

English 98R – Diverse and Inclusive Syllabus Design Tips

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- I. Diversity on Syllabi (review from last workshop)
 - Diversity: “proportionate representation across all dimensions of human difference”—such as “age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, mental and physical abilities, and sexual orientation”
 - **Principle 1: The readings you assign reflect upon your course’s values.**
 - That’s not meant as a call-out; it IS meant as inspiration to challenge received ways of designing a syllabus.
 - E.g., not simply “Shakespeare” or “Romantic poets” but, e.g., Othello and race; “Romanticism and Empire”
 - **Principle 2: A syllabus need not do everything at once to count as “diverse.”**
 - *Units.* Even if you teach a course more squarely centered in canonical white male authors, consider **a unit on underrepresented authors** relevant to your period or topic. Why are these authors NOT included in the canon? What kinds of assumptions are implicit in canon-making itself?
 - *Theory.* E.g., Feminist theory, Queer theory, critical race theory, disability studies, ecocriticism
 - **Principle 3: Diversity can be an opportunity to create a novel syllabus that teaches students to think about important questions**
 - i. women writers; black or LatinX writers; LGBTQ writers; writing on a theme relevant to diversity and inclusion

- II. Creating an Inclusive Syllabus.
 - Inclusion means creating a learning environment in which “everyone is included, visible, heard, and considered.”
 - **Transparency**
 - Means of contact, office hours, clear due dates, clear expectations for blogs/canvas,
 - Helpful phrases: “We will explore”; “Students will be able to”
 - For more: [Bok Center Guide to Syllabus Design](#)
 - **Inclusive learning statement**
 - Introductory statement on the syllabus and discussed in class, recognizing and seeking to ameliorate power differences, or recognizing the importance of respect in conversation.
 - For more: [Bok Center Inclusive Learning Statements](#); [Tulane Accessible Syllabus Website](#)
 - **Accessibility Statement** (may be joined to inclusive learning statement)
 - “Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations should present a letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.”
 - For more: [Accessibility.harvard.edu](#)
 - **Statement on Permitted Collaborations**

- “Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance.”
- **Welcoming Language**
 - Instead of "no excuses if you don't contact me 24 hrs in advance" try "flexibility with extensions if you contact me more than 24 hrs in advance"
 - Time banks: telling students they can have 2 “floating” days that can be used for extensions—either two days on one assignment, one two 1-day extensions
- **Difficult Content**
 - CWs;
 - Can be part of an Inclusive Learning Statement:
 - E.g., “Our course has a discursive heaviness, a subject matter that gets to the heart of social and political questions that are very much how we all identify ourselves, and to sometimes violent epistemologies that constitute our fields. This discursive heaviness may at points generate comments that can create misreadings or moments of exclusion or discomfort because of powerful norms under which we live, operate, and from which we speak. I wanted to write you all to affirm that I will be attentive to these issues in my own comments, asides, examples. I am also attentive to my role in the classroom and to sustaining our space as one of safety and shared learning, as I know you are attentive to as well. I may at times use language or examples, whether it be related to racial (slavery, colonialism, primitivity, a developmental chart of civilization), gendered (the social recognition of cis people, the passivity of archetypal womanhood), classed, or bodily difference. I will make sure to be as attentive as possible in the way I use this language with the hope of creating a safe, constructive, and cohesive environment.” - Durba Mitra
 - Having a frank discussion w/students about what they can handle.