

# Guide for Designing an Inclusive Syllabus<sup>1</sup>

## Overview

A note on credit on where credit is due. This summary document curates resources from a diverse range of already published sources on inclusive syllabi projects. Footnotes and symbols indicate different source materials either by section or specific bullet points. A full list is provided at the end of the document.

+ Source - Pete's 100 Ways: Indigenizing and Decolonizing Academic programs: Pete, S. (2016). 100 Ways: Indigenizing & Decolonizing Academic Programs. *aboriginal policy studies*, 6(1).

<https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/aps/index.php/aps/article/viewFile/27455/pdf>

\* Source - Inclusion by Design: <http://cte.virginia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Inclusion-by-Design-Survey-Your-Syllabus-Brantmeier-Broscheid-Moore-.pdf>

^ Source - Waggoner, Jess, Hailee Yoshizaki-Gibbons, Ashley Mog, Krystal Clearly, and Margaret Price, Facilitators. Workshop: Disability Access as Feminist Praxis at NWSA and Beyond. National Women's Studies Conference. Baltimore, Maryland. November 18, 2017.

[https://www.academia.edu/35438137/Handout\\_Disability\\_Access\\_as\\_Feminist\\_Praxis\\_at\\_NWSA\\_and\\_Beyond\\_](https://www.academia.edu/35438137/Handout_Disability_Access_as_Feminist_Praxis_at_NWSA_and_Beyond_)

## Course Policies, Philosophies and Values<sup>2</sup>

What pedagogical philosophies and values will shape your teaching in the course and what policies will guide you? What values do you intend to instill in this course? (Examples: philosophies: constructivist, inclusive, decolonial, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, social justice, progressive pedagogy; values: inquiry, community, discipline, deliberation, critical thinking, value of difference)\*

- Inclusiveness and Interdependence:** How can your syllabus help you create an anti-racist and inclusive atmosphere that welcomes all students? How can your syllabus support the tenet of interdependency?^ Some instructors include statements inviting diverse forms of participation, honoring student diversity and differing points of view, or inviting requests for disability accommodations.
- Integrity:** What are policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and misconduct in relation to materials and assignment for this course that upholds university policies but deescalates policing misconduct? For example, considering the types of work you are asking students to do, what do you want to communicate about working with data? How do you support students in understanding how to represent original sources and ask questions if they are unsure? What are forms of accountability for contributions to group projects?
- Responsibility:** What do students need to know about expectations regarding assignments, attendance, online participation or classroom interactions? Other possibilities include policies regarding late work, make-up exams and preparation for class participation. How will you redefine this?^
- Expectations for success:** How can students learn most successfully in your course? In the syllabus, you can express confidence that all students are capable of doing well and you can suggest strategies for success. For example, what strategies for learning are particularly important for this material? What resources — such as study centers, web tutorials or writing centers — are available to help students succeed in the course?

## Vision and Goal Statement

- People:** Who will most likely be in your class? (Consider student intersectional identities such as race, gender, age, class, dis/ability, religion, language, geographic region, sexual orientation, first generation college, other invisible identities, etc.)\*

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from on <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/TLI-TEFD-Checklist-Inclusive-Syllabus-20180613.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the following source: <http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/preparing-to-teach/designing-your-course-and-syllabus/>

- ❑ **Pedagogy:** What are the pedagogical choices available to you in your discipline and how diverse are they? (Examples: student-centered, team-based learning, problem-based learning, socratic method, simulations, role-play, debate, service learning)
- ❑ **Racial Justice:** How will your classroom reflect tenets of anti-racist and anti-oppressive and socially-just pedagogies? Who is represented as knowledge-holders in your course and what types of knowledge is being valued? What are disciplinary resources available to you to diversify the descriptive, substantive, and epistemic representation in your syllabus? How will you confront difficult dialogues, hostile classroom climates, or micro-aggressions in the classroom?
  - Include work from BIPOC scholars in your fields
  - Recognize the racialized and gendered histories of your institution
  - Include antidiscrimination policy and resources on how to report hate and bias
  - Provide anti-racist resources for your students
  - Describe the conditions of conduct in the classroom, especially around difficult dialogues
  - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Anti-Racist Pedagogy <https://libguides.usc.edu/c.php?g=756583&p=5976573>
  - Purdue - Black Lives Matter Library Guide: <https://guides.lib.purdue.edu/BLM>
  - Racial Justice Library Guide: <https://libguides.mit.edu/racial-justice>
  - Racial Politics of Citation: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/04/27/racial-exclusions-scholarly-citations-opinion>
  - Citation Matters: [https://culanth.org/fieldsights/citation-matters-an-updated-reading-list-for-a-progressive-environmental-anthropology?\\_ga=2.247505039.960271752.1593194384-2114737357.1592772097](https://culanth.org/fieldsights/citation-matters-an-updated-reading-list-for-a-progressive-environmental-anthropology?_ga=2.247505039.960271752.1593194384-2114737357.1592772097)
  - Institutionalized racism – a syllabus: [https://daily.jstor.org/institutionalized-racism-a-syllabus/?\\_ga=2.124257871.472656224.1593189587-298924932.1530908801](https://daily.jstor.org/institutionalized-racism-a-syllabus/?_ga=2.124257871.472656224.1593189587-298924932.1530908801)
  - Black Lives Matter Micro-Syllabus: <https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/anthropology/graduate/current-grads/resources.html>
  - From Racial Violence to Racial Justice: <https://library.ncte.org/journals/ee/issues/v49-2>
  - Racial Justice, Racial Equity, and Anti-Racism Reading List: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/library-knowledge-services/collections/diversity-inclusion-belonging/anti-racist>
  - The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights: [https://civilrights.org/?\\_ga=2.19332605.472656224.1593189587-298924932.1530908801](https://civilrights.org/?_ga=2.19332605.472656224.1593189587-298924932.1530908801)
  - Intersectionality Matters! <https://aapf.org/podcast>
  - White Racial Literacy Project: [https://wrlpiupui.weebly.com/?\\_ga=2.219719057.960271752.1593194384-2114737357.1592772097](https://wrlpiupui.weebly.com/?_ga=2.219719057.960271752.1593194384-2114737357.1592772097)
- ❑ **Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Academy**
  - Seek out and review the scholarship of Indigenous Peoples in your field+
  - Provide a Land Acknowledgement +
    - [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/consciouselders/pages/1529/attachments/original/1526921069/Honor\\_Native\\_Land\\_Guide.pdf?1526921069](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/consciouselders/pages/1529/attachments/original/1526921069/Honor_Native_Land_Guide.pdf?1526921069)
  - Review and implement Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education+
    - <https://sass.uottawa.ca/en/aboriginal/principles> and [https://teachingcommons.lakeheadu.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/ACDE\\_Accord\\_on\\_Indigenous\\_Education\\_0.pdf](https://teachingcommons.lakeheadu.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/ACDE_Accord_on_Indigenous_Education_0.pdf)
  - Consider offering land-based learning opportunities.+
  - Consider the role that volunteering and community service can play in building cultural competency with your learners.
  - Consider the role that elders and traditional knowledge keepers can play in course reform and delivery.+
  - Consider arts-based and non-dominant forms of demonstrating understanding, including re-storying, photo essays, performance, reflective writing, etc.+
  - Name the dominant worldview; make visible non-dominant worldviews and work toward what Sefa Dei refers to as “synthesizing knowledges.”+
  - Consider the role that ceremony may play in your course design, and in department/
  - faculty norms.+
  - Consider offering courses/programs in off-campus locations (i.e., introductory

- o courses taught at the food bank, friendship center, public library, etc.).+
- o Use the traditional names of places in your territory.+
- Content:** What different perspectives and viewpoints are included in the course content?\*
- o Include research and writings from authors of diverse backgrounds and offering multiple perspectives.
- o How to check your syllabus for gender balance: <https://jlsumner.shinyapps.io/syllabustool/>
- Climate:** How will differences of positionality/opinion/thinking be handled in the classroom? How can you create safe spaces for both visible and invisible students of color? What are the ways in which your approach is caring and compassionate?

### What and How Students Will Learn:

- Post your syllabus well before class begins.^
- Provide course schedule, student learning objectives related to course content, the required learning processes, and assignments/assessments are aligned
- Leave room for students to discuss their needs and experiences and allow time to accommodate changes^
- Redefine classroom expectations^
- Consider a TILT design: <https://tilthighered.com>
- Consider Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education: [http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/planning\\_syllabus](http://udloncampus.cast.org/page/planning_syllabus)
- Culturally responsive teaching: To what extent do teaching activities meet the needs of diverse learners, diverse learning styles, diverse ways of processing information, diverse performative styles? (Examples: Experiential learning, collaborative group work, individual activities, peer teaching/editing/sharing, one on one instructor time.)\*
- Diversity in Learning Style: Does your syllabus account for different types of learners (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.)
- Formative assessment: Is there a variety of formative assessments (assignments) that provide students with immediate feedback and opportunities to improve?\*
- Fixed and flexible options: Is divergent, creative thinking rewarded or do assessments require students to conform to one common norm?\*
- Scaffolding of extensive assignments with options for review, feedback, revision
- Fair and clear assessment criteria: Rubrics, checklists, rationales for grading
- Interaction patterns: Do learning activities promote inclusive interactive patterns? Do students cooperatively learn together? Or is instruction based on one-directional information provision by the instructor?\*
- Shared teaching: Do students have shared responsibility in their (and their fellow students') learning? For example, do students lead discussion groups, reteach concepts, or otherwise contribute to the teaching?\*
- Co-design and collaborative teaching: Is the classroom student-centered?

### Inclusive and Supportive Course Policies

- Move statements to the beginning, rather than end of syllabus.^
- Land Acknowledgement – [Why Acknowledge Territory?](#)
- Disability Accommodation and Inclusive Learning Statement with hyperlinks to campus and other resources. Read outline the first day of class.^
- Diversity Statement: <https://ctl.yale.edu/DiversityStatements>
- Statement Against Hate and Bias
- Statement on Racial Justice
- Scent-free Policy or Statement^
- Statement on supporting student families and/or breastfeeding student mothers with hyperlinks

- The policy outlined here is a reflection of Dr. Amanda Veile's (Purdue University) personal commitment to student, staff, and faculty parents that you can adopt or adapt:
  - Breastfeeding children are welcome in class as often as necessary. Indiana law allows a woman to breastfeed her child anywhere she has a right to be.
  - For older children, I understand that unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay home with a child. While not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class to cover gaps in care is acceptable.
  - I ask all students to help me create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.
  - In cases where babies and children come to class, please sit near the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met.
  - I understand that parental tiredness can be a major barrier to completing course work. I maintain the same high expectation for all students in my class regardless of parenting status, but am happy to problem-solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.
- Inviting Office Hours Statement
  - Expansive Academic Honesty Statement with hyperlinks to campus and other resources
  - Pronoun Policy
  - Course Value & Norms Statement
  - Take Care of Yourself and Mental Health Resources with hyperlinks to campus and other resources, for example see <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/syllabus/syllabussupport.html>
  - Report Hate Bias Resources with hyperlinks to campus and other resources
  - Sexual Harassment Resources with hyperlinks to campus and other resources
  - University Statements on Diversity and Inclusion with hyperlinks to campus and other resources

### Rhetoric<sup>3</sup>

- Welcoming, compassionate and inviting tone
- Use of personal pronouns
- Cooperative language
- Redundancy across modes
- Student Appeal
- Use of icons & logos
- Images of key authors, textbooks
- Visuals to represent main concepts
- Word clouds
- Visual representation of grade distribution
- Digital syllabus on course website

### Readability and Accessibility<sup>4</sup>

- Multiformatting your syllabus<sup>^</sup>
- Clear hierarchical structure of document, using headings
- Table of Contents with in-document hyperlinks
- Text: 12-16 point sans serif font; 1.5 line spacing; bold or underline to emphasize text. See also<sup>^</sup>
- Text distribution: digestible sections for learners with reading disabilities, non-native English speakers, attention-deficits
- Accessible color design

<sup>3</sup> Section adapted from: <https://www.umass.edu/ctl/sites/default/files/Handout%20Video%20Series-Six%20Principles%20of%20an%20Inclusive%20Syllabus.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Section adapted from: <https://www.umass.edu/ctl/sites/default/files/Handout%20Video%20Series-Six%20Principles%20of%20an%20Inclusive%20Syllabus.pdf>

- Check with accessibility checker
- Flexible text that can be altered by the user

### Inclusion and Subtext\*

- Implicit rules:** What formal and informal rules, assumptions, values are important for the course but not stated in the syllabus?
- Implicit messages:** What unwritten messages does the syllabus convey about the course, content, and learning? Is there a “hidden curriculum” embedded in the syllabus?
- Hidden biases:** In which ways does the “hidden curriculum” potentially discriminate against some students? (For example, do you use only one type of assessment to determine grades, and does the disadvantage some of the students in ways unrelated to their learning?)
- Teaching philosophy:** What is your teaching philosophy (student-centered learning, teacher-centered information dissemination, cooperative learning, etc.) and how does the syllabus communicate it to students? Do you clearly communicate your teaching philosophy to avoid biases?

## Sources, Readings and Resources

### References

- Brantmeier, Ed, Broscheid, Andreas, and Carl S. Moore. Inclusion by design: Survey Your Syllabus and Course Design. Available at: <http://cte.virginia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Inclusion-by-Design-Survey-Your-Syllabus-Brantmeier-Broscheid-Moore-.pdf>
- Helmer, Kirsten Ed. (2018). “Six Principles of an Inclusive Syllabus” Director of Programming for Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Institute for Teaching Excellence & Faculty Development, University of Massachusetts Amherst. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/TLI-TEFD-Checklist-Inclusive-Syllabus-20180613.pdf>
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- The Progressive Pedagogy Group: <https://www.hastac.org/groups/progressive-pedagogy-group>
- University of Washington Course Syllabus Design <http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/preparing-to-teach/designing-your-course-and-syllabus/>
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### Additional Resources

- Diagram Center - Making Images Accessible: <http://diagramcenter.org/making-images-accessible.html>
- Banks, J.A. (1999). *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Summary of four approaches to multicultural curriculum available at <http://www.intime.uni.edu/multiculture/curriculum/approachs.htm>
- Bers, T. H. Davis, B. D., and Taylor, B. (2000). The use of syllabi in assessments: unobtrusive indicators and tools for faculty development. *Assessment Update* 12(3), 4-7.
- Burgstahler, Sheryl. 2012. “Universal Design of Instruction (UDI): Definition, Principles, Guidelines, and Examples.” <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/instruction.html>.
- Ensuring Access through Collaboration and Technology (EnACT) project - Universal Design for Learning and your Syllabus: <http://mtsac.libguides.com/udl>

- James Madison University's Office of Disability Studies: <https://www.jmu.edu/ods/>
- Kairos PraxisWiki - Suggested practices for syllabus accessibility statements
- Knightlab – Storytelling Resources: <https://knightlab.northwestern.edu/>
- Padron, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., and Rivera, H. H. (2002). Educating Hispanic students: Effective instructional practices (Practitioner Brief #5). Available at: <http://www.cal.org/crede/Pubs/PracBrief5.htm>.
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- Mike Wesch - Steps toward a big idea syllabus: <http://myteachingnotebook.com/index.php/2015/08/28/rethinking-the-syllabus/>
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- Rebecca Thomas Two-Eyed Seeing <https://leapintothevoidwithme.wordpress.com/2016/07/29/etuaptmumk-two-eyed-seeing/>
- Rochester Racial Justice Toolkit: <https://thetoolkit.wixsite.com/toolkit>
- Universal Course Design online validation tool: <http://ucd.eeonline.org/validator/>
- Womack, A. (2017). Teaching Is Accommodation: Universally Designing Composition Classrooms and Syllabi. *College Composition & Communication*, 68(3), 494-525.