Creating an Inclusive Classroom

1. WELCOMING LANGUAGE

- Use contemporary language when referring to marginalized groups. If materials use outdated language, note it and explain that the class will use contemporary terms (except when referring to the original).
- If a student uses an offensive term, rather than ignore it, gently express why that language may be perceived as problematic and suggest an alternative term.
- Be mindful of diversity in using pronouns, crafting hypotheticals, or creating fact patterns.
  - E.g. Resist always using "he" to refer to judges or attorneys while always using "she" to refer to paralegals or clerks.
  - E.g. Use a variety of diverse names ("attorney Rodriguez") and relationships (e.g. same-sex couple) if a fact pattern or hypo does not touch upon something sensitive along those lines.

2. ELICITING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

- When soliciting personal experiences, ask generally whether any student has relevant experience or knowledge they would like to volunteer, rather than singling out students based on a group identity such as race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, or religious belief.
- When class material gestures toward diversity-related issues, don't ignore them. Acknowledge when bias affects how a particular legal issue is discussed or handled in a case or set of cases. If not germane to the lesson, flag it even though the immediate focus is elsewhere.
- Discussing highly charged topics, like race or sexual assault, is of great value and importance in a truly diverse community. Don't avoid those topics because they feel awkward or uncomfortable. Do exercise care in how to open and shepherd difficult conversations, and consider acknowledging your own biases.

3. RESPECTING STUDENTS' DIVERSE IDENTITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

- Start the course by expressly stating that your classroom is a space to share a wide array of opinions, but that students must treat one another with respect even when they sharply disagree.
- Include a reasonable accommodation statement on your syllabus.
- Ask for student's preferred name, preferred gender pronoun, and title (if you are using last names) on the seating chart at the beginning of the year.
- In a diverse classroom, the names of students will reflect that diversity and potentially raise questions of pronunciation. Model how students should behave with clients or superiors in a similar circumstance by asking the student for clarification and making note of it.

4. ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

- Announce openings for TA and RA positions transparently; recognize the value of diversity when making those selections.
- Aim for diversity in classroom participation. Cold call or select volunteers with an eye toward equity, and be conscious about possible bias in feedback or in who is asked to follow up.
- After the first third of the semester, take stock of whether participation is skewed in your classroom. If so, explicitly encourage more voices.

5. EXHIBITING WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

- Empower TAs to raise concerns with you anonymously on students' behalf. Consider providing a method for students to give anonymous feedback during the semester about diversity-related concerns.
- Encourage students to reach out to you during office hours or otherwise to talk about any issues related to identity that may be inhibiting their ability to fully engage in your class.
- Consider videotaping your classes to get another perspective on classroom dynamics.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</h1>

1. **WELCOMING LANGUAGE**
   - It may be helpful to know that many marginalized groups' preferred terms have changed over the years. There are several resources for learning about these preferences:
     - LGBTQ http://www.glaad.org/reference/ ; http://goo.gl/lXc1y0
       - E.g. "gay" not "homosexual"
       - E.g. "sexual orientation" not "sexual preference"
     - Immigration https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/DTIW_Stylebook.pdf
       - E.g. "undocumented" or "unauthorized" not "illegal" when describing an individual in a country without or beyond authorization and/or documentation
       - E.g. "noncitizen" not "alien" when describing individuals based on their lack of citizenship status (or, when addressing a specific group among noncitizens, more tailored terms like "immigrant" "refugee" or "migrant")
     - Race/ethnicity
       - E.g. Native populations may prefer "Indigenous" to "Indian"
       - Differentiate race from ethnicity, and note that students may identify with multiple categories
     - Mental Health/Disability http://ncdj.org/style-guide/
       - E.g. person-first language:
         - "people with disabilities" not "handicapped"
         - "a person with an intellectual disability" not "retarded"
         - "a person with schizophrenia" not "a schizophrenic"
       - Avoid terms like "crazy," "loony," "mad," and "psycho"
       - Avoid expressions that imply that a person with a disability must be a victim or have a poor quality of life. (E.g. "afflicted with/stricken by/suffers from")
   - Include diverse names and relationships in your original hypos and fact patterns, which affirms that students with those identities are welcome in your class and in the profession. At the same time, in so doing, be careful not reinforce bias by stereotyping or tokenizing.
     - E.g. Use diverse names or relationships in a hypo involving facts not stereotypically associated with marginalized identity groups (e.g. contracts to purchase property or securities), but avoid doing so when it might reinforce stereotypes (e.g. a hypo about a rap or sports star signing a contract).

2. **ELICITING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES**
   - If the class covers highly charged or sensitive topics (e.g. units on abortion, sexual assault, cases that acutely address race/ethnicity/orientation), consider acknowledging the sensitivity of the area proactively, putting the cold-call system on pause, or offering students an opportunity to confidentially request being taken off call.
   - Studies show that opening such conversations with an acknowledgment of their difficulty as well as by signaling the purpose as a learning opportunity helps to reduce barriers to engagement (e.g. "Talking about race in this context is difficult and uncomfortable, but these conversations are important to have and honest exchanges are a learning opportunity for all of us.").
   - Difficult conversations may include charged language (e.g. "thugs"). But ensure that such language is used to serve the purpose of the free exchange of ideas, rather than stand as a proxy for group-based epithets or stereotypes.
   - If an unusual degree of tension arises during the discussion, express openness to hearing from students outside of class.

3. **RESPECTING STUDENTS**
   - For an example of an accommodation statement, consider: "I am committed to making my classroom a safe and accessible space for all members of our community. If you need a reasonable accommodation for this course, the Law School provides an array of services for students. To respect student privacy, faculty are asked not to entertain those requests individually. Instead, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, which is located at 726 Broadway, 2nd floor, (212) 998-4980, or the Office of Academic Services at (212) 998-6020. Services are also available for students who encounter unexpected trauma (e.g., health issues of oneself or a loved one). The Office of Student Affairs addresses needs that arise in those circumstances, through Dean Jason Belk whose office is on the 4th floor of Furman Hall. The NYU Wellness Exchange at (212) 443-9999 also staffs a 24 hour crisis hotline."
   - When advising students on professional attire (e.g. in Lawyering, clinics, or in mock scenarios), use gender-neutral language to describe appropriate clothing (e.g. "formal professional wear" rather than "men should wear ties").

4. **ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**
   - We all tend to gravitate toward people with whom we feel comfortable, including along race, gender, religion, orientation and other identity group grounds. In choosing TAs or calling on students, recognize the potential to perpetuate patterns of success by making participation or assistance more comfortable for some students than others, and aim for diversity when possible.
   - Be conscious of which students contribute what comments so as to avoid praising a student who replicates a remark that was previously stated but without notice, particularly since research suggests that those more likely to be overlooked may be students from marginalized groups.
   - Studies show that educators may inadvertently use different language with students who are or are perceived to be struggling, based on race, gender, or other stereotypical indicators, and that this language matters. For *all* struggling students, use language that suggests that success is within their control, as opposed to a product of fixed ability (e.g. Rather than say "1L is just really hard for some people" or "Just try your best," consider "1L feels hard now, because you're learning" or "The point isn't to immediately know all; the point is to learn it step by step.")
   - Ensure that students from all backgrounds feel comfortable participating in class. Students who participate with high frequency can be gently reminded to leave room for others by limiting their participation to especially important points; students who do not speak can be encouraged to participate more so that all perspectives are heard.

5. **EXHIBITING WILLINGNESS TO LEARN**
   - Acknowledge openly the potential biases in your own perspective, and ensure a rich dialogue within class by seeking to elicit opinions that differ from your own.
   - Provide a method for students to provide anonymous feedback about diversity-related concerns. One option is to create or ask IT to create a Google Form that can be adapted for this purpose and included as a link on your syllabus. For an illustration only (do not use this link itself, as it is not connected to your account), see https://goo.gl/r8MwKV.
   - Consider videotaping one or more of your classes to identify whether there are any disparities in race, gender, or other discernible factors in student participation, and whether it relates to who raises hands, who is called upon, who is asked follow up questions, and who receives positive feedback or affirmation about their contributions/responses. If you see inequitable patterns, adjust accordingly.
   - Stay tuned: The Diversity Working Group intends to develop further resources to help faculty interested in assessing their current practices and learning new teaching skills.