Ways to Decolonize Your Syllabus at UMass Boston

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UMass Boston

Land Acknowledgment

- We acknowledge that UMass Boston resides on the unceded lands of the Massachusett people. It is also important that we not only acknowledge the First Nations of this land, but also work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples around issues of Native survivance and sovereignty.

- We have donated to the Massachusett Tribe at Ponkapoag to support their on-going efforts related to Native education and the general welfare of their people. You can join us by visiting here: www.massachusetttribe.org

- We also encourage everyone to visit the Massachusetts Indigenous Legislative Agenda, where you can learn more about ways to work in solidarity with Native activists in our local communities: www.maindigenousagenda.org

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Locating Ourselves in this Work…
Denise and Chris

- Who are we?

- Why do we do this?

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Frameworks: Decolonization

- Decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012)
  - Settler-colonialism functions through the replacement of indigenous people by a settler society; to be successful in settlement, settlers must destroy or disappear (often through erasure) indigenous peoples.
  - Settler-colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-indigenous-enslaved.
  - Decolonialization is the unsettling of colonial systems. It is not a metaphor, but actively undoing settler domination, achieving indigenous sovereignty, and realizing freedom and justice for colonized people.

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Frameworks: Anti-Racism

- Anti-Racism (Jones, 1997; Kendi, 2019; National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2022)
  - Types of Racism: Internalized, intrapersonal, institutional, and structural
  - Anti-racism is making conscious decisions to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices in personal practices and structural policies
  - It is actively working against white supremacy, white dominant culture, and unequitable institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you *are*; it is about what you *do*. It means expressing anti-racist ideas, engaging in anti-racist practices and supporting anti-racist practices
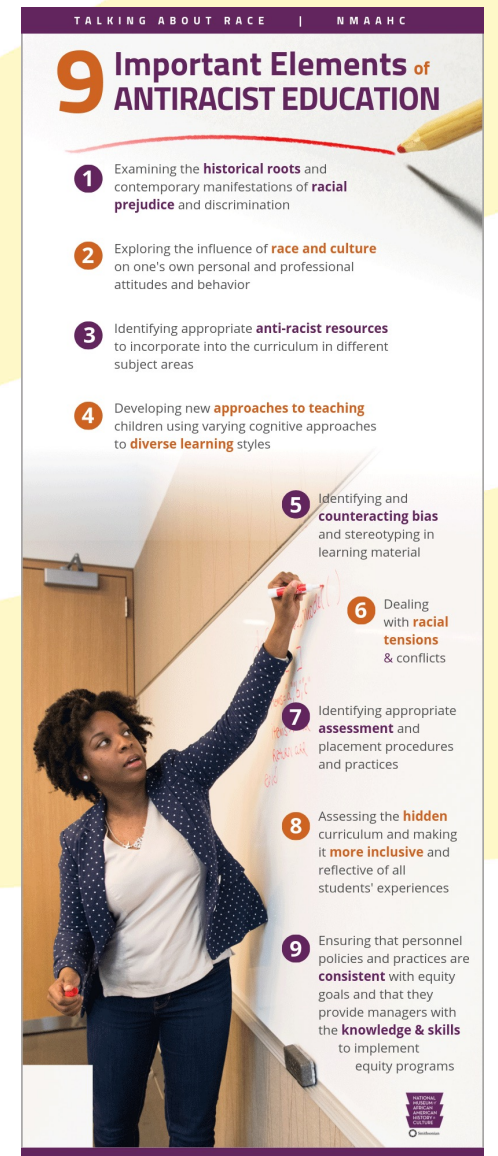
Anti-Racist and Equity-Minded Guiding Questions

- **Who Are You?**

- **Who Are Your Students? (Do You Know Them?)**
  - Are students' co-creators of the course?

- **What Content Are Your Using?**
  - What are the racial (gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.) Identities of those whose materials you are using (readings, activities)?

- **How Are You Helping Your Students Grow? How Are You Growing Along With Them?**
  - How do you know what the students need?
  - Are your assessments oriented toward student growth?

Individual Work: Use The Syllabus Equity Tool

- We will share a Syllabus Equity Tool created by California Community Colleges

- We have highlighted six questions for you to focus based on this workshop's guiding questions. Use these six questions to reflect on your syllabus (although you are welcome to use more of the questions presented)

- We will then work in small groups to share about what we learned and discuss where we want to go

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Individual Work: Use The Syllabus Equity Tool

- 1. Do students know who you are? Do you introduce yourself—race or ethnicity, gender pronouns, academic experience, cultural identity, etc.—in the syllabus as the instructor of the course and provide anti-racist and equity-minded messaging to welcome your students.

- 2. What books, articles, and readings have been selected in your course? Are your course resources inclusive to race, socio-economic standing, gender, sexuality, disability, immigration status, English language learner, and first-generation students? Do you include a significant number of authors of color, women, queer, or authors with disabilities in your syllabus?

- 3. Do students have input in shaping content and co-creating community rules outlined in the course syllabus?

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Individual Work: Use The Syllabus Equity Tool

- 4. Allocating points can cause students to assume they have no room for growth, and therefore they may drop out of the course (Rose, 2017). Faculty may consider holistic modalities and progression steps—for example, beginning, emerging, and proficiency—to develop opportunities for the learner to grow (Feldman, 2019) before finalizing student grading in the class.

- 5. Is the syllabus language around policies and expectations of students supportive and not punitive or deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010)?

Group Work

- Introduce Yourself to Your Group: Name, Dept., How do you come to this work?

- Share the take aways from your own syllabus exploration.

- What did you learn about your syllabus related to decolonization and anti-racism, specifically?

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Whole Group

- What Did We Learn?

- Where Are We Going (and Why)?

- Complete this evaluation form:

Thank You! Resources.

- Thank you. We hope you will share these materials with your departments and other colleagues.

- For more resources, see here:
  - Center for Urban Education: https://www.cuesta.edu/about/documents/vpaa-docs/Syllabus_Review_Protocol_CUE.pdf
  - Bryn Mawr Teaching and Learning Institute: https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/academic-information/centers-institutes/teaching-learning-institute/creating-rethinking-syllabi-open-learning/revolutionizing-my-syllabus-process

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