

Syllabus Review

The goals of the syllabus protocol is:

- (1) To make visible the use of language used in syllabi
- (2) To make visible who syllabi are designed to serve
- (3) To reflect upon the potential for syllabi to impact student experiences in our classes.

Step 1: Descriptive Coding

Code the language in your syllabus using the descriptive words listed below. The purpose of this step is to make visible the types of language that are used in syllabi, and who the syllabus was designed to serve. Note that more than one word may apply.

Code Word	When to Use
Directions	<p>Language in which students are asked/told to do something. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It is important that you come to class on time.”</i> • <i>“All assignments must be turned into D2L by midnight.”</i>
Rules	<p>Language that describes the governance of the class. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Three tardies will count as one absence.”</i> • Grade/attendance policies.
Consequences	<p>Language that describes a reward or punishment for failing to follow a rule or direction. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Three absences your grade will be lowered by one full grade.”</i> • Policies regarding grading
Institution	<p>Language designed to serve the institution. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Learning Outcomes • Department policies
Student	<p>Language designed to serve students. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements that welcome students • Providing resources, such as hours for the tutoring lab or office hours.

Step 2: Interpretive Coding

Review the language and policies in your syllabus a second time using the code words listed below. The purpose of this step is to reflect upon the potential for language and policies to impact the experience students have in our classes. More than one word may apply.

Code Word	When to Use
Validation	<p>Language/Policies that communicate a belief that students are capable of being successful. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I was once a student like you, so I know you can do this!”</i> • <i>“If you earned a grade of ‘C’ in the prerequisite class, you should reconsider taking the course again.”</i>
Expectations	<p>Language/Policies that communicate(s) the practices and behaviors students should adopt. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Strive to be in-class 10 minutes early.”</i> • <i>“Struggling students should seek help.”</i>
Transparency	<p>Language/Policies that describe the underlying rationale of policies and procedures, or why students are asked to behave in certain ways. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining the reasoning behind the design of assignments. • <i>“Cells phone must be turned off so they do not disrupt the learning of your classmates.”</i>
Positionality	<p>Language/Policies that say(s) something about the roles students and teachers play. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Regular attendance is the responsibility of the student.”</i> • <i>“I will be in class early if you have questions.”</i>
Belonging	<p>Language/Policies that communicate(s) whether students are invited to bring their authentic selves into the class. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement on inclusive excellence • A teaching philosophy statement that outlines the use of the lived experiences of students



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Step 3: Reflection Questions

The purpose of this step is to reflect upon the potential for our language/policies to impact the experience students have in our classes. We will discuss these prompts at the next session of EILA, so be sure to write some notes.

- How was 'success' defined in your syllabus? In what ways was it defined directly, and in what ways was it implied through language, policies, or the design of course activities?
- How were student/teacher roles defined?
- Thinking from a student lens, how might a student suspect you see them? How might the students see you?
- Reflecting upon EILA's study of dominant and subordinate identities, who is most likely to see themselves within your syllabus? Which students are most likely to be aware of the norms and values embodied within your syllabus?
- Who does the syllabus ask students to become?