

## Inclusive Pedagogy Worksheet<sup>1</sup>

We all want our classrooms to be inviting places where diverse perspectives and backgrounds are welcome and enrich the educational experience. When you design a course that is supportive of diversity and promotes a sense of belonging, all your students are more likely to succeed. In fact, many of the pedagogical strategies for increasing student engagement can also help you to create an inclusive classroom. Below, we outline recommended pedagogical practices related to building a syllabus, creating course materials, engaging with students, and creating and evaluating course assignments and exams.

### Syllabus

- **Make the syllabus more visually engaging with color and graphics, or at least easier to read (e.g., more white space, differently sized text)**
  - Syllabi are crammed with information that students don't read. Adopting an easily readable syllabus allows students to quickly grasp information necessary to succeed in the course.
- **List the pronouns students should use when referring to you (e.g., "she/her")**
  - Transgender and non-binary identified students may read this as a signal that your classroom is a safe space.
  - Consider including these on the first page of your syllabus and/or in your automated email signature.
- **Refer to office hours as "student hours." Explain what these hours are for and regularly encourage students to use them.**
  - First-generation, international, and students from other minoritized backgrounds may be uncomfortable or shy about "bothering" the teacher.
- **List out strategies to be successful in the course**
  - This can be especially beneficial for first-generation students or other marginalized students who may experience imposter syndrome.
- **Check religious holidays each semester.**
  - Make sure they do not make your course calendar challenging for some students. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (September) are Jewish holidays often overlooked. Eid al Fitr (May) and Eid al Adah (July) are Muslim holidays often overlooked.
- **List campus resources available to students that promote their academic success and personal well-being.**
  - **Specifically, provide and explain resources for students:**
    - With disabilities: [TAMU Division of Student Affairs](#)
    - With non-conforming genders and sexual orientations: [LGBTQ+ Pride Center](#), [Aggie Allies](#), and [Transcend](#)
    - Who are racial/ethnic minorities: [Department of Multicultural Services](#)
      - Identity-affirming policies and resources are associated with increased perceived inclusion and psychological wellbeing (Woodford et al., 2018).
    - Who are experiencing discrimination or harassment: [TAMU 'Tell Somebody'](#), [Title IX at TAMU](#), and [Employee Relations](#)
    -

---

<sup>1</sup> This worksheet was adapted from [Princeton's McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

- Who are experiencing food and/or housing insecurity: [The 12th Can, Student Assistance Services](#), and [Brazos Valley Food Bank, 2-1-1](#)
- **Include a diversity/inclusion statement**
  - Instructors can support and encourage underrepresented students within their class by including a diversity statement. Including this statement near the beginning rather than the end of the syllabus signals that diversity and inclusion are important values and may improve class climate perceptions (Branch et al., 2018; Fuentes et al., 2020).

## Class Materials

- **Try to reduce the cost of course materials for students.**
  - Reserve readings and course materials in the library, and let students know which materials are freely available to them. Consider incorporating more or all open-access materials, and if you must use a textbook, consider whether students can use an earlier edition of the textbook. These practices particularly benefit students who are low SES.
- **Make lecture materials available to students online before and after class.**
  - This can make the course more accessible to students with mental illnesses or those who are neurodiverse.
- **Make sure all videos have subtitles, all photos have captions, and all images have “Alt Text” tags.**
  - Subtitles and captioning not only support deaf and hearing-impaired students, but also strengthen reading skills of students with learning disabilities (e.g., Bowe & Kaufman, 2001; Evmenova, 2008; Linebarger, 2001; Rickelman, Henk, & Layton, 1991).
  - Students with and without disabilities similarly use subtitles to enhance their learning experience.
- **Use text size, font, and color to enhance readability of course materials, and always use a microphone.**
  - Sans-serif fonts generally display best on computer screens and mobile devices.
  - Microphones are helpful to all students, especially those with hearing difficulties.
- **Diversify course materials to include various ethnic and racial perspectives.**
  - This ensures you are including information from a broad range of perspectives beyond the white rhetoric. Consider including pictures of the authors next to these readings.
- **Contextualize course content by identifying and exploring the cultural and historical assumptions the researchers were working under at the time.**
  - Psychological research is influenced by -isms and biases (e.g., whiteness, heteronormativity, neurotypicality) and assumptions about “normality.” Placing research in context teaches students to critically question established science and increases the likelihood they will be more inclusive in their own work.

## Instructor Behaviors

- **Get to know your students.**
  - Check in with students to better understand their situations (e.g., access to technology, where they are in their understanding, etc.)
  - This practice is especially important for virtual learning (Angelino, 2007).
- **Connect with students by sharing information about yourself and your background.**

- This makes you more approachable and your class a more welcoming environment.
- **Be mindful of and challenge your own preconceived assumptions.**
  - Our points of view and ways of engaging are influenced by our various identities and backgrounds. Without critical self-examination, these can act as barriers to valuing different perspectives and practices.
  - Students bring skills, knowledge, and perspectives that may differ from your own. Consider an additive approach to learning that allows them to use and build on the strengths they already have (Rogoff et al., 2017).
- **Use gender-inclusive language that avoids gender binaries.**
  - Use plurals instead, such as “their” instead of he or she.
  - Avoid “you guys.” Use “y’all” or “everyone” instead.
  - Word choice greatly impacts LGBTQ students (Woodford et al., 2012). Using inclusive language signifies to your students that they can safely express themselves in your classroom.
- **Be aware of contemporary terms for cultural identities.**
  - Preferred terminology within many social groups change over time. Always be open to learning new information about how to be more inclusive towards different identity-groups, and try to proactively educate yourself to stay up to date.
- **Don’t expect minoritized students to speak about or educate others on diversity related topics.**
  - It is not a minority student’s responsibility to educate others on their race/ethnic group’s experiences and/or oppression. The absence of knowledge in the majority student body as it pertains to minority racial/ethnic groups often exists because of a deep, historical erasure of the true experiences of these groups. Furthermore, these actions can single-out, tokenize, and further alienate these students from the rest of the class.
- **Establish ground rules for discussion as a class.**
  - This is particularly important in courses where controversial topics are at the center. These might include rules about confidentiality, openness, respectful disagreement, and civil debate, and can be developed/discussed as a class (see Appendix for a starting point).
- **Address harassment, hate speech, discriminatory behavior, etc., immediately.**
  - It doesn’t need to be confrontational, but it should be clear and firm. Hold students accountable for their behavior by following up with TAMU policies and procedures.
- **Consider administering a mid-semester feedback survey to gauge student comfort and engagement.**
  - Include and pay particular attention to questions about classroom atmosphere and perceived inclusivity. This can benefit all students, especially when you respond to and address this feedback in class.

## Course Assignments/Assessments

- **Focus on firm and fair standards, not competition and difficulty**
  - Try to be clear about your standards and assure your students that each of them can succeed if they put in the work. This can be especially helpful for first-generation students and those with imposter-syndrome.
- **When possible, incorporate a variety of activities, assignments, and audio-visual media, as well as a wide range of options for participation.**

- Students from some cultural backgrounds are less comfortable raising their hands/speaking in class.
- This strategy enables students to take different pathways toward participating in class and demonstrating their learning.
- Encourage cooperative, or active, learning in which students work in small groups toward a specific task or learning goal and engage in discussion with each other (Fuentes et al., 2020).
- **Assign individuals to groups to increase diversity within teams.**
  - If assigning group-work, do not allow students to self-select into teams, as homogenous groups will likely form and certain students will be excluded or left out. At the same time, avoid outnumbering or isolating students from underrepresented groups within teams.
- **Include names from various backgrounds in writing test questions/examples.**
  - Varying genders, races, orientations, and backgrounds of individuals used in these examples can make more students feel included and represented.
- **Use objective grading policies and rubrics**
  - Provide clear, transparent, and objective performance expectations (e.g., use rubrics) to avoid bias (or perceptions of bias) within grading systems.

## Appendix

### Discussion Rules

\*Your behavior within the classroom should reflect the rights of your classmates and be conducive to an atmosphere of learning. Disrespectful, disruptive, or domineering behavior will not be tolerated. It is my intent that ALL students, regardless of backgrounds or perspectives, are well-served by this course. I view the diversity that different students bring to the class as a resource, strength, and benefit to the ideals of a university education. Therefore, our classroom is a designated safe zone of respect, including toward diversity of gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, neurodiversity, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, culture, etc. Please let me know if you have suggestions about how to improve the value of diversity in this course; your comments are welcomed.

### Alternate Discussion Rules:

#### Communication Guidelines Drawing on Difficult Dialog Communication Guidelines

- 1) Active listening – We will listen to understand with our full attention, not only to respond.
- 2) Speak one at a time and give each person the space to express themselves without interruption.
- 3) Make I statements recognizing that our experiences are unique. We will avoid speaking for others or the group.
- 4) Engage in respectful dialogue, not debate.
- 5) Balanced air time - if you tend to talk too much, let other voices be heard. If you do not tend to participate, step out of your comfort zone.
- 6) Confidentiality - who says what should stay in the room, opinions offered in here should not have consequences for participants outside this meeting. Discussing issues is okay, discussing names is not.
- 7) Assume good intentions - give others the benefit of the doubt: we are all here because we want to learn from one another and understand; but we may have different levels of understanding.

Confirm that all members can abide by the group's guidelines, or at least be open to practicing with them

### Campus Resources for Academic Success and Personal Well-being

Texas A&M University offers a variety of resources for students with disabilities, with non-conforming genders and sexual orientations, and who are experiencing discrimination or harassment on or off campus.

- The Disability Resources website (<https://disability.tamu.edu/services>) offers services to students with disabilities, including access to Accommodations Coordination, the Testing Center (TC), Assistive Technology Services (ATS), and Communication Access Services.

- The LGBTQ+ Pride Center (<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/lgbtq>) offers a variety of resources, including a place to report bias/hate. Aggie Allies and Transcend are two organizations that support LGBTQ+ students. Aggie Allies (<https://allies.tamu.edu/>) serves to offer LGBTQ+ students with student and faculty allies that offer a safe haven a listening ear when needed. Transcend (<https://www.facebook.com/transcendtamu/>) offers a variety of resources for trans students, including workshops and social events.
- The Department of Multicultural Services (<https://dms.tamu.edu/>) located in Suite 2200 in the Memorial Student Center (MSC) offers several educational programs and provides a safe environment for students of all backgrounds. Several of these services and programs are listed under the “Engagement” tab of the DMS website.
- The Women’s Resource Center (<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/wrc/resources/>) offers a variety of resources including pregnancy and parenting programs, women’s health information, and a women’s Aggie network.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

Texas A&M University is committed to providing an inclusive, equitable learning environment for students of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, races, religions, languages, and socioeconomic statuses. We recognize that each student contributes their own unique experiences to the diverse culture of our university, and we value and embrace such differences between our students. Diversity and inclusion are essential as we live out our Aggie Core Values.