



Decolonize My Counseling Psychology Syllabus Checklist

Preparing to Decolonize My Syllabus

- I have read “[Decolonization is Not a Metaphor](#)” by Tuck & Yang (2012) and understand decolonization is an ongoing endeavor and must be at the center dismantling [anti-Black racism](#).
- I understand that decolonization means resisting and actively unlearning the dangerous and harmful legacy of colonization, particularly the racist ideas that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) people are inferior to White Europeans.
- I have a plan to “decolonize” my syllabus in community with others so that I can collaboratively identify how anti-Black racism and erasure of BiPOC experiences will show up in my syllabus planning.
- I use Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality to identify how interlocking systems of oppressions (e.g., racism, sexism, xenophobia, nationalism, classism, ableism) set up BiPOC students and all students on the margins of teaching and learning, exposing them to societal harm.
- If this is a syllabus I am revising, I have a plan to solicit and integrate previous feedback from students in developing my syllabus before, during, and after my class (and if not, I have considered developing a partial syllabus for student feedback and collaboration). I welcome and invite feedback from BiPOC students, being intentional about not asking them to educate me and being mindful of the power differentials between us.
- I have considered how I may be “banking” (Freire, 1970) content “into” students - as opposed to creating a learning space of mutual respect, where it is possible to learn with and from students, to see students’ cultural backgrounds as strengths, and to view learning as a tool for decolonization and social justice.
- I have asked myself what pedagogical approach and theory I am integrating into my course preparation, and how these theories may perpetuate harm to BiPOC folx and those on the margins of education.
- I am aware of how using Black feminist, womanist, and other BiPOC-centered theories can help me identify sites, language, and policies of anti-Black racism and other oppression in my syllabus and course.

- I have asked myself how I as an instructor can move beyond my institutional “requirements” and my past pedagogical moves in the classroom towards a liberatory redevelopment of my course so I can provide adequate support for BiPOC students and those on the margins.
- I am aware that a core aspect of decolonization is self-examination of my institution and myself to challenge the idea that the syllabus and instructor are the ultimate authorities and holders of knowledge in the classroom and academia.
- I am aware that neutrality is not possible in learning spaces, and that biases inform every aspect of learning institutions. I am prepared to discuss these biases and incorporate them into the learning.
- I am aware that integrating my own personal experience, my students’, and our narratives into the learning space can serve as a tool for liberatory education, as well as a technique to ground learning in real life experiences with oppression.
- I understand that fostering empathy and interconnectedness among students in the class, as well as towards communities outside of the classroom are learning outcomes that contribute towards decolonization.

Designing the Outline of My Syllabus

- I have included statements related to equity and justice (e.g., land and labor of enslaved Black people, disability services, community-building, financial resources for students).
 - Example of land/enslaved Black labor acknowledgment: “As we come together as a learning community, I acknowledge the land I live and work on by naming the Muscogee-Creek, Cherokee, and Chickasaw Peoples upon whose unceded and stolen territory the university stands. I further acknowledge the enslaved peoples, primarily of African descent, whose labour built much of the university.”
- I have included policies within my syllabus that allows students to engage in the course in a way that promotes equity and democracy. Examples of these include a process for providing ongoing feedback, process of agreeing to contents of the syllabus, and ability to vote on options for completing key components of the course (e.g., voting on whether to complete a major assignment as a written paper or an exam based on student’s strengths).
- I have included a personal goal statement that shares my aims for collaborative professor-student learning (e.g., I include a statement about the “class being a community” and participation and liberation from oppression are important goals).
- I have clear, accessible course goals, outcomes, and expectations centering student learning that are connected to reducing harm to BiPOC people and those on the margins. This include explicitly naming systems of oppression that cause harm to BiPOC students, and the specific ways that this course addresses a system of oppression and marginalization.

- I have been clear about the “need-to-knows” or “previous information” students must have before taking my class beyond pre-requisites for my course. I have included information about processes for students to access this information in the event that oppressive conditions may have prevented them from having this access in the past.
- I have thoughtfully considered the expectations I have for my students who are BiPOC and those on the margins. I answer these questions critically in terms of my own experiences of interlocking oppressions and privileges.
- I know that decolonizing my syllabus is ongoing work that is never completely done, and yet fosters the ongoing empowerment and liberation of the BiPOC students I work with and myself. I am prepared to engage in an iterative process, whereby I continue to decolonize my syllabus with feedback from students every term.

Selection of Teaching Materials

- I have considered how to bring liberation-focused images to my syllabus, as well as bringing this type of media to encourage conversation and instruction.
- I consider how and why my course begins with theories, examples, case studies, and more rooted in white and western theories. Essentially, I consider what is an accurate his-tory/her-story/trans-story of my field. For instance, instead of saying “William James founded psychology,” you may say “William James founded Western formalized psychology. ”You may also acknowledge that mental health and wellness approaches began in the continent of Africa where humanity began. I consider deeply the erasure of these lineages, and how I may bring these truths back into my discipline.
- I consider that scientific evidence suggests that humans originated in the continent of Africa, and I remind my students of this fact, reminding them that movement and migration have been a natural part of human history and they have been key in our evolution as a species.
- I make use of dialogue-based learning as much as possible and favor this approach over approaches that foster aggressive debate and hostile discussion, as I acknowledge that the latter are colonized patterns of behavior.
- I select materials that have real application to those who experience marginalization today to help contextualize how students consume the literature. For example, I elevate the experiences of immigrants of color.
- I select materials that include BiPOC cultures and those on the margins within my syllabus, and I acknowledge that Western psychology is limited in its knowledge-base related to BiPOC communities.
- I include materials and assignments that expose students to the real-life experiences of BiPOC communities in ways that go beyond academic articles and texts. This includes community-oriented projects, inviting guest speakers into the classroom, participatory

Adaptation of “Decolonize My Counseling Psychology Syllabus” Special Task Group members (Anneliese Singh, Elizabeth Cardenas Bautista, Germán Cadenas, Della Mosely, and more Special Task Group members who were inspired by [Yvette DeChavez](#) to do this work and we appreciate feedback from [Christopher Busey](#))

assignments, as well as using popular media content (e.g., podcasts, documentaries, social media).

- I have intentionally and critically reviewed the texts and other learning materials I use to examine the:
 - Messages they send that reinforce anti-Black racism and oppression to those on the margins.
 - Representation of BIPOC scholars and perspectives.
 - Possibilities of a free or no-cost text.
 - Misrepresentations or decontextualized issues related to BIPOC people and other communities on the margins.
 - Inclusion of attention to white-body supremacy and other systems of supremacy that marginalize communities.

Beginning and Throughout the Delivery of My Course

- I have acknowledged my positions of privilege and power I hold in the classroom and institution relative to my BIPOC students and those on the margins.
- I demonstrate my appreciation for BIPOC students in the classroom, develop strong relationships with BIPOC students, and encourage their voices to be prominent during class.
- I explicitly welcome the authority and vast knowledge of the culture and experience that BIPOC students and those on the margins have.
- I have expressed my dedication and willingness to hear and hold space for BIPOC students and those on the margins. have a plan to begin the class with group agreements - beginning with the type of learning environment of what people want to see in the classroom and have collective norms (not just instructor as authoritarian instructor).
- I have a plan to begin the class exploring community feedback and potential agreements we would like to bring to our learning environment.
- I regularly pause before classes to engage in critical self-dialogue to identify where colonized pedagogy, white-body supremacy, and other supremacy structures and systems show up within my delivery of the syllabus content.
- I have made a commitment an instructor to continue my education and professional development related to current events influencing BIPOC communities and those communities on the margins, and I regularly reflect on how these events influence my students' understanding and my understanding of the world.
- I regularly center knowledge of other BIPOC and students on the margins without being the sole authority and gatekeeper of knowledge.
- I actively demonstrate as an instructor that I am willing and open to learn from my students.

- I regularly acknowledge the limitations of the literature provided in class and the influences of anti-BiPOC racism and white-body supremacy in my discipline, and find ways to challenge and deconstruct these limitations.
- I have a plan for formative and summative evaluation and feedback with my students that include questions on centering BiPOC and other communities on the margins.