing idea for learners to refer to and relate to as they learn and experiment with new ideas. What big ideas provide a way for learners to structure new learning and build connections?

**Big ideas:** examples and criteria :<http://bit.ly/1lku7Ba>

**Essential questions:** What questions act as a guide to learning in the course and may even form the basis of ongoing inquiry?

**Essential questions**: Examples and criteria: <http://bit.ly/1kHJ3Zt>

**Key Question 3: How will I determine priorities?**

**Why is this important?** The creative process of course design often unleashes many more ideas about why, how and what students might learn than can reasonably be addressed in a 13 week course. For this reason, it is helpful to determine priorities around the big ideas in the course. This framework will help you keep the core ideas at the forefront of your design and (from there) consider what learners will need to know, do and be familiar with as they work toward understanding. It helps focus the design process.

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| **Learners will understand that…**    *Big idea:*  *Essential Questions:* | **In order to understand “big idea” X, learners will need to know, do and apply…** | **It will be important for learners to be familiar with…** |

**Guiding Questions for Key Question 3**

How do I translate big ideas and essential questions into priorities for learning?  Given the context of my course (including constraints of time, the level of the course, the format etc), what do I want my learners to be able to know, do, value by the end of the course (given what I claimed were the “enduring understandings” I have identified)?

**Part 2: Learning Outcomes**

*Note: In the remaining sections of the course plan, you will begin to think about alignment. So that you can begin to visualize the alignment between the outcomes you have defined and the evidence and assessment methods you will consider here, you may want to use the* [**3 Column Course Planning doc.**](http://bit.ly/1lXua6l)

*In this section, you will practice taking some of the priorities you identified above (from the column “What do I want my students to understand, know, do and value?”  and translate these into learning outcomes.*

Suggested steps for translating the information in the first column [successful completion of this course means that learners...] into learning outcomes.

1. Revisit the priorities you identified and select one.
2. Ensure that the items in the “know, do, value” column correspond to the “big idea”. That is, if students can “know, do, value” X, does this align with at least one of the big idea that you hold as important?
3. Drawing from the information in columns “understand, know/do/apply”, create learning outcomes (see resources for Day 2 ).

**Part 3: Evidence/Assessment**

**Key Question 4: What counts as evidence of understanding?**

**Why is this important?** Understanding develops as a result of ongoing inquiry, experiment, reflection and re-working over time. It makes sense, then, that evidence of understanding needs to be collected over time, using varied methods, rather than as a single event (Wiggins & McTighe, p.152). Learners need opportunities to demonstrate understanding in ways that require them to reflect on their thinking and decision making processes - they “why” they did what they did as much as the “how”.  Assessments for understanding are best grounded in learning tasks that are close to the sorts of activities that someone would engage in if they had a professional role in the area of study.

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| **Learning Outcomes** | **Evidence/Assessment** | | **Activities** |
| ***Successful completion of the course***  ***means that learners...*** | ***Learners will know they are meeting***  ***course goals when...*** | | ***To help learners make meaning and***  ***develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes***  ***that will help them be successful,***  ***they will engage in...*** |
| ***Understand***  ***(note that other learning outcomes may roll up to these larger goal)*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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| ***Know and do/apply*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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| ***Are familiar with*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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| ***Value*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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**Guiding Questions for Key Question 4**

How can the content in this course best be **understood** (by doing, thinking about, discussing, experimenting, iterating, analyzing, etc.).

What will learners do, apply, create to **demonstrate or express** what they have learned?

How will they be **assessed** and what will they **produce** in order to be assessed (ie. research paper, series of blog posts, collection of images, etc)?

**How you assess your students will impact how & what they learn.**

Blumberg activity: <http://bit.ly/1klU0Av>

**Why** do you assess?

**Who** else assesses?

* learners themselves
* peers
* TAs
* other instructors
* community (through ratings, etc).

**What** do you assess?

**Part 4: Learning Activities and Teaching Strategies**

**Key Question 5: What learning activities and resources support learners in constructing and developing their understanding?**

**Why is this important?**The activities that learners engage in help them make sense of what they are learning and provide an opportunity to integrate what they know with what they are learning. Authentic learning challenges can motivate learners to participate in “real world” contexts. Careful selection of learning activities is essential in order to support the understandings articulated in part one and prepare learners for the assessment challenges outlined in part two. Aligning activities for learning with desired learning outcomes and assessment completes the 3 stage backward design process.

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| **Learning Outcomes** | **Evidence/Assessment** | | **Activities** |
| ***Successful completion of the course***  ***means that learners...*** | ***Learners will know they are meeting***  ***course goals when...*** | | ***To help learners make meaning and***  ***develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes***  ***that will help them be successful,***  ***they will engage in...*** |
| ***Understand*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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| ***Know and do/apply*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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| ***Are familiar with*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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| ***Value*** | **Evidence** | **Assessment Method** | **Learning Activities** |
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**Guiding Questions for Key Question 5**

What activities will **equip** learners to produce their evidence of understanding the central themes of the course?

How will learners **engage** in questioning, provoking thought, addressing a challenge or analyzing and solving a problem?

What sort of **learning challenges** are relevant to learners and linked to the big ideas of the course?

**Syllabus Prep**

Why is this course important to learners? How might the big ideas at the heart of the course relate to their lives? What gets you excited about this course?

**How would YOU describe your course in a way that inspires (or at least engages) curiosity/interest?** - not the calendar description. Think of this first attempt at a draft of your thinking so far about why this course is important in the world?

Resource: \* Bart, Mary (2015) [A Learner Centered Syllabus Helps Set the Tone For Learning](http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/a-learner-centered-syllabus-helps-set-the-tone-for-learning/) - Faculty Focus

**Next Steps: Course Sequence Planning Guide**

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| Week’s Theme \* | Out-of-Class | In-Class | Reading/Resources |
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\* Note: themes should relate to core ideas, key concepts or essential questions that are required for understanding/working with big ideas and achieving learning outcomes.

3 Column Course Planning Worksheet

Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| Big Ideas/Enduring Understandings: (reference: <http://bit.ly/1lku7Ba>) | Essential Questions: (reference: <http://bit.ly/1kHJ3Zt>) |

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| **Learning Outcomes**    What will people **gain or learn** as a result of participating in your course?    *(consider outcomes that will have enduring value beyond the course)* | **Evidence/Assessment**  How will they **demonstrate** **or apply** this learning?  **Who** will and **how** will work be **assessed/evaluated**?    *(consider alignment with outcomes and relevance beyond the course)* | **Learning Activities**  What activities or opportunities will help learners **build the capacity** for demonstrating or applying this learning?  (*consider learning scaffolds and alignment with outcomes and evidence*) |
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