Equity & Inclusion in the Online Classroom

> *The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it - and then dismantle it.*
>
> *- Ibram X. Kendi, How to be an Antiracist*

We live in a racialized society. Students and instructors carry their lived racial experiences with them into the classroom, but historically, the American higher education system has privileged the experiences of White individuals over those of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, AAPI, and other minoritized people. An integral part of creating equity in the classroom is actively fostering spaces where students feel safe enough to bring their whole selves to class. Although this section focuses on practical steps for fostering this kind of environment, the steps outlined here are just a starting point. Addressing and working towards dismantling this historical inequity is an institutional and personal responsibility. Only through continual investigation and internal interrogation can we begin to make meaningful impacts in the spaces we inhabit.

Build Equity Into The Course: First Steps

Treat EDI as a Working Concept

1. **Include an EDI Statement in your syllabus**. Be authentic. What does EDI mean in your classroom and in your material? Take a look at the sample syllabus statement as a starting point. Remember, it's crucial that you tailor this language to your course so that students understand what equity means to you. [Take a look at a sample statement from the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning.](#)

2. **Build in content that addresses EDI** issues in your field, and articulate how your course learning objectives align with your EDI statement and goals.

3. **Include culturally relevant materials** in your course content. Consider what material you are already using, and who it represents. Be reflective of your own cultural frames of reference, and acknowledge what perspectives they exclude. The course content, including images, reading material, and examples, should represent our diverse student cohort. (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Additional Resource:

[The Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool: A First Step in Doing Social Justice Pedagogy](#) (Taylor et al, 2019)

The Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool (SJSDT) is an assessment tool and framework that walks you through designing an inclusive syllabus and other course strategies to help improve

the success of underrepresented students and create a greater emphasis on social justice in the classroom.

Be Responsive to Current Events

> *Racial Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color*
>
> *- Sue et al. 2007*

In the online learning space, microaggressions can manifest in forms of digital communication and non-text behaviors. Doing nothing when racial bias manifests in the classroom, or in the world, does not foster spaces where students feel that their experiences are valued or heard. In fact, not acknowledging racist acts and microaggressions may create a hostile environment where students of color feel invalidated (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yasso, 2000).

1. **Acknowledge how these events impact our communities** and acknowledge that students carry these issues with them into the classroom. Sending out a class-wide announcement or email acknowledging events when they occur, and inviting students to share their experiences with you, is a great starting point.

2. **Step in when students make racist, hurtful, or insensitive comments**, and acknowledge the harm they cause. Do not allow problematic behaviors to continue unchecked, and make it clear that the problematic behavior does not align with [the expectations and values of UC San Diego.](#)

3. **Reach out to support on campus** if you need guidance for addressing issues in class. The EDI Office on campus can help facilitate how to address these issues, and The Office of Student Conduct can support in instances where individual students need to be reported.

Additional Resource:

[Responding to Racial Bias and Microaggressions in Online Environments, CORA Learning](#)
[Responding to Racial Microaggressions (Handout), Engaged Teaching Hub](#)

This one-hour webinar utilizes common definitions, as well as scenarios, to help participants recognize and respond to racial bias and microaggressions in the online environment. The handout, developed by the Engaged Teaching Hub at UC San Diego, adapts the webinar into a resource for addressing racial microaggressions in the classroom.

Consider Digital Equity

1. **Utilize [Open Educational Resources](#)** and library reserves for low to no-cost options for students who may experience financial barriers to course materials.

2. **Be intentional when integrating high-resource technologies** into the curriculum. Technology that requires the use of webcams, microphones, high-performance computers, etc may present barriers to students accessing course materials.

3. **Provide frequent opportunities for students to become familiar** with new technologies before high-stakes assessments. Participation only or other low stakes activities can help students identify any potential pain points in advance of critical assessment events.

Additional Resource:

[Peralta Online Equity Rubric](#)

The Peralta Equity Rubric is a research-based course (re)design evaluation instrument to help teachers make online course experiences more equitable for all students.

References

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