

INCLUSIVE LAW CLASSROOMS

This document provides a non-exhaustive list of evidence-based principles for inclusive teaching and universal design that we hope law faculty will integrate into their classrooms. Inclusive teaching is an approach that is responsive to all intersecting social identities and the lived experiences of students in the classroom. When inclusive teaching practices are embedded in every aspect of how one prepares to teach and engage with students, it can foster creativity, healthy and robust dialogue, critical thinking, collaborative learning, and a greater sense of belonging for all students.

We hope that faculty will keep a learner's mindset about creating inclusive spaces for students in the classroom and beyond. We recognize that difficult situations may still arise and invite you to reach out to if you want to talk through any aspect of these practices or your experience in the classroom:

- Lexi Freeman, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (afreeman@law.du.edu);
- Annecos Wiersema; Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (awiersema@law.du.edu);
- Becca Ciancanelli, Director of Inclusive Teaching Practices with the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) (becca.ciancanelli@du.edu).

RESPECTING STUDENT IDENTITY

- Be mindful of saying your students' names correctly. One way to get to know your students and learn their preferred names and the correct pronunciation of their names is to give your students autonomy about what they share with you. Consider surveying your students at the beginning of the semester and invite them to share with you privately what they would like you to know. For example, you can do this with notecards or with an assignment on Canvas.
- Provide students with the option to share their pronouns, but don't require it so that students don't feel singled out. Faculty support can also provide information about pronouns where students have indicated a preference in their records.
- Avoid using honorifics in the classroom that are related to gender, including gender neutral honorifics. You could use first names instead or refer to students as "Attorney [Last Name]."

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

- Enable live transcription if using Zoom.
- Ensure that your content is accessible for students who are using screen readers. The faculty support team at the law school can assist with this.
- Use a podium or lapel microphone at all times. Avoid relying on asking whether everyone can hear so that students don't have to identify themselves if they cannot hear well.
- Students process information in various ways. Avoid mandating the use of particular techniques or either restricting or requiring the use of laptops in the classroom so that you give students the choice about how to take notes and organize information.
- Recognize that some students need more time than others to process information and formulate responses. For situations where you are calling on a student or asking a student to read something and respond in class, ensure that the student has adequate time to respond. Consider whether you can provide some information or written material in advance.
- Some accommodations are difficult to meet outside of the classroom. If you are planning events outside of the classroom as part of your course, please make sure that all accommodations can be met.
- Examine your course design and ask yourself if you are able to gauge the learning experiences of all your students. Are there multiple ways for your students to engage and participate in your course?

RECOGNIZING THE OCCURRENCE AND IMPACT OF CURRENT EVENTS

When significant moments occur locally, nationally, or globally, take a moment to acknowledge them prior to class or during class. Adjust your class plan if you can to either create space to discuss or to shift attention away from a sensitive topic on that date. Even if you are unable to dedicate meaningful time to discuss, recognizing it still matters.

DIVERSIFYING COURSE CONTENT

- Be mindful of the way course content can sometimes reflect cultural norms and baseline assumptions, such as heterosexual relationships, white identity, and non-disabled status, among other majority identities.
- Note the images you use in your course content, the people you cite or refer to, the identity of guest speakers, and the perspectives, backgrounds, and identities being represented throughout the course. If there is a historical or cultural reason for the absence of diversity, consider opening up the opportunity for discussion with the class about that absence. Try to identify ways to bring in different voices through authors, guest speakers, websites, video clips, and more.
- Use diversity of identities, names, and status in hypothetical problems and exams.
- Where appropriate for the classroom setting, consider inviting students to share materials that are valued in or representative of their communities, without singling out particular students. Seeking feedback on the course, as discussed below, is also a valuable way to encourage students to share perspectives you may not have included in the course materials.

FACILITATING CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Consider establishing and writing down “discussion agreements” for your course. Start your course with a discussion of these guidelines and, perhaps, offer a group activity that allows your students to contribute ideas or revise/amplify some of your rules. If you involve students in this process, they will feel agency and commitment to these guidelines and will likely help hold one another accountable. Make sure to present and refer back to the agreements frequently, so that you create a space for authentic conversation about challenging topics that need to be addressed.
- If you see discomfort during dialogue, pause and note this discomfort. Consider sharing resources after class as well that allow for a deeper dive.
- Be mindful of “air time” allocated to certain people, perspectives, or topics. Recognize perceived legitimacy if you allow a certain amount of air time. Intervene when needed.
- Recognize that some topics can be traumatic and triggering – try to acknowledge those in advance without assuming whether any particular student or group may be affected.
- If you utilize hypos that ask students to take on difficult subjects or arguments, be clear about that with your students. Consider providing them with the ability to opt out if the subject matter will be potentially traumatic, particularly where legal issues are also closely connected to identity.
- Identify ways to ensure that discussion and participation are not dominated by individuals from less marginalized communities who are more likely to volunteer. You can supplement requests for volunteers with techniques like calling on students in an equitable and consistent manner, setting up small group discussions and partner work, and asking for written responses.

RECEIVING FREQUENT FEEDBACK

- Ask for frequent feedback from your students about their experience in your class. Consider a mid-term anonymous detailed evaluation to allow students to be honest about their experience in your course. Let the students know how you are reflecting on this feedback, and how you are modifying your teaching to best support their learning.
- Reflect on your identity as the instructor of your course(s). How does your identity impact the classroom dynamic? Is there a way to acknowledge your identity to your students and make space for their identities to co-exist with yours?

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS A DOCUMENT THAT LINKS TO ARTICLES THAT PROVIDE MORE DEPTH AND EVIDENCE FOR EACH OF THE TEACHING TOPICS



[RESOURCES](#)

CLICK HERE TO LEARN ABOUT THE FACULTY INSTITUTE FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHING (FIIT), AN ONLINE PROGRAM FOR DU FACULTY



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