Diversity & Inclusion
Syllabus Statements

Including a diversity statement on your syllabus can set the tone for your classroom environment. It shows students that you value and respect difference in intellectual exchange, and are aware of current campus conversations surrounding diversity.¹

When crafting a diversity statement you might consider the following questions:

- What are your discipline’s conventions and assumptions? How might students with varying backgrounds respond to them?
- What role does your respect for and engagement with diversity in the classroom play in your personal teaching philosophy?
- What positive learning outcomes can come from respecting difference in the classroom? How can you highlight these?
- What do you want your students to know about your expectations regarding creating and maintaining a classroom space where differences are respected and valued?
- Is your statement inclusive of different types of diversity, including, but not limited to: race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, religion, and disability?
- Which campus resources would you like to direct your students to for further support?
- What kind of classroom environment would your students like to see? How might you include them in the conversation about standards for classroom civility?

Below are some sample syllabus statements from Brown University:

(1) DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT: In an ideal world, science would be objective. However, much of science is subjective and is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices. I acknowledge that the readings for this course, including the course reader and BCP were authored by white men. Furthermore, the course often focuses on historically important neuroscience experiments which were mostly conducted by white men. Recent edits to the course reader were undertaken by both myself and some students who do not identify as white men. However, I acknowledge that it is possible that there may be both overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens with which it was written, even though the material is primarily of a scientific nature. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of science. Please contact me (in person or electronically) or submit anonymous feedback if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials.

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Brown records, please let me know!
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don’t hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. Remember that you can also submit anonymous feedback (which will lead to me making a general announcement to the class, if necessary to address your concerns). If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Dean Bhattacharyya, Associate Dean of the College for Diversity Programs, is an excellent resource.

¹ Adapted from Cornell’s Center for Teaching Excellence resource, POD Network conference, 2011.
1. I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. (Again, anonymous feedback is always an option).

-Monica Linden, Neuroscience, Brown University

2. Curricular statement: The Department of Sociology embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We are especially committed to increasing the representation of those populations that have been historically excluded from participation in U.S. higher education.

-Brown University Department of Sociology: [http://www.brown.edu/academics/sociology/diversity-statement](http://www.brown.edu/academics/sociology/diversity-statement)

3. “Respect for Diversity” Statement:

**RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

**Important Note:** Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others’ emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students’ experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

-Lynn Hernandez, Behavioral and Social Sciences, School of Public Health, Brown University

4. English Language Learner Syllabus Statement: Brown University welcomes students from around the world and recognizes the unique perspectives international students bring enrich the campus community. To empower students whose first language is not English, an array of ELL support is available on campus including language and culture workshops and individual appointments. For more information about English Language Learning at Brown, contact the ELL Specialists at ellwriting@brown.edu.

5. Sheridan Center statement: The Sheridan Center supports an inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized, respected, and seen as a source of strength. Certificate II seeks to present a variety of diverse perspectives within the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) and through our seminar discussions. The seminar will address diversity considerations for course design and student engagement along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic class, age, religion, and disability. Seminar participants who have a disability or other condition necessitating accommodation are encouraged to discuss their needs with the instructor.

-Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, Course Design Certificate (Certificate II), Brown University

Below are some sample syllabus statements from other universities:
In our structured and unstructured discussions and dialogues, we also will have many opportunities to explore some challenging issues and increase our understandings of different perspectives. Our conversations may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. Always we will need respect for others. Thus, an additional aim of our course necessarily will be for us to increase our facility with the sometimes difficult conversations that arise as we deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives – whatever our backgrounds, experiences, or positions.


“Respect for Diversity: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.”

-University of Iowa College of Education: https://education.uiowa.edu/coe-policies/syllabus-checklist