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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 your 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

❏ 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.

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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 their 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.

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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.

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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

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

☐ 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

❑ 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?

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