

## Elements of a meaningful and inclusive course syllabus

Adapted from [UCLA Center for Education and Innovation & Learning in the Sciences](#)

This resource has been developed in part to help instructors incorporate specific strategies into their teaching and course design to foster an inclusive classroom environment. *As you revise your own syllabi, you might articulate these efforts in your promotion and tenure files to provide evidence of your inclusive teaching practices.*

Highline College serves over 70% students of color, many who are first generation college students and who speak English as a second or other language. Jordan Greer and Marissiko Wheaton from the Center for Urban Education (CUE) gave a presentation at Highline's Equity Development Institute (Spring 2020) on the syllabus as an equity-based artifact. To be responsive to our student population, they encouraged workshop participants to use the syllabus to engage in six equity practices:

1. welcoming -- communicate care and support
2. decentering -- promote awareness of assumptions, dominant norms, and privilege
3. creating a partnership -- communicate respect and commitment to working with students
4. demystifying -- give students the information they need to navigate the course
5. validating -- show that all students are capable and can succeed
6. representing -- value the experience and backgrounds students bring

*Overall strategies for an inclusive syllabus:*

- The tone, text, and course policies should convey a supportive and encouraging climate for all students. Consider using language (e.g. "we" or "I" instead of "you") that is intended to welcome students into your course.
- Make your syllabus and other course documents accessible -- use the [Inclusive Syllabus template](#) to create your syllabus.
- Use the [Accessibility Checker](#) in MS Word to make sure your content is accessible for people of all abilities -- visit Highline's [Accessible Technology](#) website to learn more about creating accessible materials.

The following table shows the elements that should be in your syllabi -- click here for a [syllabus template with these elements](#).

Syllabus Element	Description
<b>Course Title, quarter and year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course number and title should match the catalog listing.</li> <li>• The quarter and year are required for accreditation and articulation (when the syllabus is requested by another school)</li> </ul>
<b>Instructor Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell students how they can reach you</li> <li>• Include office location, office hours, preferred method of contact (email, phone, Canvas, etc.) -- included expected response time to email/phone.</li> <li>• Include a general statement about what office hours are for (talk about a grade, concern about meeting an assignment due date, extra help on content, anything else).</li> </ul>
<b>Course Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include Department, Item #, day/s and time/s the class meets, course modality, and meeting location.</li> </ul>
<b>Course Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please use the course description <a href="#">from the college catalog course descriptions</a>. Do not create or add your own course description for this section. This is necessary for accreditation purposes.</li> </ul>
<b>Course Overview</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of this section is to provide a more personalized overview of your course. Give students a concrete idea of what they will get out of the course. Include explanations about why students should care about the course, why you are passionate about the material, and how the course fits into the larger framework of their major or degree.</li> <li>• Welcome students into the course, set the tone, and communicate the value and importance of this topic with a brief 1-3 paragraph description of the course.</li> </ul>
<b>Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SLO's must be listed on syllabus and match those in the <a href="#">Highline College online catalog</a>.</li> <li>• You must use the descriptor "Student Learning Outcomes" because accreditors look for this phrasing in college syllabi.</li> <li>• Include course prerequisites if relevant</li> </ul>

<p><b>Course Text(s) and Other Required Materials</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● List all required reading and viewing materials, equipment, supplies, software, and technology.</li> <li>● Make copies of materials available in the HC library reserve books or negotiate reduced pricing through publishers.</li> <li>● Consider how highlighting aspects of your course materials will serve to inspire, reflect, and/or include diverse perspectives and the student population you work with. This might include textbook authors; course texts (films, video, literature); and the images and examples used in your course materials.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Expectations and How to Succeed in the Course</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicate to your students that you want them to be successful.</li> <li>● Include an explicit statement about strategies that lead to success in your course.</li> <li>● Let students know about office hours and the importance of communication.</li> <li>● Consider challenges students have faced in your courses in the past -- <i>What could you have communicated early that might have helped prevent those issues?</i></li> <li>● Include a statement regarding how much time students can expect to spend each week outside of the classroom on your course.</li> <li>● Include a link to the important registration dates for the quarter (withdrawals, drop dates, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information about Course Assignments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide information about course assignments and assessments, including major research projects and tests, midterm, final, quizzes, attendance and participation points, and other activities.</li> <li>● Consider clarifying for students the difference between low-stakes assessments such as homework and quizzes and high-stakes assessments (tests, major papers).</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: some instructors may combine this section with the next.</i></p>
<p><b>Grading and Related Policies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide information about how grades will be calculated for the course.</li> <li>● Include grading scale used for your class, grading procedures, course attendance and participation policy, assignment deadlines, and policy on missed deadlines and exams.</li> <li>● Toward an inclusive curriculum, consider what is called the “practice</li> </ul>

	<p>paradox” in the Four Connections, which calls for a balance of high expectations and high support: stacking the course with low stakes assignments in the first few weeks and other policies that allow flexibility within the course structure.</p>
<b>Academic Honesty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feel free to use the statement included in the syllabus template or a modified version that better suits your class.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusivity Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include a statement that affirms Highline’s diversity policy -- this can be from the college or a statement personalized for your class (see syllabus template for samples)</li> <li>● <i>Some instructors may choose to place this statement at the beginning of the syllabus</i></li> </ul>
<b>Accommodations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following statement should be included in all course syllabi <b>and</b> listed on the Highline College Resources for Students document:  <p>“Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Access Services, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.</p> <p>If you have not yet established services through Access Services, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact Access Services at 206-592-3857, <a href="mailto:access@highline.edu">access@highline.edu</a> or <a href="http://access.highline.edu">access.highline.edu</a>. Access Services is located on the 5th floor of the Library (building 25).”</p> <p>Include language about making your course more accessible, such as accommodating religious observances.</p> </li> </ul>
<b>Grievance Procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include links and explanations for two important grievance procedures (see syllabus template for sample language): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>For instructional grievance process:</i>  <a href="#"><u>Instructional Grievance Process</u></a></li> <li>2. <i>Title IX process:</i>  <a href="#"><u>Title IX - Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy</u></a></li> </ol> </li> </ul>

<p><b>College Policies and Student Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include a notation that directs students to these three pages posted in Canvas: 1) Highline College Resources for Students; 2) Highline College Policies and Procedures, and 3) Basic Needs Resources</li> <li>● You may include a specific policy or resource in your syllabus that has a connection to your discipline, i.e. the Math Resource Center or the college’s policy on incompletes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advising</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include the following statement about Advising in your syllabus:  “Advising is a collaborative partnership between you and your advisor. Your advisor can teach you how to find information to make the most of your college experience. In your first advising meetings, you will create a plan together for courses and/or a degree based on your educational goals. Your advisor can connect you to a network of resources and support services whether you are facing obstacles or just need more information. It is suggested to meet with your advisor once per quarter. To request a Faculty Advisor: <a href="https://bit.ly/3ciPEb9">https://bit.ly/3ciPEb9</a>”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Course Schedule</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide a logically sequenced course schedule with topics/concepts listed chronologically, along with readings and other assignments required of students together with due dates.</li> <li>● Consider including a disclaimer about possible changes to the class (letting students know you will document and share changes in the future when this happens).</li> </ul> <p>For example: <i>“This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the quarter and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as the course needs arise.”</i></p>

**Great articles and resources on creating inclusive syllabi:**

- Article: [“A Learner Centered Syllabus Helps Set the Tone for Learning”](#)
- Article: [“Creating the Foundation for a Warm Classroom Climate”](#)
- Podcast: [“How can I use my syllabus in a way to improve Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?”](#)
- Short post: [“We not I in Syllabi”](#) -- from Sue Frantz with links to research
- Website: [The Accessible Syllabus](#) -- tips on images and text from Tulane University
- Resources on syllabi from [Highline’s Learning & Teaching Center](#)