

CTL Inclusive Syllabus Checklist [Last updated 12-17-2024]

This Inclusive Syllabus Checklist is a tool that can be used across an array of entry points and course types. There may be practices included that you have never heard of or that you already do well; that are more or less relevant to your courses, your discipline, or your teaching philosophy; or that you are more or less comfortable trying to change. The intention is not that you would go through this checklist in its entirety to review your syllabus all at once, but rather that you would decide which one or few areas are most relevant or important to you and use the guiding questions to reflect on where you may want to make some changes. You might start by choosing one of the overarching questions to review your entire syllabus, focusing on a particular section of your syllabus, or focusing on one question in one section. This can and should be an iterative process. This checklist is a work in progress and we welcome suggestions (contact sarah.andrews-1@colorado.edu with feedback).

Overarching syllabus review reflection questions

- ☐ Is the document accessible?
 - ☐ Start by using the [Digital Accessibility Office](#) (DAO) [accessible syllabus template \(docx\)](#) or [accessible syllabus template \(Google Doc\)](#), or:
 - ☐ Structure your document with headings
 - ☐ Make your headings clear and descriptive. Accurate headings help users navigate quickly to the information they need and make it easier to understand the purpose of each section of the document
 - ☐ Use proper outline hierarchy
 - ☐ Heading 1 should be the broadest, most important level of content, and each increasing level is more specific.
 - ☐ Only increase heading levels by 1 when moving to the next level of specificity. Never jump straight from heading level 1 to 4, for example.
 - ☐ Use unique meaningful link titles, not “click here” or the URL
 - ☐ See [Understanding Word Accessibility](#) or [Understanding Google Docs Accessibility](#) for more information
- ☐ Is the language welcoming?
 - ☐ Do you use personal pronouns (you, we, us) rather than “the students”, “the course”?
 - ☐ Does your language communicate that all students belong?
 - ☐ Does your language demonstrate that students’ diverse identities, backgrounds, and cultures are valued?
 - ☐ Have you conveyed your excitement about teaching the course?
 - ☐ Have you included an inclusion statement?
 - ☐ Is it contextualized to your course?
- ☐ Is all information in the syllabus clear and easy to follow (i.e., transparent)?
 - ☐ Do you avoid or explain jargon?
 - ☐ Is it organized in a logical manner?

Instructor Information

- ☐ Instructor Name and Contact Information
 - ☐ How do you want your students to refer to you?
- ☐ Office Location and Office Hours
 - ☐ Does the language encourage students to come to office hours?
 - ☐ Are office hours explained?
 - ☐ What might students discuss during office hours and why it is important for students to use them?
 - ☐ You might also consider calling them something friendly like "Student Hours" or "Ask Me Anything Hours".
 - ☐ Do you explain when and where they will be held and how to reach out if they need to meet outside your stated times?
 - ☐ If you have a TA, do you explain their role in the course and what help students can expect from TAs?
- ☐ Communication preferences
 - ☐ What is your response time?
- ☐ Welcome statement
 - ☐ Teaching philosophy
 - ☐ Biography or link to website on your academic work and/or research
 - ☐ A photo of yourself

Course Information

- ☐ Course Name and Number
- ☐ Location/Day/Time/Modality
- ☐ Course Description
 - ☐ Do you explain the rationale for course design and teaching practices?
 - ☐ Are there opportunities for student-student interaction and community building, e.g., through structured group work, class discussions?
 - ☐ Are there opportunities for formative assessments?
 - ☐ Are there opportunities for students to give feedback on the course (beyond FCQs)?

Student Learning Outcomes

- ☐ Do you articulate what you expect students to be able to do, know, and/or value at the end of the course?
- ☐ Do you explain how the skills/knowledge/values developed in the assignments and course activities connect with students' future careers and lives?
- ☐ Do your learning outcomes indicate a high level of academic rigor (e.g., objectives that promote high-order thinking and skills development from [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) or [Fink's Taxonomy](#))?

Classroom Expectations

- ☐ Do you use verbs that focus on what students and instructors do, not what the course or some abstract entity does?
- ☐ Do you communicate what you expect from students?
 - ☐ Attendance
 - ☐ Preparedness
 - ☐ How many hours do you expect students to put in outside of class? (If you aren't sure, consider using this [Course Workload Estimator](#))
 - ☐ Engagement during class
 - ☐ Collaboration
 - ☐ Community guidelines
 - ☐ Reaching out when they need help
- ☐ Do you communicate what students can expect from you as an instructor?

Keys To Success

- ☐ Do you include tips for succeeding in the course?
- ☐ Do you communicate that:
 - ☐ you believe that all students can succeed in your course?
 - ☐ the course will be challenging / that you have high expectations?
 - ☐ that it is normal to be/feel challenged by the course, AND
 - ☐ that students can meet expectations through hard work, effective strategies, and seeking support?
- ☐ What kinds of support do you mention?
 - ☐ Instructor and/or TAs 1:1 support
 - ☐ Examples, models, additional background materials
 - ☐ Study guides
 - ☐ Review sessions
 - ☐ Frequent feedback
 - ☐ Accommodations (Consider including accommodation language near the top of the syllabus rather than only as part of the required syllabus statements at the end)
 - ☐ Campus [Academic Support & Resources](#)
 - ☐ Do you highlight what campus resources might be particularly helpful for students in your course?
 - ☐ Campus [Student Support Resources](#)
 - ☐ Campus [Basic Needs Center](#)
- ☐ Do you emphasize the benefits of accessing resources?

Textbook And Course Materials

- ☐ Are course materials cost-effective and accessible? (see [DAO resources](#) to learn more)
- ☐ Are there multiple methods for delivering content?
- ☐ Do the readings include diverse, culturally relevant perspectives?
- ☐ Do you describe the use of Canvas and/or other online resources?

Assignments and Assessments

- ☐ Are all assignments clearly described?
 - ☐ Do you state the purpose of the assessment with respect to the knowledge and skills students will gain as described in student learning outcomes?
 - ☐ Have you provided detailed directions on how and where students will submit work?
- ☐ Are there multiple ways that students can demonstrate their knowledge / a diversity of assessment types? (quizzes, exams, formal and informal writing assignments, etc.)
- ☐ Do you make clear how the coursework relates to students' future career plans or lives (e.g., investigating real world problems, creating authentic and meaningful products, exploring areas that are personally or professionally relevant to students)?
- ☐ Have you built in frequent opportunities for low-stakes (formative) assessments throughout the course (e.g., clickers or other polling systems, informal writing assignments, group discussions or moderated discussion board, ungraded or lightly graded homework assignments)?
 - ☐ Do these occur before high-stakes assessments?
 - ☐ If you do not describe formative assessments in detail, have you made it clear that such activities will occur throughout the course?
- ☐ Have you built in student choice (e.g., choice of topic for a project/paper, format for a final project, which assignments to complete, discussion topics for class)?

Course Calendar

- ☐ Is the course schedule laid out with specific topics, readings, homeworks, assignment due dates, etc.?
- ☐ Do the readings, activities, and assignments include diverse, culturally relevant perspectives?
- ☐ Are modules/assignments labeled with a thoughtful naming convention (e.g., "Chapter 1: topic/title" instead of just "Chapter 1")
- ☐ Are assessments distributed throughout the semester?
 - ☐ Is there at least one summative assessment before the drop date?
 - ☐ Do assignments/assessments build in complexity?
- ☐ If there are areas of flexibility or where you anticipate making changes, is that communicated?
- ☐ Do you describe how modules, activities, assignments etc. align with learning outcomes?
- ☐ Have you ensured the format you've chosen for the calendar is accessible? (See [Understanding Word Accessibility](#) or [Understanding Google Docs Accessibility](#) for more information)

Grading

- ☐ Are graded assessments appropriately weighted to reflect the impact of the assessment and/or the importance of the learning outcome?
- ☐ Do you provide specific details on how grades are assigned (e.g., grading rubrics)?
- ☐ Do you include your grading policy and scale?
- ☐ See CU Canvas Grading Initiative Working Group "[Faculty-recommended Promising Practices for Student-Centered Grading in Canvas](#)" for more insight into inclusive grading practices

Course Policies

- ☐ Do you describe all course policies clearly?
 - ☐ Attendance Policy
 - ☐ Late Work, missed work, make-up work
 - ☐ Use of references
 - ☐ Use of generative AI
- ☐ Are the course policies supportive and flexible?
- ☐ Is the rationale for course policies explained?
- ☐ Do the written policies reflect what you do in practice?

Does your syllabus include the required campus syllabus statements?

- ☐ Ensure the [most recent versions of required syllabus statements](#) are included exactly as is except where indicated (below were last updated Aug 2024)
 - ☐ Classroom Behavior
 - ☐ Accommodation for Disabilities, Temporary Medical Conditions, and Medical Isolation
 - ☐ Where indicated, have you inserted your procedure for students to alert you about absences due to illness, injury, or medical isolation?
 - ☐ Preferred Student Names and Pronouns
 - ☐ Honor Code
 - ☐ Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation
 - ☐ Religious Accommodations
 - ☐ Where indicated, have you inserted your procedures around communicating religious accommodations?
 - ☐ [OPTIONAL] Mental Health and Wellness

This checklist was adapted from the following resources:

1. [Instructure Canvas Course Evaluation Checklist v3.0](#)
2. [Equity-Minded Assessment Checklist](#)
3. [Learner-focused Syllabus Rubric](#)
4. [Syllabus Review Guide For Equity-Minded Practice \(pdf\)](#)
5. [Syllabus and Course Policies for Inclusive Teaching](#)