

Inclusive Teaching Course and Syllabus Design

Reflection: Questions for Course Planning

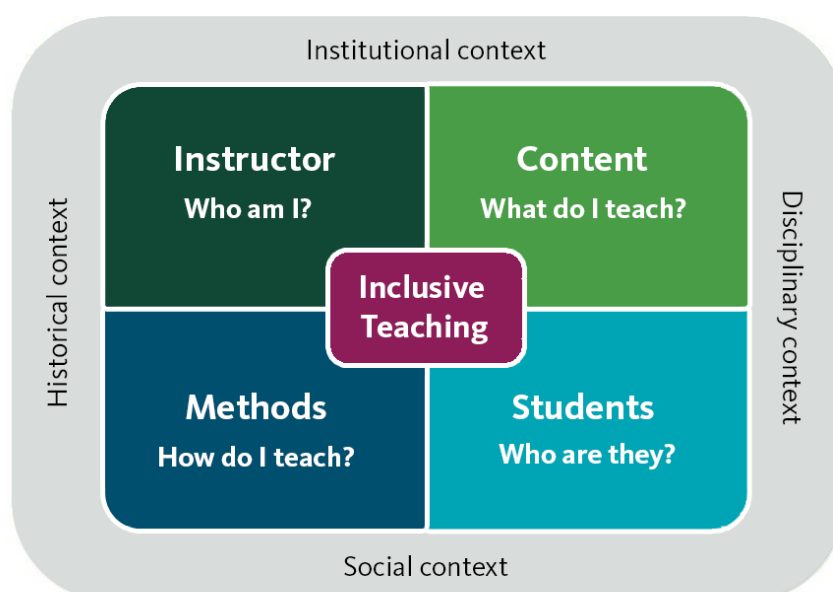
Who am I? What assumptions do I bring to my teaching; what assumptions do I make about students? How has my own background shaped or enabled my intellectual journey? Do I find ways for my students to know me as a person with hopes, curiosities, even failures? Do they understand how to, and feel *invited* to, address and talk with me? How do my social identities position me in relation to my students, my institution, my field of study, etc.?

Who are my students? How will I find out? Do I know at least some of my students' names? What strengths, anxieties, experiences, and identities do they bring to our work together? Can I make a place for those strengths, experiences, and identities to be clear assets in my classroom? Can I help relieve students' anxieties or fears? What are my students' own goals for their learning? How do they learn well? Do they feel anonymous? Like they don't belong in my classroom? How can I counteract those feelings and build their sense of connection and agency?

What content and information will I convey? Does my course material reflect the diversity of the field, including the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its scholars and practitioners? More broadly, do I present knowledge as evolving and developed through heterogeneous conversation? Or are "non-traditional" topics and voices marginalized? Do I build a bridge between my content and my students' lives—underscoring its possible urgency or beauty or value for *them*? Do I explicitly break down the process of expert thinking to invite them in?

What teaching methods will I employ? Am I using a range of strategies and modes of student engagement? What values do my methods signal to students? Do I draw on different kinds of talents and experiences my students bring to the class? Am I giving students low-stakes chances to practice, receive feedback, and reflect, and do I adjust my approach to respond to trends in their understanding? Do I engage with the scholarship of teaching and learning in my field? Am I aware of, and draw upon, anti-oppressive pedagogies pertinent to my teaching and learning context?

How are relevant contexts shaping my course? How has the history of my field or this particular course shaped what is included in its content, how it is taught, and which kinds of learners are centered in it, and which might be marginalized or excluded? How has this course evolved over time, and in what ways – and for what reasons – has it been altered or adapted to its current form? Which trends in my discipline, field of study, or other pertinent scholarly contexts should I be considering for how I organize and teach my course? Are there any departmental or institutional expectations or initiatives that might be influencing the aims, structure, or curricular elements of the course? What is happening socially, politically, economically, culturally, etc. in my community, region or nation that is related to the content of my course or might be affecting me or my students' sense of wellbeing? How should I bring such contexts into the class?



Adapted from Marchesani, Linda S. and Maurianne Adams. "Dynamics of Diversity in the Teaching-Learning Process: A Faculty Development Model for Analysis and Action." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 52 (Winter 1992): 9-20. The authors cite an unpublished paper by B. W. Jackson as the source of this model.

Activity: Inclusive Teaching Syllabus Annotation

This exercise invites you to examine the syllabus itself as a reflection of the attitudes and possibilities of a course, looking especially to see how a commitment to inclusive teaching might show up in the very architecture of contact details, course descriptions, learning objectives, course policies, and more. (We're sure you have other strategies for creating a sense of purpose, belonging, relevance, and support beyond what we suggest here, too!) *We welcome chances to talk with you about this.*

Your syllabus might include:	Notes:
<p>Instructor contact details, course communication policy Do you introduce yourself? Is it clear how to address you? Would students feel invited to? What happens in your office hours?</p>	
<p>Course description How is it written to convey what's most promising about the course? In other words, rhetorically speaking how does it <i>invite</i> students into questions or problems they might regard as important, intriguing, or beautiful?</p>	
<p>Learning objectives Do they articulate clearly what you most care about in terms of developing how students think, act, and feel even beyond your 10 weeks in the course? It's possible that the skills and aptitudes of an inclusive classroom—say, attentiveness to a range of perspectives, the capacity for self scrutiny, willingness to participate in evidence-based dialogue about socially urgent topics—are an essential part of what students are there to learn. Are they foregrounded in the objectives?</p>	
<p>Alignment For each learning objective, can you identify the assignments or activities or moments when students demonstrate it, i.e. where it is assessed? Do any of the learning objectives lack a moment of demonstration and assessment? Do any your assignments or planned activities lack an objective to which they aim?</p>	
<p>Course policies and resources Do you include explicit course policy statements that affirm a commitment to inclusive teaching and learning and/or indicate resources for students regarding these policies? For example, do you include policies on accessibility, equity and inclusion, student conduct, or prohibited discrimination and harassment reporting, among others?</p>	
<p>Course materials Place a star next to texts that reflect racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among your field's scholars, practitioners, and knowledge communities. What sense might students get about the field, its evolving concerns, and who produces knowledge from this slate of materials?</p>	
<p>Community Circle places in the schedule where you've built in time to develop students' sense of community.</p>	
<p>Challenges What do you think is the single hardest part of the course for students? Please highlight a particular lesson, activity, assignment, or line from the course description. Why is it so hard? What do you do to help students through it? How do you communicate both help and challenge to students?</p>	
<p>Faculty feedback Place an "F" next to places in the term where students are getting feedback from you or peers about their progress toward meeting course learning objectives. Are there plenty of low-stakes occasions for students to see how they're doing and build their skills? Is your own effort going to moments when students can make the most use of your attention?</p>	
<p>Student feedback Place an "SF" next to places in the term where students are invited to share their experience of the course, including their sense of whether the climate supports their learning.</p>	