

A Comparison of the Chinese and American Graduate Syllabi in Regard to Their Content and Style

Zhencong Liu

School of English Education, Beijing International Studies University, China

Wei Wang

School of English Education, Beijing International Studies University, China

Abstract—This paper aims to compare the Chinese and American syllabi for graduates in regard to their content and style. 36 syllabi of various majors in different universities were collected and compared. It was found that in both Chinese and American syllabi there are 12 common components, including, the heading, overview, course objectives, target students, prerequisites, textbook and reading list, course requirements, homework, course grading, lecture schedule, teaching method and evaluation. The special components for American syllabi are academic integrity and office hour. As for style, American syllabi are more demanding in reading than their counterparts. Their teaching methods are more flexible and interactive. Their homework is assigned in higher quantity and quality. Their assessments are various and are evenly distributed through the whole semester while Chinese syllabi depend more on the final exams.

Index Terms—syllabus component, syllabus style, graduate syllabus

I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

First of all, it is highly necessary to figure out what a syllabus is. Till now there is no common or unified definition of this term. From my viewpoint, a syllabus is a statement or outline about the teaching material, goal, requirement and assessment of a particular course.

As a necessary part of school teaching, a syllabus is undoubtedly important. The significance of a syllabus lies in two aspects. For one thing, as a stimulus, the syllabus motivates students to inspire their potential, have a strong sense of competition and cultivate their self-study abilities. For another, as a guideline, the syllabus leads instructors to work conscientiously, diligently and enthusiastically, and cultivate top talents for the country and human beings.

Till now, there have been a lot of studies in syllabus field, which can be summarized as follows.

First, research has been done in the field of syllabus's nature and function. Some scholars defined a syllabus at class level instead of at national, provincial and school levels. Zhang and Huang (2014) perceived a syllabus as a programmatic document to guide and direct course teaching. Rahimpour (2010) saw a syllabus as something localized and based on accounts and records of what actually happened at the classroom level as teachers and learners applied a given curriculum to their own situation (Rahimpour, 2010). And a syllabus served as a plan, contract, bridge, map, academic record, and teaching evaluation for instructors and students (Zhang, 2011).

Second, research has been done in the field of syllabus's creation and formation. Syllabus-makers should think why this course is important, what is to be taught, and how the course is to be taught and presented to learners. Brown (1994) examined curriculum development systematically. He gave a comprehensive but practical overview of the different phases and activities involved in developing and implementing a sound rational and effective language program for syllabus development (Brown, 1994). Diamond (1998) reflected the knowledge and practice in course and curriculum design. According to him, syllabus design included the following process: making the decision to do ahead; getting started; linking goals, courses, and curricula; gathering and analyzing essential data; thinking in the ideal; adjusting from the ideal to the possible; clarifying instructional goals and learning outcomes; designing and implementing your assessment plan (Diamond, 1998). A syllabus is based on national and school rules, and is made according to learners' and teachers' needs (Fang, 2011). It commonly takes three steps to create a syllabus. First, a teacher should think about who to teach, what their needs and expectation are, what to teach, how to teach, and how to evaluate. Second, the teacher should ascertain teaching objectives, teaching materials, teaching methods, etc. Third, taking all the points into consideration, the teacher begins his or her syllabus design. Li (2002) put forward five basic principles for syllabus design. First, it should be in accordance with teaching plan and educational objectives. Second, it should be scientific, profound, and practical. Third, it should have a well-arranged system. Forth, it should meet students' needs. Fifth, it should be clear and specific.

Third, research has been done in the field of syllabus's approval. This is the latest research field concerning syllabus

and little work has been done till now. Ye and Lin (2014) focused on American university syllabus, and summarized its approval process, characteristics of its approval and evaluation, function of approval system, and weakness of approval system. A set of strict approval process was followed at American universities, including creating, modifying and removing courses. The course approval process of American universities had the features of approval process programming, approval standard integration and diversity of reviewers, leading to outstanding excellence as well as shortcomings.

Fourth, research has been done in the field of syllabus's execution and implementation. In the United States, teaching practice adheres to course syllabus rigidly because syllabus itself is quite comprehensive, detailed, operable and practical. Zhao (2010) summed up that American syllabus was strictly implemented. The instructor trains his or her students in accordance with their aptitude, and focuses on individual's progress. He or she gets students actively involved in teaching. Besides, the instructor lays special stress on students' socialization. What the instructor teaches in class is checked and evaluated by the authority concerned.

Fifth, research has been done in the field of syllabus development and reform. Since the reform and opening up in 1978, education in China has developed rapidly. But educational problems, including syllabus or curriculum, do exist in this big oriental country. So it is high time that syllabus or curriculum was to be improved and perfected. Liu (2002) and Dai (2009) summarized foreign language syllabus development in China since the reform and opening up. They categorized the gains and losses of syllabus design in China, and offered direction for future reform. They believed that the syllabus should focus more on the range of knowledge and cross-cultural communication than on grammar of Chinese students. Zhang and Zhang (2011) gave their opinions on syllabus development in China. They thought national syllabus should coexist with school syllabus. The syllabus should respect the peculiarity of instructors' teaching methods. It should perfect itself in order to better service teaching work. And instructors' salary should be included and stated in the syllabus.

Sixth, research has been done in the field of syllabus's classification and characteristics. Just as approaches and methods in teaching diverse, different syllabi emerge in modern times. Yalden (1983) introduced the communicative syllabus, including how this kind of syllabus was created, designed and implemented. Richards (1984) described and compared three curriculum approaches in language teaching program development and implementation, including forward, central and backward curriculum design. Nunan (1988) introduced the learner-centered curriculum for second language teaching. Rahimpoura (2010) classified syllabus into six categories: structural syllabus, notional or functional syllabus, situational syllabus, skill-based syllabus, content-based syllabus, and task-based syllabus. American syllabus which leads the world sets a decent example for others to follow. Ji (2014) summarized four features of American university syllabus: 1. it is not just designed for teachers. More importantly, it is for students; 2. It is both normative and to the point; 3. It is strictly carried out; 4. It is implemented according to general requirements instead of varying from teacher to teacher. Zhao (2010) summarized three features of American university syllabus: 1. it is concrete and specific; 2. it is operable and workable; 3. it focuses more on process than result.

Seventh, research has been done in the field of syllabus comparison. Ji (2014), Zhang and Huang (2014), Fan (2011) and Fan (2011) compared American university syllabi with Chinese counterparts, and summed up the merits that China could learn from the United States. American syllabus is more comprehensive, concrete, operable, interactive and learner-centered. Li (2005) did some similar studies by comparing Canada with China.

To sum up, the studies that have been done concerning syllabus are either limited to one specific country like Zhao (2010), or limited to certain subjects like Zhu (2002) on English and Zheng and Chen (2003) on Physics. The comparison of Chinese and American syllabi is either limited to two schools like Fang (2011), or limited to certain subjects like Zhu (2002) and Zheng and Chen (2003), or limited to undergraduate students (Gaff and Ratcliff, 1996), or focuses on students of all levels. So far cross-boundary, cross-school, and cross-subject comparison of Chinese and American graduate syllabi have not been done. Besides, the previous studies may not be representative and persuasive because the research method of case study has been employed. For that reason, by adopting the research method of empirical study, this article compares Chinese and American graduate syllabi and intends to answer the following two questions: 1. what are the differences in components between Chinese and American graduate syllabi? 2. What are the differences in style between Chinese and American graduate syllabi, including teaching objectives, reference books, homework, examination, course grading, etc?

II. METHODS

A. Data Collection

Syllabi for 2011 and 2012 were collected, and most of them were for 2012. The collected syllabi covered most liberal arts and science disciplines. They included 18 Chinese graduate syllabi and 18 American ones. Among them, 3 syllabi were about law and politics, 3 syllabi were about history and geography, 3 syllabi were about foreign language and literature, 3 syllabi were about mathematics and physics, 3 syllabi were about biology and chemistry, and rest 3 syllabi were about electronic communication. The author collected these Chinese graduate syllabi with the help of other teachers, colleagues, students and the Internet. Different university syllabi were collected. These universities were representative not only in geography, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, but also in level, including both key and average ones. In addition, these universities were typical in nature, including both regional and

national ones. And the author collected these American graduate syllabi through the Internet. Many syllabi belonged to open courses of American universities. These syllabi were labeled with some basic information, including course name, discipline, instructor, year, university, downloading website, and downloading time.

B. Data Analysis

The collected data are processed with the aid of computer. The components of course syllabi are put into computer. Each component is expressed in “1” and “0”. “1” is used as the symbol to show that the component is included in the syllabus and “0” is used as the symbol to show that the component is excluded in the syllabus. Some components are not listed separately in the syllabus and are affiliated to other components. However, these components are still seen as something that is included in the syllabi and “1” is marked to these components. For example, course objective sometimes belongs to course overview. In this case, course objective is still viewed as a part of the syllabus.

The following calculation methods are applied to judge whether the textbook listed in syllabi is new or old. If only one textbook is listed in the syllabus, the publishing year of the textbook is subtracted from the beginning year of the course, and the result is used to show whether this textbook is new or not. If several textbooks are listed in the syllabus, first the previous calculation method is used one textbook by one textbook, then all the results are added together, then the new result is divided by the number of the textbook, and the average value is the number that is wanted. For instance, one course that begins in 2011 offers 2 textbooks. And one textbook is published in 2009, and the other is published in 2003. Then the following formula is employed to show whether these two textbooks of this course are new or old: $[(2011-2009) + (2011-2003)] / 2 = 5$.

The following calculation methods are applied to judge the volume of reading. First, add the chapters for reading, the journals, newspapers, or the pages for reading together, and the result is the total volume of reading. Then the times for reading in the semester are subtracted from the total volume of reading, and the result is the average volume of reading for each lecture. When the total volume of reading is being calculated, at times the reading tasks of some courses, including the handouts given by instructors, are overlooked because they are hard to search and calculate. Usually no reading task is assigned in the first lecture of the semester and is overlooked during the calculation. Sometimes no reading task is assigned in the final lecture of the semester because the class is for students' final paper presentation and defense, and the reading task is overlooked during the calculation. Sometimes the reading tasks belong to some chapters of the textbook or journals. In order to simplify calculation, one journal article or network connection is regarded as one chapter of the textbook. Suppose only the pages are given in reading tasks, then the page span is used to calculate the volume of reading. See the formula below: reading pages = ending page - starting page + 1. For instance, if the reading task of one lecture is from Page 12 to Page 63, the reading pages = $63 - 12 + 1 = 52$ pages. Then the times of reading tasks are subtracted from the total reading pages, and the result is the average reading pages for each lecture. The reading task of some syllabi is made up of reading pages and a few chapters or papers, so it is hard to convert reading pages into chapters or papers. In this case, the specific chapters or papers are figured out. The pages of chapters or papers are recorded, added together with other reading pages, and the result is the total volume of reading. Then the times of reading tasks are subtracted from the total reading pages, and the result is the average reading pages for each lecture.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Main Content

Concerning the major content or the make-up of a syllabus, till now there is no unified or agreed standard. In general, however, a common and complete syllabus is made up of the following sections: the heading, overview, course objectives, target students, prerequisites, textbook and reading list, course requirements, homework, course grading, academic integrity, lecture schedule, teaching method and evaluation. These 13 basic components are presented and discussed in detail below.

1. Heading

Generally speaking, the heading of graduate syllabus consists of the year, semester, day, time, location, faculty, and the name, contact information (telephone and E-mail), office hour of an instructor. The heading is included in both American and Chinese syllabi. See Table 1.

TABLE 1.
HEADING

	Headings (total)
American graduate syllabi	15
Chinese graduate syllabi	18

The heading of American graduate syllabus is more inclusive. Here is an example of Math of University of Washington for 2012:

Math 544/545/546 2011-2012

SYLLABUS

Lectures: MWF 1:30-2:20, C-36 Padelford

Instructor: Tom Duchamp, Padelford C-505, 543-1724

Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Graham Clenaghan, Padelford C-113

Office Hour: Thurs. 1:30-3:30

Required texts: For 544: *Introduction to Topological Manifolds* [ITM], 2nd ed. by John M. Lee, Graduate Texts in Mathematics 202, 2010. For 545&546: *Introduction to Smooth Manifolds* [ISM] by John M. Lee.

The heading of History of Chinese Society of Shanghai Jiao Tong University for 2011 is as follows:

History of Chinese Society

Course Code: X090611

Credits: 3.0 / **Hours:** 54

Course name: History of Chinese Society

Department: School of Humanities

Instructor: Li Yuchang

Concerning the heading, American graduate syllabi differ from Chinese counterparts mainly in office hour. American syllabi offer clearly instructor's office hour while Chinese counterparts do not. Sometimes office hour is done by appointment. That is to say, students make the reservation and confer with instructor before the final office hour is reached. Office hour is set for instructor to solve students' academic problems and life issues for the ultimate purpose of enhancing teacher-student communication and affection.

2. Overview

The alternatives of overview are general description, course description, catalogue description, bulletin description and so on. Overview usually consists of the significance, major content, objective, and target students of a certain course. It is generally regarded as a necessary part of a syllabus. See Table 2.

TABLE 2.
OVERVIEW

	Overviews (total)
American graduate syllabi	14
Chinese graduate syllabi	18

The overview of the graduate syllabus of Spoken English for Non-Native Speaker of Northwestern University for 2011 is as follows:

Course Description: The goal of this class is to improve your ability to communicate in spoken American English by developing greater fluency and intelligibility. The course will focus on the sounds, rhythms and phrasing of spoken English through various elements of American culture.

The overview of Theory of politics of Shanghai Jiao Tong University for 2011 is similar to the previous one.

Description: This course focuses on the major conceptions and theories of political science in the context of academic studies and political reality of China and the world. The main topics include political power and legitimacy, the formation of modern state and sovereignty, regime type and political typology, the structure and function of government, political parties and party systems, political culture and ideologies, and political development and change.

3. Course objectives

Sometimes course objectives belong to part of overview. However, they are stated separately at times. In general, course objectives, sometimes called course goals, objectives and aims, include relevant knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge through problem solving, experimental skills, positive attitudes, etc. Chinese graduate syllabi usually pay more attention to course objectives than American counterpart. See Table 3.

TABLE 3.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

	Course objectives (total)
American graduate syllabi	7
Chinese graduate syllabi	17

The course objectives of the graduate syllabus of Math of University of Washington for 2012 are as follows:

Course goals. The primary purpose of this course is to prepare you to work toward a Ph.D. In pure mathematics, so there is a strong emphasis on mastering the use of technical tools and methods of proof. But we will also look at lots of concrete examples and do nitty-gritty computations. Only in this way, will you develop an appreciation of the power of the modern approach to geometry.

If you take all three quarters of this course, and do all of the required work satisfactorily, you should have mastered the basic concepts and tools of manifold theory sufficiently well to use them when they arise in other fields of study; you should have the background necessary for the Manifolds preliminary exam; and you should be well prepared to continue your study by taking any second-year course that deals with manifolds, such as Geometric Structures, Algebraic Topology, or Lie Groups and Lie Algebras.

However, we can't cover everything and some important topics are left out. We will not cover in any detail the geometry of curves and surfaces, Riemannian geometry (curvature, the Gauss-Bonnet Theorem), or piecewise linear

topology.

The course objectives of Advanced Organic Chemistry of Guangxi Normal University are as follows:

Course objectives. This course gives a comprehensive introduction to every aspect of organic chemistry. By going over literature and attending academic lectures, the class focuses on the relations between the structure and function of organic molecular for the purpose of gaining the latest development of organic chemistry research. By taking the course, you are expected to have a deeper understanding of the theory related to organic chemistry, improve your ability of applying the theory to solving practical problems, and gain the capacity to acquire organic chemistry knowledge by yourselves.

4. Target students

Students who can attend a class are stated more clearly in American graduate syllabi though only some of them pay special attention to who to teach. See Table 4.

TABLE 4.
TARGET STUDENTS

	Target students (total)
American graduate syllabi	3
Chinese graduate syllabi	1

Some courses for graduates are very inclusive and compatible, and students with different backgrounds are accepted. For example, the target audiences of Mathematics 116/E-216 of Harvard University for 2011 include: undergraduates meeting the analysis requirement for Applied Math concentration; graduate students in Economics taking Economics 2010; students doing a secondary field in Mathematical Sciences; economics concentrators who are planning to go on to PhD programs or to work for firms that do sophisticated research; math concentrators; extension students who are considering graduate school in mathematics, applied mathematics, or mathematical economics; professionals in engineering and finance.

Another example is the syllabus of Theory of politics of Shanghai Jiao Tong University for 2011. It is mentioned that Theory of politics is an elementary course for graduates majoring in politics and public administration, including students specializing in politics theory, Chinese and foreign political institution, international politics, international relation, administrative management, and social security. Other graduates who major in social science and doctoral students who need to retake the course of political theory are also welcomed.

But not all students can attend all classes, and the target audiences of some courses are limited and restricted. For instance, it is clearly stated in the graduate syllabus of Biological Databases and Database Tools of Johns Hopkins University for 2011 that at the graduate level, understanding and being able to discuss presented material is generally considered to be "B"-level. "A"-level requires some effort beyond the ordinary--additional investigation of a topic, a more complete development of ideas, or relating material to other areas, for example (Hobbs, 2012).

5. Prerequisites

Prerequisites, sometimes called pre-assignments, mean the elementary courses and must-have skills that have already been mastered previously for the course. If students lack the essential bases, some solutions and requirements are listed in this part. About half of American and Chinese graduate syllabi include prerequisites though American ones are more in-depth. See Table 5.

TABLE 5.
PREREQUISITES

	Prerequisites (total)
American graduate syllabi	8
Chinese graduate syllabi	11

The prerequisites of the graduate syllabus of Mathematics 116/E-216 of Harvard University for 2011 are as follows:

Prerequisites for Math 116: You need to know linear algebra and multivariable calculus and be comfortable with proofs.

Math 23, 25, or 55 is fine. Sophomores have done very well.

If you took Math 21, you should also have taken another course where you did proofs. Obvious candidates are Math 101, Math 110, Math 112, Math 121, Math 152, and Math 154. The intersection of the content of these six courses is approximately the empty set, but any of them should have got you to the point where you can read and understand a textbook at the level of the one we are using.

Other courses that might provide useful background include Physics 16, Economics 1011a, and Computer Science 121.

Extension school students should, at a minimum, have taken Math E-21b or the equivalent, but that course alone does not provide enough background in doing proofs. An undergraduate major in a field like math or physics is probably the right background.

Extension students who plan to take both Math E-23a and Math E-216 are strongly discouraged from trying to do both in the same year, but an exception can be made if this year is your only opportunity to take either course.

For the Chinese example, in the graduate syllabus of Combinatorics of Harbin Engineering University for 2011, it is

stated the preliminary knowledge or prerequisite is higher mathematics and elementary number theory.

6. Textbook and reading list

Roughly speaking, there are three types of textbooks: required textbooks, further readings / suggested textbooks, and journals / newspapers. Sometimes movie, drama, class notes, and handouts are suggested. Chinese syllabi require more reading while American ones are more various in reading types. And further reading is not embraced in Chinese syllabi. See Table 6.

TABLE 6.
TEXTBOOK AND READING LIST

	Textbooks (average)	Required reading (average)	Further reading (total)
American syllabi	1.69	2.33 Chapters	2
Chinese syllabi	5.5	3.32 Chapters	0

According to the graduate syllabus of Spoken English for Non-Native Speaker of Northwestern University for 2011, sharing and photocopying of the textbook is not allowed. There is no required textbook in the graduate syllabus of Electric Energy Markets of University of Arizona for 2011. However, two useful references and additional references are listed, and many class notes, papers, and journals are suggested. Thus, the reading task of this course is rather demanding. There are 2 required textbooks and 4 recommended references in the graduate syllabus of Analog Integrated System Design of Georgia Institute of Technology for 2012. And daily reading assignments include sections of the textbooks, supplementary notes that instructor gives out, literature search, and online articles that are relevant to the course topics.

The reading requirements for Syllabus Design and Development of Beijing International Studies University include 3 textbooks, 4 reference materials and other selected readings.

7. Course requirements

Course requirements are made up of class arrangements, teaching mode, preparation requirements and so on. Almost all American graduate syllabi embrace course requirements while only half of Chinese counterparts do so. See Table 7.

TABLE 7.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	Course requirements (total)
American graduate syllabi	17
Chinese graduate syllabi	9

The course requirements of the graduate syllabus of Public Health Law of Northwestern University for 2012 are as follows:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Class attendance:** Attendance at all classes is highly encouraged—absences will be permitted on a limited basis, and students will be expected to write a 1-2 page paper summarizing the content of the class they missed.

2. **Participation:** Students are expected to have read and studied all their assignments prior to class, and to participate actively in the discussions.

3. **Mid-term examination:** Students will be given a take-home examination at the conclusion of the 6th weekly session (February 16).

4. **Final paper and Presentation:** Students are required to write a 7-10 page paper (including references, but excluding tables, figures, and charts) on a public health issue affecting children and youth. Please use 12 point Times New Roman font and double space. During sessions 10-11, students will present a 20 minute summary of their paper; please use Power Point slides. The grade will be based on both the quality of the paper and the presentation. The content should demonstrate the student's ability to synthesize clinical epidemiology, rulings from court cases, and federal and/or state legislation to address the specified issue. Students should submit a hard copy and email copy of their paper prior to their presentation (Elster, 2012).

In order to avoid conflict of interest between teachers and students, and better protect teacher-student benefit, paid private teaching is strictly prohibited, which is clearly stated in the graduate syllabus of Poetry and Prose into Drama of University of Southern California for 2012. See below.

Private Teaching Policy

A faculty member holding a full-time appointment may not accept for private instruction where a fee is charged any student who is currently enrolled in any USC School of Theatre course. This policy is established for your own protection as well as for that of the student, since the appearance of a conflict of interest is immediately established if the student studies privately with your for a fee at the same time that you will be called upon to give that student a grade in a course taught within the School or cast that student in a School production. It is in the best interests of all concerned to not even suggest the possibility of a conflict of interest. This policy is in keeping with the University's Code of Ethics, established March 2004, which states that we "recognize that the fundamental relationships upon which our university is based are those between individual students and individual, professors; thus, such relationships are especially sacred and deserve special care that they not be... exploited for... personal gain." (Houston, 2012)

The Course requirements of Theory of politics of Shanghai Jiao Tong University are as follow:

Requirements: (1) through class discussion and after-class reading, every student must finish the required reading and submit reading notes; (2) through teacher's instruction and peer discussion, every student must get well-prepared to share his or her opinion in class and participate in class discussion.

8. Homework

Homework includes personal homework and group homework. Group homework involves in work distribution, cooperation, group statement, discussion, and so on. American graduate syllabi attach much greater importance to homework than Chinese ones do. And they are rich in homework type and demanding in homework quantity and quality. See Table 8.

TABLE 8.
HOMEWORK

	Homework (total)
American graduate syllabi	15
Chinese graduate syllabi	3

For instance, according to the graduate syllabus of Introduction to Public Policy of New York University for 2011, homework is explained concretely and minutely, including topic selecting, requirement, procedure, word length, guideline, bibliography, submission, and deadline. See below.

#2 – Evaluation of an official piece of policy analysis – due October 19

Students will select a written document intended as a piece of policy analysis and evaluate how well the document meets the professional standards of policy analysis. The evaluation should cover each of the steps described in the Bardach book, indicating strengths and weaknesses for each component. The evaluation should be about 1,500 words. More detailed guidelines for preparing this assignment will be distributed in class.

Students will be provided a list of recommended documents for evaluation, but you may select a document on your own. The name and full citation of document you are evaluating should be submitted via e-mail to the instructor no later than October 12, and preferably by October 5. The workshop portion of the classes four through six will be devoted to assisting students in preparing the evaluation (Brecher, 2012).

Essay writing or book reporting is also a common way to train and cultivate graduates. For example, according to the syllabus of Math of University of Washington for 2012, students are required to write reading reports regularly. See below.

Reading reports: Each week, you're required to submit a short reading report. Your report must include at least two paragraphs:

- Briefly describe the most important idea(s) in this week's reading assignment, in your judgment.
- List one or two questions that the reading raised in your mind. Your questions might address such issues as why something is defined the way it is, how a given concept might be of use, something you'd like to learn more about, or something that made you feel "stuck." Your report may also include any other comments or questions you'd like to raise concerning the course, including the lectures, class work, reading, homework, or exams. If you wish to write about specific homework problems, please confine your comments to general questions and suggestions about how to get started (Duchamp, 2012).

The graduate syllabus of Theory of digital optical fiber communication of Shanghai Jiao Tong University for 2012 states rather briefly that homework is self-reading.

9. Course grading

Course grading is made up of grading method and the proportion that each grading item takes. Commonly there are three types of grading methods: centesimal marking system, letter grading (for instance, A.B.C.D.E.F), and 5-grade marking system. American colleges lay great emphasis on students' daily performance, and the grade students get is evenly distributed through the whole semester. On the contrary, Chinese colleges think much of final exam and think little of students' in-class and after-class endeavors. See Table 9.

TABLE 9.
COURSE GRADING

	Course grading (total)
American graduate syllabi	16
Chinese graduate syllabi	15

The course grading of Analog Integrated System Design of Georgia Institute of Technology for 2012 is a perfect example to show that the grade that learners are awarded is evenly distributed through the entire semester. See below.

Grading Policy:

Midterm-1	20%	A: 90 – 100 B: 70 – 89
Midterm-2	30%	C: 50 – 69 D: 40 – 49
Project	50%	F: 0 – 39

Project Grading	Draft-1	5%
	Draft-2	10%
	Layout quality/techniques	10%
	Simulation results	10%
	Circuit performance	10%
	Presentation	20%
	Final Paper	30%
	Group cooperation	5%

Specific grading criteria, letter grading and the 5-grade marking system are well-defined in the graduate syllabus of Introduction to Public Policy of New York University for 2011. See below.

Grading Policy

Students will receive grades according to the following scale:

A = 4.0 points

A- = 3.7 points

B+ = 3.3 points

B = 3.0 points

B- = 2.7 points

C+ = 2.3 points

C = 2.0 points

C- = 1.7 points

F (fail) = 0.0 points

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

(A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.

(A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.

(B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.

(B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.

(B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in "good standing."

(C/-/+) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.

(F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive (Brecher, 2012).

The grading policy of Intellectual property law of University of Science and Technology Beijing for 2011 is as follows:

Grading: daily performance (30%) and final exam (70%). That is to say, daily performance accounts for 30% while final exam accounts for 70% of the total grade.

10. Academic integrity

Academic integrity is the prerequisite and standard for graduates' academic endeavors. The alternatives of academic integrity are honor code, honor policy and so on. According to academic integrity, all students' endeavors should be done originally and by themselves. If violating academic integrity, students are to be punished mercilessly. Academic supervisory organizations are set to monitor learners' behavior and handle the punishable actions of certain students. Academic integrity is one unique component that makes the United States differ from China. Policy of academic integrity almost can not be found in Chinese graduate syllabi. See Table 10.

TABLE 10.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

	Academic integrity (total)
American graduate syllabi	7
Chinese graduate syllabi	0

The academic integrity of Public Health Law of Northwestern University for 2012 is as follows:

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity at Northwestern University is based on a respect for individual achievement that lies at the heart of academic culture. Every faculty member and student, both graduate and undergraduate, belongs to a community of scholars where academic integrity is a fundamental commitment. The Programs in Public Health abides by the standards of academic conduct, procedures, and sanctions as set forth by The Graduate School at Northwestern University. Students are responsible for knowledge of the information provided by The Graduate School on their Web page at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/studentsvcs/ethics/>.

Additionally, faculty reserve the right to use the “Safe Assignment: Plagiarism Detection Tool” that is part of the Course Management System. Info about this tool is found at <http://course-management.northwestern.edu/tipsheets.html> (Elster, 2012).

3.1.11 Lecture schedule

Lecture schedule, sometimes called syllabus, course outline, and schedule, is the arrangement of teaching plans throughout the whole semester, including organizational structure of the course, teaching content, lecture date, and reading requirements. Most of American graduate syllabi give clear lecture schedule while only half of Chinese counterparts do so.

TABLE 11.
LECTURE SCHEDULE

	Lecture schedule (total)
American graduate syllabi	15
Chinese graduate syllabi	9

For example, the lecture schedule of Public Health Law of Northwestern University for 2012 is as follows:

January 4: Development of public health law: Part I

Readings

- Gostin LG. PH law in a new century: Part I. *JAMA* 2000;283:2837-2841.
- Gostin LG. PH law in a new century: Part II. *JAMA* 2000;283:2979-2984.
- Hodge JG. Implementing modern public health goals through government. *JContemp Health L & Policy*. Read Parts 1-3, pg 93-106 (Elster, 2012).

The lecture schedule of Intellectual property law of National Chengchi University for 2011 is as follows:

Week 1 Intellectual Property Right & Its Legal Framework

- Basic Introduction
- Intellectual Properties Legal Framework
- Assignment:

Reading materials: WIPO website IP introduction materials <http://www.wipo.int>.

Taiwan Intellectual Property Office, <http://www.tipo.gov.tw>,

USPTO, <http://www.uspto.gov>

Chinese Intellectual Property Office, <http://www.sipo.gov.cn>

12. Teaching method

A teaching method, as a guideline for instructor class presentation, is a general plan concerning how knowledge is to be taught and learned. Teaching methods for American students are varied and flexible. And the methods mentioned in syllabi include lecture, reading, discussion, online communication, video, project, seminar, workshop, fieldwork, portfolio, and so on. On the other hand, Chinese counterparts are simple. All American graduate syllabi embrace teaching method while only a few Chinese ones do so. See Table 12.

TABLE 12.
TEACHING METHOD

	Teaching method (total)
American graduate syllabi	18
Chinese graduate syllabi	6

For example, case study is adopted in the Public Health Law of Northwestern University. It is calculated that 11 cases are to be discussed in the semester and averagely 1.22 case is to be dealt with per lecture. The course of College Teaching and Visual Communication of Duke University is rich and colorful. See below.

Activities:

In this course, you will participate in a range of activities including hands-on tool use, small group projects, individual projects, synchronous and asynchronous online communication, lectures, class discussions, readings and other activities determined by class interest. You can expect to average about two and a half hours a week on out of class activities (Crumley, 2011).

In the syllabus of Traditional Chinese geographical environment and political division evolution of Sun Yat-sen University for 2011, it is only stated briefly that the method is just teaching and discussion.

13. Evaluation

Evaluation, including course evaluation and faculty evaluation, is usually done through the Internet. Students submit their evaluations anonymously. Only by completing evaluations, can students get their final grades. Evaluation is not regarded as something that vital. From Table 13, it is found that only one American syllabus includes evaluation while none of Chinese counterparts does so. See below.

TABLE 13.
EVALUATION

	Evaluation (total)
American graduate syllabi	1
Chinese graduate syllabi	0

The only example is Public Health Law of Northwestern University for 2012. See below.

The Programs in Public Health administer web-based course evaluations to students for each course near the end of the quarter. Your completion of both the Unit (course) and Faculty evaluations is required; failure to complete the evaluations will result in an incomplete grade until the evaluations are submitted. You will be sent the web link and instructions via e-mail later in the quarter. You will have about 2 weeks time to complete the evaluations before grades are submitted (Elster, 2012).

B. Stylistic Features

American graduate syllabi are distinct from Chinese ones not only in make-up, but also in style. They enjoy plenty of distinctive features in comparison. The stylistic characteristics they possess can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, American graduate syllabi attach great importance to academic integrity that Chinese counterparts lack. The respect for academic morality is the basis for making and implementing rules of academic honesty. Good academic integrity is highly appreciated in the United States. The purpose of academic integrity is to promote credibility and pursue fairness and justice. Self-discipline and academic integrity are the bottom line for both students and teaching staff. To ensure the pervasiveness of academic honesty, some agencies are set up for the formulation and investigation of academic integrity policy. A clear definition of the behaviors seen as breaking honor code is presented to faculty members and students. When honor code is violated, a scientific and canonical implementation procedure is followed to sanction people involved. The lack of academic integrity among Chinese graduates and teachers is nowadays prevalent. Teachers pay too much attention to knowledge instruction, leading to the neglect of academic discipline. It is high time that Chinese universities and institutions took actions to enforce and strengthen academic credibility. See the example of Poetry and Prose into Drama of University of Southern California for 2012.

Academic Integrity

Dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the School of Theatre. Therefore, USC policies on academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Papers suspected of containing plagiarized material (the unacknowledged or inappropriate use of another's ideas, wording, or images) will be verified for authenticity by the School of Theatre through internet services. I expect you to familiarize yourself with the academic integrity guidelines found in the current SCampus (Houston, 2012).

Secondly, office hour which is peculiar to American graduate syllabi serves as a bridge connecting students and instructors. As discussed before, through face-to-face talking and interaction, office hour provides a platform for learners and teachers to communicate with each other and tackle issues. Students are encouraged to make use of office hour to the full. See the instance of Database Systems of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for 2012.

In any case, for more thorough discussion, come to our **office hours** if you can! The TAs and the instructor will have office hours for all weekdays. Don't be shy. Use our office hours to their fullest extent to help your study (Yershova, 2012).

Thirdly, assessment of American syllabus is various and is evenly allocated through the whole semester. American instructors pay more attention to students' daily performance. As a result, students can never be lazy and shirk their tasks. However, Chinese counterparts emphasize final examinations. So students who perform well in final exams are likely to get a high score. Here is an example of Biological Databases and Database Tools of Johns Hopkins University for 2011. Student assessment is made up of four parts and none of the four parts takes the predominance. Every week students are required to finish homework, quiz, and discussion posting, which is really challenging and stressful. Exam only accounts for 20% while project and paper take up nearly a half. See below.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	
Weekly homework or quizzes	20%
Weekly discussion postings	20%
Course exam	20%
Database project and paper	40%

Fourthly, homework of American syllabus is high in quantity and quality. Learners are expected to do much homework and this homework should be done conscientiously and seriously. However, Chinese counterparts do not lay much stress on the quantity and quality of homework. Below is an example of Aquatic Geochemistry of Duke University for 2012. Students must do 4-5 sets of homework for the purpose of solving practical problems. After that,

they must present their homework to the whole class. The following is the detail.

Homework Assignments:

Approximately 4-5 homework sets will be assigned during the semester. These assignments will incorporate lecture materials into quantitative problems related to soil composition and chemical speciation. One assignment will entail SMIF-based exploration and short presentation of your results in class (Hsu-Kim, 2012).

Fifthly, American graduate course is rather demanding in time. It is very time-consuming for American graduates to get credit hours. They should be highly diligent because the courses they take are stressful and challenging. Here is an instance of Physics 598SE of California Institute of Technology for 2011. The final grade learners get consists of 4 sections. They have to do homework, participate in class and club activity, offer presentation and write grant. In a word, they need to work hard not only in class, but also after class. See below.

THE FINAL GRADE WILL BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

Item	%
Homework	30
Participation in-class and at DMBGC	30
In-class presentation of outreach work	20
Final lesson packaged for dissemination via the web	20
Total	100

Sixthly, American graduate syllabi are practical and pragmatic. Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition in the United States, which can be observed through university syllabi. Instructors do not only empower learners to gain necessary theoretical knowledge, but also cultivate their practical ability, including the ability to do experiment and survey. American graduates, especially those of science and engineering, are given the opportunity to link theory with practice, such as internship and field investigation. In the syllabus of College Teaching and Visual Communication of Duke University, it is figured out that the course is very useful in job-hunting. See below especially the last sentence.

Course description

This course is offered by the Graduate School and the Center for Instructional Technology to support professional development for graduate instructors and/or future faculty. It covers visual communication for teaching and other professional activities in print, in face-to-face situations and online. This includes introductions to web design, graphic design, effective presentations, development of an electronic teaching portfolio, and exploration of other instructional technology for college teaching. Completion of this course includes development of an electronic teaching portfolio; numerous students from previous semesters have found this to be extremely helpful in their job searches (Crumley, 2011).

Seventhly, American graduate syllabus is inclusive and comprehensive. As discussed in the previous part, plenty of items are included in it, making it all-round. The average American syllabus covers more than 4 pages, displaying its comprehensiveness. See Table 14.

TABLE 14.
PAGES

	Pages (average)
American graduate syllabi	4.39
Chinese graduate syllabi	3.16

Lastly, American graduate courses sometimes function as moral education. In some graduate syllabi it is mentioned that courses should arise learners' interest and help them build a correct and positive view of life. For instance, in the graduate syllabus of Biological Databases and Database Tools of Johns Hopkins University for 2011, mutual understanding, cooperation, teamwork and mutual benefit are highly appreciated. See below.

Final Words from the Instructor

This is an interdisciplinary class with students from both computer science and life science backgrounds participating, which gives each class a chance to learn from the other. And this course is set up to give students the opportunity to explore their own ideas in this field through the database project, which can be tailored to meet individual student's interests (Hobbs, 2012).

IV. CONCLUSION

American graduate syllabi differ greatly from Chinese ones though similarities do exist. In regard to major components, the heading, overview, course objectives, target students, prerequisites, textbook and reading list, course requirements, homework, course grading, lecture schedule, teaching method and evaluation are included in both Chinese and American graduate syllabi. Office hour and academic integrity are unique to American graduate syllabi. In regard to style, American graduate syllabi have a number of distinguishing characteristics. Compared with Chinese graduate syllabi, American ones highlight academic integrity and office hour. American course assessment is various and is spread out equally through the entire semester. Homework is highly demanding in both quantity and quality. Teaching methods are more flexible and interactive. American graduate syllabi are rather comprehensive, specific, practical and pragmatic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to School of English Education and Department of Graduate Student of Beijing International Studies University. We are grateful to all the leaders and faculties in School of English Education, especially to Dean Xiangmin Li. We also own our gratitude to Department of Graduate Student for its support. This paper is sponsored by the Innovation Foundation of Scientific Research for Graduate Students of Beijing International Studies University.

REFERENCES

- [1] Brecher, C. (2012). Introduction to Public Policy. <http://wagner.nyu.edu/> (accessed 31/7/2012).
- [2] Brown, J. (1994). *The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach to Program Development*. Boston: Heinle ELT.
- [3] Crumley, H. (2011). College Teaching and Visual Communication. <http://www.duke.edu/> (accessed 6/8/2012).
- [4] Dai, W. (2009). Foreign Language Teaching of Chinese colleges in 30 years. *Foreign Language World*, 1, 2-4.
- [5] Diamond, R. (1998). *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula: A Practical Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- [6] Duchamp, D. (2012). Math 544/545/546. <http://www.math.washington.edu/~duchamp/courses/546/syllabus.pdf> (accessed 16/7/2012).
- [7] Elster, A. (2012). Public Health Law: Promoting Healthy Youth Development. <http://www.publichealth.northwestern.edu/current-students/Course%20Syllabi/MPH/PH%20417%20Public%20Health%20Law%20Winter%202012.pdf> (accessed 31/7/2012).
- [8] Fan, X. (2011). Learn from American Curriculum, Innovative Curriculum of Our College Courses. *The Science Education Article Collects*, 6, 49-50.
- [9] Fang, H. (2011). A Study of American College Syllabus. *Journal of Changchun University of Technology (Higher Education Study Edition)*, 32, 142-144.
- [10] Fang, H. (2011). Syllabus Analysis of Sino-US Higher Pedagogy Major—Taking Fujian Normal University and Pennsylvania State University for Example. *Journal of Hubei University of Education*, 28: 85-86.
- [11] Gaff, J., & Ratcliff, J. (1996). *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- [12] Hobbs, E. (2012). Biological Databases and Database Tools. http://apps.ep.jhu.edu/course-homepages/viewpage.php?homepage_id=2991 (accessed 16/7/2012).
- [13] Houston, V. (2012). Poetry And Prose Into Drama. <http://web-app.usc.edu/soc/syllabus/20121/63219.pdf> (accessed 6/8/2012).
- [14] Hsu-Kim, H. (2012). Aquatic Geochemistry. http://hsukim.pratt.duke.edu/files/hsukim/AqGeochem_Sp2012_Course%20syllabus.pdf (accessed 16/7/2012).
- [15] Ji, C. (2014). The Concept, Element and Feature of University Course Syllabus: Based on American Experience. *The Modern Education Journal*, 2: 37-40.
- [16] Li, S. (2005). Foreign Course Syllabus and Its Inspiration for Chinese Vocational Colleges. *Vocational & Technical Education Forum*, 33: 58-60.
- [17] Li, Y. (2002). On the basic principles of making up of the teaching syllabus. *Journal of Hebei Institute of Architectural Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 19: 75-78.
- [18] Liu, R. (2002). The Reform of English Course Syllabus. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 34: 403-404.
- [19] Nunan, D. (1988). *The Learner-centered Curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [20] Rahimpoura, M. (2010). Current trends on syllabus design in foreign language instruction. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2: 1660-1664.
- [21] Richards, J. (1984). Curriculum Approaches in Language Teaching: Forward, Central, and Backward Design. *RELC Journal*, 44: 5-33.
- [22] Yalden, J. (1983). *The Communicative Syllabus: Evolution, Design and Implementation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [23] Ye, X., & Lin, L. (2014). Review on the Course Approval Process at American Universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 35: 94-101.
- [24] Yershova, A. (2012). Database Systems. <https://wiki.engr.illinois.edu/display/cs411sp12/Syllabus> (accessed 17/7/2012).
- [25] Zhang, G. (2011). The Functions and Components of College Course Syllabus. *Tsinghua Journal of Education*, 32: 40-46.
- [26] Zhang, M., & Huang, H. (2014). Reflections on course syllabus creation. *Education Teaching Forum*, 2: 170-171.
- [27] Zhang, Y., & Zhang, X. (2011). Problems and Solutions to College Syllabus Compiling. *China Economist*, 1: 130-131.
- [28] Zhao, Y. (2010). American College Course Syllabus. *Education Teaching Research*, 5: 163-164.
- [29] Zheng, R., & Chen, H. (2003). Compiling of the Teaching Outline for Thermodynamics and Statistical Physics. *Journal of Southwest China Normal University (Natural Science)*, 28: 658-661.
- [30] Zhu, C. (2002). Comments on English Syllabus for College English Majors. *Journal of Northern Sichuan Education College*, 12: 31-33.



Zhencong Liu was born in Hezhou, China in 1968. He received his Ph. D. degree in linguistics from Beijing Foreign Studies University, China in 2007.

He is currently an associate professor in School of English Education, Beijing International Studies University, China. His research interests include cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition.

Wei Wang was born in Tongling, China in 1989. He received his bachelor degree in English from Anhui University, China in 2012.

He is currently a master degree candidate in School of English Education, Beijing International Studies University, China. His main research interest is English education.