

Inclusive and Accessible Syllabus Design
A Project in Process
For Anti-Racist Pedagogy Workshop
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Preliminaries

Syllabus design is complicated. It impacts all higher ed faculty and students but is often controlled by a college’s administration, the members of which have different concerns and priorities than student and instructor stakeholders. As concerns about DEI have become both greater and more nuanced, they have further complicated syllabus design and rhetoric. What is a syllabus for? Who is the audience for the syllabus? To what extent should a syllabus represent the values and concerns of the institution? A field or discipline? An individual instructor with a particular pedagogical perspective? Any given student? These questions do not suggest easy answers.

This document is part of a larger work-in-progress to investigate the various perspectives and approaches to syllabus design. Currently, it contains three parts. First, an overview of different stakeholder perspectives and their concerns and values vis a vis the syllabus (which may be incomplete—but offers a starting point). Second, a list of immediate resources faculty can use to begin making a syllabus more inclusive and/or more accessible. Finally, there is a preliminary list of resources for deeper and more sustained consideration of syllabus design issues and considerations. (This list will be expanded and annotated in time.)

Syllabus Perspective Matrix

Perspective	Concerns
Universal Design	Physical and mental hurdles to access to printed materials, images, media-based materials. Need for variety and optionality in course materials and assessments.
Culturally Responsive	Accessibility to materials regardless of cultural perspective. Decentralization of power in the classroom and in class materials. Reflection of students’ lived experience in classroom and class materials. Inclusive use of language and rhetoric. Acknowledgement and questioning of privilege.

Feminist	Decentralization of power in the classroom and in class materials. Classroom strategies focused on collaboration/consensus.
Pragmatic	Clear communication of course expectations and resources. Toolkit or pathway for student success. Central location for course information, policies, calendar, etc. Aims/outcomes of course.
Bureaucratic	Clear expectations and contracts (particularly for grading and granting credit). Adherence to institutional policies. Communication of institutional policies. Location for information required for accreditation purposes.

Places to Begin

- *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor* by Lynda Barry. Published by Drawn and Quarterly.
- *An Equity Syllabus* <https://sites.google.com/view/anequitysyllabus/home?authuser=0>
- *Inclusive Syllabus Design* University of Massachusetts, Amherst
<https://www.umass.edu/ctl/resources/deeper-dives/inclusive-syllabus-design>
- *Syllabus Review Guide for Equity-Minded Practice*
https://www.cuesta.edu/about/documents/vpaa-docs/Syllabus_Review_Protocol_CUE.pdf
- *Accessible Syllabus* <https://www.accessiblesyllabus.com/>

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