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# **Diverse Communities (“DIV”) Courses: A Handbook to Guide Proposals**

Curriculum & Academic Policies Council (CAPC), West Chester University

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## D) Steps for proposing a Diverse Communities course

Any faculty member at WCU may submit a proposal for a course to receive the General Education program's Diverse Communities ("DIV") designation. Faculty can adapt an existing course or develop an entirely new one; either approach is welcome, so long as the given course directly engages the values and requirements of the Diverse Communities designation.

Before submitting a proposal, faculty should understand the rationale and perspective behind Diverse Communities courses. WCU takes a social justice approach to diversity, and this should be reflected in the course content and activities. Rather than simply acquainting students with differences among diverse communities, DIV courses seek to help students understand the structural inequality and oppression that shape the status of peoples from diverse communities, as well as the lived experiences and varied modes of resistance that these communities use to challenge that oppression. DIV courses must also make students aware of the potential actions that they themselves might take to confront these injustices. Finally, the work of the class must be anchored by the use of at least one theoretical framework that informs the course's social justice approach.

As the university's General Education framework indicates, Diverse Communities courses "focus on historically marginalized groups (based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, and other forms of difference) and are framed by theories that lend understanding to the analysis of structural inequalities." They also "invite students to consider how marginalized groups resist oppression and have agency in spite of structural exclusion and discrimination." The larger aims of DIV courses are to "foster an informed and reasoned openness to, and understanding of, difference" and to help the university achieve its goal of "graduating students who are committed to creating a just and equitable society."

A complete proposal for a Diverse Communities course consists of three parts: **1) Syllabus**; **2) Narrative**; and **3) CIM Application**. If needed, an impact statement form should accompany the proposal in CIM. Each of these parts is explained in detail below. Please also note that when preparing the narrative and syllabus, proposers should consult the Diverse Communities Course Criteria checklist, available here: <https://www.wcupa.edu/deputy-provost/capc/genEd/diverseCommunities.aspx>.

For the sake of clarity, the contents of that checklist are provided and explained below.

### **1) Syllabus**

Like any syllabus submitted to CAPC, your Diverse Communities syllabus should provide a detailed explanation of the course, its goals, its student learning outcomes, and the activities and assignments that provide instruction and assessment of those outcomes. The syllabus should also meet all of the criteria established by university policy (the Provost emails these criteria to faculty before each semester). Most important of all, your syllabus should adhere to all of the requirements listed in the Syllabus section of CAPC's Diverse Communities Course Criteria checklist.

Please also note that while there will be overlap between the narrative and the syllabus, each document should stand on its own. Avoid submitting a narrative that simply says "see syllabus" or copies what the syllabus already says. Instead, strive to provide a thoughtful response to each of the

checklist items, expanding and reflecting on syllabus content, not simply duplicating it. And, as a guiding principle, try to pitch the narrative to a faculty audience and the syllabus to a student one.

**As specified in the syllabus section of the Diverse Communities Course Criteria checklist, your course syllabus should do all of the following:**

- Include a clear and prominent statement early in the syllabus that the course is an approved General Education course that meets the Gen Ed curriculum's Diverse Communities (DIV) requirement.
- State that as a Diverse Communities course, the course is designed to help students meet General Education Goals #1 ("Communicate effectively"), #2 (Think critically and analytically"), and #5 ("Examine the workings of power, oppression, and resistance in a diverse society").
- Select the Gen Ed SLOs that you will use to achieve each goal. For Gen Ed Goals 1 and 2, please choose one of the possible SLOs as listed in the Gen Ed Program CAPC Webpage, under the General Education 2019 Program tile: <https://www.wcupa.edu/deputy-provost/capc/genEd/default.aspx>. For Gen Ed Goal 5, address all three of the following: (a) "Analyze the role that social structures have historically played or continue to play in maintaining disparities within and/or across diverse groups"; (b) "Discuss the varied ways peoples from marginalized groups resist oppression and wield agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination"; and (c) "Identify relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world."
- Explicitly link Gen Ed SLOs with their instruction and assessment: i.e., the syllabus must spell out which course artifacts (e.g., which exams, papers, presentations, etc.) provide instruction and assessment of the specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) associated with Gen Ed Goals 1, 2, and 5. Please note that a single artifact can be used to assess more than one SLO; that is, preparers are not obligated to create a separate assignment for each individual SLO.
- Provide instruction-and-assessment information for course-specific learning outcomes and, if the course is required by any program, provide such information for program-specific goals as well.
- Identify one assessment artifact for Gen Ed Goal #5 that students will be expected to upload to their Gen Ed ePortfolio, which they will have created in Google Sites using their WCU Google account. To ensure that students upload their documents to their ePortfolio, the syllabus should be as clear as possible when identifying the artifacts. E.g., "This is the assignment that assesses Gen Ed Goal 5 and that you will upload to your Google Sites Gen Ed ePortfolio." A version of this statement can be inserted under the relevant assignment descriptions on the syllabus.
- Identify which historically marginalized groups (based on categories including, e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexuality, class, religion, language, national origin, immigrant status, age, body size, ability, etc.) are studied in the course. The syllabus must make clear that the study of these groups is substantive in nature.
- Identify one or more theoretical approach(es) or framework(s) on which the course is based. It

must be clear that the course’s theoretical framework provides an analysis of structural inequalities and that the framework meaningfully anchors and informs the work of the course.

- ❑ Include a statement indicating that the course fosters an informed and reasoned openness to, and understanding of, difference. This statement can be placed anywhere in the syllabus; many instructors prefer to add it to their course description. Because the statement is not officially part of the Gen Ed goal #5 learning outcomes, it shouldn’t be listed with the SLOs, but it can be placed below them if you wish.
- ❑ The course organization, student learning outcomes, list of required readings, course schedule/calendar, and assignments should all directly reflect the approaches and goals detailed in the course narrative and required by the Diverse Communities designation. The course schedule/calendar must show how the course’s theoretical framework informs the class work and is incorporated meaningfully into the work of the course, be it via readings, units, topics, assignments, or other indications.

## 2) Narrative

The main purpose of your proposal narrative is to explain—using the required Gen Ed Course Narrative form on CIM—how and why your course qualifies as a Diverse Communities offering that adds meaningfully to the Gen Ed curriculum. To accomplish this goal, your response to question #7 on the form should explain your approach to teaching students the impacts of structural inequality and oppression—within the specific subject area of your course—on marginalized communities. This explanation might include a discussion of how a particular concept (e.g., “whiteness”; “heterosexuality”; etc.) achieves status as the accepted, normalized, and even celebrated standard (one often backed by white supremacy and heterosexism), thereby marginalizing and oppressing others who resist this standard. Your explanation should also emphasize how oppressive systems reinforce that concept’s privileged status in a way that subordinates and disempowers other groups’ concepts and practices. A nuanced explanation of these dynamics might also take into account how inequality can be maintained both consciously and unconsciously, and by those with and without power.

At the same time—and equally important—your narrative must also make clear, from the perspective of the peoples from marginalized groups, how marginalized communities negotiate and contest oppressive practices so as to resist or even eliminate them. What are the varied and divergent modes of resistance and negotiation adopted by peoples who are marginalized as they confront the prevailing concepts/practices that are determined by those with power and privilege? In what ways might those modes of resistance sometimes contradict one another?

Again, focusing on “how” these dynamic processes take place requires a strong theoretical framework that clearly specifies the nature and workings of relations between peoples, power, and structures; this framework might also consider how these dynamics can be (among others) historical, institutional, cultural, and psychological.

Finally, the narrative must also establish in a clear and straightforward way how students in the class will work towards thinking about potential tools or strategies that could be used to challenge the forms of oppression discussed in the course. One of the primary aims of DIV courses is to

enable students to see that it is possible to work in tangible ways towards a more just and equitable world.

Please also keep in mind that your narrative should not take the form of a mere catalog of “differences” in practices and/or concepts. Listing differences is effective only in so far as it works to provide evidence of the existence, operations, and pervasiveness of structural inequalities or to illustrate the agency and forms of resistance carried out by peoples in oppressed communities.

**As specified in the Narrative section of the Diverse Communities Course Criteria checklist, your response to question #7 in the Gen Ed Course Narrative form on CIM should explain all of the following:**

- which historically marginalized groups (based on categories including, e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexuality, class, religion, language, national origin, immigrant status, age, body size, ability, etc.) are substantively studied in the course.
- which recognized theoretical approach(es) or framework(s) the course uses, how they constitute a basis for the work in the class, and how they enable the course to provide an analysis of structural inequalities.
- how the course considers the multiple ways in which these marginalized groups resist oppression and have agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination. For this item, it would be ideal if your response could explain, from the perspectives of peoples from marginalized communities, the varied practices of resistance and negotiation they adopt to confront oppressive concepts and structures.
- how the course prepares students to identify tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world. For this item, it would be ideal if your response could explain how (e.g., through what activities, reflections, tasks, etc.) students will be asked to showcase their ideas in this area.

### **Note on Bibliographies:**

Preparers are no longer required to provide a bibliography—a list of major works in the field that informs the approaches and perspectives used in the course—for CAPC reviewers. However, preparers are encouraged to provide this resource to reviewers at the department and dean stage of the submission process. These parties are best equipped to make informed judgments about whether a given proposed course draws adequately on current and relevant scholarship in their discipline.

### **3) CIM Application**

In addition to the above two parts, a complete DIV course proposal must (like any CAPC proposal) be submitted to CIM, WCU’s web-based course inventory management system.

Before the CIM process begins, you should submit your narrative, syllabus, and any impact statements (if needed) to any relevant department or program committees for approval. Once these committees approve the proposal, you should submit these materials to CIM. As part of the CIM process, you will be required to upload your materials and fill out a web-based application form and

check appropriate boxes, including the box for “Full CAPC review.”

Under “Purpose of Course,” be prepared to provide brief answers to the questions “What are the proposed changes?” and “Why are the changes being proposed?” In this same section, check “General Education 2019+,” which will trigger a box allowing you to define the purpose of the course as “Diverse Communities Requirement.” Clicking on this box will open another box that shows the relevant Gen Ed Goals and learning outcomes for DIV courses.

Here you should make sure that the three required Gen Ed Goals for DIV courses—Goal #1 (“Communicate effectively”), Goal #2 (“Think critically and analytically”), and Goal #5 (“Examine the workings of power, oppression, and resistance in a diverse society”)—are checked. For Goals #1 and #2, keep checked the SLOs that your course meets, and uncheck any others, keeping in mind that your course need address only *one* of the four SLOs listed under Goal #1 and *one* of the four SLOs under Goal #2.

However, for Goal #5 (“Examine the workings of power, oppression, and resistance in a diverse society”), make sure that *all three* boxes are checked: (a) “Analyze the role that social structures have historically played or continue to play in maintaining disparities within and/or across diverse groups”; (b) “Discuss the varied ways peoples from marginalized groups resist oppression and wield agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination”; and (c) “Identify relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world.” Your syllabus must address all three SLOs by specifying how the course’s activities and assignments enable the teaching and assessment of these outcomes.

**For preparers’ convenience, we list all goals and SLOs for Diverse Communities courses here:**

- **Gen Ed Goal #1: Communicate effectively**
  - SLOs: *Address at least one of the following:*
    - a) Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms
    - b) Revise and improve written and/or presentations
    - c) Express oneself effectively in presentations
    - d) Demonstrate comprehension of and ability to explain information and ideas accessed through reading
  
- **Gen Ed Goal #2: Think critically and analytically**
  - SLOs: *Address at least one of the following:*
    - a) Use relevant evidence gathered through accepted scholarly methods, and properly acknowledge sources of information, to support an idea
    - b) Construct and/or analyze arguments in terms of their premises, assumptions, contexts, conclusions, and anticipated counterarguments
    - c) Reach sound conclusions based on a logical analysis of evidence
    - d) Develop creative or innovative approaches to assignments or projects
  
- **Gen Ed Goal #5: Examine the workings of power, oppression, and resistance in a diverse society**
  - SLOs: *Address all of the following:*
    - a) Analyze the role that social structures have historically played or continue to play in maintaining disparities within and/or across diverse groups.
    - b) Discuss the varied ways peoples from marginalized groups resist oppression and wield

agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination.

- c) Identify relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world.

Once you have submitted your CIM application, it will first be reviewed by your department chair before proceeding through the CIM workflow until it reaches the Diverse Communities Subcommittee, where it will either be rolled forward for consideration by other committees or rolled back for requested changes. Preparers should understand that rollbacks are not uncommon, nor are they a value-judgment of the quality of the course or the instructor. Also, please note that a subcommittee may occasionally approve a proposal but still ask the preparer to make minor changes. Once the proposal passes through the DIV subcommittee, it will be forwarded to CAPC's General Education Committee, followed by the Undergraduate Programs Committee (UGPC), Executive Committee, and General Assembly, before ultimately reaching the Provost for final approval and inclusion in the catalog as a Diverse Communities course.

**Please note:** Faculty should not use a newly created/revised DIV syllabus for a course until that course has been approved by the Provost and added to the catalog.

## II) Common Problems and Solutions

### 1) Lack of clarity regarding student learning outcomes and their assessment

**Problem:** The most common problem in Diverse Communities proposals is that the preparer has not yet clearly articulated the required student learning outcomes or explained how the course’s activities and assignments meaningfully provide instruction and assessment of those outcomes. For example, the syllabus might name Diverse Communities Gen Ed Goal #5, “Examine the workings of power, oppression, and resistance in a diverse society,” but leave out one or more of its three goal-affiliated SLOs: (a) “Analyze the role that social structures have historically played or continue to play in maintaining disparities within and/or across diverse groups”; (b) “Discuss the varied ways peoples from marginalized groups resist oppression and wield agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination”; and (c) “Identify relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world.” Or the syllabus might stop short of clarifying which course activities and assignments provide instruction and assessment of which specific SLOs.

**Solution:** Preparers are encouraged to consult the Diverse Communities Course Criteria checklist (whose contents are listed earlier in this handbook) for complete information about the goals and SLOs that all Diverse Communities courses must address, and to make sure that the required information appears on the syllabus. Beyond adhering to the letter of the requirements, however, preparers should seek to clarify how the course activities and assignments meaningfully provide instruction and assessment of student learning outcomes. This explanation can appear when you list the relevant goals and SLOs early in the syllabus, or when you describe your assignments in more detail later in the syllabus. The information can be provided as a table, a bulleted list, or narrative paragraphs, or some combination of those approaches. Whatever format you use, it should be clear to students, faculty, and potential reviewers that there is a meaningful link between the course activities and the goals and SLOs they are intended to achieve. Finally, try not to think of this task as simply a matter of inserting required language into your syllabus; instead, try to see it as ensuring that your course is enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes we advertise when we teach Diverse Communities courses.

### 2) Exclusive emphasis on “differences”

**Problem:** The proposed course merely describes different practices—those of the peoples from dominant groups and those of the folks from marginalized communities—in a way that suggests “difference” is the only cause of tension between these groups or the only focus of resistance by the peoples from marginalized groups. Simply listing these practices without providing context about structures of power and privilege reduces the complexity of the cultures, practices, and varied forms of resistance that emerge from marginalized communities and does not represent the spirit of DIV courses. Cataloguing these differences may only be a first step in understanding them. Listing differences should be secondary to educating students about how these differences are created and exploited by peoples and institutions in the dominant culture (to establish and maintain dominance), how peoples from marginalized groups resist and negotiate the characteristics prescribed and established by dominant communities and identities, and how students may envision solutions to challenge those forms of oppression.



**Solution:** Provide a theoretical explanation and context for *how* the noted differences arise, *how* and *why* these differences are embraced/dismissed/quashed by dominant communities, *how* these differences reflect and rely upon structural and systemic inequalities to maintain the status quo, *how* these structural inequalities and resulting dominance are resisted and negotiated by peoples from marginalized groups, and *how* to envision ways to challenge these forms of oppression. Note that this solution requires a strong foundation in theory (see the next section).

### 3) Lack of explicit theory

**Problem:** The course presents piles of facts (typically about “difference”) but provides no theoretical framework for understanding how these differences arise, how they operate (to dominate and/or resist), or what sustains them. Or, the course may have a theoretical framework, but the syllabus doesn’t specify clearly enough what that framework is. Without a clearly identified theoretical framework, students do not know “how to think about what.” As a result, students can be fooled into thinking that “knowing differences” is the same as understanding the creation and function of differences for purposes of marginalizing peoples and/or resisting marginalization.

**Solution:** Theory can be thought of as a set of organizational principles (formally stated) of well-specified relations between well-defined phenomena. In the context of a Diverse Communities course, the theoretical framework must be an accepted academic theory that tells students how a dominant practice emerges, creates structural inequalities, and exploits those structural inequalities to marginalize other practices and maintain its dominance. Theory is necessary in order to show students *how* hegemony, oppression, and structural inequities are linked so as to guide the students to an understanding of how differences are more than simple distinctions between various group practices or cultures. Moreover, because the theoretical framework is central to any effective DIV course, the preparer must explain that framework fully in question #7 of the Gen Ed Course Narrative form, and also name it and briefly explain it in the course syllabus. In addition, the syllabus should make clear (e.g., in the schedule or assignment descriptions) when and how the theory will be introduced to students and how they will be asked to apply it.

In addition to producing theory-driven knowledge of oppression, DIV courses can also facilitate theory-driven practice. In applied fields such as the health professions, for example, a nuanced theoretical understanding of diverse communities can provide a foundation for the practice of cultural competence and cultural humility, both of which are central to positive encounters between medical professionals and patients from marginalized groups. Such theory-driven practice can also address social determinants of barriers to care for peoples from marginalized groups, thus potentially reducing or eliminating healthcare inequities.

Please keep in mind that Diverse Communities courses are not meant to be courses “on” theory. The proposed DIV course does not necessarily need to center on theoretical debates or probe the deepest complexities of a chosen theory. Instead, the course should incorporate a guiding framework to help students understand what they see, read, and hear. An appropriate theory can be simplified to the level of the course and the students’ capabilities. Thus, it is important not to confuse an emphasis on the theoretical framework that informs the course with a complete subordination of the courses’ contents to specific theoretical approaches. (Of course, it is possible to teach a DIV course “on” theory, such as WOS 407: Queer Theory—but again, it is not required.)

There are many theoretical frameworks available to proposers of Diverse Communities courses. Some examples of useful theories from various disciplines include:

- Critical Race Theory
- Cumulative Disadvantage Theory
- Feminisms
- Functionalism
- Intersectionality
- Marxism
- Postcolonialism
- Postmodernism
- Queer Theory
- Social Conflict Theory
- Social Determinants and Health Inequity
- Social Stratification Theory
- Symbolic Interaction Theory

#### 4) Lack of correspondence between syllabus and narrative

**Problem:** The narrative includes a brief mention of a theory to be employed, but there are no readings or class time dedicated to explaining the theory; OR the narrative mentions the marginalized groups covered in the course, but the readings do not address the groups or the manners by which they are marginalized and resist; OR the class work, projects, or assignments do not match the issues covered in the narrative.

**Solution:** These problems (most likely) stem from trying to shoehorn DIV requirements into what a course already does, making the issues of diverse communities “fit” the course rather than modifying the course meaningfully around the diverse communities’ issues. One solution is to step back and re-envision the course, eliminating what doesn’t fit the terms of the DIV course, and adding elements that might update or offer alternatives to the existing approaches.

#### 5) Lack of consideration of intragroup differences

**Problem:** In a course that focuses on a single marginalized community, the narrative and syllabus pay little or no attention to the complex intersectional differences between and among subgroups within that larger community.

**Solution:** Although many Diverse Communities courses do cover multiple marginalized groups in a single course, it is also possible to teach a DIV course on just one specific group. For example, *WRH 333: African American Autobiography* carries a DIV attribute but focuses on African Americans, and *ARH 419: Women in Art* centers on women. However, if this approach is taken, the preparer must pay attention to the intersecting sub-categories that exist within the single studied community. For example, the category of “African Americans” is cross-hatched by gender, sexuality, class, geography, ability, and other markers of difference, as is the category of “women.” This heterogeneity and attention to intersectional nuance must be a key part of any DIV course, and particularly one that focuses nominally on a single group.

## 6) Lack of consideration of the perspectives of peoples from marginalized groups

**Problem:** The course proposal focuses on diversity but does not consider the perspectives of peoples from marginalized groups and/or fails to teach how those groups resist oppression and have agency. The proposal might take an implicitly white or normative perspective that treats diversity as something foreign or *other* that the (implicitly white) student must respond to. This problem might typically stem from a lack of attention to the spirit of the revamped DIV Goal and SLOs (see Problem #1 above), or from an overemphasis on differences without any critical perspective on how those differences are exploited and connected to power (Problem #2).

**Solution:** Faculty who teach DIV courses should be able to think from multiple perspectives and understand how peoples from marginalized groups might experience the world or might seek solutions to structural problems. If a course does not center or at least explore these dynamics from the perspective of peoples from the oppressed group, then that course may not ultimately be a good fit for the DIV designation, even if the proposal espouses the general values of the DIV curriculum. On a practical level, a DIV course that falls prey to Problem #6 will likely need to spell out more clearly and meaningfully which specific marginalized groups will be studied in the course and how they resist structural oppression and achieve agency. But the preparer might also need to rethink the course's entire perspective. For example, a course that studies provider and client relationships in a social work setting but adopts the perspective only of the provider (and implicitly casts that provider as white) would need to overhaul that approach by exploring the client populations as well. The course would also want to consider how the provider—who may themselves be from a marginalized group—must navigate the ways in which their own intersectional identity shapes their approach to working with clients.

## 7) Insufficient emphasis on concrete steps to address problems presented in the class

**Problem:** The course focuses so intently on analyzing structures of oppression and historical patterns of inequality that it stops short of inviting students to envision how they might apply “relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world” (SLO c).

**Solution:** A key part of any well-developed DIV course is to help students identify forms of structural oppression and grasp how these problems came to exist historically. However, a good DIV course will not stop there; instead, as indicated by SLO(c), DIV courses should also invite students to consider concrete strategies and potential actions that might address the problems of today's world. This work could take any number of forms, such as (for example) a question on a final exam that asks students to reflect on how they'll apply what they've learned to future experiences in their academic and professional careers; a personal essay prompt asking students how they might use knowledge gained in the course to change a family member's perspective on racial justice; a group project that asks students to design a website highlighting concrete proposals for change; or a service-learning project that enables students to confront injustice in a more direct, hands-on way. Instructors have the freedom to figure out for themselves what this aspect of their course will look like, and we recognize that not every class will feature service-learning work or send students out into the field as activists. But the key point is that DIV courses should be asking students to at least reflect on how the class has informed their ability to contribute to making the world a more just and equitable place.

### III) Key Terms and Definitions

Here are working definitions of some of the key terms used in WCU's Diverse Communities curriculum:

**1) *diverse communities perspective*:** a perspective that includes not only an awareness and understanding of the historical, cultural, and ideological sources of structural inequality, oppression, and unequal privilege, but also the ability to view a situation or issue from the perspective of a person in a historically marginalized group. This perspective includes but is not limited to the ability to understand the varied modes and practices of resistance, negotiation, and strategic organizing that peoples from marginalized communities use to challenge the prevailing concepts or practices that are determined by dominant communities and institutions. It also includes an “informed and reasoned openness” to difference, an attitude that enables us to acknowledge the viewpoints of others, approach them with objectivity, and understand the factual bases of differences in power between peoples from dominant and marginalized groups. An informed and reasoned openness also means valuing and appreciating the experiences, perspectives, and potential forms of agency of peoples from historically marginalized groups.

**2) *historically marginalized groups*:** those groups of people who have been historically and systematically excluded from advantage or oppressed by a dominant group. Categories of marginalization include (but are not limited to) race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, gender expression, sexuality, religion, immigrant status, national origin, language, age, body size, and physical, mental, and developmental ability. One important clarification in the use of this term is that “historically” should not imply “only in the past.” On the contrary, Diverse Communities courses emphasize the reality that marginalization, exclusion, and oppression remain systemic and ongoing today, and that studying the past enables us to better understand such conditions in the present. To cite just one example: present-day disparities in rates of poverty, incarceration, and educational access between whites and African Americans in the United States are direct legacies of the oppressive social and economic hierarchies institutionalized under slavery and Jim Crow. Moreover, Diverse Communities courses should make clear that the ways groups are marginalized—and the multiple methods of resistance used to confront and remedy that injustice—can shift and evolve over time. (Of course, a well-planned DIV course could also focus on marginalized groups within a specific historical period—e.g., indigenous resistance movements in the Americas during colonial times.)

**3) *structural inequality*:** a process and a set of institutional relationships by which peoples from marginalized groups are historically and systematically excluded from advantage or oppressed by a dominant group. These inequalities are established and maintained by peoples from dominant communities, which results in the marginalization of other peoples and their concepts or practices. Peoples from these marginalized communities in turn negotiate and contest the status and meaning of the concepts, practices, and structures maintained by the dominant group. Some examples of structural inequality that have been challenged by members of marginalized communities include, among many others: discriminatory immigration laws throughout U.S. history; incarceration of Japanese Americans in internment camps during World War II; the longstanding denial of civil rights and legal protections for LGBTQ citizens; the practice of redlining and restrictive covenants that enforced racial segregation and limited African American homeownership and wealth accumulation throughout the 20th century; the exclusionary enshrinement of whiteness and heterosexuality as assumed cornerstones of acceptability and normalcy in American life; the

longstanding targeting of Black and brown populations for disproportionate policing and incarceration by a white-controlled criminal justice system; forced sterilization of American Indian women, Mexican American women, African American women, and women from other marginalized groups throughout the 20th century; and forced assimilation of American Indians (e.g., removing children from their families and detaining them in boarding schools) in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**4) *resistance and agency*:** SLO(b) requires that DIV courses help students “Discuss the varied ways peoples from marginalized groups resist oppression and wield agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination.” To this end, we encourage preparers to see resistance and agency as mutually reinforcing terms that speak to the potential of peoples from marginalized groups to attain power, change norms and structures, and become conscious of the conditions of their own exploitation. These terms also reject the notion that marginalized groups are passive victims of their own oppression. Within this context, “resistance” refers to challenges to the status quo through acts of opposition or non-compliance. These actions can take many forms; they may be individual or collective, improvised or coordinated, rhetorical or physical, and situational, provisional, counterintuitive, contradictory, or chaotic. Examples could include transgression (such as jumping the turnstile), disruption (such as stopping traffic to protest), subversion (such as trying to work to dismantle an institution in a strategic way), or rebellion (such as actively taking to the streets with the aim of overthrowing a government). While anyone may perform acts of resistance (compare, for example, the Haitian Revolution of 1791 with the insurrection of January 6, 2021 in the United States), DIV courses focus on such acts by historically marginalized groups in a diverse communities context. Closely related to resistance, “agency” (from the Latin for “activeness”) refers to one’s ability to act on the world—to exert authority, wield control, or direct the course of one’s life. The *Open Education Sociology Dictionary* defines agency as “The capacity of an individual to actively and independently choose and to effect change; free will or self-determination.” A well-developed DIV course will consider the multiple forms of agency and resistance that peoples from marginalized groups might wield to change their own situation or condition.

**5) *social justice*:** an approach to diverse communities that values and works toward a more equitable distribution of access, opportunities, rights, resources, protections, privileges, and dignity for all peoples and groups in a society. Social justice work seeks in particular to remedy the injustices and inequities faced by peoples from marginalized communities who have been systematically excluded, exploited, or institutionally disadvantaged by the powerful and privileged in ways that prevent their full participation or recognition as citizens. Social justice work often originates from within marginalized communities and can take many forms, including (most visibly), but not limited to, strategic organizing and mass public demonstrations. In this sense, social justice can be seen not as an outcome per se but rather as a tool that works *toward* the outcome of equity among different groups in a society.

**6) *just and equitable world*:** the university’s larger aim in offering a Diverse Communities curriculum is to “graduate students who are committed to creating a just and equitable society.” Similarly, SLO(c) mandates that DIV courses help students “Identify relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world.” In other words, DIV courses do not just point out problems but also seek to empower students to work toward responses and solutions to those problems. (Once students have learned about injustice, what do they *do* about it? How do they *respond* to it in ways that can bring about justice and equity?) In this

context, the concept of equity contained in the phrase “just and equitable” refers to the fair treatment of diverse peoples in a way that considers the specific needs, cultural practices, and lived experiences of people from these groups rather than assuming a color-blind, need-blind, or one-size-fits-all approach. “[T]he route to achieving equity will not be accomplished through treating everyone *equally*,” explains the Race Matters Institute. “It will be achieved by treating everyone *equitably*, or justly according to their circumstances.” By helping students to understand the historically rooted injustices and inequities that impact peoples from marginalized communities, DIV courses enable graduates to act more thoughtfully in working to resolve them.

## IV) Contributors to this Handbook

- The Diverse Communities Handbook was originally created by the 2006-07 CAPC Diverse Communities Subcommittee:
  - Rodney Mader (English), Chair
  - Chris Awuyah (English)
  - Maria Purciello (Music History)
  - Lynn Spradlin (Counselor Education and Educational Psychology)
  - Rick Voss (Social Work)
- The handbook was subsequently revised by the ad hoc 2019-20 CAPC Diverse Communities Handbook Revision Committee:
  - Andrew Sargent (English), Chair (also Chair of CAPC's Diverse Communities Subcommittee)
  - Beatrice Adera (Special Education)
  - Janet Chang (Psychology)
  - Liam Lair (Women's & Gender Studies)
  - Kathleen Riley (Literacy)
  - Gopal Sankaran (Health)

Additional Consultants to the 2019-20 revision included:

  - Cristóbal Cardemil-Krause (Languages & Cultures; also Diverse Communities Director of CAPC's Gen Ed Council)
  - Karen Mitchell (Psychology; also Chair of CAPC's General Education Committee)
  - Rónké Òké (Philosophy)
- Some of the material in the handbook's "Common Problems and Solutions" section was originally written by former Diverse Communities committee member Jake Lewandowski (Geography & Planning).
- The handbook was revised into its current form in 2023-24 by Cristóbal Cardemil-Krause and Andrew Sargent, co-chairs of CAPC's Diverse Communities Subcommittee, in response to recommendations made in 2022 by the Diverse Communities Task Force, an ad hoc CAPC advisory committee chaired by Francis Atuahene and charged with strengthening WCU's Diverse Communities curriculum. The task force was formed in response to the global racial protests that followed the police killing of George Floyd in summer 2020 and was charged with "reviewing and recommending revisions to the university's Diverse Communities requirement." Among the body's suggestions was to strengthen the language of Gen Ed Goal #5 and its accompanying SLOs to make them more relevant to today's society.
- The work of revamping the Diverse Communities Goal and SLOs was led by Cristóbal Cardemil-Krause and Andrew Sargent in 2022-23, but it was also helped along by the advice and feedback of these WCU faculty with expertise in diversity and assessment:
  - Angela Clarke (Psychology)
  - Liam Lair (Women's & Gender Studies)
  - Karen Mitchell (Psychology; also Chair of CAPC's General Education Committee)

- Dana Morrison (Educational Foundations & Policy Studies)
  - Tom Pantazes (Teaching & Learning Center)
  - Simon Ruchti (Philosophy and Women's & Gender Studies)
- Finally, to illustrate the evolution of the Diverse Communities Goal and SLOs, we list the 2019 version here:

- Gen Ed Goal #5: Respond thoughtfully to diversity
  - SLOs: *Address both of the following:*
    - a) Discuss the historical practices leading to the marginalization of diverse groups.
    - b) Identify and analyze structural inequalities using a recognized theoretical approach.

And the 2024 version here:

- Gen Ed Goal #5: Examine the workings of power, oppression, and resistance in a diverse society
  - SLOs: *Address all of the following:*
    - a) Analyze the role that social structures have historically played or continue to play in maintaining disparities within and/or across diverse groups.
    - b) Discuss the varied ways peoples from marginalized groups resist oppression and wield agency despite structural exclusion and discrimination.
    - c) Identify relevant tools or strategies to challenge oppression and help create a more just and equitable world.