

Guidelines for Course Descriptions

Catalog course descriptions are a driving force behind the enrollment decisions our students make. Please keep this in mind when constructing each description, ensuring it is clear, concise, easy-to-read and conveys the how each course will benefit the student. The course description that appears in the catalog is distinct from material that may appear on a particular syllabus for the course and will generally be less detailed. Catalog course descriptions represent a course over its lifetime

1. Course descriptions should be no more than 100 words
2. Begin each course description with an active verb: explore, examine, gain, learn, develop, etc.
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. Omit self-evident content:
 - a. In this course...
 - b. This instructor-led workshop...
 - c. This class provides an overview of...
 - d. Participants learn about...
5. Omit information that may change or time or with instructors, such as specific works or authors, student tasks or requirements
6. Omit course titles, numbers, prerequisites and corequisites levels as they are indicated elsewhere
7. Avoid using pronouns like “we” and “you” when writing courses descriptions and always write in the present tense.

OLD VERSION: In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of human resources management.

NEW VERSION: Learn the fundamentals of human resources management.

8. Refrain from repeating the exact title of the course as the first sentence of any description. You may include a question or a short sentence to grab the reader’s attention.
 - a. The diversity of China's environment and people is integral to understanding the ways in which economic and sociocultural changes have taken place. (AST/GEO 308)
 - b. Does America define race differently than other countries? (PAS 205)

Example of a Modified Course Description

SPAN 055 Puerto Rico y su discurso literario (with apologies to Swarthmore College)

Puerto Rico is one of the last standing colonies in the world. Puerto Rican and Nuyoricán artists and writers have faced their anachronistic status with intelligence, inventiveness and humor. ~~This class will study~~ the Puerto Rican imagination through the analysis of a range of works, including narrative, theater, creative essays, as well as film and the visual arts. ~~We will focus particularly on~~ **Explore** 20th- and 21st- century works produced by both mainland and diaspora creators. ~~We will pay,~~ **paying** special attention to the relationship between aesthetics, nationalism and colonialism, diaspora, race and gender.