



## Inclusive Teaching - Preparing to Teach for Inclusion

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### What is Inclusive Teaching?

Inclusive teaching and learning denotes pedagogical methods, techniques and approaches that take into account the diverse needs and backgrounds of all students ensuring that they feel valued and welcomed in the classroom. Teaching inclusively means taking advantage of the diverse strengths learners and instructors bring to the classroom, as well as recognizing the interplay of systems of power and privilege. Inclusive teaching and learning practices are, therefore, instrumental in assuring and maintaining a democratic and positive educational environment in which all participants, regardless of viewpoints and backgrounds, are fully engaged and respected (Zumbrunn et al., 2014).

Interactions between faculty and students and among the students themselves in the classroom setting may be directly or indirectly influenced by student age, ability/disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation and other characteristics (Hoffman and Toutant, 2018). The richly varied experiences, views, and backgrounds of faculty, staff and students make our classrooms and campus a healthy and robust teaching and learning community (Maruyama and Moreno, 2000; Gurin et al, 2002; Nomikoudis and Starr, 2016). In inclusive classrooms, the course is purposefully and unambiguously designed to include various viewpoints and wide-ranging experiences reflective of the demographic composition of the classroom.

***“Even though some of us might wish to conceptualize our classrooms as culturally neutral or might choose to ignore the cultural dimensions, students cannot check their sociocultural identities at the door, nor can they instantly transcend their current level of development... Therefore, it is important that the pedagogical strategies we employ in the classroom reflect an understanding of social identity development so that we can anticipate the tensions that might occur in the classroom and be proactive about them” (Ambrose et. al., 2010, p. 169-170).***





# Strategies for Implementation

(Adapted from Harvard University, 2010; University of Michigan, 2004; Saunders & Kardia., 2004)

## Creating an Inclusive Syllabus

- Include a diversity statement for your syllabus. An example of a diversity statement can be found here: <https://ctl.yale.edu/DiversityStatements>
- Establish clear expectations and goals for the course and include them in the syllabus.

## Course Content

(adapted from Saunders & Kardia.,2004)

Review course content from multiple standpoints and varied perspectives.

- Include research and writings from authors of diverse backgrounds.
- Assure that all activities, materials, and equipment are physically accessible to and usable by all (Burgstahler, 2005)
- Create an environment where all students feel comfortable expressing their opinions, thereby co-constructing content
- Create content to help students understand the importance of each individuals' histories, experiences, values, and perspectives in constructing knowledge
- Use writing assignments that encourage students to explore different points of view.
- Integrate the work of authors and researchers with diverse perspectives relevant to the topic.
- Utilize scenarios in course and presentation materials that reflect the diversity of our society.
- Ask yourself whether students with different backgrounds and experiences are likely to have a familiarity with the material you have chosen to use.

## Approach to Teaching

- Ask yourself how students who are different from you would experience the course.
- Expand your range of educational approaches. Consider lectures, collaborative learning options, hands-on activities, Internet-based communications, educational software, fieldwork, etc.
- Assign group work in which learners must support each other and that places a high value on different skills and roles.
- Provide specific feedback on a regular basis; for example, allow students to turn in parts of large projects for feedback before the final project is due.
- Regularly assess student progress using multiple, flexible, accessible methods; consider portfolios, group work, projects, take home assignments as alternatives to the standard in-class paper and pencil timed test.



## Classroom Management

- Ensure members of project groups, panels, and laboratory teams are diverse and the leadership of these teams is shared by all students.
- Consider in advance how you can handle sensitive issues or heated discussions that may arise. (Please refer to [Navigating Difficult Conversations in the Classroom](#) at the CTL Teaching Tool in a Flash.)
- Assign group work in which learners must support each other and that places a high value on different skills and roles.
- Build and maintain an environment where all students feel comfortable expressing their opinions.
- Be prepared to respond to microaggressions that may occur in the classroom (adapted from [Diverse Education, May 5, 2020](#)):
  - *Interrupt and redirect the harmful interaction*
  - *Ask probing questions to help aggressors understand the harm done*
  - *Clarify values and expectations*
  - *Emphasize your own thoughts and feelings on the harm being done*
  - *Provide next steps for the aggressor, such as making amends to those they have harmed or learning more about racism and microaggression.*

## [Inclusive Teaching Practices Tips and Checklist](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can I be certain that presentation of my course materials is accessible for all?

*Universities often have an office with staff dedicated to assisting faculty to create or convert course material and online course presentation of material so that it is accessible for all. For example, there may be a Student Accessibility Services office on your campus.*

2. I would like to know at the beginning of the semester about the unique and diverse experiences and backgrounds of my students. How can I gain this insight?

*You may consider early in the semester asking students to either discuss in class, discuss using an online forum, or submit a brief description of their background as it may relate to the course – learning experiences, cultural experiences, other experiences you believe may be relevant. This should be an optional activity.*

3. How do I know if a student has unique learning needs?

*It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor of any documented learning support that the student must be provided.*

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- I would like to vary the delivery of content and add group assignments to my course. How do I go about beginning this change process?  
*Most universities have a Center for Teaching and Learning (or similar title) with staff dedicated to collaborate with you as you create and implement course changes. Also, you may wish to consult a Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (or similar title) at your university for course resources.*

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