

SMU Course Descriptions Style Tip Sheet

Last revision: 12/2/15

URL: <http://www.smu.edu/~media/Site/catalog/PDF/CatalogStyleTipSheet.ashx?la=en>

Topic	Details	Examples
Colons	Introduce lists with a sentence followed by a colon or (preferred) with a phrase without a colon. (The word <i>includes</i> or <i>include</i> indicates a partial list.)	Like this: Topics include the following: integrals and vectors. Not this: Topics include: integrals, vectors, and derivatives.
Commas & Semicolons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commas between each element and before the final conjunction in a series of three or more elements. • Semicolon between elements when there is internal punctuation in any element. 	Covers multimedia applications, radio frequency (RF) [♦] packaging, and Q uality of S ervice [♦] (QoS). [♦] Includes models; applications; and the design, use, and maintenance of systems.
Cross-listed or Equivalent Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses can be set up as equivalent courses in my.SMU as usual. • Course equivalency information appears in print or digital catalogs ONLY when that information is included in the catalog description. 	Analyzes structural relationships among important participants in the U.S. Prerequisite: FINA 3320. Students may not receive credit for this course and ECO 3355.
Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figures for units of measure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Units of measure include hours and credit hours. ○ Also days, weeks, years, feet, miles, etc. • Spell out numbers one to nine if not used with a unit of measure. 	Prerequisite: 3 credit hours of math. Includes a 2-week fieldtrip, 3 hours of lecture, and one 2-hour laboratory. One of six core courses required for the M.A. [■] in history. [□] IMPORTANT: When relevant, use <i>credit hours</i> not <i>TCH</i> , <i>term credit hours</i> , or <i>6 credits</i> (for example).

Notes for all catalog text

♦ Abbreviations	In general, spell out terms on first reference and in lower-level courses, without putting the abbreviation/acronym in parenthesis. See the SMU Editorial Style Guide for exceptions: http://smu.edu/brand/editorialstyleguide/a.asp .
► Capitalization	Most major style guides and SMU's style guide favor a "down" style of writing.
Capitalization in Titles	Verbs – including "is" – and prepositions with four or more letters are capitalized.
■ Degrees: First Reference	B.S., M.B.A., M.Ed., bachelor's, Master of Science in Entrepreneurship (then M.S.Ent)
□ Majors, Minors, Etc.	M.S. in physics, Ph.D. in English

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Parentheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End with campus info if not the main campus. • Begin with unusual offerings not listed on the course update form or in my.SMU. • Rare: Use with complex numbered lists. 	<p>(SMU-in-Taos)</p> <p>(spring term of even-numbered years)</p> <p>Explores 1) DNA structure ...</p>
Quotation Marks	<p>Around the usual: book titles, court cases, words as words etc., and word(s) normally in italics or not in an English dictionary.</p>	<p>Close reading of “The Inferno” and “The Purgatory.”</p>
Requisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses can be set up with system-enforced requisites in my.SMU as usual. • System-enforced requisites appear in print or digital catalogs ONLY when that information is included in the catalog description. • When relevant, system-enforced requisites and requisites that are not system enforced are usually combined in one list. • Omit repeating the subject area abbreviation (ANTH, SPAN, etc.) whenever possible to save space. 	<p>Prerequisites: Graduate standing or C- or better in ECO 3301 and 3302, MATH 1309 or 1337, and one of the following: STAT 2301, 2331, 4340.</p> <p>Prerequisites: ECO 3301, 3302; MATH 1309 or 1337; STAT 2301, 2331, or 4340; or graduate standing.</p> <p>Prerequisites: MATH 2320, 2142, 2143; CEE/ME 2320; CSE 2320 or 2321. Prerequisite or corequisite: CEE 2101.</p> <p>Prerequisites: Overall GPA of at least 3.000[▲] and ENGL 2130, 2230.</p>
Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This course</i> is usually omitted. (Never use <i>class</i> or <i>section</i>.) • Sentences and/or fragments are fine. • Preferred: Third person, present tense, and active voice. • Semicolons and/or commas (not periods) to separate a list of topics. 	<p>Like this: Guest lecturers discuss current topics in research.</p> <p>Not this: Current research is discussed by guest lecturers.</p> <p>Not this: We use current research ...</p> <p>Not this: Integrals. Vectors. Derivatives.</p>
Titles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colons or commas are preferred over dashes to separate phrases. • En dash (no spaces) instead of <i>to</i> when possible. • No abbreviations or ampersands. 	<p>Introduction to Western Art I: Prehistoric Through Medieval</p> <p>Postwar European Cinema, 1945–Present</p>
Notes for all catalog text		
▲ GPA	Three decimal places: 4.000, 3.500 (except for Dedman Law)	
Hyphen with a prefix	For <i>non</i> , <i>post</i> , <i>pre</i> , <i>re</i> , etc., usually no hyphen with a word starting with a consonant.	

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<p>What can be included in a course description?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only the course abbreviation and number when referring to another course. (Exception for Dedman Law courses.) • A partial or complete list of topics covered. • Benefits such as skills and personal/professional goals students can obtain. 	<p>Builds on topics explored in BIOL 3201 to ...</p>
<p>What is omitted from a course description?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit hours for the course. • Typically offered. • Course titles (except for Dedman Law). • URLs. • Contact info. • Ampersands. • Assumed knowledge. • Abbreviations on first reference, usually, but exceptions are generally OK for high-level graduate courses. • When <i>we</i> could refer generally to all human beings or to the discipline, the course description should be reworded or recast to avoid ANY use of a pronoun with a vague (or missing) antecedent or that could be an assumed knowledge situation for an ESL student. 	<p>Like this: Explores DNA structure, cell regulation, and antibodies. Also covers current topics in research. Prerequisite: Approval of instructor.</p> <p>Not this: Three hours. DNA structure. Cell regulation. Antibodies. Current topics in research will also be covered. Instructor approval required.</p>