

Class titles:

Keep them short; they'll be paired with descriptions. "From Zero to Infinity: An Introduction to Set Theory and Cardinality" is an example of a good title that is probably also the upper limit of long.

Three questions to ask yourself about your class description:

• *Is it concise?*

160 words is a rough guideline for the upper limit on length; most descriptions should be shorter than this. There's no rule against going over, but a description that is too long can be intimidating, and fewer students will actually read it.

• *Is it enticing enough to compete with students' other options?*

Your class might be very cool, but does the description do it justice? Imagine your class were running alongside a gourmet chocolate tasting. What would you add to the description to draw students to choose your class over the chocolate? See the before-and-after on the next page for an example of how a class description might be made more exciting.

• *Does it tell students what to expect?*

A student who reads your class description should know the answer to the following questions:

- "What is this class about" / "What will I learn in this class?"
- "What will happen in this class?"
- "What is the format of the class?" (Lecture, lab, discussion, etc.)

If you can, it's also great to answer the following...

- "Why should I take this class?"
- "Am I prepared for this class?" (It's usually appropriate to use the "prerequisites" field for this)
- "What *won't* I learn from this class?"

EXAMPLE: I teach a 3-hour Introduction to Calculus for middle school students at Spark. One important thing I tell them (at the beginning of class, if not in the description) is that this class won't cover all of Calc 1 in 3 hours – it won't enable them to do their older siblings' calculus homework – but it *will* give them a basic foundation of concepts such that after taking it, they'll have a much easier time picking up a calculus textbook and teaching themselves whatever else they want/need to know.

A couple of other tips:

Use correct spelling and grammar! Our website unfortunately doesn't have built-in grammar and spellcheck, so we suggest writing your description in Microsoft Word or LibreOffice (or a similar program) first and then copy-pasting it into the teacher registration form. Alternatively, get a friend who is good at grammar and spelling to proofread for you.

You might also consider asking friends, after they read your description, what they would want to know about your class if they were a high school student deciding whether to take it.

Example before-and-after for *Introducing The Blues*, a 75-minute Splash-style class taught by Jonathan Gerkin at Junction 2012:

BEFORE: This class will begin with recordings from the 1920's of Robert Johnson, the supposedly satanic root of much of modern music. We will focus specifically on lyrics and themes, and listen to blues music through the century in addition to some of the rock and roll greats it influenced. During class we will listen to Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Taj Mahal, Jimi Hendrix, and Led Zeppelin.	AFTER: Some say Robert Johnson's songs were written as he drank moonshine sitting on tombstones, and others say that all his skill came from the devil himself. No one is sure, but we do know that his eerie tunes inspired countless twentieth century musicians. This class will introduce the basics of the blues and some of their history, beginning with Johnson's supposedly satanic songs – songs that helped label blues "devil's music." During class we will listen to Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Jimi Hendrix, and Led Zeppelin.
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Below are **three examples of fantastic descriptions** for Splash-style classes. (These were also originally 75-minute seminars at Junction 2012.)

Mikhael Bakhtin's Polyphonic Truth and Literary Theory

by Jonathan Gerkin

Do you believe that every debate has a real winner? Everyday humans make decisions off of the belief that there is certain and straightforward truth in the world. We hope that there is a right and wrong answer in every argument. But are we deluded? Is truth more complicated than we imagine? Mikhail Bakhtin—a literary critic who lived under soviet rule—proposed that truth was not so simple, and that it is foolish to hope for such simplicity. In this class we will explore Bakhtin's concept of truth and its relevance to literary theory.

Codes and Cryptography

by Bianca Homberg

For Mary Queen of Scots, a broken cipher meant her execution. For the Allies during WWII, a broken Enigma code meant lives saved and war significantly shorter. When you can read your enemies' private communication, you know what they're thinking and what they're planning – and such information is never a bad thing.

Come learn how to send messages that your friends won't be able to read – and even better, how to break the secret messages that other people have sent! We'll cover a few different kinds of ciphers, including Caesar shifts, substitution ciphers, and the Vignere cipher. First, we'll try to break some codes, then go over methods that have been developed over time to make all of these ciphers insecure. Then, you'll make up your own ciphers and try to decipher each others messages. If we have extra time, we'll talk about how mathematicians broke the Enigma Cipher during WWII and how the supposedly-unbreakable RSA encryption works.

Game Theory and Animal Behavior

by Chelsea Voss

How likely are you to lend \$50 to a stranger? What if I asked you to lend \$50 to a friend instead, someone who might repay the favor in the future? Game theory is the mathematical study of strategic decisions: the complicated game of conflicting versus cooperating with the decisionmakers around you. Familiarity with game theory will give you new perspectives on topics ranging from economics to philosophy, political science to evolution. Come learn about biology-related topics in game theory, while competing against your classmates in various decisionmaking games for the prize of maximizing the delicious candy you win.

^ Editor's note: While this description is mostly awesome, it would be even better if it briefly mentioned something more about what it has to do with animal behavior; if you struck out the phrase "biology-related" in the description, the "animal behavior" half of the title would be completely lost, and this description would be indistinguishable from one for a plain game theory class.