

Results of Analysis Using the Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool

Jonathan Balagot
Thomas Kunze

Jordan Guillory
Rebeca Hernandez
San Francisco State University

Shandy Hauk
Sandra Torres

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The re-humanizing of mathematics calls for a variety of classroom-level changes (Su, 2020). Supporting faculty to transform their views of self, students, and authority can begin with the course syllabus (Palmer et al., 2016). This report gives results of the authors' analysis of 39 mathematics class syllabi, from 27 instructors, based on the Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool (Taylor et al., 2019). The tool has 25 questions, each aligned with at least one of three categories: *community, process, relationships*. In using the tool to design a syllabus, one answers reflection questions and makes adjustments to bring the syllabus into greater alignment with recommended practices (i.e., an answer of "Yes"). For this analysis, reviewers answered each of the tool's questions with Yes (1) or No (0) and had the option of offering notes about their selection (e.g., statements from the syllabus that prompted a "Yes" or "No").

On the tool were 10 questions aligned with the community category so 10 opportunities on each syllabus for a "1" in community, 4 opportunities in process, and 11 in the relationship category. Some questions were reverse-coded (i.e., where "No" indicated the *presence* of justice-supportive language). Thus, there were $10+4+11=25$ "points" possible for each syllabus.

As an example of poster content, across the 19 syllabi that were for 100-level courses, there were $25 \times 19 = 475$ points possible. The leftmost chart in Figure 1 indicates the proportion of points, out of all 475 possible, aligned with each of the three categories (the gray area indicates the remaining proportion of potential points---social justice foci not present). Similar analysis of nine 200-level course syllabi led to the rightmost chart in Figure 1.

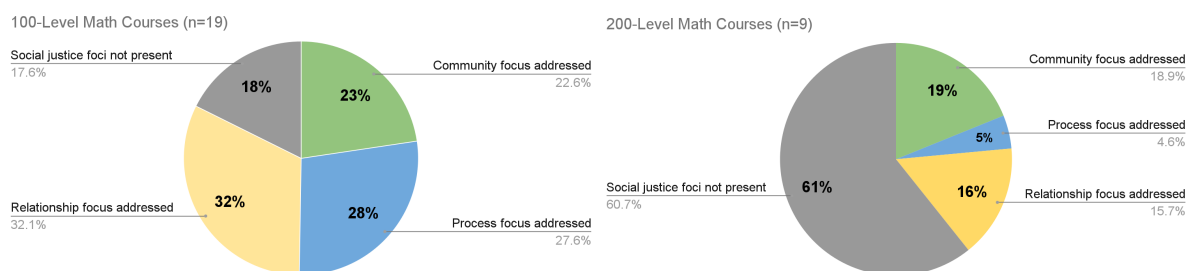


Figure 1. Charts for 100-level and 200-level courses.

In addition to other visuals and comparisons, the poster shares wording. For example, the following illustrate justice-aligned wording (coded with the answer "No" on the reverse-scored question "Does the syllabus read like a legal contract?"):

This course aims to offer a joyful, meaningful, and empowering experience to every participant.

We (you, your classmates and I) will experience many different class relationships and mathematical ideas this semester. This syllabus documents significant goals and expectations for our class and is a resource for the development of our particular Statistics learning community.

References

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SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY

Jonathan Balagot, Jordan Guillory, Shandy Hauk, Rebeca Hernandez, Thomas Kunze, Sandra Torres

Background

Poster Purpose: Offer and collect ideas for making sense of (and making sense with) justice as an essential component in syllabus design.

Abstract: Supporting faculty to transform their views of self, students, and authority can begin with the course syllabus. This poster gives results of analysis of 39 mathematics syllabi written by 27 different instructors in a single department. Analysis used Taylor et al. (2019) *Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool*.

Theoretical Perspective

Relationship: *Emphasizes the messages that students receive from a syllabus about the type of relationship that is expected to occur between faculty and student* (p. 147).

- Roles are implicit in “relationships”
- Clear outline for desired student-instructor relationship in their syllabi.

Community: *Highlights the way a syllabus either promotes or inhibits a collaborative and inclusive environment* (p. 150).

- Inherently tied to inclusivity.
- Can establish with collaborative language.

Process: *Draws attention to...how learning can and will occur...how faculty regulate emotions ... [and] judgements about student behaviors, and grading outcomes* (p. 153).

- Grading, practicing, risk-taking
- Success-oriented language (e.g., productive struggle is valuable)

In what ways does a syllabus acknowledge, act, and hold us accountable for increasing justice? What is the evidence of it, for you?

Reference

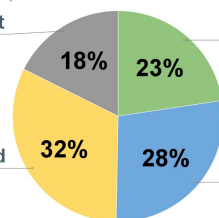
Taylor et al. (2019). The social justice syllabus design tool: A first step in doing social justice pedagogy. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity*, 5(2), 133–166.

Comparisons

100-Level Math Courses (n=19)

Social justice foci not present
17.6%

Relationship focus addressed
32.1%



Community focus addressed
22.6%

Process focus addressed
27.6%

200-Level Math Courses (n=9)

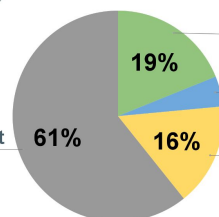
Social justice foci not present
60.7%

300+ Level Math Courses (n=11)

Social justice foci not present
2.8%

Relationship focus addressed
27.8%

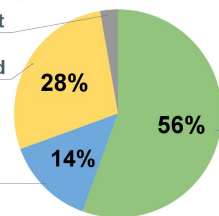
Process focus addressed
13.9%



Community focus addressed
18.9%

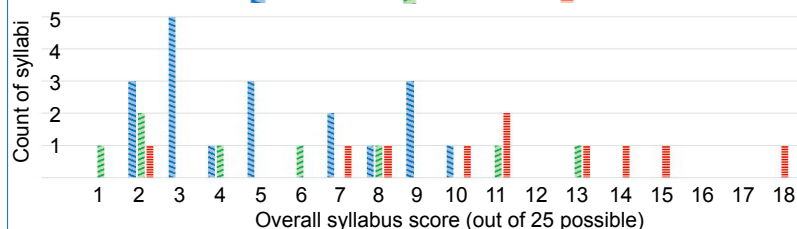
Process focus addressed
4.6%

Relationship focus addressed
15.7%



Community focus addressed
55.6%

Distribution of scores 100-level 200-level 300+level



Examples

Learning mathematics is all about practice, which means: struggling through confusion, making mistakes, receiving feedback, and having an opportunity for growth. (Process)

We all go through difficult times that can affect our academic life. If you feel this way, regardless of the reason, please do not hesitate to talk to me and ask for extra time or resources. Your well-being is most important. (Relationship)

Please offer and ask (your classmates and me) for help with the material and assignments. Mathematics is often best learned with others, even if that can be a bit uncomfortable sometimes. Start your work early. Come to student hours. Form study groups. (Community)

We (you, your classmates and I) will experience many different class relationships and mathematical ideas this semester. This syllabus documents significant goals and expectations for our class. This syllabus is a resource about the structure, content, and processes for the development of our particular class community. (Community)

What More? What Next?

- Implications for Practice
 - revisit and revise syllabus each term
- Implications for Teaching-focused Professional Development
 - practice with exemplars to support syllabus refinement
- Implications for Research
 - include syllabus score as a covariate
 - explore undergraduate response to syllabi with various score profiles