

# Racism and Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching

SIG Convener(s):

Equity and Social Justice (Nicole A. Cooke, University of South Carolina; Mónica Colón-Aguirre, East Carolina University; Amelia Gibson, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA)

Presenters:

Renate Chancellor (Catholic University of America), Michelle Kazmer (University of Florida), David Lankes (University of South Carolina), Bharat Mehra (University of Alabama)

## ABSTRACT

Student evaluations of teaching (SET), also known as student course evaluations, are a generally accepted way to evaluate performance of faculty members in higher education. These evaluations are tied to retention, compensation, promotion, and even hiring. However, there is a strong body of literature demonstrating that SET are highly flawed systems and that basing personnel decisions on them can lead to discriminatory employment practices. Some issues that arise with this reliance on student evaluations of teaching include the so-called reciprocity effect in which students tend to use course evaluations as a punitive action for receiving a lower grade. Other issues include the tendency to put total responsibility for the quality of the education on instructors and grade inflation. Research has also found that student evaluations of teaching are marred with sexist comments, they tend to judge racial minorities more harshly than whites, and they express more negative performance evaluations of faculty when diversity and inclusion topics are the focus of the courses being evaluated.

This panel will draw upon the expertise and personal narratives of a group of faculty members who will present their experiences, points of view, and musings regarding the topic of bias in student evaluations. The main goal of this panel is to highlight issues faculty face in LIS education while analyzing the role of SETs in terms of their utility and dangers. Panelist presentations will form a good starting point for ongoing conversations regarding appropriate teaching evaluation tools which are fairer and more objective in evaluating real teaching proficiency rather than lingering on the personal biases of the evaluators.

## ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

students; education programs/schools; pedagogy; administration

## AUTHOR KEYWORDS

student evaluations of teaching; bias; discrimination; library and information science education; faculty of color