

## Incorporating Language about Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Abuse into Your Course Syllabus

<p><b>Overview</b></p>	<p>Students come to college with a wide range of personal experiences, positive and negative. Additionally, they may experience sexual or gender-based violence during their time on campus. In fact, 23.1% of females and 5.4% of male undergraduates experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation. Graduate students are not immune from this issue. Among graduate and professional school students, 8.8% of females and 2.2% of males experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation. For more information, <a href="#">see these statistics</a>. Instructors should consider whether their course structure and content might create a difficult learning environment for students who have had these experiences. This resource provides language that instructors can include in their course syllabus to let students know they are supported and welcomed into an inclusive learning community.</p>
<p><b>Goals</b></p>	<p>1) To use language and provide resources in your syllabus that create a welcoming and supportive environment for students who have experienced gender-based violence and sexual abuse.</p>
<p><b>Implementation</b></p>	<p>Depending on course content, the categories and language listed in this document may be useful for you to include in your syllabus.</p>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<p>Before including this content in your syllabus, consider the challenges listed below. Talk with a colleague or CRLT teaching consultant if you have questions or concerns.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Content notification:</b> When addressing controversial subjects or assigning material that may elicit strong feelings, instructors may or may not choose to disclose this information in advance in a syllabus. Both avenues have the potential to limit learning outcomes and constrain the types of conversations that can occur inside the academic environment. We use the term “content notification” (as opposed to “trigger warnings”) as a way to inform students of class content, such as assignments, readings, and speakers, so that students can take steps to prepare themselves for class and study. Content notifications are a way to help students prepare for class so that they can show up to class in an engaged, participatory manner.</li> <li>2) <b>Privacy:</b> We recognize and appreciate that disclosing personal experiences in the classroom can feel healing for some and may contribute positively to the learning environment. However, this varies, depending on disciplinary norms and the comfort level of the faculty member or instructor. When responding to personal disclosures related to sexual violence, racism, homophobia, classism, or other forms of interpersonal violence and discrimination, it is ultimately up to the faculty member or instructor leading the class to establish personal boundaries that are consistent with disciplinary norms and their personal comfort level.</li> </ol>

3) **Legal Constraints:** University policy and federal law mandate the reporting of certain violent crimes. However, students may share information without fully understanding the limits to which some faculty members can keep certain kinds of information confidential. To help all parties be fully informed of the potential consequences of sharing information, it is important for faculty and instructors to understand their reporting requirements at the University of Michigan. These requirements differ for individuals who are designated by the University of Michigan Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) as “Responsible Employees”. It is important to note that your roles and responsibilities can change, even within a semester. For more information about Responsible Employees, and to learn about reporting requirements and recommendations that apply to all employees, please see the Responsible Employees Website.

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Topic	Example Language to Use
<b>Faculty Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty are here to support you in your learning. Contact the professor if you are concerned or uncomfortable; they will be available during office hours or by appointment throughout the course for conversations regarding course content.</li><li>• For debriefing about the class, we strongly encourage you to attend office hours or set up a meeting.</li></ul>
<b>Content Notifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In this class, we will be having honest and open conversations about...</li><li>• Some of these topics may be difficult, unsettling, or painful for survivors and others.</li><li>• Assignments or discussions may precipitate reactions such as distress, anxiety, anger, and others.</li><li>• Review the course schedule for a weekly list of topics discussed, prepare yourself accordingly, and ensure self-care is well practiced.</li></ul>
<b>Self-Disclosure and Personal Sharing</b>	<p><b>If you choose to address self-disclosure/personal sharing at the beginning of your class, some examples include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is the professional norm in our field to refrain from disclosing personal experiences of abuse, harassment, or assault to colleagues in a classroom or during interactions with clients/patients. This is because people are not free to leave classrooms or professional spaces in the same way they would be free to leave personal conversations. Confidential reports can be made to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and the University Ombuds.</li><li>• In this class, we will use our [writing/art/etc.] to explore our past experiences. If you would like support around a personal experience that you are managing, here is a list of <a href="#">campus resources</a>.</li></ul> <p><b>If you do choose not to address self-disclosure/personal sharing at the beginning of your class, then it is important to disclose your reporting requirements and confidentiality limitations. One example could be:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Please note that there are limits to the confidentiality with which we can provide you, and I am not in a position to ensure complete confidentiality. Additionally, I cannot compel other students to keep private what is shared in discussion.</li></ul>

<p><b>Responsible Employee Scenarios</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Learn more about the Responsible Employees designation</a></p> <p><b>If you are designated as a Responsible Employee by the University of Michigan, then some potential syllabus language might include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I care about the health, well-being, and safety of all students. I also want students to know that I am designated as a Responsible Employee on this campus, which means I am required to share information about sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment if I am made aware of it. I am sharing this information so that students can make informed decisions about what information they share and with whom. <b>The confidential offices on campus are the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and the University Ombuds.</b> Please let me know if you have any questions.</li> <li>• I am designated as a “Responsible Employee” by the University of Michigan Office of Institutional Equity, which means I am required to report instances of Prohibited Conduct.</li> <li>• If you are a Responsible Employee (RE) consider downloading the “RE” sign and hanging it in your office, so it is visible to others. <a href="#">Access the sign here.</a></li> </ul> <p><b>If you are not designated as a Responsible Employee by the University of Michigan, then some potential syllabus language might include:</b></p> <p>I am not designated as a “Responsible Employee” by the University of Michigan Office of Institutional Equity. Therefore, I am not required to report instances of Prohibited Conduct, but I am still strongly encouraged to report. <b>The confidential offices on campus are the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and the University Ombuds.</b></p>
<p><b>Additional Resources for Faculty</b></p>	<p>Determine the scope of your reporting responsibilities by taking this online quiz. <a href="#">Responsibilities at Michigan: Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence, Stalking, and Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment</a></p> <p>Additional resources related to sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual and gender-based harassment are at the following sites:  <a href="#">Learn more about the U-M Student Sexual Misconduct Policy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Browse the resource guide, <i>Our Community Matters</i></a>, intended to assist university students, faculty, and staff who may have experienced sexual misconduct to understand their options for reporting and to make them aware of support resources.</p> <p><a href="#">Haven Training for Faculty &amp; Staff</a> is an online training program covering sexual and gender-based misconduct and other forms of interpersonal violence.</p>