

Creating an Equitable Syllabus

March 8, 2024



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Land Acknowledgement

I come with respect for the land I am on today, I am on unceded territory of Kumeyaay, Ipai, Tipai people, colonized and known as San Diego.

As a resident of South Los Angeles I recognize that I occupy land originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Tongva and Kizh Peoples. I honor and pay respect to their elders and descendants as they continue their stewardship of these lands and waters.



Introduction

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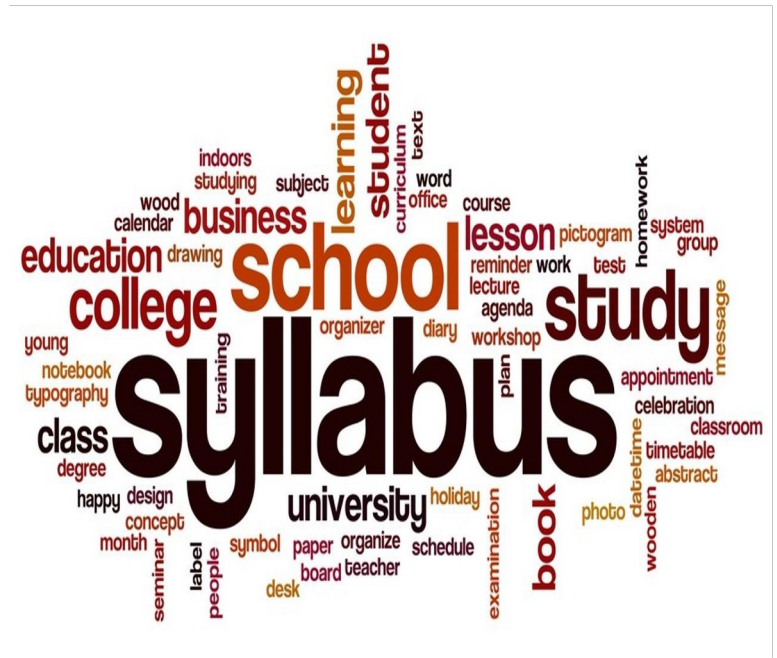


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Ice Breaker (Part 1)

When you think of a syllabus, what comes to mind?



Ice Breaker (Part 2)

**How do bias, assumptions, white privilege,
and stereotypes influence the way
we create our syllabi?**

**Fortunately, integrating a
DEIA lens to your syllabus
creation process helps!**



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What is DEIA?

Diversity: Focuses on and *values* the ways in which people differ

Equity: Focus on providing access and *resources* to historically excluded groups

Inclusion: Bringing traditionally excluded individuals/groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power

Anti-Racism: Actively opposing racism and the unfair treatment of people/groups; replacing old systems/policies with equity lens

Who *we* are & the *why* behind our work



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DEIA is about everyone!

We all have valuable perspectives on this topic! Keep these questions in mind as move forward:

- **Who Are You? Who are your students? (Gender, race, etc.)**
- **Are you new to DEIA? What questions do you have?**
- **How has DEIA already been integrated into your syllabus/course?**
- **Are your students co-creators of the course?**
- **What content are your using? Whose voices are present/absent?**
- **How are you helping your students grow? Are you growing?**
- **How do you know what the students need?**



Integrating DEIA into your Syllabus...

...and your course!

Definition: Decolonization

Our ultimate goal is to help you decolonize your syllabus and course.

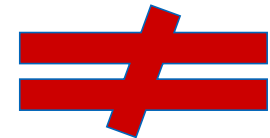
Decolonization is the process of *challenging* and *undoing* colonizing practices that have influenced education in the past and are still present today.

This includes *rethinking, reframing, and reconstructing* curricula and research that preserve a colonial lens.

Decolonizing your syllabus involves:

Moving away from the typical syllabus characteristics

- Lack personality
- Use a lot of “inside baseball” language
- Discuss what *not* to do
- Read like a manual



..and incorporating inclusive values and voices:

- Humanizing the content
- Using student friendly language
- Emphasize how to be successful
- Read like a welcome letter



Definition: Anti-Racism

Decolonizing requires an anti-racist approach. Being racist or anti-racist is not about who you are; it is about *what you do*.

Anti-Racism: It is actively working against white supremacy, white dominant culture, and inequitable institutions and society. Anti-racism is making conscious decisions to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices in personal practices and structural policies.

- ***Openly acknowledge*** all types of racism in your course: internalized, intrapersonal, institutional, and structural.
- ***Express*** anti-racist ideas, engage in anti-racist practices and support anti-racist practices.

Let's Focus on Three Major Sections of the Syllabus:



1. Course Description

2. Communication Plan

3. Policies

Let's Focus on Three Major Sections of the Syllabus: **revise them, and add to them!**

1. **Course Description (Diversity and Inclusion Statement)**
2. **Communication Plan (About Me Section)**
3. **Policies (Resources)**

1: Course Description

- Share what is unique about the way YOU teach this course?
- What is exciting, fun, and new in your field? Or your approach?
- What should they start thinking about now, in order to be successful later?
- Tell students *how* they can apply the information in the course in their everyday lives, and *why* this matters.

Add: A Diversity and Inclusion Statement

- **Explain your commitment to DEIA and how you and your students will work together to uphold these values.**
- **Don't just mimic language from your school's website, make it personal!**

Example

Etiquette and Equity Online

Respect for Diversity

Students in this class are encouraged to speak up and participate during class meetings. Because the class will represent a diversity of individual beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences, I ask that every member of this show respect for every other member of this class.

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your cultural or religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

2. Communication Plan

- Don't just explain how to reach out, share how *you* plan to communicate with your students, and how they can collaborate with one another
- Offer a range of channels to reach you, and explain when to use which, offering screen-shots when applicable
- Offer Office Hours at different days/times
- Provide an email template, to help them with their communication skills

Add: An About Me Section

- Share your story as a teacher and as a *student*
- Demonstrate how you embody DEIA
- Make students *want* to use the communication plan!

Example

A Little More About Me

Before we go any further, I might as well share my story. Soon I will be asking you to reflect and get personal, so it is only fair that I do likewise.

Discovering My Strengths

My name is Brielle Plump, and you can call me Prof. Plump. I have been an instructor of Communication Studies since 2011, but my love for the field and teaching goes back decades!

I grew up in Oakland, CA in a diverse community where I enjoyed playing sports. On the soccer field I learned that: I was bossy, hard working, and a well-rounded team player who loves to make others laugh and feel confident. I realized these characteristics could be strengths in other contexts, so by the time I got to high-school I began to channel them in the classroom, as well.

Attending College

When I got to UC Davis (UCD) for college I found these same skills of mine were also helpful at work! I used them as a counselor with Student Services on campus, as a server at the local Thai restaurant, and as wellness trainer at Curves. Of course, in addition to paying for college with all these jobs, I took courses, but I started off without a clear path towards any specific major. Therefore, I took some Communication Studies classes because the titles just drew me in, and they were great course for satisfying a lot of General Education requirements. It turned out, I loved investigating meaningful interactions between people and communities, and my skills as a hard working fun-loving team player were again useful!



3. Course Policies

- **Include essential campus policies, but introduce them with your own language**
- **Message your own policies with empowerment in mind**
- **Consider where there is grey area, and explain the options**

Add: Support Resources

- Go beyond campus support
- Tailor your list to the topic
- Give “tips for success”
- Point to the resources, “just in time”

Example

Time Management

[10 EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR STUDENTS](#) ↗

1. Create a Master Schedule

Make a master schedule your child can use to block off time to work on his or her assignments. This will help your child prioritize projects and provide a structure to help keep him or her on track to meet due dates. Use a different color for each subject so your child can follow the schedule quickly and easily.

[Download the Printable Version Here!](#) ↗

2. Use the To-Do Lists

Look ahead to all upcoming assignments and record the due dates in a personal calendar. Use this agenda to schedule in TV and rest time too—this will help you avoid falling into a trap of wasted hours in front of a screen instead of working on assignments.

3. Eliminate Distractions

Between cell phones, social media, and friends, there are a lot of activities that can distract students from their school work. When it's time to get down to work, have your child turn off his or her cell phone and sign out of social media accounts. Any time on the master schedule that is dedicated to working on school work should be cell phone and television-free!



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What else can we do?

Update Course Content and Materials

- **Be transparent and holistic:** Offer context, and share the “dark” side of your topic, don’t gloss over it – discuss it openly.
- **Mirror and center your audience:** Create places where students can see themselves reflected in your course, and lead with those images/examples.
- **Avoid assumptions:** From lesson content to the language you use in instructions, be mindful of your word choice and who it serves, who it ignores.
- **Follow the law:** Use an accessibility checker to ensure you are 508-compliant.

Update Course Content and Materials (cont.)

- **Lower the cost:** Offer Open Educational Resources (OER) as primary or alternative texts; and be upfront about any required costs
- **Showcase diversity:** Ensure textbooks, images, videos, etc. include diverse representations in authorship and perspective
- **Be predictable:** Balance the workload of each unit, provide easy to understand titles & instructions, give “expected time to complete” ranges, send emails and grade at roughly the same time each week
- **Don’t over-rely on the Syllabus:** Remember to offer those “just in time” resources

Practice *Inclusive Course Design*

Exclusive

- Text heavy lectures
- One size fits all assignments
- Heavily weighted assignments only
- Closed, one way conversations
- Strictly subject based activities
- Avoids tough conversations or unknowns

Inclusive

- Integration of images
- Assignment options
- A mix of low stakes and high stakes assignments
- Opportunities for feedback and collaboration
- Incorporates self reflection, leadership, team work
- Acknowledges bias and admits gaps in information

Questions? Suggestions?

Recommended Resources

- Podcast: [*Uncovering Your Implicit Biases: An Exercise for Teachers*](#)
- Book: “Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain” by [Zaretta Hammond](#)
- Training: [Online Equity Training](#) with Peralta Community College
- Email us: bplump@peralta.edu and jpenhos@swccd.edu

References

[CCCCO Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms](#)

[Jones, 1997; Kendi, 2019; National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2022](#)

Thank you!

Recorded webinars and a schedule of upcoming events are available at onlinenetworkofeducators.org/spring-2024-webinars.

Email support@cvc with any questions!