Inclusive Syllabi Design

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Agenda

Introductions

Goals

Understanding Syllabus Tone and Language

Syllabus Review

Student Centered and Accessible Syllabus design

Goals, Purpose and Outcomes

- Provide an opportunity to reflect on current syllabi construction to gauge the extent to which it incorporates inclusive practices.

- Become aware of strategies and tools for constructing a student-centered syllabus that is inclusive and accessible to diverse learners.

- Revise sections of current syllabi where applicable/appropriate to reflect more inclusive and accessible design.

"Inclusive teaching practices are effective teaching practices" (Hogan & Sathy, 2022)

Syllabus Tone and Language: Why it Matters

What Are My Values As An Instructor?

- Why are these values important to me?

- In what ways do I want them to/do they, show up in my syllabus/instruction?

Understanding Syllabus Tone and Language

Less Welcoming	More Welcoming
If you need to contact me outside of class...	I welcome you to contact me outside of class...
Students are required to attend all course sessions.	We highly encourage students to attend all live lectures, but we will also be posting recordings to Canvas for students who cannot attend.
Some of the skills you should learn in the course include...	Some of the skills I hope you will learn throughout the course include...
Late work will be penalized by 50%.	Late work is still eligible for 50% partial credit.

Standford University

Warmer Language = More Welcoming Tone

Consider:
- Positive over Punishing Language

Sample Phrases from Cold Syllabus	Sample Phrases from Warm Syllabus
"Come prepared to actively participate in this course. This is the best way to engage you in learning"	"I hope you actively participate in this course . . . because I have found it is the best way to engage you in learning."
"traumatic events . . . are no excuse for not contacting me within 24 h"	"traumatic events . . . are unwelcome and because I understand how difficult these times are, if you contact me within 24 h of the event and provide documentation, I will be happy to give you a make-up exam."

Warmer Language = More Welcoming Tone

- Consider:
  - Active Voice over Passive Voice & First or Second Person over Third

Sample Phrases from Cold Syllabus	Sample Phrases from Warm Syllabus
This course covers . . .	This semester we will explore . . .
Students are required to . . .	You will . . .
Students will . . .	We will [or you will]

Warmer Language = More Welcoming Tone

- Consider Invitations over Commands

Commands	Invitations
"You must complete makeup work to receive credit."	"Feel free to complete makeup work to earn credit."
"You are allowed to…"	"You are welcome to…"
"I only accept…"	"I encourage you to…"
"Late work receives a 40% reduction."	"Late work is eligible for 60% of original points."
"If you need to contact me outside of class or office hours, email _____"	"I invite you to contact me outside of office hours by emailing _____."

Understanding Syllabus Tone and Language

- In pairs, review the language used in the course overview, assignment descriptions etc. using the worksheet to guide conversation.

- **Purpose**: Understand the tone of our syllabus and discover opportunities for a more accessible/inclusive design.

Examples of Less Welcoming Tone

Statement 1: "Students shall conduct themselves in a manner that will not disrupt the learning of other students. Cell phones may not be used in class FOR ANY REASON! All personal devices must be silenced prior to the start of class."

Statement 2: "As research on learning shows, unexpected noises and movement automatically divert and capture people's attention, which means you are affecting everyone's learning experience if your cell phone, pager, laptop, etc., makes noise or is visually distracting during class. For this reason, I ask you to turn off your mobile devices and close your laptops during class."

How can we convert to warmer tone?
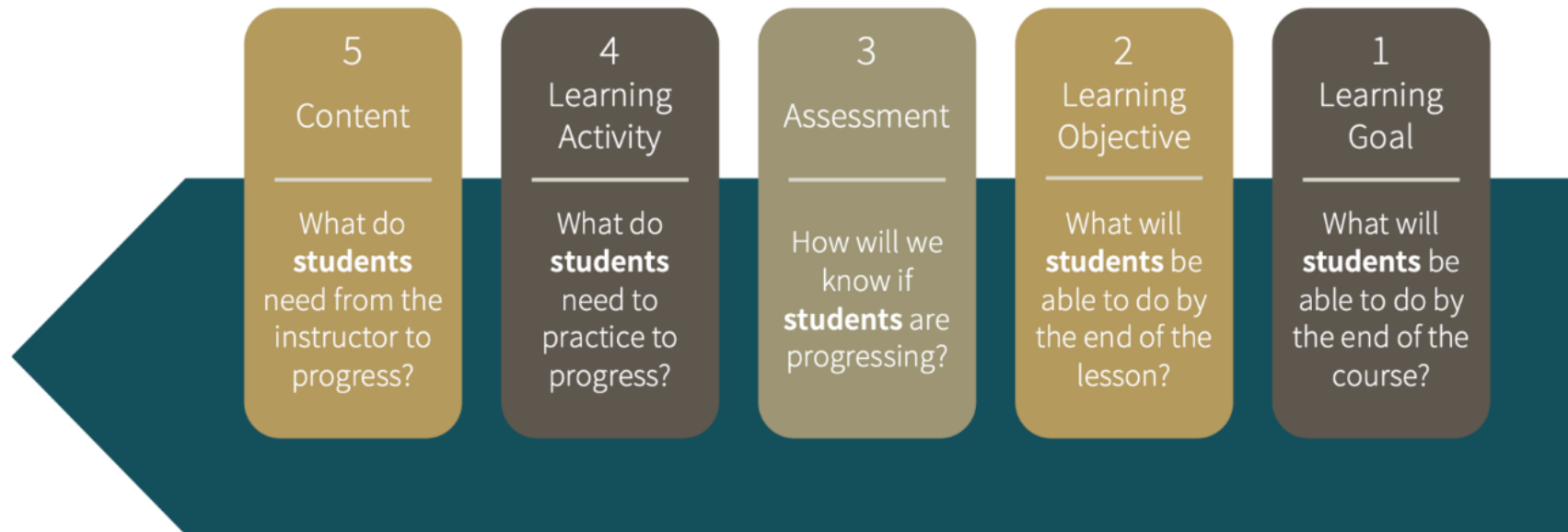
Suggested Ways to "warm up" Our Syllabi

- A "welcome message" to your course overview, expressing your enthusiasm for the course and for working with students, and your belief in their potential for success.

- A diversity statement, expressing your commitment to cultivating an atmosphere that recognizes diversity and supports inclusion.

- An inclusive learning statement that recognizes learner variability and expresses flexibility for disabled and nondisabled students.

- A course overview that highlights diversity and inclusion, indicating the topics the course will cover (Fuentes, Zelaya & Madsen, 2021, p. 73).

Accessible and Student-Centered Syllabus Design

"Who might be left behind because of this syllabus design?"

Student-centered course design

5	4	3	2	1
Content	**Learning Activity**	**Assessment**	**Learning Objective**	**Learning Goal**
What do **students** need from the instructor to progress?	What do **students** need to practice to progress?	How will we know if **students** are progressing?	What will **students** be able to do by the end of the lesson?	What will **students** be able to do by the end of the course?

Syllabus Activity

- Design 2 expected outcomes for two lessons
  - State at the beginning of class, lesson, semester etc.
  - Check in at the end of class, lesson, course etc.

Structure is Important

- Guided Reading Questions for required reading assignments
  - Helps students recognize key takeaways from the readings
  - Helps students identify how key points align with course/ module goals and assessments

This vs That

- Create a short report, approximately three paragraphs long, about the state of gender diversity and inclusion in at least one social institution in the United States or another country. Things to consider for the report:

  o Are there any obvious biases or discriminatory practices that discourage gender diversity and inclusion in this institution?

  o Are there any obvious diversity and inclusion practices that encourage gender diversity and inclusion in this institution?

  o What does this institution need to do differently to increase gender diversity and inclusion?

  o What recommendations could you make to help promote gender diversity and inclusion in this social institution?

- Do a report on the state of gender diversity in the United States

Notes on Accessible Design

- Captioning
- Use of MyCourses to design modular course outlines (show example)
- Affordability e.g. free texts/no texts where possible, low-cost course supplies, consider mobility for experiential learning activities, e.g. off campus visits, minimize incidental cost e.g. subscriptions to access certain content or for course activities.
- Flexibility, e.g. alternative assignment delivery methods or content presentation, accommodations for different learning styles, e.g. varied assessment methods, combination of quizzes, papers, individual vs. team assignments.
- Create a course schedule in table form. This is a concise visual way to help students understand what the course will look like and how they can best prepare for each session. (show example from my course).

Resources

- Hogan, K. & Sathy, V. (2022). *Inclusive Teaching : Strategies for Promoting Equity in the College Classroom*. West Virginia University Press
- Montclair State University Office for Faculty Excellence
- Stanford University Teaching Commons
- Smith, T. (2024). *Inclusive Pedagogy Academy Workshop*. RIT Division of Diversity and Inclusion.