

THE ANTI-SYLLABUS

A flexible course plan for learning without punishment

Course	_____	Facilitator / learner	_____
Dates	_____	Meeting rhythm	_____
Primary question	_____	Preferred contact / support	_____

Course Description

This course exists to help me follow a real curiosity long enough to learn something meaningful. The plan may change as I learn. Reading everything is not the goal. Showing up perfectly is not the goal. The goal is to investigate, make connections, try things, and leave with evidence that my understanding changed.

What I Hope to Leave With

- A clearer answer to a question I genuinely care about.
- A collection of notes, artifacts, experiments, conversations, or observations that show what I explored.
- At least one thing I made, tested, explained, taught, changed, or understood differently.
- A trail I could follow later if I want to keep going.

Guiding Questions

What am I curious about? _____

What do I keep noticing? _____

What would I like to be able to explain, make, or do? _____

What might change my mind? _____

Materials

There is no required pile. Choose what helps: books, articles, videos, podcasts, lectures, field trips, conversations, games, archives, experiments, observation, practice, making, or something else. A source can be useful without being completed.

Course Rhythm

Move through these phases in order, out of order, repeatedly, or not at all. The “week” column is a suggestion, not a deadline.

Wk	Phase	What happens here	Possible evidence of learning
1	Wander	Collect possibilities. Follow links, browse shelves, watch, listen, notice.	A list, messy notes, screenshots, bookmarks, voice memo, conversation.
2	Choose	Name the question or thread that currently has the most energy.	A question, a tiny proposal, a map of what I want to know.
3	Investigate	Spend time with sources, people, places, examples, or experiments.	Notes, annotations, recordings, sketches, photos, attempts, data.
4	Make / Test	Do something with what I am learning.	Prototype, essay, lesson, poem, model, recipe, explanation, experiment.
5	Connect	Look for patterns, contradictions, missing pieces, and new questions.	Concept map, synthesis notes, discussion, comparison, revision.
6	Close or Continue	Decide what counts as enough for now and what I might return to later.	Final artifact, reflection, teach-back, portfolio, next-question list.

My Actual Route

Start here:

The first thing I want to explore is _____

The smallest useful next step is _____

Flexible Pacing

- Fast weeks count. Slow weeks count. Pauses count.
- I may skip a module, combine modules, repeat one, or change the question.
- A deadline can become a checkpoint: “What happened?” instead of “Did I fail?”
- I can stop because I learned enough. Finishing every planned item is not required.

Course Policies

Attendance / The Disappearing Policy

There is no penalty for disappearing. If I miss a day, week, month, or season, I do not owe make-up work as punishment. I return by identifying where I am now, what still interests me, and one next action small enough to begin. The course changes to meet the person who came back.

Participation

Participation means engaging in a way that creates learning. It can look like reading, listening, making, asking questions, discussing, practicing, observing, teaching, collecting examples, taking a walk to think, or resting long enough to come back able to care.

Assignments

Assignments are invitations to produce evidence of learning, not obedience tests. Any assignment may be resized, substituted, combined with another, completed orally or visually, or replaced with an artifact that demonstrates the same learning.

Late Work

Nothing becomes less intellectually valuable because it happened later than planned. If timing matters for another person, group, event, or application, we name that practical constraint clearly. Otherwise, late work is simply work completed later.

Assessment / Ungrading

Instead of points, ask: What did I try? What changed in my understanding? What can I do or explain now? What evidence do I have? What do I want to revisit? Completion is based on reflection and demonstrated learning, not volume of output.

Access

Use the format, environment, tools, pacing, breaks, movement, sensory supports, assistive technology, communication method, and amount of structure that make learning possible. Access needs do not have to be earned by struggling first.

Ways to Complete the Course

Choose one, combine several, or invent another ending.

Make something	Create a project, artwork, lesson, guide, model, tool, experiment, zine, performance, or prototype.
Explain something	Write, record, present, diagram, teach, or talk through what you now understand.
Build a portfolio	Collect your notes, attempts, sources, artifacts, questions, and reflections into a learning record.
Change a practice	Apply what you learned to your routine, work, community, environment, or decision-making and document what happened.
Leave a trail	Create an annotated reading/listening list, map, bibliography, glossary, resource guide, or set of next questions.
Declare enough	Write a short reflection explaining what you learned, why you are stopping here, and what you may return to later.

If I Disappear, I Return Here

1. What still interests me? _____
2. What can I officially let go of? _____
3. What is the tiniest next action? _____
4. Do I want to continue, redesign, or call this course complete? _____

Final Reflection

The most interesting thing I learned was _____

Something I understand differently now is _____

Evidence that I learned something: _____

The question I am carrying forward is _____

You are allowed to learn in a way that leaves room for being a person.