Toolbox for Creating an Inclusive Classroom

Creating an inclusive classroom in which all students have a sense of belonging and have an equal opportunity to succeed enhances the whole teaching environment and benefits everyone. Small changes in the structure of our courses or making brief, inclusive statements in class can often have surprisingly large benefits. The PBS Diversity Committee designed this brief "toolbox" to provide instructors with concrete ideas and suggestions for fostering inclusivity in the classroom. Ideas are provided in the form of questions, to encourage thoughtful consideration of what you already do to foster inclusion and what more you might be able to do. These are not meant to be prescriptive but rather food for thought. You don't need to do everyone on the list to teach inclusively—focus on those strategies that you believe would be most useful. In these ideas and resources, we hope that you can find an approach that works best for your particular course and your particular teaching style; what works for one instructor or class may not work for another. This list is not exhaustive and we encourage you to explore other ideas as well that help you foster inclusion in your classroom.

DESIGNING INCLUSIVE COURSES

DESIGNING COURSES[1]

Content
□ Are there diversity-related topics that could be added to your courses? Some topics to consider:
  o How do the psychological processes you are discussing vary across gender, sex, race/ethnicity, culture, social class, religion, age, ability? If the processes have been assumed to be universal across these groups, what is the basis for that assumption and has it been empirically tested?
    • Are there topics that are specific to a sociocultural group that could be addressed? For example: Racial socialization, Neurodiversity, Acculturation, Bilingualism, Racial identity development, Discrimination, Coming out
  o Has research excluded certain groups from study? For example, have studies of gender differences, measured gender assuming a binary? Has family research included same-sex couples or non-parental caregivers (e.g., grandparents)?
  o How do we measure and analyze variables related to social identity? What assumptions do we make when we form categorical variables and what are some limitations of those categorizations?

Readings & Course Materials
□ Are there textbooks and/or readings that you could use in your courses that effectively address diversity-related topics?
□ Could your courses incorporate selected readings authored by scholars of different backgrounds (e.g., have you included female scholars and scholars of color?)
□ Could you bring in diverse guest speakers in your course (and make sure that your classroom is accessible to guest speakers)?
□ Have you considered cost when selecting a textbook and other course materials? Will the students have access to used copies of the book or affordable rental options?
□ Can you provide alternate means for students to obtain class materials (e.g., allow students to rent or borrow textbooks from the library rather than purchasing them; make PDFs of articles available online)?
□ If you share PDFs of readings with students, are they readable? To check if they are readable, open them in Adobe Professional, click on "view," then "Activate Read Out Loud." Click here for

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[1] Many of these ideas are based on the idea of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which focuses on creating flexibility in the structure of courses to accommodate a wide range of learning needs and seeks to reduce barriers to learning. To learn more about UDL, click here.

more information about converting pdfs to be readable.

- □ If you show videos in class, are they closed captioned? This can be helpful not only for students with hearing impairments, but also for many students for whom visual processing can support their auditory processing. Many videos have closed captioning and you must simply turn it on.

Course Requirements & Structure

- □ Could your courses be structured to encourage collaborative learning? (e.g., offer TA led homework sessions, facilitate the formation of study groups)
- □ Could your courses promote multiple pathways to learning? (e.g., could you use a variety of types of assignments and assessments?)
- □ If you gather student information on the first day, could you provide the opportunity for students to share their gender pronoun in a non-threatening way (e.g., sharing it in a written rather than verbal manner)? To find more about UMass pronoun policies and practices please click here.
- □ Could your courses allow for extended time for exams for all students who need extra time so that students with disabilities do not have to make special arrangements proactively?
- □ Could your courses provide support for students who have difficulty taking notes while processing lectures? (e.g., could you post recorded lectures or lecture notes on Moodle? How could you support Note-Taking services in your class?)
- □ If students are required to utilize technology in or outside of the classroom (e.g., laptops, iclickers), are your courses designed to be accessible to students with financial concerns? (i.e., Can you help identify low-cost, alternate ways for students to secure these tools?)
- □ Could your courses make all assignment guidelines available at the start of the semester to allow students with disabilities to plan for them and maximize the time they have to obtain any needed assistance?
- □ Could you structure regular assignments or assessments (such as homework or weekly quizzes) to be consistently due on the same day of the week?
- □ Could you design an attendance policy that takes into account accessibility? (e.g., alternatives when in person attendance is impossible)
- □ Could you provide options for participation credit that take into account accessibility?

MAKING AN INCLUSIVE SYLLABUS

Religious Inclusion

- □ How can your courses avoid scheduling exams or project due dates over major religious holidays?
- □ How do you communicate with your students about how to handle conflicts with religious holidays? E.g., Could your syllabus include a statement like, "If a religious holiday conflicts with an assignment deadline, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that we can make alternate arrangements." Click here for more information about Massachusetts laws regarding religious holidays and absences.

Accommodations & Accessibility

- □ Does your syllabus contain UMass's required Accommodation Statement?
  - o "The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements."
- □ Could you make your syllabus more accessible?
  - o Could you use the accessibility checker feature in your word processing software to find and fix accessibility issues? (Click here to see what issues it checks for)
  - o Could your course materials use a headings function to make it easy for students who are using assistive technology to scroll through the syllabus?
  - o Could you use a sans-serif font that is easier for dyslexic students to read (e.g., Helvetica, Courier, Arial)?

Gender Inclusion
- □ Could your course syllabi specify your own pronouns? In addition to preventing students from having to make assumptions, this models the notion that pronouns can't be assumed.

PREPARING AND GIVING LECTURES

CREATING POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS AND OTHER MATERIALS
- □ Could you use images in course slides to convey inclusiveness? Could you use images of individuals from a variety of backgrounds (e.g., various, races, ethnicities, ages, gender, ability), while being careful to avoid using them in a non-stereotypical or tokened way?
- □ How can you ensure that text is readable for students with varying visual acuity (e.g., no font smaller than 18 point, and ideally larger; providing materials that can be read using text to speech)
- □ Could you use the accessibility checker feature in PowerPoint to find and fix accessibility issues? Click here to see what issues it checks for and check here for techniques for making your PowerPoints accessible.

USING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
- □ How can you ensure that you are using contemporary language when referring to different sociocultural groups? (see section on Terminology at the end of this document)
- □ What can you do if materials use outdated language? Can you make note of it and explain that the class will use contemporary terms?
- □ Could your examples be inclusive?
  - o When using pronouns in examples, can you use a variety of pronouns ("he," "she," "they," "ze," "hir")?
  - o Could you avoid using gender pronouns in stereotypical ways? (e.g., not always referring to hypothetical doctors, lawyers, or scientists with he/his pronouns; avoiding the use of gender as a binary variable)
  - o If you are creating examples with fictional names, could you use a variety of diverse names ("Juan," "Tyrone," "Jin") while avoiding stereotypes in name choice?
  - o If you are creating examples of families, could you use a variety of family structures (e.g. same-sex couples, single parents) while avoiding using them in stereotyped ways?

INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS DURING CLASS
- □ How can you be mindful to use students' own gender pronouns (and not assume them) and be comfortable using common alternatives to male/female pronouns?
- □ How can you avoid assuming students' genders when calling on them? (e.g., instead of calling on "the man in the back," could you say something like "the person with the green hat in the back"?)
- □ Are there steps you can take to make sure you pronounce students' names correctly? (e.g., ask for phonetic pronunciations if you collect student information sheets at the beginning of class)
- □ Do you make an effort to avoid singling out the one person in the class who belongs to a group under discussion? Are you careful to avoid asking them to represent their group on the topic?
- □ If a student uses an offensive term, could you respectfully express why that language may be perceived as problematic and suggest an alternative term? Click here and the end of this document for more specific ideas for handling these situations.
- □ Could you provide opportunities for the students to get to know one another to build an inclusive classroom community?

SUPPORTING ALL LEARNERS
- □ Are there ways that you can help de-stigmatize disabilities? This could include

announcing on the first day of class that you encourage students with disabilities to approach you or one of the graduate TAs in person or by email to discuss any accommodations that they may require, and say that you are happy to work with students so that those with different learning styles and needs can be successful in your class. (Never ask students to disclose their disability; you should only ask what accommodations are needed—not why they need them.)

- □ Could you remind students that disability services can provide accommodations to students who have diagnosed psychological disorders (e.g., anxiety disorders, depression) that interfere with their academic functioning?
- □ Could you let students know where and how to access translators and tutors? Click here for details regarding tutoring at UMass.
- □ How can you avoid inadvertently conveying that providing accommodations is a burden for you or somehow undesirable?
- □ Can you make additional (optional) learning resources available for students who need extra support?
- □ Could you reach out to students who are struggling in your class to offer extra support or guide them to campus resources (e.g., the UMass Writing Center or the UMass Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success)?
- □ Can you break larger projects into parts and provide feedback before the final project is due (within the confines of what is feasible given the course size)?
- □ Could you use the google slides captioning feature so that your lectures are captioned to accommodate students with varying levels of hearing acuity? Click here for instructions.
- □ To learn more about ableism and resources for people with disabilities, click here.

ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

- □ Could you recruit more undergraduate TAs and RAs from diverse backgrounds?
- □ In small classes, are there steps you could take to encourage equal opportunity in classroom participation? Are you mindful of who talks more? Some suggested techniques:
  - Allow a longer time for more students to think and raise their hand before calling on anyone.
  - Continue to solicit additional perspectives beyond the initial responses.
  - Use "think, pair, share" to allow for smaller group discussions that allow more people to speak
  - Use "The Round" – A question is asked to the class and each person has the opportunity to respond briefly to the question. If a student does not wish to participate, he or she can "pass."
  - Provide alternative means for contributing to the discussion, such as allowing questions or comments to be submitted in writing or on a Moodle discussion board.
  - Provide prompts before class for students to respond to and then share in class
- □ Could you use techniques to encourage students to come to office hours? For example, in small classes, some faculty build short individual appointments in to the schedule early on in the semester.

EXHIBITING WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

- □ Could you explicitly welcome feedback from students?
- □ Are there ways you could empower TAs to raise concerns with you anonymously on students' behalf?
- □ Could you provide a method for students to give anonymous feedback during the semester?
- □ Could you encourage students to reach out to you during office hours or otherwise to talk about any issues that may be inhibiting their ability to fully engage in your class?

TALKING ABOUT DIVERSITY IN CLASS

Talking about diversity in PBS classes means considering how psychological processes may be affected by differences across sociocultural groups (e.g., gender, sex, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, social class, disability, religion). This includes talking not only about what research has been done, but also about what isn't known. The degree to which diversity is addressed and how it is discussed will of course vary depending on the course topic. In some cases, it will be a heavy focus of the course (e.g., *Stereotypes and Prejudice*) and in some cases, it may be smaller (e.g., *Statistics*). For some classes, it may be possible to weave diversity throughout the course, in some cases it may make sense to devote one or two classes to tackle diversity topics relevant to your course in some depth, and in some cases you may be able to do both. Finally, some classes may have a bigger emphasis on some sociocultural groups than others.

At times, talking about diversity issues can elicit strong reactions and opinions from students (and from you), and it can be easy to avoid charged topics because of concern that it may feel awkward or uncomfortable. However, there are many tools for helping these conversations go smoothly, and resources for guiding instructors about how to engage in these discussions effectively, several of which are provided at the end of this document. Some examples of effective tools include the following:

- □ Establish ground rules and guidelines before discussion begins. You can agree upon them at the beginning of the semester and refresh their memory as necessary throughout the semester. A few sample ground rules include:
  - o Think critically not only about others' perspectives, but also about your own.
  - o Use "I" statements. No one speaks for another or for an entire group of people.
  - o Avoid critiquing others' experiences and don't engage in name calling; focus on your own experiences.
  - o You can disagree. Differences in perspectives foster learning.
  - o Treat one another with respect even when you sharply disagree.
- □ Anticipate some of the issues that are most likely to cause discomfort and preemptively address the issues. For example, before discussing cultural differences, it may help to acknowledge the fine line between recognizing differences and contributing to stereotypes.
- □ Explicitly acknowledge that different people have different perspectives and solicit alternative viewpoints. Seek multiple answers or perspectives to questions. Ask, "Would someone like to share a different perspective?"
- ⊟ Be aware of "minority stress"—when one is a member of a disadvantaged group, being in the minority can be stressful, even when treated with respect.
- □ Avoid making generalizations during discussions (and encourage your students to do so as well).
- □ Don't make assumptions about individuals based on their social group (stereotyping) but DO acknowledge the reality that individuals' social groups are likely to affect their experiences.
- □ Don't make assumptions about how people identify or how strongly they identify with a social group.
- □ Be aware of different forms of microaggressions—intentional or unintentional commonplace slights.

APPENDIX

TERMINOLOGY

Terminology changes over time and different people prefer different terms for themselves. People's preferred terms for their own social identities should be asked about and respected. Here are some current common believes about preferred vs non-preferred terms:

Sociocultural dimension	Currently generally accepted terms	Terms to generally avoid (in addition to obviously derogatory terms)
Race and ethnicity	Ideally one should be as specific as possible in referring to race and ethnicity, but these are broad terms that are currently acceptable: • Black or African American • White or European American • Asian or Asian American • Latino/Latina/Latinx • American Indian • Indigenous • Alaska Native • Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander • Multiracial, Biracial • People of color (a term used to refer to people other than White or European American) Note also, that the distinction between race and ethnicity is complex and different people experience this distinction differently.	• Hispanic is still widely used but many people find this term objectionable because it was coined by white people (esp federal government) • Minority (ethnic minority is still widely used but many people find this term objectionable for a number of reasons (e.g., because people of color are in fact not globally in the minority) • Be careful about using the term African American if you are including Black people from the Caribbean or African citizens. • Caucasian is still commonly used, but is less preferred because its parallel terms (e.g., Negroid, Mongoloid) are obsolete
Immigrants	Undocumented, unauthorized, noncitizen, immigrant, refugee, migrant	Illegal, alien
Sex	Female, Male, Intersex (having both male and female sexual characteristics)	Transsexual (while outdated, this term may still be preferred by some individuals; therefore, ask which term an individual prefers)
Gender	Man, Woman, Transgender, Genderqueer, Cisgender (when one's gender identity is congruent with one's biological or birth sex.)	Tranny (note to use "cross-dresser" rather than transvestite which is different from transgender)
Religion	Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Sikh, Atheist, Agnostic	
Sexual orientation	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, LGB, heterosexual, pansexual, asexual	Homosexual
Ability	Physical disability, learning disability, intellectual disability, temporarily able-bodied, neurodiverse, and autistic are currently considered acceptable. Note that many self-advocates who are autistic or Deaf reject the label of disability. Hearing impairment or hard of hearing is acceptable if a person has some hearing ability, otherwise d/Deaf is preferred. Similarly, visual impairment is acceptable for people who have some vision, but otherwise blind is preferred. When referring to people with disabilities, you can use person-first language (e.g., a child with autism) or identity-first language (e.g., an autistic child). Similar to gender pronouns, you should always respect the choice someone makes for themselves. You should default to person-first language but certain groups	Mental retardation/retarded, handicapped, crazy, special needs, abnormal, deaf-dumb Avoid using the term "normal" when describing people without disabilities. This implies that people with disabilities are not normal. Instead, use terms like "people without" disabilities, "typically developing individuals," or "neurotypical."

	have a preference for identity-first language (e.g., I'm autistic, I'm Deaf, I'm disabled).	
Age	Older persons, adults, young people, children, adolescents	Elderly
Social Class	Poor or poverty class, working class, middle class, upper-middle class, ruling class, owning class	

Additional resources for learning about these preferences:
- o LGBTQ http://www.glaad.org/reference/
- o Immigration https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/DTIW_Stylebook.pdf
- o Mental Health/Disability http://ncdj.org/style-guide/

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERRUPTING BIAS IN THE CLASSROOM
from Diane J. Goodman, Ed.D. www.dianegoodman.com

a) **Directly correct the stereotype/assumption/language.**
Example: A white student turns to a black student and asks if black people believe the Black Lives Matter movement is being effective.
Possible response: No one can represent everyone from their racial or other social identity groups. Everyone speaks from their own experience. Let's hear different people's perspectives.

Example: A student uses the term "illegal alien" when discussing immigration issues.
Possible response: I realize you didn't intend it this way, but using the term "illegal alien" is considered by many to be an offensive term since people aren't "illegal". Preferred language is "undocumented".

b) **Address the comment on a broader level as a common assumption, not focus on the individual.**
Example: A student makes a comment about a gender non-conforming person just being "confused" about their gender.
Possible response: Many people mistakenly believe that people who are not gender-conforming are just confused. However, people who are gender non-conforming don't identify with the traditional gender categories and are expressing their gender in a way that is consistent with their own sense of identity.

c) **Remind students of class guidelines and respectful behavior.**
Example: A student says, "That's so ghetto" or "That's so gay".
Possible response: We agreed that we would be respectful and not use put-downs. That language is not consistent with our guidelines and is unacceptable. (If appropriate, suggest other terminology or ways to express their thoughts.)

d) **Note reactions and ask for a response.**
Example: A student makes a statement that students visibly react to.
Possible response: "I noticed that several students had a reaction when John said that. Could you help us understand your reactions? Before asking people to share their thoughts and feelings, it may be helpful to remind people of the class guidelines.

e) **Ask for further clarification of the statement.**
Example: When a student makes a biased comment, ask them to clarify their thinking and assumptions.
Possible response: You're suggesting that low income students are not as academically capable. Could you tell us more about how you came to that assumption?
Follow up with correcting inaccurate assumptions and information.

Consider following up with the person who said the microaggression and/or the person who was the recipient of the microaggression after class.