



# Universal Design for Learning Resource Guide

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a research-tested framework for teaching that aims to improve learning for all people, based on three principles:

Provide multiple means of  
**Engagement**

Provide multiple means of  
**Representation**

Provide multiple means of  
**Action & Expression**

[udlguidelines.cast.org](http://udlguidelines.cast.org)

**Faculty, postdocs, and graduate students** in UW's Department of Philosophy are having an **ongoing discussion** about how to best implement this framework in our curriculum. Thus far, we have focused on nine tools for creating equitable discussions and assignments.

Take the QR code below to our community-crafted resource sheet, which includes links to materials covering each bulleted tool.

## Resource sheet



## Tools for equitable discussions

- Community-set norms
- Engaging for comfort and accessibility
- Awareness of power dynamics
- Anonymous feedback

## Tools for equitable assignments

- Diversifying syllabi
- Collaboration and scaffolding
- Accessible materials
- Flexibility in grading
- Supporting multilingual learners

**Thank you** for your dedication to improving the learning experiences of all students of philosophy at UW!

# Tools for equitable discussions



## Awareness of power dynamics

No classroom has an equal distribution of power: by design, the instructor is in possession of knowledge that the students seek to obtain! Nonetheless, awareness of this power imbalance and active attempts to share the instructor's power can dramatically improve the health of classroom discourse. Identify power dynamics and work to share power in the classroom. The physical space in the room matters;; for example, the students and the instructor might sit in a circle. Student discussion leaders or student-generated questions help to ensure interest and engagement. Using these sorts of discussion protocols can help structure equitable interactions.

### Resources

Hammond (2020) on discussion protocols:  
[The Power of Protocols for Equity](#)

EDUCASE's [Toward Inclusive Learning Spaces: Physiological, Cognitive, and Cultural Inclusion and the Learning Space Rating System](#)

NASPA on brave vs. safe spaces:  
[Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals](#)



## Community-set norms for discussion

One low-stakes way to share power with students is to collaborate with them at the start of a course to set the norms for class discussion. The resources below provide plenty of examples to help get folks started: e.g., be an active listener, seek collaboration, and do not dominate the discussion. Students are more invested in maintaining the health of their learning environment when they have a say in how it's run.

### Resources

UCLA's [Creating a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity](#)

University of Michigan's [Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#)



## Different ways to engage for comfort and accessibility

It's common for students to feel uncomfortable speaking up in class. Traditional methods (like calling on students with raised hands and validating correct answers) can leave students scared of looking dumb. That stressor is compounded for folks in minority groups, who might be adapting to new cultural norms in addition to this academic one. Creative means of engagement can rewrite the unspoken rule that you must look smart to speak up. You can help make earnest participation the norm by using tools like discussion boards, random calling, and reverse hand raises (only calling on students who do *not* raise their hands).

### Resources

UW's [What to Know When Using Random Calling](#)

Inside Higher Ed's [Discussion Boards: Valuable? Overused? Discuss.](#)

Vern Harner's [TransCrip Teaching Tips](#)

Adiam Tesfay on [UDL Against a Background of Injustice Presentation](#)

## Tools for equitable content



## Diversifying syllabi

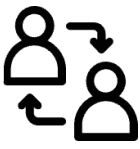
Academic inequity has been a problem for a long time—so it is no surprise that many standard picks for readings and resources reflect authorship that is predominately white, male, and cis-gendered. Still, there is a wealth of powerful resources by authors who break this mold. Including these works in syllabi actively demonstrates to students from under-represented groups that they belong in our philosophical community. Moreover, neurodiverse and disabled students can benefit from the inclusion of incorporating different types of assigned material (e.g., podcasts, videos, newspaper articles). As a bonus, many of these resources offer important challenges to traditional texts.

### Resources

Georgetown University's [Diversifying Syllabi](#)

[Diversity Reading List](#)

APA's diversifying syllabi page:  
[Diversity in Philosophy Courses](#)



## Accessible materials

Many folks at the University of Washington have disabilities of various sorts, including color blindness, impaired vision, lack of motor control, and dyslexia (to name a few). However, you can take some simple steps to ensure that your course materials are accessible. Make sure to follow the UW IT guides (linked below) when creating websites, uploading videos, drafting syllabi, and posting readings.

### Resources

UW IT's guide: [Create accessible documents, websites, and videos](#)

UW's DO-IT guide: [How can you integrate accessibility into your syllabus?](#)

UW Disability Resources for Students guidance: [Accessible Instructional Materials for Faculty](#)

# Tools for equitable assignments



## Collaboration and scaffolding

Like any other skill, philosophical writing requires practice. Students enter our classes with different levels of preparation for the specific mode of writing we adopt to do philosophy. Scaffolding assignments allow them to focus on and practice the components of longer papers multiple times. These sorts of assignments can be incorporated into in-class workshops involving peer feedback. By supporting the repeated practice of manageable chunks of writing, instructors can help prepare students to autonomously tackle more ambitious projects

### Resources

U. Michigan's [Sequencing and Scaffolding Assignments](#)

Discussion of a sample assignment: [The Four-Sentence Paper](#)

Cody Dout's [8-Sentence Paper Assignment](#)



## Anonymous feedback

Everyone has biases, graders included. Anonymous grading is a tool used by instructors to combat bias in grading. Numerous studies find that biases impact grading, even when instructors claim to be impartial (cf. the article by Kelly and Roedder linked below)they are not biased in their grading. Our goal is not to eliminate bias, but to recognize it and use tools to mitigate its inequitable consequences. Anonymous grading is one effective tool, but it is important to use it properly. Sometimes, students' identities However, anonymous grading can also be pernicious for students when their identity should be factored into considered for feedback (if, for example, they speak English as a second language; see the MLL resources below). Different approaches include giving students the option for anonymous feedback, grading anonymously but giving identified comments, and having some assignments anonymous and others identified.

### Resources

Kelly and Roedder's [Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias](#)

[Breaking the feedback loop: problems with anonymous assessment](#)

[Bias in Grading: A meta-analysis](#)



## Flexibility in grading

Traditional grading can disproportionately penalize students in minority groups, so it is worth considering alternative approaches. Some of these alternatives include specifications (spec) grading, labor-based grading, additive grading, and ungrading. Each has its costs and benefits. Non-traditional grading does not mean “easy” or low standards, but rather a different approach to feedback and assessment. Note that any of these approaches to grading can (and should!) be combined with the scaffolding assignments discussed above.

### Resources

Nilson (2016) on spec grading: ["Yes, Virginia, There's a Better Way to Grade"](#)

Gruner (2022) on ungrading: ["I no longer grade my students' work—and I wish I had stopped sooner"](#)

Inoue's [Labor-Based Grading Resources](#)

Schnee (2020) on additive grading: [A Good Time To Try "Additive Grading"](#)



## Supporting multilingual learners (MLL)

Multilingual students are valuable members of our community, but it is all too easy to let a language barrier obscure their contributions. It is critical to recognize the specific challenges that MLL students face and to set expectations and assessments appropriately. UW's Odegaard Writing Center encourages faculty to “read through error”: center the ideas the student communicates, while treating grammatical issues as “accent.”

### Resources

UW Center for Teaching and Learning's [Teaching international and multilingual students](#)

UW A&S Writing Program's [Write UW: Grading International and ELL Student Writing](#)

Purdue U's Online Writing Lab (OWL)'s [General Writing Introduction](#)

UW Department of English's [MLL Resources](#)

Odegaard Writing Center's [FAQs for Instructors](#)