SAIL in the Syllabus: Setting Course Expectations

What is SAIL?

SAIL is an approach to learning at Northeastern in which we all extract meaning from our experiences, including courses, co-ops, study abroad, and also from everyday experiences. It’s grounded in decades of research about how people learn, and it can help students develop skills that employers say they want and need in survey after survey. SAIL stands for Self-Authored Integrated Learning:

**Self-Authorship** – Proactively and intentionally writing your own life story in a way that is in line with your values and goals

**Integrated Learning** – Seeing the connections between the learning you experience in all areas of your life, then successfully applying what you’ve learned in new, unfamiliar situations

The SAIL framework consists of five dimensions of human learning and growth:

- **Intellectual Agility**
  Developing the ability to use knowledge, behaviors, skills, and experiences flexibly in new and unique situations to innovatively contribute to your field.

- **Well-Being**
  Developing the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to live a balanced and fulfilling life.

- **Social Consciousness & Commitment**
  Developing the confidence, skills and values to effectively recognize the needs of individuals, communities, and societies and make a commitment to constructively engage in social action.

- **Personal & Professional Effectiveness**
  Developing the confidence, skills, behaviors and values to effectively discern life goals, form relationships and shape your personal and professional identities to achieve fulfillment.

- **Global Mindset**
  Developing knowledge, skills and behaviors to live, work and communicate with people whose background, experience and perspectives are different from your own, as well as considering the global impact of your decisions.

Each of these five dimensions has associated skills, along with masteries that are foundational to all of the five dimensions. You can find those skills, and other information, at sail.northeastern.edu/about.

How can SAIL in the syllabus enhance my course?

The syllabus is often the first document a student sees in your course, and it serves a critical role in setting student expectations about how your course may be valuable to their personal and professional lives. By emphasizing not only the disciplinary material but also the transferrable skills they will learn in your course, you can help them envision how your course can connect to many other aspects of their lives.

Highlighting transferrable skills students use in your course supports their learning and motivation in two additional ways. Students who may be apprehensive about their success in the course can recognize skills they have successfully applied elsewhere, raising their expectation of success in this context. In contrast, students who need additional experience in skills necessary for success in your course can proactively seek other learning opportunities or support that will help them achieve mastery.

*Figure above: Students see the skills they practice in your course (left) repeated in other life experiences (right).*
SAIL in the Syllabus- Examples

There are many ways that an instructor might incorporate SAIL into the syllabus, from identifying the skills and attributes associated with each course assignment to connecting SAIL to course learning outcomes. Below are ideas from a few instructors across the disciplines at Northeastern who have already integrated SAIL into one or more of their course syllabi, as well as links where you can find the full syllabus for the course they describe.

HUSV 3570: The Nonprofit Sector, Philanthropy, & Social Change

“I use SAIL to illuminate competencies, literacies, and attributes [CLAs] that are relevant to ethical and effective practice in the social change arena. Throughout the semester, students reflect on the CLAs that resonate most deeply with them as aspiring social change leaders so they can more clearly envision the bridge between classroom theory and their personal agency to address real-world challenges.”

--Rebecca Riccio, Khaled and Olfat Juffali Director of the Social Impact Lab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/ Assignment</th>
<th>What You Will Be Doing and Why</th>
<th>Associated Competencies, Skills &amp; Abilities*</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Readings are intended to give everyone a shared knowledge base to inform your personal learning and collective decision-making. Most of the reading assignments are interesting, but please work your way through the occasional dry article. It wouldn’t be included if it wasn’t useful. We won’t recap or discuss every article in class, but your performance will reflect whether you are keeping up with the reading.</td>
<td>Civic Mindedness</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-portfolio Reflections</td>
<td>You will be asked to reflect on your experience of the course throughout the semester as a way to engage consciously and deliberately with your own learning and personal and professional development.</td>
<td>Introspection Self-efficacy Confidence</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Excerpt above from “Graded Assignments” table. See Rebecca’s full HUSV 3570 syllabus at https://sail.northeastern.edu/Riccio-syllabus.)

ENGW 1111: First-Year Writing: The Politics of Caring

“The Learning Outcomes and SAIL:

Beginning Fall 2018, all incoming first-year students will participate in SAIL—Northeastern University’s Self-Authoried Integrated Learning initiative:

https://sail.northeastern.edu/

Northeastern University
Student Assessed Integrated Learning

We’ll discuss SAIL and its potential significance to assessing your learning in the context of this course’s Learning Letters.

Here, however, I want to “translate” (so to speak!) the Learning Outcomes (above) into a number of the Skills that SAIL defines.

In other words, at the end of this semester, you’ll have developed (expanded? supplemented?) some of the following Skills in ENGW-1111:

“I’ve asked students to reflect on their learning after every project in nearly every class I’ve taught since coming to Northeastern in 2006. What I like about SAIL, and about it introducing SAIL on the syllabus, is that it prepares students to think of themselves as active learners rather than as passive receivers of knowledge from the very beginning of the semester. Now, when a student reflects on what she learned when creating an advocacy poster, she realizes that she learned more than ‘how’ to format a particular genre using audience-specific text and graphics. He learns, for example, that he’s developing competencies related to ‘social consciousness and commitment,’ and that his ability to ‘demonstrate empathy and concern for individuals, communities, and societies’ can resonate for him throughout his college career and beyond.”

– Bret Keeling, Associate Teaching Professor, English

(Excerpt at left from “Learning Outcomes” section. See Bret’s full ENGW 1111 syllabus at https://sail.northeastern.edu/Keeling-syllabus.)
SAIL in the Syllabus- Examples

CS 1210: Professional Development for CCIS Co-op

“The course syllabus and SAIL are presented to students on the first day of class as a way of introducing students to the expectations and standards of our course. Incorporating SAIL into our syllabus provides a visual for students to connect how everyday interactions and activities link to the SAIL framework. Identifying the SAIL dimensions for our course has enabled students to identify what they are learning, what they know and what skills they want to develop in planning for their careers.”

– Yasmil Montes, Assistant Co-op Counselor, Manager of Co-op Counselors, CCIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Tues. Class Date</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Class Topics and Activities</th>
<th>SAIL Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1 | 9/5 - 9/11 | Intro to Professional Development for CCIS Co-op (PDC) | • Syllabus, Blackboard, and Resources  
• Co-op & Clearance Process  
• Career Pathways | • Professional and Personal Effectiveness  
• Well-Being |
| Week 2 | 9/12 - 9/18 | Marketing Yourself to Employers | • Employer for a Day | • Personal and Professional Effectiveness  
• Intrapersonal Skills |
| Week 3 | 9/19 - 9/25 | Interviewing & Employer Communication | • Interview Highlights and Flow Chart  
• Peer Interviewing  
• Employer Communication Flowchart and Activity  
• Social Media | • Intellectual Agility  
• Professional and Personal Effectiveness |

(Excerpt above from “Course Calendar” table. See Yasmil’s full CS 1210 syllabus at https://sail.northeastern.edu/Montes-syllabus.)

Related tools and resources

A variety of additional information and resources are located at https://sail.northeastern.edu/how-to-sail/:

- Looking for a full list of the SAIL skills and foundational masteries, as well as their definitions? Check out the SAIL Skills Glossary, located under “Helpful Documents.”

- Need a worksheet that will guide you through the process of SAIL-mapping your course or other learning opportunity before entering the Educator Portal? Download the SAIL-Mapping Worksheet, located under “Mapping Your Course.”

- Want to follow up on SAIL-mapping your course and integrating it into your syllabus by entering the course skills and dimensions into the Educator Portal (https://educator.sail.northeastern.edu)? Download the Educator Portal Overview or Comprehensive Educator Portal Guide (under “Using the Educator Portal”) or watch the Adding a Course Opportunity Video (under “Creating New Opportunities”).

- Want a handout that will help students better understand SAIL and the many ways it can help support their learning in your course? Download and print or share copies of Fostering Academic and Course Success, located under “In the Classroom.”

- Interested in discussing how you might incorporate SAIL into your syllabus, or into other components of your course? To request a one-on-one consultation, email us at sail@northeastern.edu.

https://SAIL.northeastern.edu