Better Practices in the Classroom

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A Teaching Guidebook for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Equitable Learning from a Gender and Sexuality Studies Framework

Natalie Kouri-Towe and Myloe Martel-Perry

Concordia University Library
Montreal

Contents

FRONT MATTER

Version: 2.1

This guidebook was originally researched, developed and written by Natalie Kouri-Towe and Myloe Martel-Perry (2021) under the title *Better Practices in the Sexuality Classroom: Teaching Resources and Guides for Sustainable and Equitable Learning* and revised. It was revised and republished under the new title, *Better Practices in the Classroom: A Teaching Guidebook for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Equitable Learning from a Gender and Sexuality Studies Framework* (2024) with the assistance of Linneah Reynolds and Margot Thorseth.

Accessibility Statement

This guidebook was designed with universal accessibility features in mind. Using available tools, we have checked to ensure it is compatible with screen readers in the online interactive Pressbooks and ebook versions. The guidebook is also available for download in EPUB, MOBI, and PDF formats.

Descriptive captions and alternative text have been included for non-decorative images.

Please note that the H5P content included is not available in EPUB, MOBI, or PDF formats. However, we have included a **print copy of the H5P content**, available in the Appendix.

For the date of last revision, see **Versioning History** in the Appendix.

How to cite this document

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Or **sign up for our mailing list** to get updates on new versions of this guide.

Feedback

If you found this teaching guidebook helpful or have used parts of it, please let us know by filling out this **feedback form**.

Zotero

Using Zotero, we have created an **open-access bibliography** of all resources and references included within this guidebook.

As Zotero is an active library, we are consistently updating it, adding related readings and resources not necessarily included in the current version of this guidebook.

Want to get involved and help add to our library?

Email natalie.kouri-towe@concordia.ca to find out more.

Acknowledgements

Version 2.0 of this guidebook was designed and developed with the support of Linneah Reynolds and Margot Thorseth. In addition to thanking them for their hours of work to produce a beautiful and accessible interactive Pressbook for *Better Practices*, we would also like to thank the following people for providing support and feedback on versions of this document, including:

Danielle Bobker, Laura Copeland, Carly Daniel-Hughes, Jamilah Dei-Sharpe, Donna Kahérakwas Goodleaf, Alex Ketchum, Marlihan Lopez, Gada Mahrouse, Kimberley Manning, and the hundreds of people who participated in workshops on this guidebook over the years.

Special thanks also go to Rachel Harris, who encouraged us to revise this guidebook as an Open Educational Resource through Concordia University's Library Pressbooks.

INTRODUCTION

Included in this guidebook are a series of resources and "better/best-practice" guides for teaching, including some background and primers on the debates shaping these practices, which were initially researched and developed to help support faculty (both part-time and full-time) teaching courses in the Interdisciplinary Studies in Sexuality program at Concordia University. Since publishing the first version of *Better Practices* (2021), I have come to realize that these resources are relevant to those teaching across fields of study beyond the area of sexuality studies. Hesitant to codify pedagogical practices as "good" or "bad," I use the language of "better practices" to provide resources, support, and ideas for faculty across disciplines to test out different pedagogical techniques for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable classrooms. What you will find included in this guidebook are strategies and entry points for teaching and curriculum development that can help anchor how we each navigate the rapidly shifting terrain of teaching across our respective fields and in response to student needs.

This work is also informed and supported by my research on gender and sexuality pedagogies, including the contributors to my edited collection, ***Reading the Room: Lessons on Pedagogy and Curriculum from the Gender and Sexuality Studies Classroom*** (Concordia University Press 2024). You will find several of the authors from *Reading the Room* cited and referenced throughout the guidebook.

The guidebook includes common challenges emergent in a variety of classrooms, especially those in gender and sexuality studies, many of which have been informed and identified by students. The resources in *Better Practices* address the

intersectional ways that teaching and learning converge with differences across social locations, subjectivities, identities, and experiences. Many of the practices and prompts outlined in the document aim to support inclusive classrooms beyond the specific expertise that you bring to your teaching already. Using prompts around common challenges, conflicts, and debates in teaching, the guide outlines some of the strategies and resources currently available to the best of our knowledge on how to prioritize sustainable and equitable classroom practices.

Sections of the document also include recommendations and topics developed by two Concordia projects: The **Indigenous Directions Leadership Council's workshop series Pîkiskwêtân** (2021) and the **Centre for Gender Advocacy's Mapping Project report [PDF]** (Tshuma and Hadley 2020).

Please consider this a "living document," which means that new versions of the Open Educational Resource will be published as needed as new standards, practices, and resources become available. The first draft, published in 2021, was written in collaboration with a former student, Myloe Martel-Perry, and in consultation with faculty and students at Concordia. The second version was redesigned and developed alongside two other students, Linneah Reynolds and Margot Thorseth, who helped expand the research for the guidebook and integrate most of the interactive features, including adapting the material for Pressbooks.

My goal for this guidebook is for students and faculty alike to help build and improve the contents included in the years to come. Please get in touch with me (see **contact info**) if you have suggestions or feedback. If you end up finding these materials helpful and/or use these in your teaching,

departments, and otherwise, I would also appreciate hearing from you so I can better understand the needs and interests surrounding these practices.

NATALIE KOURI-TOWE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Don't start all at once!

The document took us more than two years to develop and three years to revise, evolving through following feedback from readers and new developments in research and teaching.

Here are a few ways we suggest you use this guide:

Look through the Table of Contents

Identify one or two areas that are more urgent or pressing for your teaching. Focus on those areas first.

Map a Plan

Plan your reading by mapping out when you'd like to read through different sections.

For example, reading a new section each time you build or revise your syllabus for an upcoming semester.

Experiment

You are not required to read the whole document or use all the prompts. Use these resources as anchors or starting places to help you continue your experimentation and learning in your teaching.

Read as a Group

You may want to read through sections of this guide with colleagues, friends, your department, students, or peers.

Repurpose

Use materials in this document to develop your own department's best/better practices guides using the CC BY-SA license.

Workshop

Plan workshops in your departments or program using sections of this guide as anchors to help build workshop curriculum; you can even invite specialists and hire skilled facilitators to help you through this process. You can also contact the author of this guidebook to inquire about available workshops.

Need help getting started?

If you are struggling with where to begin, we have included Self-Assessment Quizzes at the beginning of each section with scenarios related to its content. These scenarios can be used as navigational tools to review your knowledge, help you identify best practices, and engage with the material introduced in each section.

These scenarios appear within Pressbooks as H5P content. However, we have also included **printable versions of each scenario from the Self-Assessment Quizzes** in the Appendix. These scenarios can be used as prompts for workshops and discussions. Feel free to use and adapt them as needed.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Overview and Key Principles

Background

This guidebook has been developed from a gender and sexuality studies approach to pedagogy. Faculty using this guidebook may come from a wide array of expertise across disciplines and interdisciplinary fields of study, including the social sciences, humanities, fine arts, legal studies, education, health sciences, etc. Readers from STEM and other disciplines may find sections of this guidebook helpful for their teaching as well; although many of the techniques and strategies discussed are designed for classrooms which include class discussion and activities.

This poses several challenges for establishing norms around pedagogical approaches, including:

1. The methods and theories across disciplines vary and can be contradictory;
2. Training in pedagogies and classroom approaches are uneven across fields; and
3. The increasing workloads of post-secondary education teaching (part-time/contract/precarious teaching, larger class sizes, less TA support, insufficient hiring in permanent positions, etc.) make it difficult for faculty to follow and incorporate new pedagogies in the classroom.

This document aims to provide some points of entry and practical techniques to help support faculty adapt their teaching to meet the needs of our students and facilitate our

roles as teachers. This means you should use this guidebook as a way to come up with techniques that work for you and your own teaching.

Adaptive and Popular Education Strategies for Pedagogy

In part, many of the strategies outlined in this guidebook emerge from popular education, such as techniques that have been translated from social movements and community-organizing settings. These strategies may be techniques you already include in your teaching, and some may be new. Use the materials, tools, techniques, debates, and resources within as a set of anchors for your own navigation and approach to teaching rather than a set of rules to follow.

Core Principles in Gender and Sexuality Pedagogy

While the majority of the chapters include specific examples and debates relating to teaching practices and navigating classroom dynamics in a gender and sexuality studies classroom context, there are several core principles that guide the approaches outlined throughout that may be relevant across fields and disciplines. These include *reflexive teaching and learning* (**Boler 1999**; **Brookfield 2017**; **Kumashiro 2000**), *modelling engagement*, and *developing effective feedback and accountability* (**Russo 2019**). In addition to the above approaches, readers may be interested in other related

pedagogical approaches and materials, including Inclusive Pedagogies (Page 2021), and "resilient pedagogy and self-determination" (Masland 2021).

Below is a brief explanation of what these principles might look like for faculty and students, followed by a few examples to illustrate them (please note that this list is not exhaustive).

Reflexive Teaching and Learning:

Faculty

Thinking carefully about our pedagogical choices and how these might impact student learning, reflecting on classroom dynamics and behaviour, self-observing and adjusting in response to classroom dynamics.

Students

Fostering self-reflection and adjustment rather than self-criticism, encouraging self-driven learning skills development rather than testing knowledge accumulation, and focusing on revision rather than perfection.

Examples

- Soliciting student feedback through dialogue with students and techniques such as pre-course and mid-term surveys to adjust course content, delivery and methods.
- Using assessment of student assignments to revisit and revise evaluation methods.
- Seeking additional resources, support, advice, and insights into teaching strategies when challenges in the classroom arise.
- Using varied or multiple approaches to delivering course material and assessing student learning allows for

flexibility and accommodation.

Modelling Engagement:

Faculty

Fostering collaboration with students by helping to guide and model the terms of classroom engagement, using respectful and validating language, modelling apology and accountability when mistakes are made, and taking responsibility for guiding classroom engagement.

Students

Developing skills for self-advocacy, fostering collaboration over competition, and developing respectful and collaborative communication skills.

Examples

- Working with students to develop shared classroom cultural norms, codes of conduct, classroom contracts, and other tools that encourage collective contributions to establishing classroom dynamics.
- Classroom activities and exercises that model and allow students to practice working through conflict, recognize their role in fostering classroom culture, and communicate constructive feedback over individualized criticism.
- Helping to recognize the complex experiences that shape classroom behaviour by trying to understand how external factors can impact both students and faculty in the classroom.

Feedback and Accountability:

Faculty

Thinking carefully about our pedagogical choices and how they might impact student learning, integrating regular feedback to help build and adjust teaching, modelling mutual and reciprocal accountability among students and professors, following up after feedback is received, and making transparent how agency and power relations shape the classroom.

Students

Developing skills at communicating in ways that foster mutual understanding, managing expectations of others, self-monitoring behaviour and adjusting actions as part of accountability, fostering accountability among peers through support rather than scarcity or competition.

Examples

- Soliciting feedback by talking with students and putting feedback into practice through concrete actions that are shared with the class
- In conflicts, focusing on responding through acknowledgment, providing concrete plans for changes or adjustments, and avoiding self-defensive justifications.
- Using pre-course, mid-term, and end-of-term surveys and feedback to solicit anonymous or confidential feedback on both student experiences and expectations with the class, but also with their peers and themselves.
- Structuring assignments that encourage peer collaboration rather than punish the group or individual students when others participate unevenly.
- Incorporating peer-learning skills into assessment models

beyond the class presentation, such as through peer teaching, skill-sharing, peer feedback and revision, and task delegation.

Resources

Atom Fire Arts Cooperative. 2020. ***How to Share Space: Creating Community in Classrooms and Beyond***. Building Accountable Communities Project (Project NIA).

Boler, Megan. 1999. ***Feeling Power: Emotions and Education***. New York: Routledge.

Brookfield, Stephen. 2017. ***Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher***. Second ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand.

Kumashiro, Kevin. N.d. "**Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education**." *Review of Educational Research* 70 (1): 25-53.

Masland. 2021. "**Resilient Pedagogy and Self-Determination: Unlocking Student Engagement in Uncertain Times**." In *Resilient Pedagogy: Practical Teaching Strategies to Overcome Distance, Disruption, and Distraction.* Edited by Travis N. Thurston, Kacy Lundstrom, and Christopher González. Utah State University.

Mingus, Mia. 2019. ***The Four Parts of Accountability: How to Give a Genuine Apology***. Western University.

Page, Christina. 2021. ***Inclusive Pedagogies***. Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Russo, Ann. ***Feminist Accountability: Disrupting Violence and Transforming Power***. New York: NYU Press. Western University. *Getting Feedback on Teaching*.

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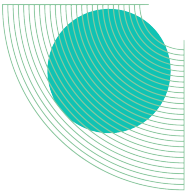
GENDER AND PRONOUNS



Self-determination, bodily autonomy, and the use of respectful and validating language are best practices for the classroom.

Background

Today's students, faculty, and staff represent a diverse array of perspectives, experiences, social locations, and identities, including gender diversity. More people use non-binary gender pronouns than ever before (**information on non-binary pronouns in French**), and Trans people represent a diverse group of people whose needs and interests cannot be universalized or generalized. One of the easiest ways to build respectful and inclusive approaches into your teaching is to consider how gender pronoun use shapes the lives of the people in your classroom. As teachers, our role in modelling techniques for respectful interaction in class can help students navigate respectful and inclusive participation as well. Below are some guidelines on better and best practices for pronoun use both inside and outside the classroom, and some resources on debates about the use of the "pronoun go around" activity in the classroom.

Navigating gender on campus requires a context-specific approach since there may be times and spaces where people choose to use certain names and pronouns (e.g. someone may use different pronouns in class than they do when they're at work). Further, being "outed" or publicly identified or singled

out as trans or non-binary without a person's consent is a form of gender-based violence. The larger political context of anti-gender rhetoric has also meant that hostile or invalidating environments for gender-diverse people can make attempts at inclusion fall short. For instance, efforts to be inclusive towards trans people can inadvertently single them out, as some of the examples we discuss below illustrate. Added to these dynamics are the delays that occur through administrative channels to update names and gender markers on student files and government IDs and the challenge of communicating new names and pronouns to peers and faculty. While techniques for fostering respectful pronoun use are varied, it is best to follow a person-centred approach to gender pronouns by making space for people to direct how they want to be identified rather than insisting on specific forms, types, or styles of identification.

> "You should invite people to share pronouns in a group setting — you should just make it clear that sharing pronouns is optional and, if you are in a leader or facilitator position in the group, explicitly share your own pronouns if you are comfortable doing so."
>
> OLIVER L. HAIMSON AND LEE AIRTON

While students at many institutions can officially change their name listed on class rosters, these changes can take time to come into effect and may be limited to students who elect to change their records. Students may choose to use certain names or pronouns in only some settings (e.g. in a gender and sexuality studies class but not in their other courses) for many reasons, including safety. Some students may proactively self-disclose this to their professors, but others may not. Faculty cannot assume that the names listed on the class roster reflect student name and pronoun use.

It is useful to consider that pronoun choice, *gender expression* (how a person presents their gender), and *gender identity* (how a person identifies their gender) are **connected** but **not causal** relationships. This means that pronoun choice cannot be assumed through gender expression. At the same time, pronoun use may not signal any relationship to gender identity or expression (i.e. some people may not have strong correlations between pronoun use and their identity).

Regardless, if you are new to gender pronouns and identities beyond the dominant social division of male-female or woman-man, we recommend reading further from the Resources section below and seeking out a copy of Lee Airton's book, **Gender: Your Guide (2019)**.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment questions for this section are **available in the Appendix**.

BEST PRACTICES FOR GENDERED AND INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Use inclusive language when discussing gender and sexuality. Prioritize validating (rather than invalidating) practices around gender both inside and outside the classroom. Using people's self-identified rather than assumed pronouns in class and in communication with other students and colleagues models a respectful culture in our classes. To do this, practice asking people about what language they use to describe themselves and actively use this language when talking directly with them and about them. Model gentle correction when you and others make mistakes without drawing significant attention to the error.

Because some people may be exploring their gender and sexual identities, it is best practice to ask which pronouns a person uses and seek clarification if there are specific contexts in which those pronouns should or should not be used. It is best not to assume the name and/or pronoun that someone uses unless they have identified these for themselves in a public way or in private communication with you, such as in their email signature or bio. If you are uncertain, you can ask someone what name and pronoun they use in a private conversation rather than in a public setting unless everyone is being asked to share their pronouns. For example: "Could I ask what name and pronoun you use? You can use X name with me, and I use she/her pronouns."

Gender Inclusive Writing

There are many tips and guides for using Trans and non-binary inclusive language. Below are some best practices (Kapitan, 2017; Trans Care BC [PDF])

1. **Use validating language that affirms all genders:**
   e.g. *all women* or *cis and trans women*, **not** *women and trans women*.
2. **Avoid using gendered words to describe human anatomy:**
   e.g. *vagina* or *internal genitalia, ovaries* or *internal gonads*, **not** *female genitalia*.
3. **Use the language people choose to describe their bodies:**
   e.g. *he* shared *his* experience having a chest exam, **not** he shared his experience having a *breast* exam.
4. **Prioritize people's self-determination and privacy:**
   e.g. she has not disclosed details about her history; **not** *she is closeted*.
5. **Affirm people's experiences and identities:**
   e.g. *they* are non-binary; **not** they *call themselves* non-binary.
6. **Transform gendered terms into non-gendered and descriptive terms in relevant and appropriate contexts:**
   e.g. *ombudsperson*, **not** *ombudsman*; *people with prostates should get screened for cancer, **not** men should get prostate exams; pregnant people, **not** pregnant women.*

Check out Transcare BC's Gender Inclusive Language Handout [PDF] and Alex Kapitan's Transgender Style Guide for more information on gender-inclusive writing.

Using Non-Binary Pronouns

Many people today, especially in the area of sexuality studies, use non-binary pronouns such as "they/them/theirs," "ze/hir/hirs," and other alternative pronouns. In the classroom, learning student pronouns and using these when referring to students is important for respectful communication. If you are unfamiliar with using non-binary pronouns in speech, there are great guides to help you practice. (See section **Gender and Pronoun Resources**.) Consider practicing with a friend or trusted colleague in private.

Need help practicing different and less common pronouns?

Check out this **interactive guide on practicing pronouns**

Misgendering

It is common for both people to make mistakes with gender pronouns when first integrating this practice in daily speech. The current best practice for mistakes of misgendering is to make a brief apology and use the correct pronoun, not draw too much attention to the individual who has been misgendered (i.e. don't apologize profusely or make a big deal about your mistake) and make efforts to practice using appropriate pronouns by practicing outside of the classroom setting.

Continuous and repeated misgendering in the classroom can create a disrespectful and hostile learning environment for students and faculty. Intentionally refusing to use a person's

pronouns or misgendering them is a form of gender-based violence. A survey conducted at Concordia found that students notice when their teachers avoid or are uncomfortable with pronoun use in class (**Tshuma and Hadley 2020 [PDF]**). This means that not addressing pronoun use in the classroom may signal something negative to students seeking gender-inclusive classrooms.

If you find yourself feeling uncertain about pronoun use or are worried about making a mistake, you can use a few strategies. When in doubt, refer to someone by name (ideally the name a person has expressed they prefer you use) or a gender-neutral term like "our colleague" or "our fellow classmate." However, use this strategy sparingly, and if using it regularly, use it for all students, not simply the non-binary and trans people in your class. This is important to ensure you are not singling out some students with regard to their pronouns. Selective pronoun use can be interpreted as a negative signal for people whose pronouns are not being used respectfully or whose identity is treated unequally.

If you do not remember or know a person's pronouns, it is best to ask discretely (e.g. a quick email apologizing for forgetting and asking for a reminder, or asking the person after class.) It is best not to draw attention to the student whose pronoun you've forgotten in a public setting (e.g. by asking the student in front of the class.)

Other Strategies

Below are some other strategies you can use to incorporate pronoun use in the classroom (not necessarily recommended):

Not Using Gender Pronouns

Another strategy sometimes used is referring to *all* students by name rather than pronoun. This approach may help foster a classroom culture of using names when referring to one another and may support flexibility in pronoun use; however, selectively avoiding the pronouns of certain students (e.g. trans and non-binary students) can single these students out and contribute to invalidating students' gender in the classroom.

Using Only Non-Binary Pronouns

Yet another strategy sometimes employed is to use exclusively non-binary pronouns for all people, which aims to normalize gender-neutral speech broadly. However, this may not be a best practice as some people may experience their gender invalidated by non-binary pronouns (e.g. trans people who use gendered pronouns.)

Normalizing Pronoun Identification

This technique involves regularly asking people to identify their pronouns in day-to-day interactions by asking all people to start individual and/or group interactions by sharing pronouns. This is more common during meetings or group settings but is sometimes practiced individually. Importantly, this technique must be used with everyone, regardless of their gender identity (i.e. including trans, non-binary, and cisgender people). In a large lecture classroom setting, this technique is easier to adopt for class discussion and participation; however, in more frequent and smaller settings, continuous requests to share pronouns may create an invalidating environment for people who have clearly shared and expressed their pronouns, which makes this model not ideal for all circumstances.

THE PRONOUN GO AROUND

A common practice in some university classrooms and community settings is called a *pronoun go around*. In this exercise, people share their names and which pronouns they use during the first meeting (or in subsequent meetings if participants change.)

Because class rosters may not include the preferred name a student uses, the "pronoun go around" provides students the opportunity to share with the class how they'd like to be addressed. Students may be in the process of exploring or transforming their own relationship to gender identity and may be using different names and pronouns. Because of this, students may be using certain names or pronouns in some settings (e.g. while at school) and others in different settings (e.g. while at work). Creating space in the class for students to direct how they'd like to be addressed can help ensure a respectful classroom environment is maintained.

Strategies for the "Pronoun Go Around"

The most common strategy is using the pronoun go-around during the first class. If you choose to do this, please consider the following best practices:

1. Make pronoun sharing an option rather than a requirement for students.
2. Model pronoun sharing by sharing your own pronoun use.
3. Offer an option to share a name other than what is listed on the class list that they would like to use in class

specifically.

4. Inform students that names listed on online learning platforms for class may not accurately reflect names used in class.
5. Invite students to share if they wish to have this name and pronoun used only in this class or other settings (e.g., with administrators, other professors, et cetera.)
6. Make clear that people's pronouns and name use may change, and the class will adapt to these changes when shared with the professor and/or the class.
7. Model strategies for a respectful classroom by showing how to appropriately correct someone's misuse of a pronoun and apologizing and self-correcting.

Alternatives to the "Pronoun Go Around"

For large classes or in classes where it may not be appropriate, other strategies could include asking students to complete a course survey online, fill out a form identifying their preferred name and pronouns for use in class, or email or meet with the professor to share pronouns. Rather than enforce pronoun self-identification in front of the entire class, the "best practice," especially in large classes, may be to respect pronoun use when this is shared by students of their own volition or to use gender-neutral language when referring to students in class, such as "our colleague," "your classmate," "the person in the front."

CHALLENGES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Inclusive Practices for the Online Environment

Gender inclusivity is also important in video conferencing, online learning and cloud-based platforms. Access to name and identification customization may be something you or your institution has access to, while some forms of customization may require student action. In either case, faculty should **not** assume that names listed on the class roster or online learning platforms are the appropriate names to use with students. Although using students' names is an excellent way to build a positive classroom environment, it is advisable to learn the names and pronouns students use before communicating with them using first names or gender pronouns.

Video Conferencing

When video conferencing, ensure your account is set up to allow participants to change their names and use virtual backgrounds. This gives students more control over what information they share in remote classrooms. You can start class by inviting students to change their names and even listing their pronouns in their names.

Institutional Challenges

Official and Preferred Name Changes at your Institution:

Find out from your institution what procedures students need to follow to request an official or preferred name change at your school. You can include this information in your syllabus or course online learning platform.

Faculty should note that there may be delays in updating name and gender markers on documentation. If a name change request has not been processed before the start of the term, students may not have their correct names or gender listed on class rosters or on the online learning platform for the course. For this reason, it is a current best practice to solicit students' name and pronoun use before the start of term or during the first class by:

- using pre-course surveys and in-class name/pronoun cards;
- inviting students to introduce themselves using their family name and the name they'll be using in this class (you should mark this down); and
- avoiding using names to call on students until you have ensured your list is accurate.

Resources

Airton, Lee. 2019. ***Gender: Your Guide***. New York: Adams Media.

Airton, Lee. 2019. **The Gender-Friendly Classroom**. *EdCan Network*. May 17.

Ashley, Florence. 2019. **Les personnes non-binaires en français : une perspective concernée et militante [PDF]**. *H-France Salon*. 11(4), #5.

Benato, Raf, Jennifer Fraser, and Francis Ray White. 2024. "**Getting beyond peeing and pronouns: living non-binary gender in higher education**." *Journal of Gender Studies,* 1-13.

Benjamin, Alex. 2017. **Le langage neutre en français: pronoms et accords à l'écrit et à l'oral**. *En tous Genres Blog*.

Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh. ***Gender-Inclusive/Non-Sexist Language Guidelines and Resources***.

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Kapitan, Alex. ***The Radical Copyeditor***.

Kapitan, Alex. 2017. **The Radical Copyeditor's Style Guide for Writing About Transgender People**. Radical Copyeditor. August 31.

Manion, Jen. 2018. **The Performance of Transgender Inclusion: The pronoun go-round and the new gender binary**. *Public Seminar*. November 27.

Trans Health BC. ***Gender Inclusive Language: Clinical Settings with New Clients* [PDF]**. Provincial Health Services Authority.

TransCare BC. ***Gender Inclusive Language* [PDF]**. Provincial Health Services Authority.

SextEd (website). ***Inclusive Sex Ed Language***.

Spade, Dean. 2018. **We Still Need Pronoun Go Rounds**. ***deanspade.net***. December 1.

Tshuma, Gift and Shayna Hadley. 2020. **The Centre for Gender Advocacy, The Mapping Project Report [PDF]**. October 7.

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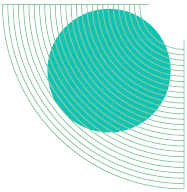
INDIGENOUS CONTENT AND DECOLONIZING PRINCIPLES IN THE CLASSROOM



Indigenizing, Decolonizing and Unsettling Classroom Curriculum & Pedagogy

The following section of this teaching resource offers a brief overview of what 'decolonizing' means in the university classroom and how it differs from Indigenizing course content alongside current debates and strategies, including tools and resources geared toward de-colonizing practices within university settings.

Following the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report** and **Calls to Action (2015) [PDF]**, post-secondary institutions across Canada have been charged to take steps to address the historic and contemporary impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples, including the role of education in genocide through the Residential School and child welfare systems. While the report outlines federal government responsibilities with regard to reconciliation, post-secondary institutions have focused primarily on *three areas:* **Indigenous hiring**, **decolonizing curriculum and the institution**, and **Indigenizing both curriculum and the post-secondary institution itself**.

For instance, the **Indigenous Directions Action Plan** at Concordia University outlines their approach:

> Concordia encourages all faculties and departments to undertake self-assessments on the inclusion of Indigenous content in their course offerings and remain actively engaged in the ongoing decolonization and Indigenization of the University's curriculum and pedagogy. This will ultimately lead all departments across the University to offer courses grounded in and reflective of diverse Indigenous histories, epistemologies, worldviews, research and pedagogical practices.
>
> INDIGENOUS DIRECTIONS ACTION PLAN, p. 15

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment questions for this section are **available in the Appendix**.

DECOLONIZING VS. INDIGENIZING

Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

> Indigenous-based curriculum should be prefaced by an introduction into Indigenous research ideologies and research methods.
>
> **A FIRST NATIONS TWO-SPIRIT STUDENT**
> (The Mapping Project 2020 [PDF])

Decolonizing Approaches

Decolonizing approaches center on learning about the colonial histories, ideologies, and contemporary conditions shaped by colonialism, settler colonialism, and imperialism. This approach may also involve **de-centring Western knowledge systems**, such as by focusing on knowledge produced by Indigenous, Black, global south/global two-thirds/global majority, and/or people from racialized, marginalized, and diasporic social locations, or what Kelebogile Zvobgo calls "**historically excluded**" and the University of British Columbia calls "historically, persistently, or systemically marginalized (HPSM) groups" (**UBC Equity and Inclusion Office**).

At an individual level, non-Indigenous faculty can approach the call to decolonize by becoming familiar with the debates and models around doing decolonial work in their field(s) and by engaging with Indigenous peoples, cultures, nations, communities, and scholars. Likewise, faculty can learn more about the various decolonial movements and approaches and how these raise different pedagogical and political concerns, such as Black decolonial approaches. Whether implicitly or

explicitly using the language of "decolonization," a similar approach can be used: teaching about colonization, de-naturalizing Western knowledge systems and traditions as universal, and learning about the lives, experiences, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples and colonized peoples.

Unsettling versus Decolonizing: Indigenous Approaches to Decolonization

While departments, programs, and individual faculty members have worked to incorporate decolonial material and approaches in their courses, Indigenous peoples, nations, communities, and scholars have questioned the relationship between decolonization and colonial nation-states. **Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) [PDF]** critique the turn to decolonization as a metaphoric approach to diversifying curriculum, instead calling for a decolonization approach that centres on land repatriation to Indigenous peoples. Rather than using decolonization as a metaphor for justice, Tuck and Yang call for an unsettling of settler colonialism—a process that makes colonial institutions, like education, incommensurable with Indigenous sovereignty and futures (2012). Similarly, **Glen Coulthard (2014)** argues that attempts to recognize and accommodate Indigenous peoples within colonial institutions reinforce rather than decolonize colonial systems.

Regardless of the possible limitations of decolonization as an approach to curriculum and pedagogy, the concept of decolonization remains a compelling call to action for systemic change at the institutional level, such as through:

1. Ethical hiring of Indigenous peoples at all levels at the university using Indigenous-led protocols (**Lawford and**

Coburn 2019);
2. Working with local communities around land repatriation;
3. Reparation through designated funding and resource allocation;
4. Requiring training at all levels of the post-secondary institution on the history and contemporary conditions shaping Indigenous peoples – including anti-discrimination and anti-bias training.

Black Studies Approaches to Decolonization

A number of scholars across Indigenous Studies, Black Studies, African Studies, pan-Africanism, Afro-pessimism, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin Studies, Critical Ethnic Studies, and related fields have debated the relationship between the concept of decolonization across Black and Indigenous frameworks (Byrd 2019; Harris 2019; Medak-Saltzman and Tiongson 2015; Sexton 2016), with many scholars arguing that Indigenous and Black peoples have shared yet different legacies of colonial violence (Day 2015; Dei 2018; Karuka 2017; Lethabo King 2019; Maynard 2019; Simpson 2016). For Harris (2019), the connection between Black and Indigenous struggles is articulated through the project of white supremacy and white property, wherein whiteness is "a construct that depended upon the global expropriation of land and labour from Blacks and Indigenous peoples" (222). Jamilah Dei-Sharpe (PhD candidate at Concordia University) draws on George Dei's 2018 work to argue that epistemic decolonizing must be grounded in community mobilization and activism; the centring of Indigenous and African intellectual traditions in the curriculum through "relationality,

sharing, reciprocity, spirituality, agency and communal accountability" (154); and through the incorporation of community learning with Indigenous and African elders and knowledge-sharing with global educators and amongst peers (171). At the root of this work is a critique of the erasure of Black histories and state violence in education and the role of decolonizing curriculum that transforms anti-Black ideologies within education. This area of work calls for building connections between the history and legacy of colonization and slavery in ways that build solidarity between Indigenous and Black liberation struggles.

Debates in Decolonial Frameworks

Despite the strength of building solidarity across decolonial struggles, some Indigenous scholars and communities have critiqued the connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous struggles, which they argue risk erasing or conflating the specificity of Indigenous experiences and peoples, particularly with regards to land claims, land repatriation, Indigenous resurgence, and sovereignty (**Cook-Lynn 1997**; **Lawrence and Dua 2005**). This topic has been most readily debated by Lawrence and Dua (2005) and Sharma and Wright (**2008**) over the role of migrants, immigrants, and racialized people in the project of settler colonialism. Although further discussion of the debates on this topic is beyond the scope of this guidebook, readers who may be interested in further scholarly discussion in this area can check the **Academic Scholarship on Decolonization and Settler Colonialism** in this section for appropriate resources and further discussions on decolonial frameworks.

If you're interested in political and conceptual differences and convergences between Black and Native Studies that lie at the foundation of many of these debates, see **Sexton (2016)**; for discussions of antiblackness and Indigenous studies, see **Byrd (2019)** and **Harris (2019)**; or for an investigation into the collapsing of Indigeneity and diaspora in the Caribbean, see **Newton (2013)**.

Indigenizing Curriculum and Pedagogy

The Indigenization of curriculum and pedagogy involves centring Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives from Indigenous peoples, nations, and communities over those of Western and colonial knowledge systems. Rather than rely on Western critiques of colonialism, this approach involves bringing to the forefront Indigenous models and methods of knowledge, education (teaching and learning), research, governance, etc. While non-Indigenous faculty may use the strategy of Indigenizing their courses—by reframing their syllabi and assignments using Indigenous knowledge systems, texts, materials, and perspectives—there are ethical questions about whether Indigenization can happen without a transformation of our universities to center Indigenous peoples as teachers, administrators, knowledge holders, and community leaders. Further, the role of post-secondary institutions and education in both historic and contemporary colonization raises questions about the impact of strategies around Indigenization that risk tokenizing or exploiting Indigenous scholars, thinkers, and community members. Faculty who choose to take an Indigenizing approach to their teaching by reorganizing their courses to centre on Indigenous knowledge and perspectives might do so by

incorporating field-specific content that is Indigenous in origin and/or reworking non-Indigenous course content through Indigenous methods and approaches.

Settler Colonialism and White Supremacy

Another approach faculty can take when thinking about decolonization and Indigenization is to complement learning from Indigenous perspectives with learning about colonialism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy (**Mackey 2016**; **Morgensen 2011**). These approaches can help non-Indigenous students better understand their own role within systems and structures of historic and ongoing violence through the relationship between institutions—such as the state, education, legal systems, etc.—and systems of power. Understanding white supremacy as a colonial and institutional structure and not simply as a personal prejudice can deepen decolonial pedagogies and help students understand the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems, traditions, cultures, communities, nations, and peoples.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

> For Indigenous peoples, land acknowledgements honour the territory of diverse communities by recognizing the **relationship** that exists between the people and land. They also illustrate the way that Indigenous communities practice values of respect and etiquette when visiting a territory that is not their home.
>
> WEMIGWANS AND MACKAY (2023, 4)

Acknowledging the Indigenous territories we are situated within has increasingly become a standard practice at post-secondary and community events. Beyond simply reading the official territorial acknowledgment of their given institution, faculty are encouraged to understand how and why we give acknowledgement and to develop thoughtful and reflexive acknowledgements when used. However, giving a territorial or land acknowledgement is complicated by the critiques of how these practices have become institutionalized and evacuated of their meaning.

> Acknowledging the land that a university occupies or that a gathering takes place on through naming the people who are in Indigenous relationship to that land is a growing social justice practice. Universities are settler institutions in that they occupy Indigenous lands as a result of the growth of property and public space facilitated by modern nation-states.
>
> THERESA STEWART-AMBO AND K. WAYNE YANG (2021, 22)

When acknowledgements are given within a university context in a repeated recitation of the institution's official statement, especially by non-Indigenous members, it can reinforce the settler colonial power structures that shape the relationship between educational institutions and Indigenous peoples and communities (King 2019).

> Considering the havoc that has been created by settlers through the institutionalization of land acknowledgements, we look to Indigenous knowledge systems and practices that teach the necessary ontological orientation of relationality through the practice of gratitude with the human and more-than-human world. We imagine this as a way of cultivating land-based education that centres Indigenous knowledge that includes an unsettling of settler colonialism to support and honour the practice of land acknowledgements as it has always been intended.
>
> JENNIFER WEMIGWANS AND LANNA MACKAY (2023)

To address the above critiques and limitations of non-Indigenous territorial or land acknowledgements, many groups have suggested more thoughtful approaches to crafting and giving acknowledgement. For instance, according to Theresa Stewart-Ambo and K. Wayne Yang, "settler land acknowledgments are not the same as Indigenous protocols... What kinds of relationships do settler acknowledgments actually name? What impacts do practitioners and advocates for acknowledgments hope these statements will have? What impacts do these practices actually have?" (2021, 28).

Online resources, such as native-land.ca, propose similar questions and offer more detailed prompts for building acknowledgements.

> While a brief acknowledgement may work for some groups, others wish to add more intention and detail to acknowledgements. To thoughtfully prepare an in-depth acknowledgement requires time and care. You may find it helpful to reflect on and research questions such as:
>
> 1. Why is this acknowledgement happening?
> 2. How does this acknowledgement relate to the event or work you are doing?
> 3. What is the history of this territory?
> 4. What are the impacts of colonialism here?
> 5. What is your relationship to this territory?
> 6. How did you come to be here?
> 7. What intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond this territory acknowledgement?
>
> **TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**
> NATIVE-LAND.CA

While critiques of land acknowledgements require careful reflection on what role non-Indigenous people play in upholding settler colonialism, Stewart-Ambo and Yang suggest that we reject "formulaic scripts for approaching land acknowledgment … [and] move beyond perfunctory and rote gestures that serve as excuses and alibies for settler institutions" (2021, 42). In doing so, they propose centring "Indigenous relationality, land pedagogy, and accountability to place and Native peoples. Land acknowledgments are not the end; they are a beginning and should lead to greater institutional responsibility" (41).

> If we think of territorial acknowledgments as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that, to some extent, undo Indigenous erasure. I believe this is true as long as these acknowledgments discomfit both those speaking and hearing the words. The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands.... However, as we are already seeing, territorial acknowledgments can become stripped of their disruptive power through repetition. The purpose cannot merely be to inform an ignorant public that Indigenous peoples exist and that Canada has a history of colonialism.
>
> CHELSEA VOWEL

STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Strategy: Decolonization and Indigenization

Concordia University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) includes a list of specific **strategies for decolonization**. Faculty who are not already teaching or working from an Indigenous framework can consider how they incorporate Indigenous content in their courses by attending both institutional and off-campus workshops training on decolonization and Indigeneity, and researching educational resources.

You may find the following areas emphasized in gender and sexuality pedagogical contexts helpful in developing your own teaching approach to decolonizing and indigenizing curriculum:

1. Focusing on Indigenous history and contemporary issues in Indigenous society, culture, politics and knowledge – including local Indigenous communities and their history and contemporary society, culture, politics, and knowledge;
2. Learning about gender and sexuality through Indigenous knowledge systems, traditions, and frameworks;
3. Understanding the relationship between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy;
4. Self-education on how to incorporate relevant and appropriate curriculum and pedagogy in courses that examine the role of Indigenous knowledge systems and settler colonialism by engaging with contemporary research produced by and about Indigenous societies,

cultures, and politics and knowledge. Including but not limited to:

- decolonization;
- Indigenous resurgence;
- Indigenous sovereignty;
- Indigenous cultural production and activism; and
- Indigenous knowledge systems and traditions (when developed and/or presented by Indigenous communities).

Emphasis should be placed on:

1. Respecting the traditions distinct to Indigenous communities (i.e. not universalizing or generalizing knowledge traditions, systems, practices, or histories);
2. Drawing on knowledge produced by Indigenous scholars, peoples, nations, and communities whenever possible (rather than drawing exclusively on knowledge produced on Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous scholars); and
3. Prioritizing ongoing and thoughtful engagement with Indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories (rather than tokenizing them, i.e., beyond simply adding an "Indigenous" topic week to a course).

Challenge: Cultural Appropriation & Ethnic Fraud

Debates have emerged about the role of cultural appropriation, self-identification, self-indigenization, and ethnic fraud in post-secondary institutions (**Leroux 2019**). In many fields, including sexuality studies, a number of scholars and public figures have been at the centre of controversies around accusations of false identity claims and the

appropriation of Indigenous cultures, such as non-Indigenous people using the term "Two-Spirit." Students are often familiar with these debates and have strong views and perspectives in discussing such cases. Further, Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and scholars may be differently positioned institutionally; some might experience these cases as acts of colonization; others may feel their own identity and belonging called into question—especially when considering the legacy of federal assimilationist policies that organized Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples through the Indian Act, residential school system, 60s scoop, and child welfare system.

Faculty teaching this material should familiarize themselves with the authors and texts they use as part of preparation for class. This is especially important when faculty choose to use texts by authors who have been publicly named by Indigenous communities as falsely representing their membership, status, or belonging. In these cases, faculty should exercise care and attention to how these texts are introduced in the class by explaining the context around controversies and accusations, explaining why these texts are being used, and facilitating space for difficult discussions in class.

For further discussion on navigating difficult discussions in the classroom, see our section **Navigating Difficult Pedagogical Dynamics**.

Learning about Violence Enacted on Indigenous Peoples

In many fields, such as social work, history, education, and gender and sexuality studies, learning about Indigenous peoples involves learning about violence. Indigenous students are likely to find themselves in a difficult situation when

learning about historic and contemporary violence enacted against Indigenous peoples in classes primarily populated by non-Indigenous students and/or a non-Indigenous professor. In such cases, repeated exposure to Indigenous content as it relates to violence can be harmful to Indigenous students (**D'Arcangelis, Gamache, Hrynyk and Lennon 2024**). Faculty drawing on this kind of content should consider balancing learning about violence enacted on Indigenous peoples with content that illustrates Indigenous self-determination, governance, culture, and knowledge production.

Resources

Decolonization and Indigenization

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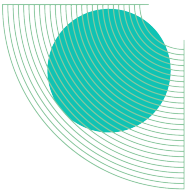
Access to this chapter's Zotero

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE CLASSROOM



Under the rubric of **EDI: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion** (sometimes also listed as JEDI: Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion or EDID: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization), many post-secondary institutions have begun taking steps to address longstanding structural and systemic inequalities in their educational settings, including:

1. Disproportionately small numbers of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized faculty and staff in most departments;
2. Lack of representation among upper administrators;
3. Pay inequities;
4. Uneven recognition of what constitutes "work" (e.g. community-based research, mentorship, supporting marginalized students),
5. Workplace microaggressions;
6. Backlash against faculty and students who try to bring about institutional accountability and change; and
7. Failure to recruit and retain a diverse student body.

More troubling, debates about "woke" culture, political correctness, and other forms of backlash against attempts to make institutions more inclusive risk eliding the continued systemic violence within post-secondary education (**Curtis 2021**).

The following examines how institutional policies around EDI, anti-racist praxis, and racial justice emerge in the classroom and offers insights and strategies for integrating meaningful actions in our teaching to resist tokenism.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment questions for this section are **available in the Appendix**.

EDI AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Initiatives to bring EDI into post-secondary institutions often focus on gestures such as including EDI statements on hiring job ads, asking job candidates to discuss diversity in their job materials or providing anti-bias training to hiring and search committees. Feminist and Black scholars have critiqued the institutionalization of diversity and related concepts, such as intersectionality, for domesticating the radical and transformative critical work of these concepts. For instance, Jennifer C. Nash argues, "The work of diversity … is not meant to transform social institutions but to insert bodies into existing structures and even to engage in 'rebranding an organization'" (**2019, 24**). Similarly, research on racism in higher education illustrates how inclusive strategies risk exposing racialized faculty to forms of institutional betrayal (**Dutt-Ballerstadt 2020**). Despite critiques over the impact these initiatives have had on the widescale restructuring of our post-secondary institutions, or worse—compounding harm for marginalized faculty and students (see **Ahmed 2012**; **Nash 2019**) and simply re-centring hegemonic norms—EDI is currently the primary language used by universities to address systemic inequalities. In this way, scholars have called for us to engage in the institution in continued projects for systemic change and transformation (**Wiegman 2016, 93 [PDF]**).

> Calls for equity, diversity, and inclusion are also found within pedagogy and curriculum through calls to diversify curriculum, ensure representation of marginalized and historically excluded groups, and integrate diverse perspectives, knowledge systems, and scholarship from outside the dominant frameworks shaping academic disciplines.

EDI in Pedagogical and Curriculum Design

Although EDI achievements in the university sector are often legible through the diversification of staffing or student enrolment in programs, the biggest challenge universities continue to face is the structural forms of exclusion that are embedded in our institutions through minor changes made in individual hiring and recruitment strategies, and little change to the structures of power and governance that maintain hegemonic control over university administration, complaints processes, evaluation, etc. This is reflected in racially homogenous university administrative bodies; disregard for student, staff, and faculty experiences of racism, ableism, transphobia, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression; and the cultural norms that underpin notions of academic collegiality that set marginalized and historically excluded faculty, students and staff as the problem when voicing concerns and complaints (**Ahmed 2012**). For instance, in Meghan Gagliardi's (**2024**) research on racialized students who take on anti-racism work within institutions, she found that Black and other racialized students are made responsible for the work of anti-racism within higher education settings precisely because anti-racism work has not been made a collective responsibility. For Gagliardi, this has resulted in compounding harm for those most impacted by racism.

What EDI looks like in Pedagogical and Curriculum Design:

Incorporating EDI into your pedagogical practices and curriculum design includes (but is not limited to):

- Conducting curriculum audits to review EDI in academic programs;

- Developing syllabi with diverse authors;
- Integrating community-based perspectives into classroom learning;
- Engaging with knowledge outside of scholarly mediums (e.g. community-based, social movements, social media, etc.);
- Developing new courses and programs with historically excluded groups in focus;
- Hiring faculty and staff specialized in EDI areas and with lived experience to guide curriculum development and revision;
- Using a diverse range of assessment models to meet the different needs and address the barriers that students face;
- Teaching from the perspectives of those historically excluded from academic knowledge production; and
- Integrating student feedback into curriculum design, particularly in areas identified by students as being absent from the program curriculum.

Name Pronunciation

Like respectful practices around gender pronoun use in the classroom (see section **Gender and Pronouns**), using the proper pronunciation of people's names is an important component of ensuring inclusive classrooms and addressing some of the quotidian ways that racism can be enacted in everyday interactions in educational settings. Although it can be difficult to pronounce names in languages one might not be familiar with, the key to respectful interactions is to learn the proper pronunciation of names, practice pronunciation, and develop effective strategies for when you make a mistake.

Consider the following points as better practices of pronunciation and engagement with names in languages you may not be familiar with:

1. Don't assign someone a new name or shorten someone's name to facilitate your pronunciation. Assigning an English name or nickname to a student or colleague can be insulting and a form of racial microaggression.
2. If someone shares a nickname or alternative name for you to use, you can use this name; however, most people appreciate the effort colleagues or teachers make to learn to pronounce their actual names.
3. If you are struggling with pronouncing someone's name, use strategies to help yourself practice proper pronunciation. For instance, record yourself or someone else pronouncing the person's name, and play the recording back privately to help you practice.
4. Look for pronunciation guides online and confirm the correct guidelines for the person in question.

Remember: the more frequently you use people's names, the easier it becomes to adopt proper pronunciation.

If you make a mistake pronouncing someone's name, apologize and adjust your pronunciation. If you are really struggling with pronunciation, you can also let the person know that you'll practice pronunciation, thank them for their patience, and invite them and others to correct you if you make a mistake (if they feel comfortable doing so).

INTERSECTIONAL HARM AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Intersectional Harm

The concept of intersectional harm connects the concept of intersectionality, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (**1991**), with an analysis of population-level state violence (**Spade 2013**).

> *Intersectionality* is an analytic framework that understands systems of oppression as co-constituted rather than discrete. For instance, an additive model of oppression would see racism and sexism as two forms of oppression that are enacted distinctly on a racialized and gendered subject. However, in an intersectional framework, racism and sexism are forms of oppression that can also be co-constituted in the form of racialized sexism and sexist racism. An analysis of intersectional harm, rather than focusing on diversity and/or individual forms of discrimination, identifies the institutional, administrative, state, and structural forms of violence that connect diversely situated people through systemic violence in the form of exploitation, marginalization, criminalization, exclusion, etc.

Understanding historic exclusions and systemic inequalities as forms of administrative violence can help identify common sources for different experiences (e.g. students facing financial precarity may experience harm in their capacity to complete their studies in ways that are different from, but might mirror, students with learning disabilities—such as through barriers to accessing safe and quiet space to study in). This approach interrogates how administrative structures and systems (such as educational policies, funding streams, departmental

culture, campus security, and service provision) enact harm on a wide scale in ways that may be imperceptible to those in positions of power, including faculty, administrators, and management.

Applying Analysis of Intersectional Harm

Although critiques over the appropriation and institutionalization of intersectionality as a concept must be taken seriously (**Nash 2019**), when used in an applied context, such as through an analysis of intersectional harm, the concept can help illustrate how individual instances of discrimination or oppression are not simply isolated, but part of institutional systems, structures, and cultures. Identifying the source of administrative violence can help bring longer-lasting transformation beyond individual punitive measures.

For instance, an incident of racism or transphobia in the classroom is usually interpreted as a problem at the level of individuals implicated in the incident, with solutions that focus on the individual(s) involved. However, through a model of intersectional harm, we can see these individual cases as connected to wider university policies that fail to make departments and the institution accountable. For example, simply stating that a course or department is anti-racist and/or trans-inclusive does not mean that faculty, staff, and students have the skill or capacity to put anti-racism and trans-inclusivity into practice.

While traditional university responses to instances of discrimination focus on individual solutions, an intersectional approach to harm would interpret these incidents as illustrations of systemic and structural inequalities within institutions that can be addressed in ways that transform those systems and structures, such as through:

1. Challenging the status quo within the institution;
2. Creating cultural changes around teaching and interpersonal interaction within departments;
3. Creating clear and transparent accountability mechanisms at all levels of the institution;
4. Centring the voices and perspectives of those most marginalized at the university in guiding priorities for change; and
5. Developing collaborative partnerships that benefit those with the least access to power and resources (e.g. students and communities outside the university).

At an individual level, thinking about intersectional harm can help depersonalize instances of discrimination and inequality in your own classroom through both self-reflection *and* identifying how a form of harm enacted in the classroom is connected to wider systems and structures. In addition to holding oneself and others individually accountable (see section: **Navigating Difficult Pedagogical Dynamics**), this approach can help connect individuals to collective processes for bringing about institutional change, such as by engaging your department in training, professional development, education, and policy work. This approach can also help build skills and tools to empower students, faculty, and staff to actively change learning and work conditions within departments and at educational institutions, such as through cultural change in the form of bystander intervention, collective accountability processes, and shifting cultural norms that are implicitly or explicitly exclusionary or discriminatory.

Racial Justice and Sexuality in Intersectional Classroom Learning

Critical scholarship in sexuality studies has examined the interconnected emergence of racial and sexual discourses through the development of scientific and medical models of racial taxonomy and sex dimorphism through the fields of medicine, psychology, anthropology, and the natural sciences (Gill-Peterson 2018; LaFleur 2018; Schuller 2018; Somerville 1994; Stoler 1995; TallBear 2013-2021). This area of sexuality scholarship aims to challenge modern discourses that see gender, race, and sexuality as discrete and natural categories. The emergence of scientific discourses around race and sex difference thus co-constitute models of population control and management starting in the 19th century through **reproductive violence** (e.g. eugenics policies, sterilization, coercive reproduction, and compulsory heterosexuality and monogamy), **law and criminalization** (e.g. miscegenation, buggery, sodomy, and indecency laws), and **labour exploitation** (e.g. racial segregation, indentured labour, undocumented labour, unpaid and low-waged care labour). Further, scholarship on the history of European colonialism and Indigenous sexualities has illustrated how the introduction of Western sex/gender ideologies—which included anti-sodomy and buggery laws, as well as marriage, property and inheritance laws—was used as part of the colonial project to both regulate colonial populations through civilizational assimilationist policies (i.e. marriage and patriarchal family structures), and eradicate Indigenous gender(s) and sexualities through criminalization, medicalization, and displacement.

Teaching about this history can play an important role in helping students identify and understand the origins of racial and sexual violence, as well as identify larger systems and

structures shaping gender and sexuality in the contemporary context, in addition to current forms of racial violence. The work of racial justice in sexuality studies, and vice versa, therefore connects discipline-specific research and scholarship in sexuality studies to analytic approaches on intersectional harm. Other fields can find similar ways of developing intersectional learning by investigating how forms of violence are co-constituted and co-implicated through historic processes. For instance, the co-constitute histories of ableism, eugenics, and reproductive control.

Racial Justice and Curriculum Violence

When teaching and learning about racial violence, images and stories of violence are often used as pedagogical tools, such as showing videos or images of police killings of Black people when learning about the movement for Black Lives, images of the bodies of refugees washed ashore during the Syrian refugee crisis, stories and coverage of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit people when learning about settler colonialism, historic images and films depicting slavery, war, and genocide, and even fictionalized scenes of torture or sexual violence in literature, film, media, and fine arts. While there may be important pedagogical and political reasons to show violent images and stories in the classroom, such as to serve historical and critical learning, the pedagogical value and use of these images have been debated. Because the circulation of violent imagery risks objectifying the victims of violence, the use of these images and stories in the classroom may also serve to reinforce and re-enact racial violence. This is what some scholars have called ***curriculum violence*** (Jones 2020).

Krista Lynes, Canadian Research Chair in Feminist Media Studies at Concordia, draws on Black scholarship to explain how the circulation of images of racial violence can have psychic costs on racialized viewers and risks reinforcing racism. Lynes argues that images of violence require a frame of engagement that prompts the viewer to act for change. This must be accompanied by acknowledging that these images are "traumatic and potentially potent *if*, and only if, those images are claimed by those whose vulnerability has been exposed."

Krista Lynes' video ***Can I Look at This: Watching Media of Racial Violence***. Hosted on YouTube and made available through the **Decolonial Perspectives and Practices Hub**.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.concordia.ca/teachingresource/?p=1323

You can find more in Lynes' video on the Anti-Racism Pedagogy Project page as part of the **Decolonial Perspectives and Practices Hub**.

Engaging with historic and popular texts that use "charged," "politically incorrect," and "violent" language has increasingly become a point of contention in education. Popular debates and even government intervention have emerged in response to demands from students (as well as faculty and staff) to avoid using (and sometimes stop assigning) texts that

reinforce or replicate racial violence. The backlash against these demands has been polarizing and has focused on dismissing students for being "snowflakes" or part of a new "woke" culture war. From the faculty side, many faculty unions have expressed concern over the concept of academic freedom, with worries that student complaints will have labour implications on hiring practices, contingent faculty, or censorship of academic research and teaching. The unfortunate consequence has been to debate the right to use violent language, images, or texts rather than develop practical skills and strategies for how to engage with these texts and objects in responsible, respectful, and accountable ways.

> There is often no room to include stories of resistance, contribution and triumph when the curriculum is preoccupied with having students simulate what literary and Black Studies scholar Christina Sharpe calls 'the story that cannot be told.
>
> **STEPHANIE P. JONES**
> *Assistant Professor at Grinnell College*

Using Contentious and "Charged" Language in the Classroom

Faculty teaching courses that deal with racial violence should take time to consider and reflect on how differently situated students in the class might be impacted by the objects and texts examined in class. For students who have experienced racial violence and trauma, being in a classroom where learning about racism and racial violence happens with student peers who do not share these experiences can be

especially challenging. For example, non-Indigenous students learning about residential schools for the first time may be distressed or upset by learning about this history and react with strong emotions in the classroom. While such experiences may strengthen empathy and learning for non-Indigenous students, they may have the reverse impact on Indigenous students by further entrenching the centring of non-Indigenous perspectives, experiences, and standpoints.

> This does not mean that these topics should be avoided; rather, faculty should prepare to address multiple ways that students encounter this material, especially those who have experienced racial violence and trauma.

STRATEGIES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Resisting Curriculum Violence

Some strategies for resisting curriculum violence include:

- Using stories of racial violence that are told from the perspectives of those who experienced violence can help anchor learning in approaches that are meaningful to those who have been subjugated.
- When examining a text that uses violent language, consider ways of contextualizing the text to help prepare students for encountering the material (e.g. when reading about eugenics, you might prepare students by letting them know you'll be reading this text to analyze or understand how biological determinism shaped racial inequality in the early 20th century).
- Discussing racism and racial violence should not be avoided, but when discussed, consider:
    - Balancing scenes of victimization with those of resistance, self-determination, liberation, survival, resilience, and/or celebration;
    - Using "content" or "trigger warnings" for this kind of material (**see Trigger Warnings in Navigating Difficult Pedagogical Dynamics**);
    - Invite students who have been directly impacted by this violence to skip certain readings, class screenings, etc. or provide alternative readings that students can choose from.
- Using the **"E.H.R.R: Empathize, Historicize, Remove, then Replace"** method developed by Jamilah Dei-Sharpe, PhD student in Sociology & **Decolonial Hub founder**, Concordia

University:

Empathize

Empathize with the affected population, group or individual(s) by thinking about the potential impact that the content could have on people who have experienced harm before even entering the classroom;

Historicize

Historicize the content and learn more about how/why some content can be harmful and/or violent; make a distinction between violent content and unpleasant content;

Remove

Remove content that is harmful and that does not serve learning from the classroom and course materials—if the semester has already started, discuss with students why the content is being removed;

Replace

Replace the content with something generative and informative, don't simply avoid learning about violence.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

1. Is there another way to learn about this form of violence other than showing images, videos, etc.?
2. Who is at risk of being (re-)traumatized by these scenes?
    - e.g. racialized students watching members of their communities being killed and students who have experienced sexual violence watching scenes of

assault.

3. What preparation work do I need to develop to support student encounters with this material?
    - e.g. providing content warnings, offering alternative material, inviting students to leave, and offering excerpted sections.
4. What support do I need to establish after engaging with this kind of material?
    - e.g. staying late after class or setting aside time at the end of class to debrief, starting the next class with a debrief, reaching out over email, offering dedicated office hours to support, inviting a community elder, health or well-being professional, or other support figure to join the class
5. How can I provide a structure for supporting students who are situated differently in my course?
    - e.g. offering separate debriefing sessions for white and racialized students;
    - offering separate times during class to provide background and support for new learning about racial violence that is optional for students from the communities affected to develop collective knowledge without subjecting racialized students to discussions that may re-enact racial violence.

Common Scenarios & Possible Interventions

Common Scenarios and Possible Interventions [Skip Table]

Example	Example Scenario	Possible Interventions
Racially Charged & Racist Language	A student uses a word in class discussion that is racially charged. It is clear the student does not intend to do harm, but others in class are visibly distressed by the use of this word.	- Remind students that while we might not all share a common language, it is important that in the classroom we develop common forms of communication to ensure we are not unintentionally enacting harm. - Provide clear alternatives to using specific language (e.g., in this class, you can say "the N-word" or refer to the word in the reading as "the racially charged language in this text...")
Racial Microaggressions	While discussing racism in class, one student questions why we are focusing so much on race.	- Encourage students to understand the context and the reasons for focusing on specific topics (e.g., because of the historic exclusion of groups). - Depersonalize the response from the individual student and instead focus on the pedagogical importance of this work and discussion. - Ensure racialized students are not left to defend against racism; take responsibility for facilitating the discussion and intervention.

Example	Example Scenario	Possible Interventions
Race to Innocence	During the discussion, a student shared that they don't think it's fair to talk about white supremacy since there are white people who are not racist, and only some people are white supremacists.	- Help to de-individualize racial concepts, such as whiteness, by focusing on the systemic and structural nature of white supremacy. - Discuss the difference between individual prejudices and systemic racism/ oppression.

Table 1.1 Examples of curriculum violence and offering possible interventions.

Resources

Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion

Ahmed, Sara. 2012. **On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life**. Durham: Duke University Press.

Brown, Brené with Aiko Bethea. 2020. **Inclusivity at Work: The Heart of Hard Conversations**. Podcast. November 9.

Curtis, Christopher. 2021. "**The other side of 'cancel culture': Students open up about racial abuse on campus**." Ricochet. September 17.

Dutt-Ballterstadt, Reshmi. 2020. "**In Our Own Words: Institutional Betrayals**." Inside Higher Ed, March 5, 2020.

Gagliardi, Meghan. 2024. "**Wielding the 'Empowered Student' Narrative: Examining how the Responsibility for Anti-racism is Assigned and Denied in Higher Education**." *Reading the Room: Lessons on Pedagogy and Curriculum from the Gender and Sexualities Studies Classroom*. Ed. Natalie Kouri-Towe. Montreal: Concordia University Press.

Jones, Stephanie. 2020. "**Ending Curriculum Violence**." Teaching Tolerance. Issue 64.

Toolkits for Equity. 2020. **Antiracism Toolkit**.

Wiegman, Robyn. 2016. "**No Guarantee: Feminism's Academic Affect and Political Fantasy [PDF]**." Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice! 37.2 (2): 83–95.

Antiracism Pedagogy Project. The Decolonial Perspectives & Practices Access (DPP) Hub. 2023.

Intersectionality

Carastathis, Anna. 2016. **Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons**. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. **Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color**. Stanford Law Review 43 (6): 1241-1299. (https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039)

Hill Collins, Patricia. 2019. **Intersectionality As Critical Social Theory**. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Hill Collins, Patricia, and Sirma Bilge. 2016. ***Intersectionality***. Key Concepts. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Nash, Jennifer C. 2019. **Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality**. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Spade, Dean. 2013. ***Intersectional Resistance and Law Reform***. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 38 (4): 1031-1055.

On Racism and Sexuality

Gill-Peterson, Jules. 2018. **Histories of the Transgender Child**. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

LaFleur, Greta. 2018. **The Natural History of Sexuality in Early America**. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Schuller, Kyla. 2018. **The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century**. Durham: Duke University Press.

Somerville, Siobhan. 1994. **Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body**. Journal of the History of Sexuality 5 (2): 243–66.

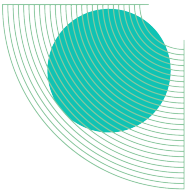
Stoler, Ann Laura. 1995. **Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things**. Durham: Duke University Press.

TallBear, Kim. 2013-2021. **Critical Polyamorist Blog**.

TallBear, Kim. 2018. "**Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family [PDF]**." In *Making Kin Not Population*. Edited by Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Access to this chapter's Zotero

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT PEDAGOGICAL DYNAMICS



Political Contention in the Classroom

Even faculty with years of teaching experience encounter challenges in the classroom. Difficult encounters and dynamics can be stressful and anxiety-inducing for both faculty and students. These situations are made even more difficult when considering the wider political debates that can frame these encounters, including the rise of right-wing, far-right, white nationalist, trans-exclusionary feminist (TERF), and men's rights activism; backlash against critical race studies, gender studies, Marxism, and postmodern theory; reactions to social movements such as #BLM and #MeToo; the repudiation of "woke" culture and labelling people as "snowflakes;" anti-intellectualism; and debates around call-out culture. The following section aims to provide some background and tools for navigating difficult topics, discussions, and encounters in the classroom, with resources for further reading and support.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment questions for this section are **available in the Appendix**.

DIFFICULT TOPICS

While there is no comprehensive description or definition of "difficult topics", the term is generally used to refer to material that raises challenging feelings, disagreements, conflicts, discomfort, triggering experiences of trauma, and connections to systemic inequality and oppression. Some examples of *difficult topics* include:

- Discussing topics relating to lived experiences of oppression, harm, and injustice, such as:
    1. Racism and racial violence;
    2. Sexual violence;
    3. War, political violence, torture, detention, and incarceration;
    4. Ableism;
    5. Medical and/or psychiatric violence; and
    6. Homophobic, transphobic, and other gender- and sexuality-based forms of violence;
- Examining violent content and images;
- Disagreements over the concepts, terms, and language of violence, oppression, harm, discrimination, et cetera;
- Reactions of defensiveness and/or anger when presented with information that contradicts a worldview; and
- Discussions of topics that can be perceived as invalidating a person's experience of harm.

Common Challenges in the Classroom

Below is a compiled list of some common challenges faculty and students of post-secondary educational institutions face when navigating difficult topics in the classroom:

- Students experiencing discrimination, oppression, and violence may expect their courses on these topics or identities to be spaces for their experiences to be recognized and centred.
- Students who experience discrimination, oppression, and violence may be called upon to justify or explain their experiences in ways that risk being coercive, exploitative, or invalidating.
- New and vanguard discourses around appropriate terminology may not be evenly available to students and faculty or could be contested/under debate.
- Students and faculty who are learning difficult knowledge for the first time may resist accepting a shift in their worldview.
- The intersectional ways that violence manifests may make it difficult to understand or recognize how a familiar form of identity or inequality (e.g. sexuality identity) may look and be experienced differently when connected with other forms of violence (e.g. racism).
- Faculty teaching may encounter new ideas around identity through their students and their classes, which they may not be equipped to understand or discuss (e.g. new gender identities or sexual orientations).
- Faculty and students risk tokenizing the experiences shared by other students in the classroom (e.g. a student or professor uses a classmate's gender identity as an example in a class discussion).
- Faculty and students may share personal experiences, whether their own or stories about others, as examples or illustrations of learning in ways that may transgress boundaries or violate ethical principles. Consider:
    - Does the person have permission to share this experience or story with others?
    - Who is served by sharing this story–the person who has experienced harm, or the person telling the story?

- Is there a risk that sharing this story will make someone vulnerable?
- Is there a more appropriate way to convey a similar idea?

Assuming a Common Language in the Classroom

As students learn new concepts, they can develop strong political views and convictions in relation to course materials. When existing knowledge is uneven in the classroom, ***epistemic power*** can sometimes emerge in classroom dynamics, especially when knowledge is used to exercise authority in class discussion.

Concept: Epistemic Power and Epistemic Privilege

Epistemic privilege is the advantage of experience-based knowledge from subjugated standpoints. Feminist standpoint theory proposes that knowledge and understanding of oppression are based on the lived experiences of being oppressed. This, in turn, gives those in subjugated positions the power to know and name systems of injustice, violence, and oppression more readily than those who are in privileged subject positions.

For example, a person who is subject to racism will understand, *by virtue of their experience*, the system and structure of racial inequality more readily than those who are non-racialized.

While students should be encouraged to apply theories, concepts, ideas, and arguments they have developed both within and outside of the classroom, including through lived experiences, the trend to assume that specialized knowledge, for example, of gender and sexuality, should be universally shared rather than part of learning, can create a learning environment that is challenging for students with less familiarity of these topics. For example, students and faculty new to gender and sexuality discourses may not know about non-binary pronoun use or how to apply respectful language conventions in new contexts. Students and teachers alike who are new to inclusive language practices may pose questions using terms that can come across as invalidating, insulting, offensive, or challenging, and some may resist accepting a worldview that challenges their own attachments to gender and sexuality norms.

These tensions can also arise due to intergenerational and cultural differences in language used to describe identity and experience and the history of words in systems of violence (e.g. using terminology like “f*g” or “dyke” may be offensive to some while empowering to others, discussing a song or text by a Black artist that uses the “n” word). At the same time, students may find themselves sharing their experiences of oppression as part of the learning environment in the classroom, only to have those experiences invalidated, dismissed, or tokenized. In both cases, it can be difficult to navigate the tension between lived experience and learning about power and inequality.

Strategies for Fostering an Inclusive Classroom

Fostering a classroom where students are encouraged to share their epistemic privilege while also making space for respectful learning is important in classes grappling with topics relating to identity, inequality, discrimination, violence, and oppression.

The role of the instructor is to help guide and facilitate this process by:

1. **Reframing student interventions** that come across as "difficult" through pedagogical terms to allow for discussion;
2. **De-escalating** and **de-personalizing** the framing of a critique by making it applicable to the entire class or to the topic at hand (i.e. deters debate over a person's experience or identity);
3. **Validating student experiences and contributions** when they bring up or raise "difficult" material to the classroom (e.g. thanking them for sharing, apologizing if you can't give the topic more time or space for discussion in class); and
4. **Reminding students that we do not come to the classroom with the same experiences or knowledge**, and thus, it is important to self-reflect on classroom participation.

Christina Page's open educational resource **Inclusive Pedagogies (2021)**, develops further recommendations for inclusive approaches to classroom design, facilitation, teaching, and learning.

Best Practices for an Inclusive Classroom

Discourage competition and policing in the classroom; instead, ask students to correct, challenge, question, and interrogate one another and the instructor in a way that encourages active learning together rather than demonstrating specialized knowledge. Further, faculty can model reflexivity, self-correction, apology, and sharing experiences of how they worked through comparable or similar forms of "difficult" learning.

Facilitating Difficult Discussions

Students and faculty alike may come to the class with previous experiences with "difficult" learning that are distressing, uncomfortable, or challenging. Defensive reactions and responses are common. When a defensive response comes up, it can help to acknowledge that the topic is bringing up strong reactions and use some of these strategies:

Pause:

- Pause class and discussion to take a few moments to reflect:
    - Identify if time and space are needed for emotional equilibrium and self-regulation (i.e. Do we need to calm down? Do a breathing exercise?);
- Pause the discussion to return to later, making sure to specify when you'll set time to return to this discussion (e.g. let's pause this discussion and take time to reflect, and we'll return to it next class);
- Call for a classroom break;

Acknowledge:

- Acknowledge that the different standpoints and experiences in the classroom are making it difficult to find common ground for discussion;
- That the classroom can also act as a reflection of society so that topics cannot be easily resolved in the classroom because they are not easy to resolve in the world;
- That the classroom can be a space that reinforces systemic violence and affirms your commitment to helping the class work through an understanding of this or offer strategies for how to transform these dynamics;
- That the classroom cannot be a "safe space" and offer ways for everyone to return to a place where they can ensure their own well-being (e.g. to reflect on their needs vs. wants for engaging in the class); and
- Offer opportunities and space for students to share their thoughts and feelings outside of class.

Identify:

- Identify strategies and ways to foster the participation of all students, especially those who have been historically excluded from the classroom; and
- Encourage curiosity and openness towards viewpoints and perspectives that are different by learning about what informs these perspectives and experiences.

SAFE SPACE VS. SAFER SPACE

Discomfort vs Harm in the Classroom

The language of safety can also be weaponized to justify forms of systemic and structural violence; therefore, it is important to identify, interpret, and address concerns around safety through an approach that understands how power and violence shape these encounters.

To help identify what is happening in a difficult encounter, consider the following questions:

1. Who wields power in this situation?
2. How are people's feelings connected to systemic or structural violence?
3. Are feelings of discomfort emerging because power or norms are being challenged or questioned?
4. What are the consequences that correspond to expressions of feeling unsafe? (e.g. material consequences like job loss or expulsion from school, emotional consequences like feeling vulnerable or anxious, political consequences like increased hostility towards a group)
5. Can feelings of unsafety be alleviated with reassurance and acknowledgement, or are interventions required to ensure accountability for potential harm?
6. Is one person or group's safety being leveraged against another?
7. Is there a risk that the language of safety is being weaponized to target a person or group?

Your answers to the above questions can help you determine whether you're dealing with an issue of safety and harm or an

issue of discomfort, conflict, or contestation. Distinguishing between these is necessary because of the danger of weaponizing "safety" when feelings of discomfort are conflated with accusations of harm. For instance, attacks on trans people are often leveraged through claims of "safety" for cisgender people, such as the exclusion of trans people from gendered washrooms. Cisgender people who make these arguments are expressing discomfort with trans people in gendered washrooms, which in turn enacts harm on trans people in the form of transphobic violence and being denied access to basic rights. Similarly, the criminalization of racialized people, substance users, and people facing acute mental health crises is often done in the name of "public safety" or "self-defence," which is then used to justify issuing fines, incarceration, and the use of excessive force, such as police assaults on and killing of unarmed suspects.

Many students and faculty aspire to see the classroom as a safe space or to create safe spaces in the classroom. Although prioritizing the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff is of central importance in the classroom, the assumption that the classroom can be safe raises some key challenges that can undermine the practice of safety.

These challenges can include:

- Learning that challenges our current values, sense of self, and worldview;
- Learning that connects to repressed trauma in unexpected ways;
- Learning about topics one may be resistant to knowing (e.g. colonialism, white supremacy, ableism, etc.);
- Learning about violence, discrimination, injustice, and oppression;
- Being confronted or challenged on our own power/privilege;
- Being accused of discrimination or harm; and
- Being exposed, whether intentionally or not, to harm,

discrimination, violence, and/or oppression in the classroom.

Building Safer Spaces

To help build safety in the classroom, you can draw on a collective approach by working with students, including working through the above questions, to help build a *safer* classroom rather than assuming safety from the outset. This can be accomplished collectively through class-generated discussions around differentiating between discomfort and harm, developing ground rules for engaging in difficult discussions, drafting class contracts that outline and make transparent the consequences for harm in the classroom, and developing terms of engagement for how to work through difficult and uncomfortable discussions and encounters, alongside your own policies, outlined in the syllabus or other policy documents.

Recognizing Harm

While the above questions can help you identify potential forms of unintentional harm in the classroom, there are also insidious forms of harm that can emerge in educational environments. Intentionally trying to traumatize or harm people through the classroom is an act of violence, and incidents such as these should be addressed swiftly by:

- Interrupting the behaviour,
- Holding people responsible for their actions (including our own),
- Proposing resolution through apology and change in behaviour,
- Seeking accountability both within and outside the classroom, and
- Following up with those who may have been harmed after the incident.

However, in many circumstances in the classroom, harm is an unintentional consequence of power inequalities. In these cases, the person who has harmed others may not be aware that their actions have harmful consequences or may have difficulty recognizing this harm due to feelings of shame, defensiveness, or dissonance in their sense of self (e.g. but I'm a good person, I didn't mean to offend you, etc.). In these cases, it can help to depersonalize the harm by identifying the connection between the individual action and wider systemic forms of harm and encouraging the practices of apology, accountability and responsibility.

APOLOGY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Responding to Emotionally Charged Moments in the Classroom

While faculty are not trained to respond to psychological and emotional distress, the classroom can be a space that brings up charged responses, especially when discussing topics that relate to lived experiences of violence, injustice, and oppression. While faculty should direct students who experience distress to access support from trained professionals—such as through campus wellness centres, psychological services, peer support services, sexual violence support services, and culturally relevant support services—faculty can also play a pivotal role in how emotions are navigated in the classroom. In our research on trigger warnings in higher education, my co-investigators and I found that requests for trigger warnings often had more to do with desires to have emotions taken seriously in the classroom rather than an expectation that uncomfortable or difficult topics should be avoided (**Dyer et al. 2024**). Given that emotions do arise in the classroom, sometimes in unexpected ways, developing strategies for addressing the emotional dynamics that can emerge in the classroom can help equip both faculty and students with better tools for navigating and responding to difficult emotions like anger, sadness, fear, and shame when they arise.

Although few people in universities are trained to respond to emotionally charged situations, classrooms can benefit from both students and teachers developing and learning foundational skills in communication and conflict resolution through de-escalation, accountability, and apology. For instance, many difficult encounters in the classroom can be resolved quickly by accepting responsibility for our actions and

apologizing in meaningful rather than superficial ways; conversely, a small encounter can spiral into a major conflict when emotions are met with defensiveness, aggression, or denial/avoidance. Learning how to be accountable, how to apologize, and how to facilitate this process can go a long way in fostering an engaged learning environment that allows students and faculty alike to work through conflicts and difficult emotions that emerge.

Things to Consider:

- The most vocal person in the room may not be the one who has been harmed.
- You might never know who was harmed in the classroom, they may never share their experience with you.
- You may learn about harm in the classroom from third parties, other students, colleagues, your department chair, or an administrator; this may happen long after the class has ended.
- Not all emotionally charged moments are harmful; it is important to distinguish between a difficult emotion or discomfort and a situation in which harm has been done.
- You can approach both discomfort and harmful experiences in a similar way, but the consequences should be different.
- **Discomfort requires reassurance**, space, time, and support to work through the emotions.
- **Harm requires responsibility**, accountability, justice, and transformation of the behaviour.

Strategies for De-escalation and Acknowledgement

1. Ensure you are feeling emotionally stable enough to facilitate a difficult class encounter. If you aren't, you can always pause the class and commit to revisiting the discussion at another determined time. However, it is important that difficult encounters in the classroom are not avoided indefinitely. This can compound and escalate harm and discomfort.
2. Sometimes it is okay for difficult emotions to come up during class. Acknowledge this. Sharing that this is normal and okay can help students grapple with difficult feelings. If you feel comfortable, you can share your own experience of grappling with difficult feelings and how you came out of it.
3. Encourage empathy: encourage students to talk with trusted friends and loved ones, and encourage them to do something kind for themselves after a difficult emotional encounter.
4. Interrupt a situation where escalating emotions risk disrupting learning; offer a time-out and space and time outside of class to continue the discussion, follow up, etc.
5. Depersonalize the conflict by connecting the individual circumstances to wider systems and structures; help to illustrate how the current situation is part of larger systems and can be challenging to address within the limited space of the classroom.
6. Turning to course learning, material, texts, and concepts can help anchor the interpretation and analysis of difficult emotional experiences beyond personal feelings.
7. Validate the emotions and feelings of *all parties* without staying neutral on the analysis/interpretation of those experiences. The reactions people are having are their own, and it is okay to feel difficult emotions; however,

validating emotional experiences is not a validation of an interpretation or understanding of that experience.

8. Remind everyone that while it's okay to react emotionally, we have a responsibility to translate our reactions in the classroom in a way that fosters communication and collective learning. Sometimes we learn things that challenge our emotional experiences and reactions.
9. Affirm that it's okay for emotions to become overwhelming and normalize taking space, both individually and as a class. Encourage students to take space and time to find grounding and self-regulate or gain equilibrium when difficult emotions emerge in ways that might disrupt participation in class.

Acknowledging harm

Invalidating the feelings and emotions of people who are feeling distressed will likely escalate a situation, even if emotions are not aligned with the circumstances. If you do not agree with the perspective(s) being shared, consider validating feelings rather than thoughts/ideas. You can return to engaging with thoughts/ideas once they have regained emotional equilibrium and can approach a conversation more openly.

If you are the one responsible for harm:

Accept Responsibility

Explicitly accept responsibility for causing harm.

e.g., *'I acknowledge that when I ...' 'I caused harm in this way...'*

Commit to Reflection

Commit to reflecting on it. You don't have to have an answer or a solution right away.

> e.g., *'I am going to take the next few days to reflect on what just happened and will follow up with you by the next class.'*

Follow Up

Follow up on how you'll take accountability and what changes you will make.

> e.g., 'After *the last class, I realize I should have done...'* instead of... '*Moving forward, I'm going to do...'* when similar situations arise.

Invite Feedback on Improving Your Accountability

Invite those who have been harmed to share what kind of accountability they would like to see and take steps to enact those things to the best of your ability.

> e.g., *'I recognize that I may not have a full picture to understand how to do better. If you feel comfortable doing so, I welcome you to share with me what kind of accountability and steps you would like to see me take.'*

Be honest about what you cannot change

Be honest about what you don't have the capacity to change.

> e.g., *'I understand that my actions have caused harm, and while I want to do better, I am struggling to meet these responsibilities; this is what I can commit to working on now, and this is what I commit to working on once my capacity to do so is available.'*

Accept that those you harmed may not forgive you

Accept that those who have been harmed may not forgive you or accept your response.

> e.g., *'I understand that you are not forgiving me. I accept that we will not be able to continue working together. These are the ways I can facilitate a process where you are not required to work with me.*

IF SOMEONE ELSE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HARM:

Ask them to be accountable

> e.g., *'Can you acknowledge your actions by identifying what happened... and describe the consequence of your actions...?'*

Invite Reflection

Invite them to take time and space to reflect on the situation outside of class.

> e.g., *'I know this is difficult. Would it help to take time and space to think about this and return to our discussion next week?'*

Share resources or support them in taking accountability

If you have the capacity, you can also offer to share resources or support them in acknowledging harm and taking responsibility.

> e.g., *'If it helps, I have resources I can share with you. I'm available later today or tomorrow to talk.'*

Help identify harm and/or triggers

Help **identify whether harm has been made or people are responding to prior anxieties, insecurities, and vulnerabilities** that are being triggered in the classroom.

This is especially the case in situations where someone is currently in crisis or heightened anxiety, where reactions may escalate quickly in ways that are disproportionate to the scenario.

In these cases, encourage the person to gain emotional equilibrium. Acknowledging that they are dealing with difficult emotions can help someone come back to the situation and be able to communicate.

> e.g., *'Why don't you take a break'* or *'let's breathe together slowly to a count of ten.'*

Remember: It is easier for people to be accountable to one another when they are not feeling personally attacked, defensive, or invalidated.

While some students may welcome support, others may want to resolve conflicts independently, with loved ones, or with community members. You can gauge if a student requests space by offering support and options, respecting their decision rather than instructing them on what to do.

How to Apologize

Incorporating skill building in accountability and apology into your curriculum can be one way of developing the collective capacity to tackle difficult encounters in the classroom more easily. There are multiple resources available outlining the process of an effective apology which are easy to read, accessible, and freely available. (See **Navigating Difficult Pedagogical Dynamics Resources** for a list of some of these available resources.)

1. **Apologizing should involve saying "I'm sorry"** and

should come **from a place of reflection**. An apology should also illustrate an understanding of the harm done and explain how the person apologizing will take steps and actions to do differently moving forward, including what actions they commit to in making these changes.

2. An apology **cannot be forced or coerced**, and apologizing may be difficult in a cultural context where competition is prioritized over cooperation and vulnerability. In a context where someone refuses to take responsibility, accountability, and/or apologize for causing harm, steps may have to be taken for there to be consequences for harmful behaviour to ensure the safety and well-being of others. For example, removing the person's access to others to avoid continued harm or seeking help from colleagues or university services to intervene.

A common pitfall in attempting an apology is displacing responsibility on the party that has been harmed, such as: "I'm sorry you felt that way; it wasn't my intention." This approach places the blame on the person who was harmed instead of showing responsibility and accountability on the part of the person who is apologizing. Being clear with the language and wording is, therefore, important in apologizing, such as: "I'm sorry that my actions made you feel that way, and while it wasn't my intention, I recognize how and why what I did harmed you."

TRIGGER WARNINGS

"Trigger warnings," also referred to as "content warnings" or "classroom warnings," are a practice whereby a warning is given in advance of reading or viewing content that includes graphic descriptions or depictions of violence. These warnings may appear in the syllabus and may be announced in or prior to class. The function of the warning is twofold: first, to help students prepare for encounters with violent content, especially in the event that such encounters trigger post-traumatic stress responses (PTSD) or distress that may interfere with learning, and second, to give students autonomy to determine whether or not, and in what context, they choose to view or engage with content that depicts violence.

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality programs have engaged in various practices of warning for many years, particularly coming out of work on gender and sexual violence prevention and responses. In recent years, however, trigger warnings have gained popularity across disciplines and have come under political debate on higher education, with critics arguing that trigger warnings are a form of censorship or are infantilizing. Some research on trigger warnings has shown they are ineffective (**Boysen 2017**; **Bryce et al. 2022**). However, other research suggests that trigger warnings are more about the politics they signal to students, than the effect of the warning itself; for instance, by illustrating consideration over student wellbeing and the effects of learnings about violence (**Bedera 2021**; **Carter 2015**; **Dyer et al 2024**; **Kouri-Towe 2023**).

Faculty who are not already using trigger warnings in their classes may encounter students who request warnings in a class in advance of engagement with violent material, or they

may react to violent material with demands for instituting warnings in the future. Further, some have advocated for using trigger warnings beyond depictions of violence to also include warnings before engaging with a text or content that is invalidating the lives and experiences of oppressed groups (e.g. transphobic content or texts written by "TERFs" – Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists), or depictions of oppression more broadly.

Regardless of your own views on trigger warnings, faculty across disciplines are now in a position where we must reflect on what strategies we use in our teaching when grappling with content that may be difficult. Rather than arguing for a universal model of giving or refusing trigger warnings, consider how potentially difficult material is incorporated into your courses and identify strategies you can use to help your classes navigate these challenges. Reflect on what strategies you'll use early on; talk with colleagues to determine disciplinary norms, common strategies, and areas for change; talk with students about their needs and requests; and share how and why you might be experimenting with different models and approaches to solicit feedback on how effective they are. Sharing that you are trying to learn how to deal with difficult material in the classroom can invite students to collaborate in that process.

Challenges in Applying Warnings

The use of warnings may appear to be a best practice in some contexts; however, there are contexts where warnings may not be appropriate or where warnings bypass more effective pedagogical approaches, such as:

- Cases where warnings about encountering material

discussing systemic violence and oppression cause privileged students to avoid learning from those materials
    - e.g. white students leaving a class that discusses racism; non-Indigenous students choosing not to read at text on residential schools; people dismissive of sexual violence;
- Where offering warning functions to exclude people who have been traumatized from learning
    - e.g. victims of violence are told to leave the classroom rather than creating an environment where their experiences of violence are taken into consideration in the classroom;
- Where calls for warnings are used to censor or silence discussion of systemic violence and oppression
    - e.g. under the pretense of religious freedom, a student says they should not be required to learn about homosexuality;
- Situations where giving a warning serves as a justification for using or showing material that is explicitly violent with little pedagogical purpose
    - i.e. another text, material, example, or object would help with learning just as easily; and
- Contexts where the university has failed to address and change publicly known conditions of systemic violence within the institution and where warnings are likely to be interpreted as complicity with institutional betrayal
    - e.g. the university has failed in its commitment to sexual violence prevention on campus.

While psychology research on trigger warnings has found that they are ineffective at preventing post-traumatic responses in students because triggers are highly specific to each individual or may be unpredictable (e.g. a smell or sound can

trigger a post-traumatic response) (**Boysen 2017**), *psychoanalytic approaches* may provide helpful insights into the use of warnings.

In the area of psychoanalysis, the idea that one can avoid a traumatic response by preparing for it fails to understand how trauma functions (**Saketopoulou 2023**). Instead of expecting people to master their emotions in the classroom, psychoanalytic approaches to education scholars, such as Deborah Britzman (**1998**), propose an approach to education that recognizes the role of discomfort in learning. Rather than working to prevent difficult feelings from arising in education, this kind of approach acknowledges the potential for difficult emotions and trauma that can arise in spaces like the classroom and welcomes them as part of the learning environment. Although managing and facilitating charged emotional dynamics is not easily incorporated into most teaching approaches, acknowledging something difficult in a learning environment can go a long way in helping those in the classroom work through challenging classroom dynamics.

Other scholars argue that more than just giving students an option for accommodation calls for warnings (trigger warnings) signal a need for trauma-informed (**Bedera 2021**) and disability-justice-based (**Carter 2015**) approaches to education.

> Survivors who experience institutional betrayal are at greater risk of anxiety, depression, sleep problems, sexual problems, and dissociation… The risk of institutional betrayal is especially pronounced among people of colour (e.g., Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour…) and queer people (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, or queer people…). Institutional betrayal primarily takes place in organizations that a survivor trusted, making a classroom with a beloved professor a place where institutional betrayal is particularly likely and especially harmful.
>
> NICOLE BEDERA

Rather than focusing on the warning itself, Bedera argues that faculty and educational institutions should work to prevent *institutional betrayal*, which includes the "refusal to take proactive steps in preventing or addressing victimization, responding inadequately to claims of trauma, minimizing the severity of a victim's experience, making it difficult to report traumatic experiences, punishing victims in some way for coming forward, and creating an environment in which similar traumatic events seem more likely" (**Bedera, 268**). This suggests that rather than focusing exclusively on warnings in individual classrooms, faculty can contribute to institutional change by helping to address the pervasive forms of violence that shape post-secondary educational contexts and advocate for institutional accountability beyond the classroom itself.

Strategies for Warnings or Navigating Difficult Content

Take these frameworks and apply them to your course planning:

Plan

Plan in advance how you'll address, intervene, support, and facilitate discussion that engages with difficult material, violent content, disclosure from students, or other challenges in the course. Even though you cannot predict these scenarios, having a plan can better prepare you if and when circumstances arise. This should also involve familiarizing yourself with resources available to support students and a plan for yourself in case a disclosure affects your own well-being (sometimes called *vicarious or secondary trauma*).

Provide

Check in with yourself before class. Are you feeling emotionally regulated, agitated, or dissociated? This can help you reflect on what your own capacity is as you enter the class and help you identify whether you need to adjust your plan for class based on your capacity that day.

Prepare

Prepare a list of resources on and off campus, with descriptions of how these resources can be used. Remind students of these resources throughout the semester, and perhaps even invite someone from one of these organizations to come speak in the class about the services they provide.

Be Clear

Be clear early in the course about what kind of difficult or violent content you may be engaging within the course and

why this material is being included.If including material that uses violent language or ideas as part of learning about the ideologies of violence and oppression (e.g. reading a historic text on eugenics), explain beforehand how that text is being used and emphasize that reading the text is not an endorsement of those texts, authors, or ideas.

Make an Agreement

Invite students to set out a model for how they'd like difficult material to be introduced, such as:

1. what processes would they like you to follow,
2. what conditions of engagement would they like from their peers,
3. what support would they like,
4. what kinds of alternatives would be helpful to have available, and
5. what should be done when someone makes a mistake.

If someone does share their experience of trauma in class, follow Nicole Bedera's suggestion to "**model a respectful response to the disclosure**, such as thanking the survivor for sharing their story and allowing the survivor to choose when to engage with the class after making their original comment. Treat the survivor as an expert on their own trauma… but avoid requiring survivors to continue to educate" (Bedera 2021, 5).

CALL-OUT VS. CALL-IN

Sometimes called “cancel culture,” the use of “calling out” instances of harm and oppressive or politically contentious language and behaviour is a widely used strategy in social and political spaces, particularly when a marginalized group is addressing those in positions of power (e.g., politicians, authority figures, etc.)

> Call-outs are justified to challenge provocateurs who deliberately hurt others or for powerful people beyond our reach. Effectively criticizing such people is an important tactic for achieving justice. But most public shaming is horizontal and done by those who believe they have greater integrity or more sophisticated analyses. They become the self-appointed guardians of political purity.
>
> LORETTA ROSS

Call-outs can also emerge in the classroom, directed at fellow students, faculty, staff, and guest speakers. The practice of calling out is usually deployed as an intervention in manifestations of (intentional or unintentional) violent, harmful, or oppressive behaviour. The goal of a call-out is to interrupt harm that is currently occurring or to hold people and institutions accountable for past harm(s). Call-outs may be effective political strategies, but they can also be used against people with little access to power in ways that can shame and undermine transformation, learning, and conflict resolution. As such, there is a risk that call-outs can be used as a tool of lateral violence.

Calling-In

Calling in is sometimes suggested as an alternative to calling out, which involves inviting people into conversation in a supportive manner to encourage accountability and transformation of behaviour. This is usually done in a more private setting, making the task of calling in a technique for helping people change rather than mobilizing public scrutiny, critique, or shame to demand accountability. Instead of seeing either of these strategies as better or worse, it can help to consider 'calling out' and 'calling in' different strategies for different circumstances.

Because the classroom is an environment where students cannot be expected to come with the same levels of knowledge, experience, or skills in navigating politically charged material, calling out is generally discouraged in the classroom, except in circumstances where overtly violent or continuous harmful language and behaviour persists after attempts are made to encourage modifying this behaviour. When call-outs are directed at a teacher, the cause may be that students can have greater expectations of faculty to model inclusive language and behaviour, and thus call-outs may be directed towards teachers for not meeting student expectations or requests for modifications in class.

> *Calling in* has been proposed as an alternative to calling out: calling in means speaking privately with an individual who has done some wrong in order to address the behaviour without making a spectacle of the address itself. In the context of call-out culture, it is easy to forget that the individual we are calling out is a human being and that different human beings in different social locations will be receptive to different strategies for learning and growing.
>
> ASAM AHMED

Strategies for Managing Call-Outs

Call-Outs Directed at Students:

Deindividualize the call-out

Unless a specific student has intentionally caused harm, a call-out can be a learning opportunity for all students in the classroom to collaboratively reflect on how oppressive systems take shape in our everyday interactions.

Discourage a back-and-forth debate between students

Intervene in a highly personalized discussion by asking students to course materials. Pause personalized debates and invite relevant parties to discuss this further with you after class.

Share in knowledge-building

If external concepts, ideas, or resources are brought into the discussion, ask students to share referenced ideas and the

texts rather than assuming common knowledge is shared in the class. This can help deindividualize the discussion and encourage peer learning.

Encourage and model self-reflexive practices

Encourage and model self-reflexive practices, like apologizing if we make mistakes, recognizing the limits of our own knowledge and experience, helping to understand individual experiences within systemic and structural terms.

Introduce the concept of "calling in"

Introduce the concept of calling in to help continue addressing the problems raised in the call-out in a more supportive environment to help bring about resolution and change.

Call-Outs Directed at Faculty:

Take a breath

Don't get defensive. Use your response to being called out as an opportunity to model respectful classroom behaviour.

Give yourself time

You have every right to give yourself time to think about what has been said and reflect on what happened in the class. For example, "I hear you, I need some time to reflect on this, I want you to know that I'm going to think about this and will follow up with you a little later." Ensure you return to this in class after thinking it over.

Think about the call-out

Spend time thinking about the call-out, **put yourself in the student's shoes**:

- Why might they have reacted to you this way?
- Is there something in your own behaviour in the classroom that students are reacting to that you can adjust?
- Is the call-out not really about you but something larger (e.g. a feeling of urgency related to a social event or movement)?
- Is there a way to engage with students to facilitate open communication rather than calling out?

Use this reflection to help shape your response rather than predict the cause of the call-out.

Follow up

Make sure you follow up on being called out. If an apology or accountability is necessary, make sure the relevant parties receive your response as soon as possible, or let them know when they can expect your follow-up.

Be transparent

Offer transparency and explanations for your responses and reflection. How you respond can encourage engagement in class or lead to students checking out because their concerns were not taken seriously. You don't have to agree with your students, but you should be open to discussing why you might disagree with them and help come up with a pathway for moving forward in class together despite this disagreement.

Respect their boundaries

Sometimes a person who calls you out is not interested in following up with you or does not want to hear your apology. If this is the case, **thank them for their intervention and respect the boundary they are setting** (i.e. do not pursue or insist someone talks with you further or hears your apology.)

If the call-out is unrelated to course material

If the call-out is unrelated to the course material or how you're conducting class, ask the student(s) if they would be willing to speak with you more about this after class, so that class can continue.

If the call-out is related to the course materials

If the call-out is related to the course material, **invite students to engage with the material of the call-out in relation to the course readings**, redirect to the course readings and materials/topics to help frame the call-out in pedagogical terms (e.g. a student finds a text racist, which may be an opportunity to analyze how racism can function through subtle forms in language, get the class to dissect the text).

If "calling out" is a norm in your department, develop strategies for encouraging call-outs to be redirected into accountability, analysis, critique, and dialogue through class activities, readings, and exercises.

Abuse of "call-outs"

If you suspect that call-outs are being abused in your classroom as a way to bully, intimidate, or harass another student or yourself, seek support from your colleagues, chair, administration, etc. However, just because a person may feel intimidated by a call-out does not mean that they are being harmed. Reflecting on the power dynamics at play in the call-out can help identify whether this is harassing behaviour or holding people responsible and accountable.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INSTITUTIONAL POWER

Academic Freedom, Institutional Power, and Conflicts in the Classroom

Recent debates on trigger warnings, difficult material, call-outs, and other challenging classroom dynamics have linked these issues to questions of academic freedom (**Curtis 2021**). Academic freedom, a scholarly principle introduced in the modern university system in the mid-20th century, protects faculty and students pursuing research and inquiry on topics that may challenge dominant paradigms or political interests (e.g., protecting people from being fired without cause, imprisoned, etc.)

When arguments over academic freedom position students and faculty as opponents in debates over new discourses and norms in education, it is helpful to consider how institutional power is at play and whether repression is being exercised. You can use the following questions to help identify if you are facing a threat to your academic freedom, are being called to account for potential harm you have caused, or are caught up in a conflict you are unprepared for. How you respond might be more effectively determined by reflecting on what is happening rather than your first reaction to a charged or difficult interaction.

Questions to ask

Who holds institutional power in this situation?

Are there contexts where the parties involved hold different positions simultaneously?

For example, a part-time faculty member may also be a student; a full-time professor may be disabled and experience institutional ableism while simultaneously being protected by tenure; a student who is a vocal activist was targeted by the university for disciplinary proceedings; an alumni of the university with ties to a powerful lobby organization.

Identifying who holds power and in what capacity can illustrate whether a situation is simply uncomfortable or actually threatens your academic freedom.

What is the nature of the demand?

Are there requests for you to adjust your teaching or demands for you to be fired? Is this a call for accountability and responsibility for your actions, or is it part of a wider political campaign to silence and intimidate faculty

Recognizing the nature of the demand can help you identify whether this is an attack on your academic freedom (as in the case of political campaigns to silence and intimidate faculty or calls for removal without cause) or a demand for accountability and a request for you to adapt and change your approach as a consequence of harm you've done (whether intentional or not.)

What is the likely consequence of these demands?

Are you at risk of losing your job? Has your research funding been revoked or not awarded without explanation? Or are you being asked to change your teaching or receive professional development training in response to complaints?

The consequence may be impacted by who holds power (e.g. a campaign to have you fired led by students may represent a smaller threat to your academic freedom compared to major lobbyists who are connected to the Board of Governors or university President and Provost).

If the consequence is a request for you to reflect on your own work and adapt accordingly, then it is likely not a violation of your academic freedom. **If the consequence is that your job is threatened or you are reprimanded for your research, then it's more likely your academic freedom is at stake.** This is a good time to contact your union or seek legal counsel.

Being criticized, having people disagree with you, facing consequences for violating the rights of others, or being told that you've harmed someone is **not** a form of censure or a violation of academic freedom. Being fired, having a job offer revoked, or facing disciplinary measures for conducting your research and teaching because the government or university administration are seeking to suppress your work for political reasons is a violation of your academic freedom.

Differentiating between these two scenarios will help you choose what course of action to follow in cases where a call-out is more than just a form of disagreement or conflict in the classroom.

Resources

Navigating Difficult Discussion and Topics

Atom Fire Arts Cooperative. 2020. ***How to Share Space: Creating Community in Classrooms and Beyond***. Building Accountable Communities Project (Project NIA).

Curtis, Christopher. 2021. "**The Other Side of 'Cancel Culture': Students Open Up About Racial Abuse on Campus**." *Ricochet*. February 17.

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Apology

Atom Fire Arts Cooperative. 2020. ***How to Share Space: Creating Community in Classrooms and Beyond***. Building Accountable Communities Project (Project NIA). [*See page 12 for a discussion on apology.*]

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Kouri-Towe, Natalie. 2023. "**Affective Pedagogies, and Pedagogies of Affect. Gender, Solidarity, and the Classroom in the Trigger Warning Debates**." In *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Affect*. New York: Routledge.

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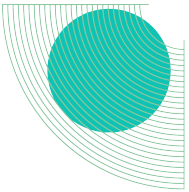
Access to this chapter's Zotero

ACCESS AND DISABILITY JUSTICE



Accessibility in Higher Education

Accessibility at post-secondary educational institutions has long been articulated through a service-based approach to classroom and educational accommodations, such as providing exam-taking services, note-takers, specialized accessibility software and equipment, adapting physical spaces for mobility, and specialized advising to students who have documented disabilities requiring accommodation. However, disabled faculty, students and activists have argued that this model of education makes disabled people a problem for the institution to provide solutions for. Instead, our institutions must understand how the structure of education functions to exclude disabled people, who must then advocate for their inclusion.

Increasingly, access/accessibility offices have turned to the language of universal accessibility—a design-based approach that attempts to remove all barriers to full participation of all students by starting from a model at the outset that allows all people to participate without barriers. While universal accessibility is the current best practice, it remains limited to design-based approaches and does not provide tools for the political work of transforming how our institutions relate to disability.

> Disability does not look any particular way; it is an umbrella of diversity. Disability is universal – part of most everyone's life course, crosscuts other lines of difference. Disclosure: students may be unwilling to disclose their disability status; never 'out' a student. Disability pedagogy is, above all else, flexible. It's a nonlinear process, not a rulebook.
>
> JESS WAGGONER, HAILEE YOSHIZAKI-GIBBONS, ASHLEY MOG, KRYSTAL CLEARY, AND MARGARET PRICE

Newer political approaches to disability focus increasingly on diversity rather than universality. For instance, neurodiversity frameworks move away from diagnosis towards recognizing the wide array of neurological, behavioural, and psychosocial dynamics shaping people's experiences and identities. Self-identification models that focus on diversity prioritize agency and flexibility, focusing on options to allow people choice and self-determination. In the classroom, this involves changing our teaching and educational approaches by adapting to those in the room and inviting disability and disabled people into education, rather than relying on services to have disabled people adapt to the non-disabled learning classroom. Kelly Fritsch (2024) calls this approach "desiring disability" by practicing access as a collective process that implicates everyone in the classroom, including the teacher and students.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment questions for this section are **available in the Appendix**.

DISABILITY JUSTICE VS. ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

> The accommodations process within higher education is regulated by the government and connected to a medical diagnosis of disability.
>
> CENTER FOR GENDER ADVOCACY, MAPPING PROJECT

Disability justice and accessibility are two connected but different approaches to addressing and transforming the conditions of ableism. While both approaches call for the inclusion of disabled people and the removal of barriers, they raise a different set of questions and strategies about how best to combat ableism.

Disability justice calls for the infrastructural, social, economic, and political transformation of our world—not just making accommodations for people who are excluded, but centring the way we design space, build community, and work together in a way that takes diverse forms of embodiment and neurodiversity as the core of organizing and design. Disability justice work often takes shape in the forms of social movement practices that challenge the idea that there is a "normal" body or "normal" cognition; instead, it sees the relational and constructed ways that we have built our world as inaccessible and exclusionary and celebrates bodily and cognitive diversity.

Disabled students regularly experience both overt and passive barriers when navigating education, including having their lives and experiences invalidated, being met with hostility or incredulity when requesting accommodations, having their

demands and needs dismissed by institutions and individuals, holding more student loan debt, and having their right to education denied when faculty, staff, administrators, and peers refuse to make requests for accommodation and adaptation.

> Disabled students are likely to have up to 60 percent more student debt by the time they graduate.
>
> JAY DOLMAGE

Further, students, faculty, and staff whose disabilities are rendered invisible (e.g. chronic pain, chronic illnesses, neurodivergence) are often dismissed, excluded, ignored, or invalidated in their experiences navigating higher education. The impact of microaggressions on disabled people within the education sector and the implicit barriers that can foreclose disabled people from even attempting to enrol in or seek careers in higher education have resulted in disproportionately low rates of disabled faculty and staff represented within institutionalized education. Due to this, universities and other post-secondary educational institutions continue to be predominantly ableist.

Students often face accessibility needs that are not recognized by institutional policies or face barriers when trying to access university services, such as medical assessment, stigmatization, and financial barriers. This means that a significant number of students would likely benefit from accommodations and/or universal and adaptive design approaches in their courses but cannot make official institutional requests for resources or support. The illegibility of disability beyond the medicalized model of diagnosis has been challenged by disabled people, as well as by intersectional approaches that see transformative disability

justice as a model for liberation for everyone who faces barriers and exclusions. Just because students are not registered for accessibility services does not mean they would not benefit from adaptations to teaching, learning and the classroom.

> Through our policy scan, we found that many universities mentioned intersectionality but did not concretely outline the steps they take to remove barriers for Disabled Students with overlapping identities. Any policy statement committing to an intersectional approach to accessibility needs to be attached to the concrete application, or it's simply an affirmation of values.
>
> CENTER FOR GENDER ADVOCACY, MAPPING PROJECT

Critical disability studies and disability justice frameworks introduce an approach to education that moves us beyond a service-provision focus toward a transformative model for education. This approach does not simply include disabled people but centres them at the outset on how education and learning are structured, which entails not simply asking how to make pre-existing curriculum accessible but how to transform the ways we teach and learn in ways that work for everyone. This can include everything from **how we design course assessments** to **the technologies we use**, to **how we design and use space**, to **the incorporation of trauma-informed approaches to pedagogy**. A disability justice approach to education sees this work as a collective struggle to improve the conditions of education for current students *and* faculty, staff, and communities not regularly included in the space of higher education.

Access and accommodation are the most common ways post-secondary institutions address ableism: through the development of services, resources, accommodations, and

support for disabled students to participate in their classes, in student life, and in the wider community. This approach aims to remedy immediate ways that our post-secondary institutions are exclusionary by developing individualized and collective changes that alleviate the harm of ableism. Rather than transform the conditions that create exclusion from the start, access and accommodation build strategies for adapting to the exclusionary conditions in our present moment. Accessibility is often prioritized in our classrooms only after a disabled person or ally advocates for better access. Better practices would involve working to integrate the principles of accessibility from the outset, alleviating the burden of self-advocacy for disabled students and other members of the community.

> When people talk about accessibility, it's usually around how we build a world around this pre-existing society that fits people with disabilities.' Disability justice, though, involves building a society 'that's free and fits everybody'.
>
> SARAH JAMA

Terminology: Person-centred vs. Identity-based language

Like other terminology around identity, the language used to describe disability and disabled people has changed over time and will likely continue to change. Debates and contestations over appropriate terminology speak to the importance of focusing on using language that people choose for themselves. In the area of disability, we often hear terms such

as *person-centred*, which is a way of naming that emphasizes personhood (e.g. a person with a disability or people with disabilities.)

> Person-centred language is often brought into tension with identity-based language, which sees disability as a key part of a person's subjectivity and social location (e.g. a disabled person, disabled people.) In addition to these are dozens of other terms people use to describe themselves (e.g. crip, deaf, neurodivergent, mad, etc.)

Rather than trying to use a universal language for disability, you can use the language and terms that people use to describe themselves. Make sure to check in with people if this language varies in different contexts (e.g. the term someone uses to describe themselves may be different in an activist setting from a medical setting.)

It is also worth noting the increasing emphasis on *disability as a process of self-identification* rather than diagnosis. This means that when a student self-discloses their identity relating to disability, it might not correspond to a diagnosis with related access to services. As such, our response as teachers to self-disclosure should take into consideration the potential barriers to support and services students are receiving. Expectations that disabled students will have medical documentation or access to university services can add barriers for students seeking out alternatives to institutional forms of accommodation.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Making Accessibility an Ongoing Practice

Given that our role as educators positions us within the infrastructure of the university, **there isn't one model for addressing ableism in our classrooms**. In addition to following your institution's policies on access and accommodation, you may also want to consider how you'll address ableism beyond official policies in relation to your own capacity and ethical approach both inside and outside of the classroom.

Perhaps you are part of a disability justice group, or you have developed strategies to work towards transformative models of disability justice beyond your classroom. However, for those with less experience in disability justice and accessibility work, introducing these principles into your teaching can be part of a process, such as by:

- Incorporating principles of universal design into your teaching;
- Learning one tool for universal design each term and then applying these to your next assignment, syllabus, or lecture;
- Providing options for students to exercise autonomy and self-determination in negotiating their access needs rather than limiting options and making choices for them;
- Attending accessibility workshops and trainings provided by the university and other organizations;
- Learning more about disability justice from disabled thinkers, writers, activists, students, and educators; and
- Developing flexibility in assignments that allow students to make their own adaptations.

Beyond accommodation, faculty can integrate critical disability approaches and material into their courses by engaging with disability rights, disability justice, crip theory and politics, mad studies, disability arts and activism, neurodivergence, and critiques of ableism. Further, in addition to adopting **universal design principles for course materials**, faculty can work to transform their classes by building relationships with disabled communities, re-envisioning the structure and role of their classrooms, and engaging in continued learning and transformative work relating to disability justice in education.

Flexibility, Self-Determination and Autonomy in Assessment and Course Design

If you're thinking of ways to adapt your courses, consider which practices you have flexibility around and which are non-negotiable (e.g. alternative assignment structures, flexibility around deadlines and extensions, etc.) Developing flexibility in your courses and your approach to teaching can make your courses adaptable to everyone involved. In a traditional model of teaching, assessment follows a singular trajectory where everyone completes the same assignments with the same deadlines. Providing options for everyone can help students determine for themselves how to adapt their learning approach to your assessment.

Instead of making choices for students, providing options, flexibility, and models for them to work from can empower students in their education rather than require them to self-advocate. This can be accomplished by:

1. Offering structured models for assignments and deadlines;
2. Clear and transparent policies on extensions;
3. Inviting students to manage their timelines rather than using a punitive approach (e.g. grade deductions for late submissions); and
4. Not requiring medical notes or official documentation for extensions.

Centring self-determination and respect for people's autonomy provides a good foundation for decisions around best practices. For instance, if a student discloses details of their accommodation request to you, you have an obligation to keep that information confidential unless otherwise stipulated by the student.

Note Taking Strategies

In contexts where note-takers are not provided by university accessibility services, faculty can directly improve access by **incorporating note-taking for students through in-class incentives** (e.g., marks) for sharing notes or collective note-taking practices, where students rotate taking notes on a cloud-based platform so that notes are available to everyone in the class.

Institutional Access Policies

Institutional policies on access and accessibility generally follow government regulations and human rights and anti-discrimination policies. However, many of these laws, policies, and practices may not reflect the shifting language and best practices in disability justice approaches to accessibility. For

example, university policies are sometimes drafted and implemented decades ago and are infrequently updated to respond to how "the discourse and approach to Accessibility and Disability has greatly changed" (**Center for Gender Advocacy, Mapping Project, 2020 [PDF]**). As such, faculty may be following official university policies with regard to accessibility and inclusion, yet doing so may not be enough to address implicit and explicit exclusions, ableism, and discrimination from taking place in our classrooms.

Access policies can be vague as to what actions are expected of students and other stakeholders (staff, teachers, administration) in securing an accessible learning environment. Faculty are encouraged to provide universal accessibility in their classes but are not required to do so and are not provided with resources or funding to incentivize and facilitate improving accessibility in education. Further, prohibitive costs associated with disability-related diagnosis and new or temporary disabilities mean that a significant number of students and faculty will have accessibility needs that may not be supported at the start of each semester.

Limitations on Access Services

Government and university policies predetermine who is recognized and eligible to access services provided by educational institutions and what accommodations a student is given, usually following an official diagnosis. Specific accommodations are usually determined by diagnosis rather than actual needs, although accessibility office staff may try to adjust accommodations to help support disabled students.

For a variety of reasons, students may have unmet support for their needs, both institutionally and through diagnosis. Financial constraints may limit who can access diagnosis or support services, given that learning disability assessments are

costly and not usually covered by schools, public healthcare, or private insurance. In other cases, students experiencing a mental health crisis may require a psychological evaluation and diagnosis to access accommodations, which can be impacted by limits in the availability of appointments with qualified medical professionals. Without an official and recognized diagnosis, accommodations are not easily provided by institutions. The result is that despite the high number of students enrolled with access services, a significant number of students have access needs that remain unrecognized and unmet by educational institutions.

The principles of universal accessibility reduce the burden on individual students by reorienting the classroom in a way that assumes students will have access needs. While the burden cannot rest only on individual faculty members to predict student needs, students with access needs face significant barriers and biases around their navigation of access in education.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Student Perspectives on Accessibility

While this section summarizes findings from the Centre for Gender Advocacy's Mapping Project Report and current practices at Concordia University, many of the findings may be applicable to those teaching at other institutions. Self-advocacy is often expected from students and may even be written into access policies.

> While 'Self-advocacy' is currently outlined as a Disabled student's responsibility within Concordia's Student Accessibility Policy, there are no responsibilities for professors outlined within the policy nor mandatory training on accessibility and disability rights. This leaves students navigating an inconsistent and unsupportive environment when disclosing their disability.
>
> CENTER FOR GENDER ADVOCACY MAPPING PROJECT

42% of student respondents to the **Centre for Gender Advocacy's Mapping Project Report (2020)** dropped a course for accessibility reasons.

According to the **Center for Gender Advocacy's Mapping Project**, students with disabilities and access needs reported that many faculty members invalidated, shamed, or dismissed their needs if students did not provide official documentation from institutional access offices. For this reason, students use early interactions with professors and the syllabus language to gauge faculty receptivity for negotiating access needs.

In a survey done by the Mapping Project, students overwhelmingly reported wanting faculty to receive better training around accessibility. See Table 1.2 (below) for a compilation of the most significant of students' desires, out of the 252 people surveyed by this project, for faculty to better engage with disability justice.

Mapping Project Survey Results [Skip Table]

Desire for instructors to learn more about:	Students (%)
Accommodating students with extensions when lateness is disability-related:	**79.76%**
Using teaching methods that are more accessible to neurodivergent students:	**77.38%**
Understanding the accommodations process at the Accessibility Centre:	**71.43%**
Making use of adaptive technology:	**59.52%**
Developing methods for teaching for students who have mobility-related disabilities:	**52.38%**
Not shaming students for being disabled:	**46.38%**

Table 1.2 Mapping Project survey results.

Including a clear and grounded-in-action section on accommodations in your syllabus and class allows students to know what to expect and what is possible while signalling to students whether their professor is approachable and available to negotiate accessibility needs in the class.

Strategies for Supporting Students

Common Accessibility Challenges and Possible Solutions [Skip Table]

Examples of Common Accessibility Challenges	Possible Solutions
A student is not registered for accessibility accommodations but is finding it difficult to focus on readings. The student has started using a screen reader for class readings, but the PDF files are not compatible with the software.	Moving towards PDF files that are compatible with screen-readers can be beneficial long-term for courses. The librarian staff can often provide support for generating accessible formatting for documents. Ensuring screen-reader compatibility is incorporated into the course and syllabus from the outset can improve overall access.
A student is not registered for accessibility accommodations and has recently developed anxiety that is affecting their participation in class. The student emailed to say they were struggling but have stopped attending class and are at risk of not completing the course.	If students experience barriers to participation, inviting them to negotiate alternative approaches to class participation could make it possible for students to return to the classroom. Providing flexibility and reducing the "all-or-nothing" stakes associated with a course can allow students to recuperate and adapt if they fall behind with course progress.
A student is registered for accessibility accommodations and has relied on the note-taker services. Now those services are no longer provided by the university, and the student is struggling with the course.	An easy solution to this institutional barrier is to provide in-class incentives for students to share their notes with their peers. Examples of this include bonus marks for voluntary note-takers, a rotating assignment where students share their lecture notes with the class, or small group work of collaborative note-taking.

Table 1.3 Strategies for Supporting Students

In all the above examples, student access needs exceed what

is currently available to them through official university services. Instructor receptivity to working with students on accommodations and accessibility can be a meaningful and impactful way of supporting student learning. Further, adapting teaching approaches and incorporating accommodations and changes to your teaching and your courses can have long-term benefits for all students.

Strategies for Accessibility

Complete "Making Learning Inclusive and Accessible"

Developed across multiple higher education institutions throughout Québec, **Making Learning Inclusive and Accessible** is a free course on making learning inclusive and accessible are offered as a set of online learning modules.

Use Screen-Reader Compatible PDF Files

Develop *OCR-compatible* (Optical character recognition) documents for your class (i.e., documents compatible with screen-reader technology.) Librarian staff and access offices can often help with generating and sourcing OCR-compatible versions of readings.

Converting a Word file into a screen-reader-compatible PDF file can be done using **Word** or **Adobe Acrobat's OCR menu feature [PDF]**. Avoid using too many special character features in a document, as that may disrupt the OCR function (e.g. tables, unique fonts, etc.)

Use the "Headings" feature in Microsoft Word to facilitate screen-reader navigation throughout the document.

Or, make tables in Microsoft Word screen-reader friendly by assigning them a “Header Row.”

Enable Large-Font Options

Providing optional large-font format copies of documents can be a proactive way of offering more accessible course materials. For example, offering both 12pt and 16pt font versions of class documents.

Use Accessible Fonts

Helvetica, **Courier**, **Arial**, **Verdana** and **Computer Modern CMU** have all been identified as more accessible fonts for readers with dyslexia. Beyond these fonts, you should prioritize **sans serif**, **monospaced**, and **Roman** font types, reducing italicized fonts. In particular, when using Arial, Italics should be avoided.

Provide Image Descriptions

Guideline on how to develop image descriptions

Consider the Visuals

Many students may benefit from visual cues to help with learning, understanding concepts, and following topics. If using visuals in class (like slides), be sure not to include too much text and use fonts, colours and images that are easy to read and see with high contrast. You can also provide descriptions for the images you show as part of your lecture.

If you are unsure whether the font you are using or colour choices are accessible and easy to see, you can use an online colour contrast checker to adjust your colour choice accordingly.

Classroom Notetaker

Collectivizing accessibility, such as through organizing class notetakers to help make accessibility a concern for the whole class.

Student contributions to access can even be incorporated into the assessment structure of the course, where students rotate taking notes and posting these on the course page or a shared document as part of their participation grade or as an assignment.

Collective Revision

Asking students to collectively assess the syllabus and classroom at the beginning of a course for gaps in access can be a beneficial teaching moment and an opportunity for students to voice access needs they see missing for themselves or their classmates. Develop a solutions-oriented approach to adapting the course to the concerns raised by students with tangible actions that you can take to improve the course.

Laptop Use

Laptop and other technology use in class have been documented as being disruptive to student learning, in part because these technologies are designed to drive users to scroll and interact with platforms such as web browsers, social media sites/apps, and chat features that distract rather than assist students.

Further, studies have shown that students retain more information when using hand-written notes than typed notes. For this reason, many faculty and departments prohibit using laptops in classes.

However, students using these technologies for accessibility purposes may be disadvantaged or feel unwelcome to request these technologies when restrictive policies are in place. For this reason, faculty are encouraged to **develop classroom policies that make laptop use available to students for access needs** with clear language around consequences for inappropriate use of these technologies. Faculty should not assume what learning and assistive technology needs students have and can instead make laptops and other assistive technology use available (with conditions) to encourage student self-determination.

Office Hours (By Telephone, Text-Chat, Video-Chat)

Including a phone number where you can be reached during office hours and providing text-based chat and video call options can increase access across a range of disabilities and barriers (e.g. needing reduced screen time, unstable internet connection, long commutes to campus, inaccessible office.)

Survey the Students

Because university accessibility services may only provide details on accommodations once the semester begins, you can use **pre-course surveys** to give students the opportunity (either anonymously or confidentially) to share their access needs, regardless of whether the university officially provides these services.

Consider the Space

Doing an **accessibility audit [PDF]** of the spaces you teach in and meet with students can help identify ways to **reduce barriers and troubleshoot access** before the semester begins.

Some example questions you could consider when checking your spaces for accessibility:

1. Does your classroom use fluorescent lighting?
2. Is your office in an accessible building?
3. Is the classroom and nearest washroom accessible by wheelchair and electronic chair?
4. Is there construction, or are there obstacles that block accessible pathways?
5. Is your office furniture set up in a way that allows people with different kinds of mobility to access the room?
6. Are there alternate accessible spaces available nearby?
7. Could a meeting that is happening in person happen remotely instead?
8. Are strong chemicals used in the space? Allergens? Do you wear perfumes and fragrances?

Accessibility in the Online Classroom

When teaching remotely, turn on "closed captioning" and/or "live transcription" when teaching. Using this function enables students to toggle on this feature. Although this software isn't perfect and not the most reliable format for full accessibility – it provides a helpful tool for students who benefit from reading along with class discussions and lectures.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENTS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Faculty can use extended syllabus statements to reflect on how access and accommodation will be addressed in their specific classes beyond your institution's official policies. Developing your own extended statement can help make clear your approach to accessibility to students and empower them to determine how they will navigate your class in advance of making accommodation requests (if needed.)

See here for a **compilation of different university and faculty syllabus accessibility statements**.

Accessibility and Accommodation Statement

Below we have included how an extended Accessibility Statement looks when added to a syllabus. Feel free to use or adapt this statement to your teaching needs.

Sample Statement

In addition to the resources and support of the university accessibility services, students are invited to communicate with the professor if adjustments to this course are needed (e.g. attending class, participating in group work, completing the assignments). While this course incorporates elements of universal design, developing a barrier-free approach to teaching continues to be a work in progress.

Within the constraints of the resources available, I will work with students to develop sustainable accommodations when possible, and in response to the diverse and complex ways that barriers arise and access needs can change. Students are strongly encouraged to speak with me as soon as they become aware of accommodation needs (which may be ongoing or unexpected) and discuss alternative forms of accessibility beyond the services already provided by the university.

Important note on disclosure: Please note that you are not expected to disclose the nature of your circumstances to me. You may simply state the aspect of coursework for which you need accommodation and any specific requests for me to consider as we discuss the terms of the accommodation.

We have also included a downloadable PDF version, available here: **Extended Accessibility and Accommodation Statement [PDF]**

Beyond the Syllabus

More than just a statement, accessibility and accommodation can be incorporated into the classroom as a collective project rather than simply a service provision. This can help make accessibility a collaborative responsibility laterally across faculty, students, staff, and university services. In the classroom, this can be accomplished by making access and accessibility statements part of course development, inviting students to co-create statements, policies, and practices for the course, or sharing your own teaching philosophy documents on accessibility.

See **Appendix: Cultivating a Culture of Accessibility, Accommodation, and Respect** for an example of one such document.

Resources

CAST. ***Universal Design Guidelines***.

Centre for Teaching Support and Learning, Teaching Assistants' Training Program. ***Access Checks***. University of Toronto.

Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. ***10 Tips for Creating Accessible Course Content*** **[PDF]**. Iowa State University.

Dolmage, Jay. 2017. "**Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education**." In *Corporealities.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

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Hamraie, Aimi. 2016. "**Beyond Accommodation: Disability, Feminist Philosophy, and the Design of Everyday Academic Life**." *philoSOPHIA*. 6(2): 259-271.

Hamraie, Aimi. 2020. ***Critical Access Studies***. Harvard Graduate Studies in Design.

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Jama, Sarah. 2019. "**Dismantling Ablism in Ontario**." Filmed August 29, 2019, in Ontario, The Agenda with Steve Paikin and Nan Kiwanuka, TVO, 0:26:39.

Laureano, Bianca I. and Aiesha Turman. ***Crip Camp Curriculum***.

Rello, Luz and Ricardo Baeza-Yates. 2013. ***Good Fonts for Dyslexia*** **[PDF]**.

Tshuma, Gift and Shayna Hadley. 2020. **The Centre for Gender Advocacy, Revision Recommendations of Concordia University's Student Accessibility Policy [PDF]**. October 7.

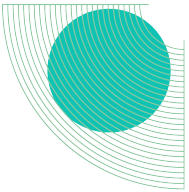
Tshuma, Gift and Shayna Hadley. 2020. **The Centre for Gender Advocacy: Mapping Project Report**. October 7.

UTSC Campus Curriculum Review Resource Hub. **Pedagogical Development with Universal Design for Learning**. University of Toronto.

Waggoner, Jess, Hailee Yoshizaki-Gibbons, Ashley Mog, Krystal Cleary, and Margaret Price. 2017. "**Disability Access as Feminist Praxis at NWSA and Beyond Workshop**." Workshop Presented at the National Women's Studies Conference, Maryland, USA, November 2017.

Access to this chapter's Zotero

PEDAGOGICAL AND CURRICULAR TOOLS



The following list of recommendations includes activities and techniques commonly used in teaching. These strategies draw from widely available guidelines and suggestions, including knowledge shared informally by faculty and students at Concordia University. Sources are not provided as most of these strategies are freely available online, such as through institutional curriculum and teaching resource webpages. Special thanks to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute's annual pedagogy retreat, where many of these strategies have also been discussed, and to Sarah Ghabrial and Genevieve Renard Painter for sharing their participation and survey models, and to Myloe Martel-Perry, who adapted strategies they have found effective as a student.

Best Practices for Pedagogy and Curriculum

- Avoid costly textbooks. To encourage financial sustainability in your courses, use the library course reserves or online course readings accessed through the library.
- Prioritize developing and converting all course readings and files to formats compatible with screen readers.
- Invite librarians and writing centre specialists to help workshop reading and writing techniques in your

introductory classes.

- Rework your syllabus design on a regular basis by drawing on guides and workshops/training.
- Incorporate moderation and facilitation techniques and skill-building into teaching.
- Collaborate with students to build inclusive classrooms and syllabi.
- Prioritize transparency and flexibility in course design.
- Survey students to generate feedback on their learning and progress, and then adapt your courses following an evaluation of this feedback.
- Use the syllabus to set the tone of your course and build your classroom culture and community.

Facilitating and Creating Spaces for Inclusion in Your Courses

Faculty face a common challenge when it comes to the classroom. Many of us face difficulties managing class discussions, responding to heated moments, and maintaining our energy and enthusiasm, given our heavy workloads. Some students dominate the discussion, while others are reluctant to participate and share for fear of being judged. Students from marginalized and historically excluded communities may be hesitant to share over fears of being tokenized, dismissed, or harassed. The classroom is not separate from the wider social, political, and economic world around us, and as such, we all bring our experiences from outside into our learning spaces. Rather than assume the classroom should be a safe space, we can better address the diverse experiences of those in our classes by thinking of the classroom as its own cultural space and community. Building a sense of collective investment in how students and faculty co-create the space of

the classroom can both help students feel invested in the class and provide practical tools and approaches based on the needs, experiences, and interests of students within the class.

In the following section, we will showcase ways of fostering **co-creation**, **collectivity**, **accountability**, and **adaptability** in your courses.

SURVEYING AND ADAPTING COURSES

Speak From Your Own Experience

A common pitfall in the classroom that leaves many marginalized and historically excluded students feeling unwelcome is when their identity or experience is being discussed, subject to debate, or theorized by people who do not have a shared experience. A helpful guideline for discussion is asking students to focus their classroom contributions by sharing their own experiences on a topic and focusing their discussion on others' experiences by talking through the language used and experiences shared by the authors of a text examined in class. This approach allows students to discuss the experiences of others without speaking on behalf of, or by appropriating, the experiences of those who have been marginalized and excluded.

Surveying and Adapting Courses to Feedback

When we rely on spontaneous student feedback, we tend to only learn about what really is or isn't working and not the in-between. Using surveys and other feedback formats can help students share their classroom experiences, needs, and priorities in confidential or anonymous ways. Surveying can also centre on feedback that is driven by self-reflection, in addition to feedback on the course itself, as well as peer interactions. Further, students who face barriers, challenges, or harmful encounters in a classroom context will not always

express these experiences with a teacher or even their peers. Students who stop showing up or stop participating are often invisible to faculty members. Anonymous surveys can open a door for students to provide feedback and share their experiences while reducing the potential for fear of retribution.

When surveying students, invite them to self-reflect (e.g. what am I struggling with in this class? I could use more support and help on...) **and reflect on their peers** (e.g. communication, what is working, what isn't working, what could help) to help identify possible areas where more support, resources, and attention could be helpful. This approach has the added benefit of providing opportunities for students to evaluate their own participation, progress, and role in the course, making feedback not simply uni-directional.

Course Surveys

Pre-Course Survey

Pre-course surveys can help you prepare for the semester and plan around the needs and priorities of your students. Below are some suggested questions that you can include in your pre-course survey:

1. The name you'll use in this class and whether this name can be used outside of this class as well?
2. The pronouns you'll use in this class, and whether these pronouns can be used outside of this class as well?
3. Is there anything else you'd like me to know about your name and/or pronouns before the start of class (e.g. you're waiting for the university to process your name change request; you would prefer not to have your current pronouns shared with the class; etc.)?
4. Do you have any access or accommodation needs that are not already provided by accessibility services that

you'd like me to consider when designing this course? (This will help me prioritize as I work to develop more universal design principles in the course.)

5. Are you facing barriers that you anticipate could impact your participation in this class? (You are not required to answer this or provide me with details, but if you'd like to discuss possible ways to support your participation in this course, you're welcome to provide more information or schedule a meeting with me.)
6. Are you comfortable with group work? If not, are there considerations or support that you think would help you feel more comfortable with working in groups?
7. Is there something that can help make this class a better experience for you this semester? (e.g. specific activities, an approach or dynamic, the chance to make social connections, building a sense of community, etc.)
8. Is there anything you've been struggling with in terms of your academic/school work?
9. Is there an area you feel confident in with your academic/school work?
10. Is there a topic that you would really like to examine or discuss in this course?
11. Is there a topic that you would really like to avoid in this course?

Mid-term Survey and Feedback

Using mid-term surveys can help you gauge student progress through the course, identify specific challenges students may be facing or grappling with, and give you an opportunity to adjust your course based on student feedback. This can help model accountability in the classroom by illustrating the use of feedback to effect changes by valuing the concerns of students who prefer not to speak publicly. It can be helpful to **make the mid-term survey or feedback anonymous** to

encourage honest answers from students, especially when assessing whether students are keeping up with reading, managing group work, and communicating with peers. Anonymous feedback also increases the likelihood of students sharing information that may be difficult to communicate.

An important step in mid-term feedback is to **share the outcomes with students** (e.g. a summary highlighting main points) and **adjust the course accordingly**. These adjustments could include shifting course readings (e.g. adding readings to help supplement background learning or reducing the number of pages to help students stay on track), changing the structure of upcoming assignments (e.g. introducing more options for upcoming assignments), introducing more support into the course (e.g. hosting in class or extracurricular workshops to help students develop critical reading skills, inviting someone from the writing centre to help students struggling with their writing).

Closing Survey and Feedback

Final evaluations run by our institutions prioritize student-satisfaction-focused feedback. It can be difficult to draw insights from these valuations to help adjust course design, teaching approaches, and curriculum for the future. Closing surveys generate specific feedback on course learning and allow you to assess benchmark learning objectives by asking students to share reflections on what they took away from the course and what they think is missing. This final form of feedback does not have to be anonymous (especially if you're not trying to solicit difficult feedback), so you may wish to incorporate final feedback into a final assessment in the course or for bonus marks.

PARTICIPATION AND SELF-MODERATION TECHNIQUES

Encouraging students to develop skills at self-moderation can help them become better at participating in class and self-assessing whether they could participate more or become more cognizant of the space they're taking up. Below are some common examples of techniques used to encourage student self-moderation. These techniques also help relieve the burden on faculty to call on students for their own participation.

The Token Metaphor

Share with the class the metaphor that every time they enter class, they are given 3 invisible tokens. Each time they speak (ask a question, offer an idea, etc.), they metaphorically hand over a token to the professor. Halfway through class, ask the students to consider:

- How many tokens do I have left?
- Did I use mine all up in the first half hour?
- Do I have them all left?

*This exercise was introduced by Dr. Gada Mahrouse

Reflection Exercise: Student Participation Styles

Ask your students to reflect on and interrogate their own participation style. This exercise can help students understand their participation as a spectrum rather than a binary of participation and non-participation.

- Individually, ask students to assign the following

participation styles, ranging from “less often” to “more often,” based on their comfort with and practice of these techniques. Such as:

    - Asking questions;
    - Offering ideas;
    - Giving recommendations;
    - Listening;
    - Taking notes; and
    - Talking with peers during breaks about ideas in class.

- Have students share their own participation spectrum in groups to discuss their different styles and how each of them might benefit or learn from their peers differently through those styles.
- As a class, discuss how there are a variety of reasons why people choose or are more comfortable with certain participation styles (e.g. navigating experiences of oppression and harm in the classroom, being neurodivergent, having anxiety, or being tokenized).
- Emphasize that the classroom can be a space where we choose to expand and try things out and that we are here to collectively learn with and from each other.
- Ask students to try to challenge themselves by individually coming up with a participation goal for their semester.

Participation Self-Assessment

Another strategy that can be useful is participation self-assessment, where students grade themselves based on a **participation rubric (sample) [PDF]** that models and outlines different ways that participation may be assessed in a class. This exercise can be done at the start of term, at the mid-term, and at the end of term to help students track their own progress through their participation, and can also be used as a grading rubric for participation assessment in the course.

Facilitation Techniques

Collective

The following strategies can be used to encourage collective facilitation of class through co-creation and collective accountability.

Creating Over Criticizing

While students appreciate opportunities to apply critical thinking and analytic skills that they develop both inside and outside of the classroom, there are other approaches that can engage students in critical thinking beyond critique, such as creating or co-creating. For example, while we often state what we *do not* want in a classroom, society, or syllabus, we rarely ask what we *do* want. Creating and co-creating encourages students to think beyond the current circumstances and apply critical ideas in new ways. For example, ask students to outline the critique in a reading or class topic/discussion, then to envision a world where things have been transformed.

Classroom Agreement/Contract/Ground Rules/Rules of Engagement

At the start of the semester, collaborate to create a set of agreements for the course. This can be revisited and adapted on a monthly or bi-semester basis in response to the emergent needs of the classroom. Below is an example of how to organize this group activity:

1. Separate students into groups for 10 minutes and ask the following:
    - How would you describe your ideal learning

environment, group dynamic, and tone for the class.
    - What are 5 features that make this ideal environment possible?
2. Translate those 5 features into 5 actionable items for our class agreement (e.g. feature = not judgement; action = we don't make assumptions about a person if they share something that we disagree with or view as problematic).
3. Invite the groups to share their actionable items with the class and to explain how these actions support their vision of the classroom. If similar items are introduced by multiple groups, have the other groups make suggestions for adjusting the language to ensure collective co-creation.
4. If an idea is contested, first seek clarity from students to see if a compromise or middle ground can be easily achieved, or if contested ideas can exist simultaneously or in contradiction. If a resolution is not easily achieved, probe the underlying values of the proposed terms of agreement to find opportunities for reframing and revising.

Professor

Faculty can help facilitate class discussion by managing the flow of participation using the following techniques:

1. Call on students who raise their hands with less frequency first to encourage new contributions to the discussion.
2. In a large class, if many hands go up, say you will take comments from 3 people and invite those who have already spoken to lower their hands.
3. Validate and invite the class to hear from others. Students who participate more regularly in class than others may do so out of a desire to be heard. Introducing self-reflection and self-moderation techniques can help

students learn to improve the quality of their participation; however, managing participation from those who dominate class discussion is important for faculty.

Some techniques include:

- Allow the person to speak;
- Validate what they have shared;
- Say that you want to take note of this as you think it's important;
- Then shift towards saying you want to hear from others about the same topic at hand.
- Either take a raised hand or call on a section of the class that has not yet participated;

4. Focus on prioritizing hearing from others rather than shutting someone down.

   Facilitate non-verbal participation by:

   - Writing on the chalkboard/whiteboard;
   - Making comments or posing questions on online class platforms;
   - Using the chat feature for discussion in online classes;
   - Using a live/cloud-based collective shared document for in-class discussions;
   - Handing out question cards that students can pass to the front of the class;
   - Moving between full-class discussions and small groups/paired discussions;
   - Using polling or anonymous live feedback software in class.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND ACCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Incorporating sustainable design into your courses can reduce the environmental and economic impact of purchasing printed textbooks. Textbooks may be helpful in standardized courses, where student learning is consistent across institutions (e.g. mathematics, anatomy, etc.); however, in interdisciplinary fields, requiring students to purchase textbooks can create barriers to accessing readings since expensive copyright permissions can limit the number of students who can access electronic and print copies of textbooks available through the library. Students who struggle to cover the costs of textbooks may forgo reading course material altogether.

Encouraging Reading: *Strategies and Challenges*

The following strategies aim to encourage reading among students at all stages.

Introductory Courses

- **Offer short excerpts** of texts (especially theoretically or conceptually dense texts) and provide reading questions and/or group reading notes.
- Spend time early in the semester workshopping how to closely read a text.
- Remind students that full comprehension of a dense theoretical or technical text is not the goal of reading at this

stage.
    - The goal is to familiarize yourself with technical and theoretical language, introduce new ideas and ways of thinking, and develop advanced reading skills slowly over time. You may return to these texts in future courses for more advanced engagement with the ideas, concepts, and arguments introduced during this class.
- **Provide previews of upcoming readings** in class so students can know something interesting about how they will connect to coursework.
- **Teach reading strategies** in class (e.g. a system of note-taking in the margins). Invite someone from the library or writing center to run a brief workshop with students on how to read and take notes.
- **Clarify** how the reading connects to course material and topics.
- **Use a variety of mediums** to appeal to different student preferences and assign denser material alongside lighter material (e.g. an excerpt of a theoretical text alongside a video or podcast).

Intermediate and Advanced Courses

- **Share your reading experiences** to help model engagement with texts, share with students what you are reading and ask them about what they are reading.
- **Prepare students to read a previously read text differently** by prompting them to pose different kinds of questions, sharing new or different passages that stood out in the reading, or a new insight from rereading.
- **Use advanced reading strategies**, such as reciprocal teaching exercises to get deeper into the reading.
    - **Reciprocal Teaching Exercise** [PDF]

PLANNING AND DESIGNING YOUR COURSES

Planning around potential barriers by thinking proactively about course design, such as the logistics of navigating your institution, accessibility services and recognizing gaps in resources can help proactively support students without requiring disclosure.

Designing a Syllabus

While there are many resources available on how to build a syllabus, some central points to consider incorporating are:

Generic Syllabus Maker

Using a Generic Syllabus Maker that creates a template of the class dates to help facilitate designing the weekly schedule.

Easy Course Navigation

Use the "Headings" function in Microsoft Word to facilitate screen-reader compatibility. The headings can create a table of contents for longer documents. You can set the table of contents to link to sections in your document for easier navigation.

Linking Assignments to Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Draw on Bloom's Taxonomy [PDF] to connect assignments to particular learning styles. You can find more details on Bloom's Taxonomy below.

Sharing Your Teaching Philosophy

You can include a statement on your teaching philosophy or model this philosophy through the syllabus.

For example, if you use a *student-centred approach to learning*, your syllabus should include details on student roles, collaboration, shared power, and professor accountability (Richmond 2016 [PDF]).

Include Accessibility Details

You can include accessibility details about the classroom space or location in the syllabus, such as the location of the closest washroom with electronic door opening mechanisms and gender-neutral or single-user washrooms.

For an example of this, see our **Strategies for Accessibility** in **Strategies for Supporting Students**.

Syllabus Quiz

A quiz based on the syllabus content may encourage students to read through the syllabus carefully. The quiz can be "open-book" with a small grade assignment.

For more information, including a list of helpful websites and resources that break down syllabus design, techniques, and best practices, refer to the list of **Resources** at the end of this section.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Figure 7.1 A model of learning objectives based on ***A TAXONOMY FOR LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSING: A REVISION OF BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES*** [PDF] *by Rex Heer, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Iowa State University. Image is licensed under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.* ***[Image description]***

Bloom's Taxonomy [PDF] is an educational framework first developed in the 1950s. As demonstrated in Fig 7.1, the taxonomy outlines a trajectory for learning development using action words (verbs) for objects or outcomes in learning (nouns) (i.e. what you learn and how you learn it). Consider mapping your course to ensure assignments connect to learning objects, starting with "lower order" to "higher order" skills.

Bloom's Taxonomy has been expanded beyond cognitive development to include **affective and psychomotor skills**,

which includes learning to listen, participating and engaging, being receptive and adapting to feedback, and practicing through trial and error.

Applying Bloom's Taxonomy

For each learning objective identified in the course, correlate an assignment with a brief statement on the purpose of the assignment as it relates to the learning objectives. Below is an example using a sexuality research methods course; the taxonomy categories are identified in ***bold italics***.

Applying Bloom's Taxonomy [Skip Table]

Learning Objective	Assignment	Purpose
Identify the methods used in sexuality research.	Quiz	To ***remember*** and ***identify*** the different methods used in sexuality research.
Apply sexuality research methods	Interview	To ***use*** interview methods and techniques learned through a short interview.
Reflect on the impact of methods for developing knowledge of sexuality.	Fieldnotes	To ***reflect*** on your experiences and observations in relation to sexuality following a participant observation exercise.
Design a sexuality research project.	Ethics Protocol	To ***create a research project using applied methods by designing*** an ethics protocol.

Table 1.4 Using Bloom's Taxonomy in designing courses.

Scaffolding

Because students enter most courses with varying skill sets, scaffolding is a strategy that helps students build on existing skills and knowledge through staged learning. Scaffolding can include both instructor and peer support and feedback, often incorporating revision into the structure of assignments and class activities. Examples of traditional scaffolding include:

- breaking down assignments into smaller steps where feedback is offered throughout the assignment process rather than only upon final submission;
- building group or peer learning assignments where more advanced students help those who are less advanced; or
- developing different assignments that build on each other (e.g. a bibliography becomes the basis for an annotated bibliography, which is then used to develop a paper outline before writing the final paper).

However, Eva Boodman (**2019**) cautions that traditional scaffolding can reinforce rather than transform underlying structural racism and classism that underpins attempts to support academically underrepresented groups when this is done under the assumption that "stronger" students are those who possess traditional academic skills (30). Scaffolding can thus be an effective pedagogical tool but is also at risk of reinforcing a hierarchical view of knowledge acquisition in an educational context. To address this risk, Boodman proposes a model of radical scaffolding, which "de-hierarchizes the distribution of 'skills' in the class so that students are aware of the choices they have when they write in an institutional context" (31) by using "transparent, step-by-step, non-punitive skill-building" in assignment design (32).

In this way, Boodman's model of "radical scaffolding takes structural factors into account by accommodating a range of possible learning goals students may have, which include

survival, passing, emotional expression and exploration, political activity on or off campus, and intellectual engagement for its own sake" (32).

If you are interested in incorporating or updating models of scaffolding into your courses, think of the following questions to help you with both assignment and course design:

- What goal are you hoping students will take away from your course or this assignment?
- How can you break down class assignments and activities into parts that build towards this goal?
- What skills would help students complete these assignments and activities, and how can you incorporate skill-building into your course design (e.g., writing workshops or training modules)?
- What structural barriers or underlying assumptions might impact different students' abilities to complete these assignments (e.g., work schedules that conflict with completing work outside of class time, devaluation of non-academic writing skills, and course materials that might have an alienating effect on underrepresented and historically excluded students)?
- How can you incorporate options and choices into the structure of your assignments to recognize a wider array of existing skill sets among your students?
- How can you incorporate non-punitive forms of learning, exploring, and experimentation into your assignments to encourage skill building over skill mastery?

Gender-Neutral and Accessible Washrooms on Campus

Find the closest gender-neutral and accessible washroom to your classroom and include this on the syllabus (note that some washrooms may not be accessible in the evenings or on weekends.) Consider walking slowly from your classroom to this washroom and back, adding 5 minutes to your time, to estimate the time it might take a student to use this washroom. If this takes longer than the typical scheduled break time, offer accommodations for scheduled breaks and late entries/returns in your class.

Some single-user washrooms are only accessible with special security access, such as a staff member or a security escort or gaining access to a special key. Note in the syllabus if this is the case for the nearest accessible and gender-neutral washrooms.

Asking students to request accommodation for bathroom use can force "a Trans student to out themselves to staff" (**Center for Gender Advocacy Mapping Project, 2020 [PDF]**); therefore, it is preferable to use an open policy for the whole class around late entry/return if accessible and gender-neutral washrooms are not close by and fully accessible to students.

Workload Estimator

Depending on your institution, the average student is taking 4-5 classes per term, and at many institutions, full-time students also work part-time while in school. Students accessing loans and bursaries are often required to be full-time students, and these funds are usually inadequate on their own to cover the average cost of living for students. In

programs that include mature students, students with children, and/or students who face financial barriers to accessing affordable housing, food, and transportation, finding time to complete coursework outside of class time can be a barrier to their education. Rising inflation rates combined with low salaries mean that students today often carry heavier financial responsibilities than previous generations.

We should assume that students are juggling multiple responsibilities and demands on their time and focus. If most courses assign approximately 10 hours of course material each week (including class time), then students face 40-50 hours/week of coursework. Adjusting your course to offset the competing responsibilities students are juggling can make your class more accessible and inclusive.

> You can use an **online workload estimator** to estimate student workload as you generate weekly reading lists and assignments.

Active Participation

Active participation is not about quantity but the quality of each contribution to shared learning. Forms of active participation include:

- Attending class regularly (i.e. as many classes as you can attend) and having completed all the readings;
- Coming to class prepared to discuss the readings by bringing notes and/or marked-up copies of your readings;
- Connecting your contributions to class discussion by referencing the readings;
- Drawing class attention to the content of the readings and objects we examine.

- Offering insight and analysis using the texts we've read together on the topics and objects being discussed;
- Staying focused on discussion and trying to avoid looking at your phone, social media, email, texting, chat, web browsing, etc.; and
- Participating in discussion to the best of your ability in a way that fosters peer participation.

Self-Assessment Exercise

You can use the self-assessment exercise **Guidelines for Active Participation [PDF]** to help your students reflect on their class participation and set goals for themselves throughout the semester. For example, invite students to complete the self-assessment at the start of the term to set out goals for their semester, then ask them to re-evaluate their participation at mid-term to reflect on what goals they've achieved and what they could do differently to help work towards their unattained goals.

Image Description

Figure 7.1 image description: A scaffolding image of Bloom's Taxonomy with two working dimensions: knowledge and the cognitive process. See the table below for a side-by-side description of the x and y axes of the image. **[Return to figure 7.1]**

Table Alternative to Fig 7.1: A model of learning objectives based on Bloom's Taxonomy

Cognitive Process:	Factual Knowledge Dimension	Conceptual Knowledge Dimension	Procedural Knowledge Dimension	Metacognitive Knowledge Dimension
Remember	**List** primary and secondary colours.	**Recognize** symptoms of exhaustion.	**Recall** how to perform CPR.	**Identify** strategies for retaining information.
Understand	**Summarize** features of a new product.	**Classify** adhesives by toxicity.	**Clarify** assembly instructions.	**Predict** one's response to culture shock.
Apply	**Respond** to frequently asked questions.	**Provide** advice to novices.	**Carry out** pH tests of water samples.	**Use** techniques that match one's strength.
Analyze	**Select** the most complete list of aci	**Differentiate** high and low culture.	**Integrate** compliance with regulations.	**Deconstruct** one's biases.
Evaluate	**Check** for consistency among sources.	**Determine** relevance of results.	**Judge** efficiency of sampling techniques.	**Reflect** on one's progress.
Create	**Generate** a log of daily activities.	**Assemble** a team of experts.	**Design** an efficient project workflow.	**Create** an innovative learning portfolio.

Table 5.1: Alternative to Fig 7.1, with text in image adapted to readable table.

Resources

Pedagogy

Atom Fire Arts Cooperative. 2020. ***How to Share Space: Creating Community in Classrooms and Beyond***. Building Accountable Communities Project (Project NIA).

Boodman, Eva. 2019. "**Radical Scaffolding Against Critique Fatigue**." Radical Teacher 115 (Fall): 27-32.

Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, University of Toronto. ***Active Learning Pedagogies***.

Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. ***Gathering Formative Feedback with Mid-Course Evaluations***. University of Toronto.

Centre for Teaching Support and Learning, Teaching Assistants' Training Program. ***Community Agreements***. University of Toronto.

Gonzalez, Jennifer. 2015. **The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies**. *Cult of Pedagogy.* October 15.

University of Windsor. ***How can you incorporate active learning into your classroom?*** **[PDF]**

Syllabus Design

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Iowa State University. ***Revised Bloom's Taxonomy***.

Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, University of Toronto. ***Developing a Course Syllabus***.

Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo. ***Bloom's Taxonomy Learning Activities and Assessments***.

Gagnon, Kevin. "How to Create a Syllabus: Advice Guide." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 4 Sept, 2023.

Heer, Rex. A Model of Learning Objectives–based on A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching [PDF]. Iowa State University.

McDaniel, Caleb. Generic Syllabus Maker. Accessed June 22, 2024.

Open Syllabus Project (website). Accessed June 22, 2024.

Richmond, Aaron S. 2016. Constructing a learner-centred syllabus: One professors' journey (IDEA Paper 60). Manhattan, KS: IDEA Center.

Access to this chapter's Zotero

APPENDIX

This section provides resources for further use. If you revise and repurpose this material and would like to share it with us for possible inclusion in future versions of this guidebook, please email Natalie Kouri-Towe at **natalie.kouri-towe@concordia.ca**

SCENARIOS

Below are the scenarios from the self-assessment quizzes (only available in the online format) that introduce each chapter of this guidebook. We've included the scenarios without the answer prompts so that you can use and repurpose them for your own discussions and workshops on pedagogy.

Gender & Pronouns

1. On the first week of the semester, you see a familiar face in class and refer to the student by their name in front of the whole class. The student is visibly distressed and tells you they use a different name. What should you do?
2. During your first class, you use a pronoun go-around exercise, where students share their names and pronouns with the class. One student says, "pass," and then another student questions them and asks, "Well, how should I refer to you?" How do you respond?
3. A student informs you that their student record hasn't yet been updated to include their new name and gender. They are concerned that their peers will use the wrong name in online class discussion forums. How would you troubleshoot this problem?

Indigenous Content and Decolonizing Principles in the Classroom

1. As part of your work to try to respond to your school's call to Indigenize course offerings, you invite a guest speaker from another department who is an expert on Indigenous art and artifacts into your course to talk about Indigenous cultures. One of your students questions your

choice of a guest speaker who isn't Indigenous. How would you respond to your students?

2. You help your department host an event on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people. During the event, a student who you know is Indigenous is visibly upset and leaves the event. How do you handle this scenario?
3. During a university workshop on decolonizing curriculum, one of your colleagues shared that she already includes the university's territorial acknowledgement in her syllabus. Another colleague in the workshop shares his plans to decolonize his classes by having students perform a charitable task for extra credit. How would you respond?

Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice in the Classroom

1. Political protests have been organized on campus in response to anti-Black racist incidents involving campus security. Given the context, you screen a documentary in class on the history of police brutality in Black communities. The film depicts graphic images of Black people being attacked by police. What do you do to prepare for the class?
2. During a class presentation, a student plays a song that contains the "n-word" in the lyrics. The student puts the lyrics up in the presentation and invites the class to discuss the song in relation to course readings. Some students in class participate in discussion by reading the word out loud. How do you navigate this context?
3. In a class discussion on racism, a white student calls out a fellow white student, accusing them of being racist because they questioned whether affirmative action initiatives work.

Navigating Difficult Pedagogical Dynamics

1. During a class presentation, one of the student groups plays a video featuring overtly sexualized language and derogatory comments on people's bodies. Some students in the class are upset and say that they should have been given a trigger warning before seeing the video. How would you handle this situation?
2. During a department meeting, your colleague suggested that her classes are a safe space for her students. However, you know of at least one student who has confidentially shared with you that she feels uncomfortable in this professor's classes but has not felt safe to say anything directly to this professor. How would you respond?
3. After a guest speaker visited your class, you received an email from them expressing concern about how it went. They share that they felt tokenized by you and the students in the class. How would you respond?

Access and Disability Justice

1. During the first week of the new semester, a student approaches you after class to ask if they can have an accommodation. They're not registered with accessibility services because they don't have a medical diagnosis, but they have been struggling to high levels of anxiety that disrupt their ability to complete class assignments. How would you respond?
2. While discussing the topic of climate change, a student suggests we should be revisiting ideas around population control to ensure highly qualified and skilled individuals have the resources needed to ensure the survival of the planet. How would you handle this discussion?
3. One of your students who has relied on notetakers

provided by the access office has just informed you that this service is no longer available to students who are registered for accessibility support. How would you respond?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cultivating a Culture of Accessibility, Accommodation, and Respect

Please note that this is a working/living set of ethical terms that will grow and change throughout the course. This is not an official policy but rather a guide to help ground both students and the professor in the practice of accessibility and a respectful classroom. This guide may be relevant to disability, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, economic status, citizenship status, and even personal hardships. You can help build this guide by proposing edits to the document.

While we collectively strive to build a barrier-free world, we must also recognize the challenges of implementing full universal accessibility, autonomy and self-determination in the classroom (and at the university) due to the systemic, institutional, and structural configurations of power. Even as we call for systemic change to achieve more accessible, inclusive, sustainable, and respectful classrooms requires our collective collaboration. In the spirit of collaboration, we commit to the following:

- We **prioritize respect for self-determination** over achieving universal consensus in the classroom. We strive to hold space for our varying levels of knowledge, skill, and experience in the classroom and engage with one another with compassion and patience, except in circumstances where harm is ongoing and/or intentional.
- **There is no single universal model of accommodation** because barriers, violence, and precarity may emerge and subside unpredictably, they can be temporary, relapsing and

remitting, or long-term, and they may be experienced individually or collectively. Therefore, should any change occur in someone's engagement in this course (including attendance in class, work in groups, or completion of course work, returning assignments, etc.), we will discuss accommodations as soon as possible with the appropriate person/people to help adapt to these changes.

- Decisions to disclose and not to disclose reasons for accommodation requests should be respected. No one should be compelled to disclose personal details relating to accessibility; and conversely, disclosures around accommodations should be met with respect and consideration for the privacy of others.
- In prioritizing self-determination and respect, we collectively endeavour to use the language people choose for defining themselves both within the classroom and outside of the classroom. If we are uncertain about what language to use and when we will ask in a respectful manner for clarification.
- We recognize that language is not universal but cultural and contextual. As such, we strive to use appropriate language in the classroom while also recognizing that such terms may be contested, contradictory, or different across various contexts.
- We strive to individually and collectively consider our own participation in class to encourage a safe and respectful learning environment. We strive to practice respect by reflecting on our attitudes, assumptions, responses, language use, and word choice during class. When we make a mistake or cause harm through our use of language (whether intended or unintended), we commit to understanding how and why harm emerged, and transforming our behaviour to the best of our ability when appropriate.
- We also recognize that the classroom is a space for working through difficult and contested ideas. This means that we

must seek to understand how barriers, language, and harm emerge across multiple levels, including the individual, the social, the systemic, and the institutional. Identifying how or why harm occurs is as important as alleviating harm.

- We recognize that difficult/challenging/uncomfortable feelings are not the same as harm, although harm can be experienced as a difficult feeling.
- This requires approaching a conflict with generosity by:
    - assuming good intentions unless intention to harm is clear,
    - reflecting on the source of harm, which may be individual or systemic,
    - evaluating safety without equating this with discomfort,
    - identifying the appropriate actions for transformation,
    - using a collaborative rather than punitive approach,
    - prioritizing collective learning, growing, and adjusting as we develop new understandings of conflict and harm.
- While accommodations for recognized disabilities are set by the university's accessibility policies and services and through agreements established individually between a student and professor, peers also play a role in cultivating a mutually supportive, accountable, and sustainable classroom. We, therefore, strive not to make assumptions about our peers and to "check-in" with our peers and/or the professor if we are experiencing challenges in a classroom dynamic (e.g. a group member who has not completed their work, an interpersonal conflict, a circumstance of oppressive or inappropriate behaviour, etc.)
- Accessibility is an ongoing process. We are all responsible for checking in throughout the term, not just at the beginning of the semester. It is never too late to seek accommodation or help or develop new ways of supporting one another in the classroom.

For more information on how official channels at the university identify and provide resources for accessibility and disability, seek out information with the campus access services office and talk with peers about how they have navigated these services. If services are not available to you for any reason (e.g. cost or barriers to diagnosis, unrecognized barriers, specific accommodations that are not provided, barriers are not disability-related, needs may be temporary or newly developed, etc.), this is an invitation to discuss supports that we can collectively and individually co-create in this class.

NATALIE KOURI-TOWE

Online Tools and Resources for Students

Citation Guides

Concordia University Citation Guides

Western Libraries Citation Guide

University of Toronto Libraries Citation Style Guide

Writing, Reading, and Styling Guides

Concordia University Handouts & Resources on Writing, Reading and More

Crash Course Study Skills (10 Individual short video tutorials)

Purdue University Writing Lab

Why Write? A Guide for Students in Canada

More Tools and Strategies

Assignment Calculator

Pomodoro Time Management-Tool

Note-taking Strategies

5 Tech-Tools to Help Improve Reading Comprehension

Access to Zotero

VERSIONING HISTORY

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number. Due to the guide's continuous updating, the addition or removal of a resource is not recorded on this page.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	11 Nov 2021	Original publication date under the title *Better Practices in the Sexuality Classroom: Teaching Resources and Guides for Sustainable and Equitable Learning*. Version prior to Pressbooks.	N/A
2.0	2 May 2024	Guidebook, published under a new title, *Better Practices in the Classroom: A Teaching Guidebook for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Equitable Learning from a Gender and Sexuality Studies Framework* with revised content throughout. - Addition of Zotero for further reading and resources. - New H5P self-assessment quizzes for the start of each chapter. New Sections: Learning about violence enacted on Indigenous peoples; Expanded territorial acknowledgements content; Name pronunciation; Discomfort vs harm in the classroom; Building safer spaces; Expanded trigger warning content; Person-centered vs identity-based language and disability terminology; Scaffolding in classroom pedagogy.	ALL
2.1	21 June 2024	Copyediting and graphic design formatting.	ALL