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# SYLLABUS AS LOCUS OF INTERVENTION AND IMPACT

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**Nicky Agate, University of Pennsylvania, Rebecca Kennison, K|N Consultants, Christopher P. Long, Michigan State University, Jason Rhody, The Social Science Research Council, Simone Sacchi, European University Institute, and Penny Weber, The Social Science Research Council**

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A syllabus is an opportunity for impactful intervention in the marketplace of academic prestige. As a construction site for notions of authority, legitimacy, and power, it proffers an opportunity to build up traditionally underrepresented voices and forms of scholarship and redefine the parameters of the scholarly conversation. As a form of sustained engagement with those voices, it offers a new way to conceive of scholarly impact that goes beyond just another citation.

When we create and share a syllabus, we indicate to our students and colleagues that we believe certain people, forms, and arguments to be worthy of their attention. It is our privilege as teacher-scholars to assign time to a contingent faculty member's podcast, to a student blog post, to a graduate student's thesis—to say that these things matter, that we value these voices, these methods, these modes of scholarship—that they are worth studying, listening to, engaging with. To write a syllabus is to seize an opportunity and a responsibility to create a mini-canon that chips away at The Canon; to redefine authority; to stake out space for new voices and traditionally underrepresented perspectives; to actively and intentionally decenter the authority of prestigious research universities and the West to make space for epistemological diversity, for other ways of knowing, other forms of expertise; to participate in the legitimization of newer forms of scholarship (digital, public, artistic).

In the projects we accept, just as much as the work we assign, we have the chance to empower our students to tell the stories of their research in these new or non-traditional genres, to expand their understanding of scholarly communication—and because we've already asserted the authority of such alternative forms of scholarship by assigning them in the first place, we're inviting them to be part of an ever-evolving conversation and the ongoing construction of an evolving scholarly record whose forms we have already indicated we value.

In addition to providing a means by which we can impact our students' understanding of the contextual and constructed nature of authority, the syllabus—when viewed as a scholarly object with a built-in audience, perhaps over several iterations of a course—arguably has more impact than any single journal article or book. Because of the long tail of traditional scholarly publishing in the humanities, new fields of inquiry and new voices that disrupt the established canon often appear first in and are amplified through

courses, in syllabi—not peer-reviewed publications. Yet while many tenure and promotion documents call for publication in frequently cited journals as evidence of impact, and while citations are often seen as a proxy for the same, academics are not normally asked to supply information about how often their work is included in a syllabus.

Why not? To be included in a syllabus is to be taught in conversation with others; to be asserted as worthy of attention; to be read and engaged with by the next generation of thinkers and scholars—to be, if just for a semester, part of an evolving, conversational canon. It is a powerful declaration and legitimization of expertise.

But to make that expertise—that impact—legible, the scholars whose work is being taught need to know about it. To truly intervene in the marketplace of academic prestige, we need not only to seize the opportunity to build up other voices and forms of scholarship, but to share our syllabi openly, via repositories and websites and social networks, to make their circulation as commonplace as that of academic articles. By openly sharing syllabi, we enable our colleagues to tell a more textured story about their research—and empower all of us to redefine impactful scholarship writ large.