

Faculty Conversations About Teaching

In our faculty conversation about inclusive teaching, we hope to address approaches to engaging diverse students, strategies for helping students to discuss challenging issues or to think critically about diversity and inclusion, and/or ways to modify assignments or feedback to make learning more broadly accessible. You are welcome to share your thoughts, experiences, best practices and tips for any of these aspects of inclusive teaching.

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My Opening Idea or Definitions

Provide a 50-150 word opening statement with your understanding of the most interesting or important aspects of this topic (to you and your teaching).

This may be a provocative statement but I believe that who you are is how you teach. As educators, our own values/philosophies/disciplines/identities shape the curriculum and culture of our classes. In order to create inclusive spaces we must continue to interrogate our own lenses and positions, and to the extent possible share that learning process with students. Why would students risk vulnerability, reflection, and challenge if we are unable to model it ourselves? I also invite students to explore their own personal and social identities and how these shape their learning. Educators should situate learning in students' experiences (especially vital for students from underrepresented backgrounds), validate students as self-authored knowers, and help students understand the socially constructed nature of knowledge and its application.

What Have I Tried?

Summarize 3-4 approaches, emphases, scenarios, or assignments, each briefly explained (50-100 words each) so that participants can envision your past and/or current teaching experiences, whether successful or still evolving.

- 1) **Safe versus Brave Space** – Prior to the first week of class, I send students a brief article (*Arao & Clemens, From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces*) and ask that they come to the first class prepared to discuss the concepts of safe versus brave space. The article articulates the role of discomfort in growth, learning, and development and offers alternative perspectives to typical classroom learning community ground rules such as 'agree to disagree', 'don't take it personally', 'respect everyone', and 'challenge by choice'. Students examine how the role of safety/comfort "contributes to the replication of dominance and subordination, rather than a dismantling

thereof" (p. 140) and encourages risk-taking, challenge, and vulnerability in learning.

- 2) **Individual Story Telling** – In every class I teach, student sign up (1-2 students per class session) to share brief authentic stories about their lives and what they care about. These stories are usually linked to class themes and serve to showcase diverse perspectives and build an inclusive learning community. This is not a 'hot seat' exercise where students are interrogated by peers, rather we treat these stories as gifts. Two examples are below.
 - a. **Moment of Obligation (MOO) Story:** What is at the root of your passion for social change? Each student will reflect on these questions using the *Work on Purpose* worksheets and then share a "moment of obligation," a story about an experience that committed you to doing something to address a problem that you care about. The story (approximately 5 minutes) will illustrate how your life experiences have inspired and motivated you to choose the issue that you will focus your inquiry and learning on through this semester. These stories will also help students practice risk-taking and contribute to the development of 'brave space' in our learning community. These stories should be authentic and unrehearsed – no visual materials are needed.
 - b. **Gendered Perspective Story (GPS):** Each student will share a story about a personal experience that made them think or feel deeply about their gender. The story (no more than 5 minutes) will illustrate how your life experiences have shaped your own socially-constructed beliefs about how gender shapes opportunities and challenges. These stories will also help students practice risk-taking and contribute to the development of 'brave space' in our learning community. These stories should be authentic and unrehearsed – no visual materials are needed.
- 3) **Community Interviews/ Predecessor, Instigator, Inheritor Assignment** – In order to invite students to explore their own histories and impact, students are asked to interview community members about their experiences and perspectives. These interviews are linked to class themes (e.g., interview a community change agent; a gender justice advocate; a service-learning client; etc.). Students are often intrigued by the inheritor assignment – talking to youth who will inherit the world they work to create. Students share their experiences with each other and discuss diversity of perspectives, politics, intersectional identities, etc.
- 4) **Predecessor, Instigator, Inheritor Assignment:** Students will complete **three** interviews with peers, family, or community members working on gender-based advocacy. Using the constructs of "predecessor," "instigator," and "inheritor" found in the Astin & Leland reading, students will interview one person who served as a *predecessor* advocating for women's rights or gender equality (a grandmother or elder, for example); one person who is currently *instigating* around gender equality

(someone who is part of a gender-specific organization or group, for example); and one person who will come after you, or that you are mentoring as an *inheritor* of gender justice and equality. Your interviews should focus on discovering their personal narrative and their experience of leadership and gender. Your final interview analysis paper will briefly describe the individuals you interviewed, weave together themes from each of these interviews, and analyze these themes with respect to course texts and ideas.

- 5) Understanding Community: Relational Leader Interview:** Identify an individual in the community (campus, neighborhood, place of worship, non-profit, etc.) who you think exemplifies relational leadership and interview (preferably in a face-to-face meeting) this person. Formulate your questions in advance. In your interview, gain a greater understanding of the leader's role, how he or she views leadership, whether the person practices "relational leadership" or follows another theory of leadership, and then expand how that person carries out that leadership theory in practice.

What Am I Exploring? What Am I Interested In?

Provide a list of 3-4 questions, activities, or options that you have been considering as you continue to adapt your teaching approaches.

- How do we make explicit the complexities of power within education and prepare individuals and collectives to navigate it?
- How can we interrogate/ deconstruct dominant narratives? Whose voices are missing/silenced in classroom content and processes?
- How do we understand intersectional identities (of ourselves and of our students) in the classroom? To what extent are we engaged in examining our own assumptions, preferences, blind spots, identities?
- How do our own values/philosophies/identities shape the curriculum and culture of our programs/classes? What are implications for introducing critical perspectives in the classroom as they relate to intersecting identities?
- Do the social locations of those practicing education replicate dominant norms?

What are some Best Practices, Tips, or Resources I'd Like to Share with Other Faculty?

If you could recommend a list of 3 core values, teaching tips, and/or resources (articles, books, links) that faculty across disciplines could find helpful for inclusive teaching in their courses, what would your list include?

Adams, M., Bell, L. A., Goodman, D. J., & Joshi, K. Y. (2016). *Teaching for diversity and social justice* [3rd edition]. NY: Routledge.

Arao B., Clemens K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces. In Landreman L. M. (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators* (135-150). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Brookfield, S. D. (2005). *The power of critical theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

hooks B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mahony, A. D. (2016). Culturally responsive integrative learning environments: A critical displacement approach. In Guthrie, K. L., Osteen, L., Bertrand Jones, T. (Eds.), *Developing Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning. New Directions for Student Leadership, No. 152*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nash, R. J., Bradley, D. L., & Chickering, A. (2008). *How to talk about hot topics on campus: From polarization to moral conversations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



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Updated September 2017