Do I have everything I need in my syllabus?

That depends. If you have everything on the list below, then the answer is “probably”:

- Basic course information, including (as applicable):
  - Your name & contact information
  - Time & location of the class
  - Office hours (time(s) & location)
  - TA name(s) & contact information
  - Time & location of recitations/labs
  - Website
  - Course pre-/co-requisites
  - Course materials

- Course Description
- Learning Objectives
- Snapshot view of the grade breakdown
- Descriptions of graded components in the course
- Course Policies
- Class Schedule

What additional features are sometimes included in a syllabus?

- Grading rubrics
- Your expectations of your students
- Explanation of what your students can expect from you
- Advice to students about how to succeed in this course
- Advice to students about how to do task of type X well
- Extra information about labs/recitations/etc.
- Other campus resources (i.e. Office of Disability Services, Center for Academic Success, Office of Minority Education, etc.)

What requirements does Georgia Tech have about my syllabus?

- See http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/6/

1 Although the class schedule is typically treated as a document that is distinct from the syllabus itself, it is important to create an easy-to-read schedule to accompany your syllabus.
Do I have all the Course Policies I need?

There are five types of course policies that should be articulated in your syllabus (or carefully considered before choosing not to articulate them in your syllabus):

- Academic Integrity & Collaboration
- Accommodations for individuals with disabilities
- Attendance &/or Participation
- Extensions, Late Assignments & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams
- Student use of Mobile Devices in the classroom

In addition, there are a number of other policies that frequently show up in syllabi, depending on the nature of the course being taught, and the preferences of the individual instructor. For example:

- Guidelines for discussion/critique
- Re-grading and re-submission
- Food/drink in class
- Preparation for guest speakers
- Recording classroom activities
- Accommodations for religious observances

For each policy on your syllabus you should:

- aim to make your expectations clear;
- communicate consequences for policy-violating behavior;
- explain the rationale behind your policy;
- be clear about what a student needs to do if/when extenuating circumstances arise (and about what sorts of things count as extenuating circumstances);
- use language that emphasizes your students’ role in the process;
- aim for a tone that communicates both authority and approachability;
- remember that policy choices tend to involve tradeoffs between equally desirable options; take time to consider what you’re giving up and why.
Course Descriptions

Your course description should provide a brief introduction to the scope, purpose & relevance of the course. Note also that it is perfectly acceptable for the course description in your syllabus to go beyond the description in the course catalogue, provided it is consistent with that description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This Course Description…</th>
<th>not at all 1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>very well 5</th>
<th>Notes for Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…tells me what the course is about</td>
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<tr>
<td>…gives me a sense of what is interesting/useful about this course</td>
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<tr>
<td>…avoids the use of jargon, and terms students who haven’t yet taken the course might not understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>…will be useful to its various audiences</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Learning Objectives

Developing learning objectives is an important first step in course design, and they should be articulated on your syllabus. Your learning objectives are meant to identify your main goals for your students, in terms of the skills and knowledge they will develop in your class. They should be student-centered, action-oriented, and measurable, and should reflect a big-picture view of the purpose of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Notes for Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Are the learning objectives student-centered, action-oriented, and measurable?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td><strong>Are there 3-8 learning objectives?</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>![ ]</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td><strong>Are there learning objectives that seem more like descriptions of assessments and/or classroom activities?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
<td><strong>Are there vague/ambiguous phrases in use (like understand and obtain a working knowledge of)?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your sense of the scope of the course (e.g. topical breadth & depth, introductory vs. advanced, etc.), given the learning objectives provided?
1. Take turns explaining your basic grade breakdown to your colleagues, and discuss together the ways in which you think each measures (or fails to measure) student achievement of the course’s learning objectives.

2. Read and discuss your colleagues’ descriptions of their graded components, with the following questions in mind:

   - If you were a student, what questions would you still have about the requirements, after reading the descriptions?
   - Is it clear from each description what kind and quantity of work will be expected of students?
   - Are there places where sentences like “More details about this assignment will be distributed in class” and/or “See our Canvas site for more information” would be helpful?
Take turn reading each other’s individual policies, and discuss the following questions:

- Is it sufficiently clear what is and is not expected/permisssible in this class?
- Does the rationale or motivation behind the policy need to be made more explicit/clear?
- Is it clear what students need to do in extenuating circumstances, and what the consequences will be if they fail to live up to the expectations laid out in this policy?
- Does the tone of this policy seem too harsh, too soft, or just right?