

Effect of Syllabus Tone

The following table taken from Harnish & Bridges' (2011) study on the effects of syllabus tone shows how a subtle shift in language can make a significant impact on creating an inclusive syllabus.

Harnish, R. J., & Bridges, K. R. (2011). Effect of syllabus tone: Students' perceptions of instructor and course. *Social Psychology of Education, 14*(3), 319-330.

Table 1 Description of emotional tone in cold and warm syllabus sections

	Cold	Warm
Office hours	Office Hours: 233 Jones Hall MWF 10:00–10:50 a.m. TR 9:30–10:30 a.m. jsmith@hotmail.com If you need to contact me outside of office hours, you may email me, call my office, or contact the department and leave a message	Student hours: 233 Jones Hall MWF 10:00–10:50 a.m. TR 9:30–10:30 a.m. jsmith@hotmail.com I welcome you to contact me outside of class and student hours. You may email me, call my office, or contact the department and leave a message
Course description	When you think about psychology, what comes to mind? My guess is that you thought about Dr. Phil, the old Frazier sitcom, or someone that “helps” people. That is a typical first impression of the field; one that excludes many other topics that fall under the heading of “psychology” that you haven’t thought of ...	When you think about psychology, what comes to mind? My guess is that you thought about Dr. Phil, the old Frazier sitcom, or someone that “helps” people. Not bad for a first impression of the field, but there are many other topics that fall under the heading of “psychology” that you haven’t thought of ...
Course goals and objectives	Some of the specific skills you should obtain in this course are listed below. Because you are not yet a critical consumer of information about mental processes and behavior, all of these activities will help you become one, and if you are motivated enough, use the skills in your daily life	Some of the specific skills I hope you will obtain in this course are listed below. Being a critical consumer of information about mental processes and behavior is important; all of these activities will help you become one, and it is my hope that you will use the skills in your daily life
Instructor’s teaching philosophy and beliefs	This course is a bit like a restaurant ... My job is like the chef in the restaurant. I serve up the “food” via lectures and assignments. It’s your job to “eat” what I prepare. However, unlike your mom or dad who told you to clean your plate, I will not hound you if you’re not hungry. That is your choice and your choice alone...	This course is a bit like a restaurant ... My job is like the chef in the restaurant. I want to serve you the most appetizing and nutritious food I can. But unlike meals with your family, I will not hound you if you are not hungry. Why? Well, from my experiences with my own kids, I know I cannot make you eat ...
Attendance	I expect you to attend every class. If you cannot attend a class, please let me know. If circumstances make you miss more than 3 classes during the semester, I will drop you from the class roster in accordance with the University attendance policy	Class participation actively participate Come prepared to in this course. This is the best way to engage

you in learning the material (and it makes the lectures more interesting ...

You should attend every class but extenuating circumstances arise that can make this difficult. If you cannot attend a class, please let me know. If circumstances make you miss more than 3 classes during the semester, you may be overextended and should drop the class per the University attendance policy

I hope you actively participate in this course. I say this because I found it is the best way to engage you in learning the material (and it makes the lectures more fun

Table 1 continued

	Cold	Warm
Missed exams or assignments	Unfortunately, illnesses, death in the family or other traumatic events are part of life. Such events are no excuse for not contacting me within 24 h of the event and provide documentation. If you contact me within 24 h of the event and provide documentation, a make-up exam will be given	Unfortunately, illnesses, death in the family or other traumatic events are part of life. Such events are unwelcomed and because I understand how difficult these times are, if you contact me within 24 h of the event and provide documentation, I will be happy to give you a make-up exam
Grading	Exams are necessary to assess your mastery of core concepts ... For most students, exams will take approximately 45 to complete, but you will have the full class meeting time (80) ...	Exams are necessary to assess your mastery of core concepts ... For most students, exams will take approximately 45 to complete, but please take your time and remember that you have the full class meeting time (80) ...

