

SYLLABUS AS A GRAPHICS BASED DOCUMENT

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In addressing students of Generation Z, it is important to note that the syllabus is read by individuals who demonstrate a limited attention span (Chicca and Shellenbarger 182). Although this information may sound negative, this shifting attention may have a positive spin if Gen Z is seen as having the ability to quickly process and assess enormous amounts of information. However, the short attention span requires the need to provide Generation Z students with visually engaging experiences (Cameron, Elizabeth, and Paganattaro 317). In addressing Generation Z in general and students with visual or spatial learning style in particular, the syllabus needs to utilize appealing visual design to motivate and encourage students to develop an initial positive perception about the course and the instructor. Matejka and Kurke report that the traditional syllabus marginalizes the importance of elevating students' interest in the syllabus or the class (117). Therefore, research in educational psychology and pedagogy has promoted the importance of visuals and graphics as integral components in writing up the syllabus.

A syllabus can rely on functional and informative images, colors, and layout to make it similar to 21st-century digital publishing products such as e-brochures, e-newsletters, and e-books. Chicca and Shellengerger as well as Peregrin suggest that Millennials are looking for great experiences, not great products. Conversely, Gen. Z's expectations are focused on the appearance of the product and how it is appealing visually; then experience comes next. Thus, the purpose of promoting a graphic-based design of the syllabus is to introduce the academic content in appealing manners to Gen. Z. students. For instance, an infographic syllabus utilizes visual hierarchy, colors, and page layout techniques to show the importance or relevance of a certain topic, or assessment tools (see fig. 1). Such visual representation captures Gen. Z's attention to the importance of such details in the syllabus and optimizes their experience in appreciating and understanding the document. Besides, information retention is higher when visuals are combined with text, as opposed to text-only information (Peregrin S29). Hence, appealing visuals serve as an effective tool to increase comprehension and memory of topics (Frisch, Camerini, and Schultz 289).



When graphics-based syllabus was used at Green State University at Ohio, students mentioned that they were impressed by the neatness and organization of the syllabus. The document— according to students' end-of-course reflection – was encouraging, supportive, and full of energy and excitement. It encouraged students not only to read it, but also to understand its value and importance.

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