

# Syllabus Challenge: Infusing Diversity & Inclusion

## Instructions:

- ❖ The main goal is to analyze your syllabus (and eventually the full course) for potential improvements that infuse diversity and inclusion throughout.
- ❖ Keep in mind that diversity and inclusion attends to a broad range of topics such as those listed to the right (not an exhaustive list).
- ❖ Choose one course syllabus.
  - ❖ helpful to also have readings list, course schedule, assignment instructions, & texts available.
- ❖ Use this challenge to conduct a step-by-step analysis of your syllabus.
- ❖ Take notes on areas in your syllabus that need attention within the space provided on each page.
- ❖ Try not to feel overwhelmed. Even if you choose 2-3 items to address this semester, you can build in more inclusive practices each new time you teach the course.
- ❖ **Take Action!!!**

## Diversity/Inclusion Topics:

- ❖ Privilege/the role of power
- ❖ Intersectionality
- ❖ Systemic/institutional-level
- ❖ Social class/first-generation
- ❖ Disability
- ❖ Religious/non-religious
- ❖ Race/ethnicity
- ❖ Sex/gender
- ❖ Sexuality/sexual orientation
- ❖ Gender identity
- ❖ Age
- ❖ Immigrant status/citizenship
- ❖ Language of origin
- ❖ Global/transnational

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## General review

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

- ❑ Current terminology referring to groups
- ❑ Avoid generic use of male pronouns; use singular “they” instead of him/her
- ❑ Check for cultural phrasing that may not translate for English learners or even out of state students
  - ❑ Students asking to submit late work are barking up the wrong tree
  - ❑ Cram for a test
  - ❑ Quizzes will be a piece of cake
  - ❑ Take a raincheck
- ❑ Visual appeal-
  - ❑ Does this syllabus follow a traditional format of all black words on a white page?
  - ❑ How could visuals, color, graphics, etc. help engage students with this document? Maybe they will even read it!!
- ❑ Accessibility- how will this syllabus work for visually impaired students?
  - ❑ Will colorblind students be able to read the syllabus?
  - ❑ Consider multiple formats (black/white, color, digital uploads)
  - ❑ Avoid pictures of words because reader software may not read the words within an image.
  - ❑ Tag images with a verbal description within digital syllabus.

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## Professor Information

- Contact information & office hours
  - Change “office” hours to “student” hours to let students know this is their time to visit.
  - Make it explicitly clear that you encourage office visits and invite students to chat with you after class.
  - Many students from marginalized groups assume they should not bother the professor, while privileged students assume they should make use of the professor’s time.
  - Include your preferred pronouns to model behavior: she/her; he/him; they/them
- Add personal touch
  - Include a picture of you to help students see you as a real person.
  - Why not share some personal information (that you feel comfortable sharing)? Pets, hobbies, background, surprising facts about you that make you human and approachable.
  - All of these additions to the syllabus make a difference to students who feel they do not belong at the university.
- Teaching philosophy
  - Include a portion of your teaching philosophy. This gives students a chance to understand your approach to their learning.
  - Address your inclusion, equity, & social justice values early on in the syllabus.

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

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## Course Description

- Is your description language clear and free of academic jargon that students entering your course may not understand?
- Include pre-requisite course info (many first-generation and other marginalized students are unaware of the importance of pre-reqs).

## Learning objectives/goals

- Consider diversity, inclusion, & equity in relation to your course content or your field as a possible added learning goal (or goals).
- Are there any learning goals to add that would speak to students' own cultures, identities, backgrounds, lived experiences?

## Texts and Readings

- Textbooks- consider the high costs \$\$\$ of textbooks for students from poverty or low-income backgrounds. Could the less expensive book or open ed resources serve your learning goals?
- Do you use all of the required texts? If not, consider making them recommended rather than required.
- Are all additional readings available well in advance of when they are due (at least 2 weeks)? Even better, can they ALL be made available week one? Many students with family/work obligations or first-generation adjusting to college life are better served when materials are made available to them in advance rather than last minute.

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

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## Assigned Readings/Authors

- Who is represented in the readings in terms of **topics covered**? Considering your own privileged identities, what areas require more attention as they may be invisible to you?
- Who is represented in the readings in terms of **authors**? Are there other readings that could be assigned (or even replace some current readings) written by authors from marginalized groups?
- Representation of one's own group in a discipline could affect choice of major, sense of belonging, staying in a major, self-efficacy, &, academic success.
- Do texts support deficit models that blame marginalized groups for inequality? Choose strengths-based readings that address institutional-level oppression (systemic discrimination).

## Topics/themes/content

- Is "diversity" covered in a boxed-off portion of the course? How can you begin to infuse diversity, equity, inclusion, & social justice throughout the content rather than sending a message that diversity is a separate topic?
- How can you adjust examples used in lectures to cover a variety of identities, cultures, and marginalized worldviews?
- When covering a theory or research by scholars who are also people of color, disabled, women, or LGBTQ+, be sure to explicitly state this information so that students know your discipline includes diversity.
- Perhaps even show pictures of these scholars. Yes, this may take some learning on your part to identify and include these marginalized scholars.

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

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## Topics/themes/content (continued)

- Culturally-responsive pedagogy:
  - Who are your students?
  - Are there ways to include relevant content connected to your students' lives, social identities, & cultural backgrounds?
  - Marginalized students are more engaged & show better academic outcomes in courses with culturally-responsive content & pedagogy.
  - e.g., COVID health disparities & direct impact on communities of color & low-income people; summer 2020 protests against police violence

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

## Schedule & due dates

- Make it clear, then stick to it.
  - Changing dates may have negative impact on students with work and family responsibilities (first generation, older, single parents, often women and students of color)
- Is the course schedule for the full term clear from the start of the course?
- Are all due dates clearly marked?
- Are due dates scheduled to avoid falling on marginalized religious holidays? (e.g., Jewish; Muslim; Baha'i)
- Are late policies & appeals to the policy made clear? When some students ask for extensions, how do you ensure that all students receive the option for an extension?
- Again, privileged students tend to ask, marginalized students tend not to ask.

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## Assignments

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

- ❑ Are the instructions for papers & projects spelled out clearly such that students from all backgrounds are able to follow? (think about first-generation, international, working-class, returning/older, students with disabilities)
- ❑ Are group work expectations and any boundaries associated with group work spelled out clearly? Don't assume all cultural definitions of "cheating" match your own definition.
- ❑ Do assignments encourage students to engage in real-world application and/or problem solving?
  - ❑ Real-world application empowers students to apply to their own culture, identities, backgrounds, contexts (creates inclusive environment & can boost sense of belonging).
- ❑ Are there rubrics associated with papers & projects? Could rubrics be added?
  - ❑ Are there sample student works from previous terms that can be shared (with permission)?
  - ❑ Transparency in expectations & grading practices help students meet the learning goals set forth by the professor. Research shows transparency can decrease equity gaps in academic success.
  - ❑ Consider having the class help you create the first rubric. This facilitates discussion of what a high quality paper looks like versus an average or poor quality paper.
- ❑ Exams/quizzes-
  - ❑ Are exams accessible to visually impaired students?
  - ❑ Are makeup policies clear such that all students will understand how to request a makeup exam?
  - ❑ Are examples used on exams representative of diverse social identities?

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## Policies

## NOTES: My Syllabus/Course

- Participation/Discussion guidelines
  - Are there guidelines for respectful participation, such as disagreeing with a position, but NOT attacking an individual?
  - Do the discussion guidelines address student awareness of how much time they take up talking in class (too much; too little)?
  - Some from marginalized groups will feel less comfortable speaking up in class. Will this hurt their grade if they do not participate as often as students from privileged groups?
  - Do the discussion guidelines encourage brave spaces (having courage to learn even when we are uncomfortable)?
- Is there a statement on diversity/inclusion making these values clear? (use something from the university or craft your own)
- Is there a statement on names/pronouns sending a message to transgender and gender non-binary students (& their peers) that their identities will be respected in your classroom?
- Technology needs for course & where/how students gain access
  - What if a student in poverty or a low-income student does not have a smart phone or home computer?
  - What if they have a computer, but do not have the software needed for your course?
  - Do any activities in class assume all students have certain technology in hand?
- Student services (not just the writing center)
  - Does the syllabus include accessibility options and the contact information for disability services?
  - What about resources on campus such as women's center, LGBTQ+ resources, multicultural center, English learning services, first-generation services?

# Let's stay in touch!

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Drop your email at the link below to get Enough Squad news, resources, updates, and tips for success.

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I designed this course for white people ready to begin the lifelong process of unlearning racism and taking anti-racist actions. [Read more details here.](#)

[Preview the Breaking Silence](#) course podcast (2:30 min) featuring sample quotes from the 32 experts interviewed for the show.