

## THE SYLLABUS

# 4 TIPS

## For Creating Inclusive and Anti-Racist Classrooms

Syllabi are learning tools that signal to students how learning takes place in a classroom. The syllabus can cover how students are evaluated and assessed and help students develop learning strategies and communication tools. Universities have historically served white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, upper class students; therefore, ensuring that our syllabi and classrooms meet the needs of our more diverse student body is key to being an equitable, anti-racist instructor.

01

### Understand the power of the syllabus

1. Syllabi can reinforce or demystify the "hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum are implicit norms and assumptions about how learning takes place. Many students are new to college classrooms. Make it as easy for students to learn!
2. Syllabi can create a welcoming and caring environment.
3. Syllabi let students know that learning is a process of knowledge sharing between student and instructor and that the instructor is there to support the learning.
4. Syllabi signal inclusion and belonging when they deconstruct dominant (e.g., white, cisgender, heterosexual) experiences as the norm through the utilization of diverse course materials.

02

### Be Race Conscious

1. Contextualize inequitable outcomes in light of historical exclusion, discrimination, systemic oppression, social context, and other important contexts.
2. Understand, teach, and discuss social and structural determinants of health throughout your courses.
3. Notice, name, and question patterns of inequitable outcomes among students from minoritized racial/ethnic groups.

03

### Assume Responsibility

1. Consider differences in student outcomes in relation to taken-for-granted practices and policies, inadequate knowledge, a lack of cultural know-how, and the absence of institutional support, *not* individual student failure.
2. Ensure that when you notice inequitable outcomes with your students, you are not using cultural stereotypes to justify your reasoning.

04

### Design the syllabus for your students

1. Help students in their development by integrating some formative evaluation activities throughout the term.\*
2. Use language that welcomes students to engage with you. This language may be more informal (e.g. "I welcome you to meet me for office hours").
3. Remove academic jargon.
4. Validate students' ability to be successful in your course.

\*These formative evaluation measures should not take place of current evaluative components (e.g., final or unit exams) that are a core component of the course content.

## Checklist for Inclusion

Below you will find a series of checklists that will provide you more specific guidance on how to create an inclusive syllabus and classroom experience for your students. At the bottom are a series of reflection questions that will also help you think more deeply about the learning environment.

*Hola*  
*Hey!*  
*Kamusta ka*

### Promising Learning Environments

- \_\_\_ Set a respectful, welcoming, inclusive tone.
- \_\_\_ Recognize students are learners who bring varied experiences, knowledge, and identities into the classroom.
- \_\_\_ Describe how classes will function and what students should expect from the instructor.
- \_\_\_ Focus on possibilities for learning and growth, not just punishments for not learning the material.
- \_\_\_ Communicate that the instructor cares about student learning and that all students can be successful in the course.
- \_\_\_ Take into account religious holidays when scheduling and provide alternative methods for students to make up assignments without penalty or undue burdensome process.

### Syllabus Statements

- \_\_\_ Consider including the MNSON Inclusive Excellence Statement to your syllabus (link at end of infographic).
- \_\_\_ Consider including the Chosen Name and Pronoun Statement to your syllabus (link at end of infographic).
- \_\_\_ Consider including a statement regarding how students can receive basic needs support and how to get help.

### Address Universal Design

- \_\_\_ Ensure your materials are readable by a screen reader.
- \_\_\_ Offer multiple ways to contact the instructor.
- \_\_\_ Provide alternative material formats.
- \_\_\_ Provide flexible ways to submit assignments.
- \_\_\_ Provide information on student support services.

### Inclusive Learning Outcomes

- \_\_\_ Outside of the approved course outcomes, make explicit what skills and knowledge students should learn.
- \_\_\_ Use a diverse range of assessment methods.
- \_\_\_ Consider how the skills and knowledge address health equity.

### Honor Diversity

- \_\_\_ Materials should reflect authors from diverse backgrounds and that share different experiences and histories.
- \_\_\_ Materials should present "critical" perspectives which means that topics should address how systemic oppressions (e.g., structural determinants) impact health inequity.
- \_\_\_ Examples should represent diverse groups and be contextualized by accurately describing historical discrimination, exclusion, and other systemic oppressions.

## Reflection

Take a few minutes to write down your thoughts:

1. How do you feel being asked to include inclusive excellence and anti-racist elements into your course?
2. How do your identities influence what you teach, how you set up your classroom, what you think about the student-teacher relationship, how you teach?
3. Where do you still have concerns and questions, or need support to do this work effectively?

### Additional Resources

- [Inclusion by design: Survey your syllabus and course design](#)
- [Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing Inclusive Excellence Statements](#)
- [Loyola University Chicago Reporting Obligation and Disability Language](#)
- [Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy: Decolonizing Your Syllabus](#)
- [Center for Engaged Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship \(CELT\)](#)

Please reach out to Dian Squire, Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence, if you need additional support integrating inclusive excellence into your course. Dian can be reached at dsquire@luc.edu.

Portions of this document were inspired by the University of Denver IE Syllabus Checklist and the UCLA Inclusive Syllabus Design program.