University *of* La Verne

Syllabus and Course Curriculum Self-Assessment and Audit Tool

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Overview

Faculty play a key role creating a learning environment that is either supportive and affirming or marginalizing and hostile. Accordingly, it is imperative that faculty carefully examine ways their syllabi, assignments, language, and classroom culture may inadvertently raise barriers to students' success. Faculty must proactively create positive classroom cultures where all students feel valued, respected, and safe.

This tool was developed for faculty to examine their syllabi, teaching practices, and classroom environment. The goal is to support faculty in implementing the ideals of diversity and inclusivity in their classroom.

Questions to Consider:
- What types of diversity do you anticipate seeing in your student population? (Consider race / ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, first generation status, learning styles, experience (preparation in high school, parenthood, etc.), language, etc.)
- How does your syllabus and course curriculum support or marginalize these students?
- How can you vary the course readings, teaching methods, class activities, assignments, and assessments to better support the diverse identities and needs in the classroom?

This tool includes:

- A checklist of syllabus basics
- Rubrics to evaluate syllabus content and classroom culture
- Guidelines for inclusive language
- Ground rules for class discussions
- Glossary of terms
- List of resources for going deeper

Syllabus Basics

This section outlines the very basic elements that should be present in every ULV syllabus. These elements ensure that syllabi adhere to ULV's Core Value of Diversity and Inclusivity, as well as provide students with resources as appropriate.

University Diversity Statement The University supports a diverse and inclusive environment where students recognize and benefit from the life experiences and viewpoints of other students, faculty, and staff. Diversity is an active and intentional practice that supports difference and multiplicity to expand knowledge, educate capable citizens, develop the whole person, and serve our local and global communities. Promoting and sustaining diversity is a commitment to educational quality and the creation of positive, respectful learning communities.	Absent Present
Link to Social Justice Incident Report Form If at any time during this course you witness or experience discrimination or injustice, we encourage you encouraged to report the incident through the Social Justice Incident Report Form available to all University of La Verne community members. The form may be found at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofLaVerne&layout_id=25	Absent Present
Accessibility Statement University policies concerning students with disabilities are available through the Accessibility Services. Students may speak privately with the instructor for assistance contacting the Director of Accessibility Services. If you have other requirements and wish to discuss non-disability related academic accommodations, please contact the Instructor as soon as possible.	Absent Present
Contact information for Accessibility Services Accessibility Services may be found at www.ulv.edu/dss or by calling 909.448.4938.	Absent Present
Title IX Statement Federal obligations, faculty and other employees are considered mandated reporters when it comes to experiences of interpersonal violence (sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking). Disclosures of such must be passed along to the University's Title IX Manager who can help provide support, remedies, and resources for individuals who have been impacted. More information can be found online at https://laverne.edu/title-ix/ or title9manager@laverne.edu or 909-448-4078.	Absent Present
Language • gender neutral • person-first (i.e., person with a disability) • no outdated terminology	Absent Present
Utilization of Interfaith Calendar when scheduling exams, assignment due dates, etc.	Absent Present
List of University Resources • Counseling and Psychological Services • Student Health Services • Office of Campus Safety • Academic Success Center • Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness • Leo Food Pantry	Absent Present

Syllabus Content

This section outlines specifics regarding the content included in the syllabus. The goal is to be intentional in including multiple perspectives and creating a safe environment for all students. Your syllabus should also take into consideration the diversity of experiences and identities reflected in our student population, as well as make an effort to include voices of those traditionally underrepresented in academia.

	0 – 1 Emerging	2 Developing	3 Accomplished	4 Exemplary
Course Texts and Readings				
Perspectives: Representative of a wide range of perspectives (e.g., authors / researchers of color, female authors / researchers, LGBTQ authors / researchers, as well as differing perspectives)				
Accessibility: Includes accessible options such as e-textbooks, video content includes subtitles, etc.				
Topics of Interest: Includes topics of interest and relevance to our student population, including topics related to social justice and equity				
Cost: Cost of textbooks are considered; multiple formats are offered; makes use of readings available free to students (e.g., journal articles through library database, open-source texts, etc.)				
Limitations: If texts include problematic areas (stereotypes or outdated language), limitations are used as opportunities for discussion, and alternatives or supplemental options are offered				
Course Assignments and Assessments				
Variety: Assignments and assessments provide a variety of ways for students to demonstrate knowledge				
Feedback: Students are provided with frequent opportunities to receive feedback in order to improve.				
Creativity: Divergent, creative thinking is rewarded, rather than punished.				
Individual and Group Work: Opportunities are given to work both individually and collectively; clear guidelines and roles are defined and introduced.				
Alignment: Assessments are closely aligned to learning objectives; assessments measure student knowledge of learning objectives, rather than extraneous knowledge and skills.				
Pacing: Syllabus allows for multiple processing speeds (time to digest readings, time to process formative feedback before summative assessments, etc.)				
Grading Procedures: Procedures value knowledge (rather than subjective areas such as effort), support a growth mindset, and are transparent (such as providing a rubric).				
Language: Language in assignments and exams is gender-neutral, is cognizant of not perpetuating stereotypes (ex: not using only male names for doctors / surgeons, not using only female names for nurses).				

Classroom Culture

This section outlines specifics regarding the classroom environment. Faculty should endeavor to create environments that respect differing opinions, fosters opportunities for growth, and includes all students. This includes being cognizant of your own behavior and language, as well as that of your students.

	0 – 1 Emerging	2 Developing	3 Accomplished	4 Exemplary
Tone: From syllabus to lectures to individual interactions, tone is supportive and inviting, and welcomes opportunities for constructive feedback.				
Interaction: Provides multiple ways for students to interact and engage with faculty (e.g., office hours that accommodate working students, online or phone meetings, etc.)				
Flexibility and Adaptability: Instructor is flexible and adaptable to embracing learning opportunities and "teachable moments" as they arise.				
Expectations: Establishes rules for respectful classroom discussions, difficult conversations, and how to address conflict should it arise.				
Inclusivity and Equity: Uses gender-neutral terms and students' preferred pronouns, makes efforts to correctly pronounce students' names; extending waiting time for responses as necessary; calling on all students equally, giving opportunities for quieter students.				
Feedback: Provides opportunities for students to give feedback, both anonymous and not, through online survey tool or private communication.				
Student Voices: Student voices and input are a valued component of the course.				
Stereotypes and Assumptions: Avoids stereotyping groups of people; doesn't ask one person to represent the entire group; doesn't assume students will seek help when they are struggling.				

<u>Guidelines for Inclusive Language</u>[1]

Unacceptable Terminology
- Gypped / Jewed: racial slur for being defrauded, swindled, or cheated
- Fag, dyke, tranny, transvestite, "that's so gay"
- Mentally retarded, mongoloid, slow, "that's so lame"

Preferred Terminology

Instead of…	Please use…
Oriental	Asian *Be aware of differences between South Asian, East Asian, etc. and name the specific ethnic group, if possible
Handicapped, challenged, crippled Handicapped parking spaces, Disabled Student Services Confined to wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	Neurodiversity, person with a disability Accessible parking space, Accessibility Services Person who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user
Indian; American Indian; Eskimo	Native American; First Nation; Indigenous
Gypsy	Romani
Minority (people of color will soon be a majority in the US, or are already the majority in parts of the US)	People / students of color; name the specific ethnic group, if possible
Homosexual	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, transgender
Schizo, psycho, crazy, insane	Person with mental illness
Hermaphrodite	Intersex
Illegal Alien	Undocumented immigrant
Boyfriend / girlfriend; husband / wife	Spouse, Partner, Significant Other
Best man for the job, layman, man hours, mankind, chairman, etc.	Best person for the job, layperson, staff / personnel hours, humankind / society, chairperson

Other Terms
- Cisgendered: someone who identifies as the gender they were assigned at birth
- Non-binary: identities that are not defined along the male / female binary. Non-binary people may feel that they exist as both, neither, or a mix of identities
- Pronouns: gendered pronouns include she/her and he/him. Gender-neutral pronouns include the singular they/them.
- Queer – reclaimed term used to self-identify as part of the LGBTQ community. Not everyone uses this term as it can be used as a slur. Consider context before using this term.
- Hispanic – from a country where the primary language is Spanish
- Latino / Latina / Latinx – from a Latin American country

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[1] Note: This guideline is not exhaustive and does not represent everyone's preference. Additionally, it is likely that language and terminology will continue to evolve. When in doubt, ask someone what terms / pronouns they prefer. For more on inclusive language, see https://open.buffer.com/inclusive-language-tech/

<u>Ground Rules for Classroom Discussions</u>[2]

Set the ground rules for classroom discussions at the beginning of the semester / term. Examples of ground rules / guidelines include:

> Respect the opinions of others in class discussions. When you disagree, make sure that you use arguments to criticize the idea, not the person.
> Be an active listener even if you don't agree with what is being asserted. If you decide to object or make a comment, it should be clear that you were listening.
> Don't interrupt.
> This classroom is a safe space for disagreement. The goal of class discussion is not that everyone agrees, but that everyone in the class gain new insights and experiences.
> When offering an opinion or answering a question, support your assertion with arguments and evidence, not generalizations.
> Don't attempt to dominate the discussion. Be open to the ideas and experiences of others in the class.
> If you are nervous about speaking in class, remember that your perspective is valid and the class deserves to hear it.
> If a statement is made that offends you or you think might offend others, speak up and challenge it, but always show respect for the person who made it.
> Speak from experience. Use "I" not "we" or "you."
> Be conscious of body language. Nonverbal responses can also indicate disrespect.
> Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the Instructor or to other students may be asked to leave the classroom.
> Private conversations during class are not appropriate – especially when others are speaking.
> Texting is not allowed during class. Laptops can be used for note-taking or class-related activities only.
> Class discussions are private and should not be shared without permission.

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[2] Source: Creating a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity, UCLA Diversity & Faculty Development https://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CreatingaPositiveClassroomClimateWeb-2.pdf

ANTI-OPPRESSION ORGANIZATION: An organization that actively recognizes and mitigates the oppressive effects of white dominant culture and power dynamics, striving to equalize that power imbalance internally and for the communities with which they work.

ASSIMILATE: The phenomenon that occurs when people belonging to the nondominant group understand dominant culture norms and take on their characteristics either by choice or by force. Many people of color are asked to "check their identities at the door" in professional settings to make their white peers comfortable. By doing so, many people of color find it easier to get promotions and professional opportunities, as well as to gain access to informal networks typically accessible only to whites.

CRITICAL MASS: In reference to representation of people of color within an organization or at a certain level of leadership. This figure is dependent on, and reflective of, the specific demographics of the communities in which an organization serves or operates.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: A theory that explicitly states and recognizes that racism is ingrained in the fabric and system of American society. Even without overt racists present, institutional racism is pervasive in dominant culture. Critical Race Theory examines existing power structures, and identifies these structures as based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuate the marginalization of people of color. Overall, Critical Race Theory examines what the legal and social landscape would look like today if people of color were the decision-makers.

CULTURAL AGILITY: The ability to communicate and build relationships by responding to cultural ambiguity and making adjustments rapidly and under control. –Randall, M. (n.d.). What is Cultural Agility. Enriching Leadership International.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE: A set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system and enable that system to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The word culture implies that integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. The word competence implies having the capacity to function effectively. A culturally competent system of care acknowledges and incorporates – at all levels – the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamic that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs. –Terry L. Cross, Journal of Child and Youth Care Work

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS: The ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures. –Culturally Responsive

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[3] Source: Awake to Work to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture, Equity in the Center
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56b910ccb6aa60c971d5f98a/t/5b508d9a2b6a2853e2d07b9f/1532005799212/ProInspire-Equity-in-Center-publication-digital-v6.pdf

Pedagogy and Practice (2008). National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, p. 12

DECOLONIZE (MIND): We exist within societal structures rooted in historical facts, one of which is colonialism: the policy and practice of acquiring control of land (frequently occupied by people of color), occupying it, and codifying power structures to elevate one race and culture above all others. The international practice of colonization informs the dominant culture that characterizes American society today, driving ideologies and subconscious biases rooted in centuries of racism, classism, and white privilege. In order to dismantle white supremacy and the white dominant culture norms it influences, one must actively "decolonize" the mind, recognizing and counteracting the thoughts, preferences, practices, and behaviors that are deeply rooted vestiges of colonization.

DIVERSITY: Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals; including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, and learning styles.

DOMINANT CULTURE: Dominant culture in a society refers to the established language, religion, values, rituals, and social customs on which the society was built. It has the most power, is widespread, and influential within a social entity, such as an organization, in which multiple cultures are present. An organization's dominant culture is heavily influenced by the leadership and management standards and preferences of those at the top of the hierarchy. In this paper, dominant culture refers specifically to the American context in which organizational culture is predominantly defined by white men and white women in positional power. See also "White Dominant Culture."

EQUITY: The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations, and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

INCLUSION: The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate and bring their full, authentic selves to work. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in the words/actions/thoughts of all people.

INTERSECTIONALITY: Represents a framework that attempts to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society. It considers that various forms of social stratification, such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, disability, and gender, do not exist separately from each other but are interwoven together. The theory began as an exploration of the oppression of women of color within society, today the analysis is potentially applied to all social categories, inclusion social identities usually seen as dominant when considered independently.

MICROAGGRESSION: The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

RACE EQUITY: The condition where one's race identity has no influence on how one fares in society. Race equity is one part of race justice and must be addressed at the root causes and not just the manifestations. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race.

RACE EQUITY CULTURE: A culture focused on proactive counteraction of social and race inequities inside and outside of an organization.

RACE EQUITY LENS: The process of paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. A race equity lens critiques a "color blind" approach, arguing that color blindness perpetuates systems of disadvantage in that it prevents structural racism from being acknowledged. Application of a race equity lens helps to illuminate disparate outcomes, patterns of disadvantage, and root cause.

RACISM: A system of advantage and oppression based on race. A way of organizing society based on dominance and subordination based on race. Racism penetrates every aspect of personal, cultural, and institutional life. It includes prejudice against people of color, as well as exclusion, discrimination against, suspicion of, and fear and hate of people of color.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: A concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of power, wealth, education, healthcare, and other opportunities for personal activity and social privileges.

STRUCTURAL RACISM: The arrangement of institutional, interpersonal, historical, and cultural dynamics in a way that consistently produces advantage for whites and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It illuminates that racism exists without the presence of individual actors because it is systemically embedded. When the United States was founded, racist principles were codified in governance structures and policies. As a result, racism is embedded in institutions, structures, and social relations across American society. Today, structural racism is composed of intersecting, overlapping, and codependent racist institutions, policies, practices, ideas, and behaviors that give an unjust amount of resources, rights, and power to white people while denying them to people of color.

WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE: Culture defined by white men and white women with social and positional power, enacted both broadly in society and within the context of social entities such as organizations. See also "Dominant Culture" and "White Supremacy Culture."43WHITE PRIVILEGE The power and advantages benefiting perceived white people, derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other non-white groups.

WHITE FRAGILITY: A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress (due to information about racial inequality or injustice) becomes intolerable, triggering a range of

defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: The power and advantages benefiting perceived white people, derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other non-white groups.

WHITE SUPREMACY: The existence of racial power that denotes a system of structural or societal racism which privileges white people over others, regardless of the presence or the absence of racial hatred. White racial advantages occur at both a collective and an individual level, and both people of color and white people can perpetuate white dominant culture, resulting in the overall disenfranchisement of people of color in many aspects of society.

WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE: Characteristics of white supremacy that manifest in organizational culture, and are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the full group. The characteristics are damaging to both people of color and white people in that they elevate the values, preferences, and experiences of one racial group above all others. Organizations that are led by people of color or have a majority of people of color can also demonstrate characteristics of white supremacy culture. Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun identified twelve characteristics of white supremacy culture in organizations: Perfectionism, Sense of Urgency, Defensiveness, Quantity of Quality, Worship of the Written Word, Paternalism, Power Hoarding, Fear of Open Conflict, Individualism, Progress is Bigger/More, Objectivity, and Right to Comfort.

<u>Going Deeper</u>

- Accessible textbooks, screen readers
    - http://www.accesstext.org/accessible-textbook-finder
    - http://www.accesstext.org/
    - https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/alternative-format-text-aft/textbooks-in-electronic-formats
    - https://www.naturalreaders.com/
- Universal Design for Learning
    - http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html
- Best practices for teaching and learning in higher education
    - http://www.nea.org/home/33508.htm
- Active and high-impact instructional strategies
    - https://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingandLearningResources/InstructionalStrategies/
- Tips for group work in the classroom
    - https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/alternatives-lecturing/group-work/implementing-group-work-classroom
- Where to find open-source educational resources
    - https://laverne.libguides.com/oer

References

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Garibay, J.C. (2015). "Creating a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity." Retrieved from https://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CreatingaPositiveClassroomClimateWeb-2.pdf

"Equity and Diversity Audit Tool," Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada. Retrieved from https://afmc.ca/pdf/committees/AFMC_Equity_and_Diversity_Audit_Tool_10MAY2011.pdf

"Strategies to Create an Inclusive Classroom," Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Iowa State University. Retrieved from http://www.celt.iastate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/strategiescreateinclusivecourse.pdf