

GUIDE FOR WRITING COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Course descriptions appear in the University Catalog and are a driving force behind the enrollment decisions our students make. The description should clearly explain what is covered in the course, both for students who are considering taking the course and for “outsiders” who are reviewing the content of a course listed on a student transcript.

Course description guidelines are as follows:

1. Course descriptions should be no more than 80 words [not including criteria/restrictions/fulfillments. These will be added by Academic Programs].
2. Begin each course description with an **ACTIVE VERB**
 - a. Examples: Explore(s), Examine(s), Focus(es), Gain, Learn, Develops, Covers
3. Ensure each description reflects how the reader would **BENEFIT** from taking the course (i.e., consider the question, “What’s in it for them?”)
4. **AVOID** self-evident content and stock phrases, such as:
 - a. “In this course...”
 - b. “This instructor-led workshop...”
 - c. “This class provides an overview of...”
 - d. “Participants learn about...”
 - e. “At the end of this course...”
 - f. “Topics include”, “A study of...”
 - g. “This course covers”
 - h. Specific descriptions of course assignments/papers
 - i. Specific products or programs used.
5. It *is* acceptable to use sentence fragments. Though it might seem awkward to include incomplete sentences, they can create a sense of emphasis, tone, momentum, etc. Fragments should be used frugally and purposefully.
6. Avoid using pronouns like “we” and “you” when writing courses descriptions and always write in the present tense
 - a. Example:
 - i. **OLD VERSION:** In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of human resources management.
 - ii. **NEW VERSION:** Learn the fundamentals of human resources management.
7. **Refrain from posing questions** or repeating the exact title of the course as the first sentence of any description

EXAMPLES

COMM 441 - Organizational Communication Ethics

Examines ethical questions that impact how organizations communicate and what they choose to relay and omit to their various audiences. Considers personal ethical decision-making processes taking place in workers’ everyday lives. Explores ethics theories as well as approaches that engage important questions of power, equality, and justice. Emphasizes the connections between communication, social justice, and ethics.

KINE 408 - Physical Education for Diverse Populations

Prepares Kinesiology majors to meet the physical activity program needs of persons with disabilities. Covers the etiology and characteristics of persons with mental, physical, emotional, sensory, health, learning and/or multiple impairments. Examines issues of gender, ethnicity/culture, health, class/socio-economic status, disability, religion, and homophobia within the context of physical education, physical activity, and sport.