

Inclusive Teaching

By creating inclusive classrooms from the very start-- in your syllabus design, policies, reading list choices, deadlines, class activities, and tone-- you can move the needle forward on helping to create a stronger, more equitable community at Mount Holyoke. Classrooms are never neutral spaces and are marked by the same inequalities, exclusion, and power struggles that exist elsewhere in the world. The point is not to claim a privileged space for the classroom that is somehow exempt from those dynamics, but to work to eliminate them where we can, confront them honestly when we cannot, and find ways to listen and include all our students in equitable, just ways. A first step might be taking an inventory of your own practices to see how inclusive your classroom is.

In traditional college classrooms, faculty have often been assumed to be in a position of manager and enforcer, making sure students attend class, do their assignments, and then judging that performance. That is, the syllabus serves as a contract and is filled with punishing language about what will happen when a student violates this or that policy. Recent thinking about universal design in higher education suggests a very different approach. By inviting students to learn in approachable, empathetic ways, faculty can create more accessible, learning-centered courses in which all students are given the opportunity to learn well.

More resources for Getting Started with Inclusive Teaching: Inclusive Mentoring/Prof. Becky Packard Inclusive Syllabus Design/Tulane University Identifying Your Own Attitudes/University of Michigan Guide to Creating Inclusive College Classrooms/University of Michigan Classroom Dynamics and Diversity/Bok Center at Harvard University Building Inclusive Classrooms/Cornell University

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