

**Constructing More Inclusive and Equitable College Classrooms\***  
**24 October 2016**

**Dr. Sam Museus**  
**Indiana U, Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Project**

Where perspectives come from and how they might be limited:

-From personal experience and from research (students and their perspectives on what has contributed to their thriving and learning; what faculty say they do; how campuses support faculty to more effectively engage in this work)

-It's limited. "I'm prof of higher ed; not of other disciplines". Can look very different in other disciplines.

Today: challenging us to think critically about our assumptions.

**Inclusive classroom framework.** All 3 are interconnected, but distinct.

1. Perspectives: values, norms, assumptions
2. Content: Readings, assignments, schedules
3. Interactions: Structure, activities, discussions

**Challenges in the classroom:**

- Stereotypes: racial and class groups stereotyped as being intellectually inferior. Research on stereotype threat: has impact on student performance, ability to focus. "Spotlight anxiety": fear they might confirm stereotypes.
  - nb. Students who benefit from positive stereotypes can benefit to a certain extent, but at some point can also cause anxiety
- Irrelevant curricula: their "soul is dying" because need to leave their communities, things they value behind.
- Competitive and individualistic cultures.
- Unequal privilege. We've created classrooms based on assumptions, values, norms of people who created them.
  - ex. We have idea that if we create resources, our responsibility ends there. Assumption that students can find resources; even if students find resources, then they need to feel entitled to take advantage of them. Assumption of prior knowledge of the system.
- Implicit bias. When I'm grading, calling on a student, my biases may be shaping my interaction w that student.

**Stereotype Reduction.**

- See potential contributions in all. It's obvious to us, but how often do we verbalize it? Be clear and explicit: they all belong here.
- Name and challenge stereotypes. Very imp't to name it.
  - Point out and note unintentional nature

- Allow reaction.
- Empower people to address discomfort. Outside class; let them know it's OK to challenge in classroom because it's productive.
- Embrace difficult conversations.
- Recognize implicit biases.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

- Apply material to recent real-world problems
- Engage problems that impact diverse communities
- Acknowledge dominant and marginalized voices
  - ex. of Physics prof who engages in a discussion of how all these theories were generated by white European males. Let's talk about that?
- Engage non-traditional examples
  - ex. "Montreal massacre": prof offered opportunity to research the topic
  - ex. female law prof teaching about sexual assault in the law. Incorporated reading on case of rape in male prisons.
- Promote cultural critique and social change: encourage them to do something about it; changing what is lacking
- Be visionary. We want to get things done now. But I can think about things I want to do down the road and set things up to be able to do so. Have students help make lesson plans that are culturally relevant that we can incorporate in the future.

### **Collectivist pedagogy**

- Avoid combative debate. Socratic method can become humiliating (ping pong between prof and student).
- Use group discussions

### **Proactive pedagogy**

- Assume intelligence, not knowledge
- Cultivate foundational skills
  - ex. teach students how to outline. They are learning a new culture. Norms of academic writing in our field.
- Be clear (breakdown complex concepts) and repeat
- Get and give feedback
- Require office hour visits. Students from marginalized populations might not feel comfortable talking to us, going to office hours. Build relationships.
- Avoid scheduling conflicts.
- Provide resources proactively.

### **Humanized Pedagogy**

- Create comfortable environment: ask how they're doing, cultivate meaningful relationships.
- Normalize vulnerability. We're all going to make mistakes and that includes me. We might learn more from them than pretending we're not making mistakes.
- Outline ground rules. Think before you speak; recognize complexity
- Be real and admit fallibility
- Know names
- Empathy and enthusiasm

### **Balancing Course Objectives**

- Social context and problems. We can cut back on theories in order to connect what we're doing to outside world.
- Doctrinal content
- Survival skills
- Avoid overcrowding syllabus

### **Systemic Barriers**

- Pressure to cover standard material (prepare for big exams)
- Transformation is difficult and takes time; usually time we don't have
- No rewards for faculty

### **Systemic Problems, systemic solutions**

- Faculty hiring processes
- Institutional Support Structures
  - Grants
  - Library resources
  - Centers for Teaching and Learning
  - Professional Development Seminars
  - Communities of Practices
- Institutional Reward Systems
  - Awards
  - Annual Review
  - Promotion and Tenure

---

\* Thanks to Molly Robinson Kelly for taking and sharing these notes.