Anti-racist pedagogical considerations and strategies for synchronous online courses

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This poster curates a sample of our community's ideas from discussions during virtual faculty development sessions for online educators during 2017-2022; we see ongoing conversations around inclusivity and anti-racism as critical, and hold space for these conversations regularly. By sharing collectively generated advice and tips, we hope this poster demonstrates an approach to knowledge generation that challenges the white supremacy culture characteristic of individualism.

Collaborate with students on community agreements & other class decisions
- Use tools (e.g. chat, polls, breakout groups, discussion forums) to create community agreements together
- Prompt students to address the use of tech in your agreements, e.g. muting mics, indicating when one has stepped away, preferred uses of chat
- Review community agreements regularly & update as needed
- Seek student input, e.g. on assignments and grading rubrics

Be clear about expectations, and be inclusive of first-gen students
- Use grading rubrics and connect them to grading in the learning management system
- Clarify expectations around academic reading; Share assignment examples
- Promote academic resources such as the Writing Center uniformly to all students, and clarify how online students can access these resources
- Explain how students can meet with you virtually for office hours

Prioritize community-building
- Recognize that online students may feel isolated and reluctant to share or take risks during class, and help students build relationships with each other, e.g. through community-building check-ins, class discussions, small-group discussions, chat participation, group projects, discussion of digital communication
- Use breaks and pre- or post-class time for quick community-building activities, including activities that activate prior knowledge and connect to course content

Prepare to address micro- and macro-aggressions when they come up in class
- Example model for addressing microaggressions: The NAME Steps (Notice the microaggression, Acknowledge the instructor's responsibility to address it, Make space to address it, and Engage the group about moving forward)
- Be aware that these can occur publicly on webcam, on mic, in the typed chat, in polls, etc., or privately in breakout groups or private chats

Amplify BIPOC voices
- Make sure that authors of color are represented in the required readings, videos, and course materials
- Invite BIPOC guest speakers from around the world
- Highlight role models from underrepresented populations
- Make sure to give white and BIPOC students equitable opportunities, encouragement, & mentoring (be aware of biases and reflect on your own identities as the instructor, including hidden identities)

"Like fighting an addiction, being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination."

-- Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be An Antiracist*

"Educators are compelled to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, different strategies for the sharing of knowledge."
-- bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*

Name & address white supremacy culture when it shows up in the classroom
- Characteristics of white supremacy culture include: perfectionism, sense of urgency, defensiveness, quantity over quality, worship of written word, only one right way, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, i'm the only one, progress is bigger/more, belief that objectivity exists, right to comfort for those with power

Address classism in course design
- Make sure all required readings are available to students for free online or digitally via Columbia's Library, as physical library reserves are not accessible to online students
- Be mindful that students represent a range of incomes and backgrounds
- Be aware that income differences may be visible on webcam or audible on mic

Be mindful about student technology
- Consider if/when to require student webcam use
- Share info re: ways to lower Internet and tech costs, e.g. federal Affordable Connectivity Program, student discounts for computers, Columbia IT's free/discounted software
- Share advice about home technology setup & problem-solving to minimize issues and maximize learning

Be mindful that online ed opens access & can create more diverse classrooms
- When teaching with examples/case studies, consider that students are coming from many backgrounds, including race, class, geography, country of origin, religion, etc.
- For students who are caregivers or share space, be clear about expectations around the presence of children and others during class

Implement trauma-informed teaching principles & Universal Design for Learning Principles
- Take advantage of the online teaching tools that can reduce barriers and provide choice, connection, support, empowerment, and flexibility in ways that info is presented and students engage
- Tools apply to in-class interaction, homework, and viewing of recordings

"Co-creating the classroom experience holds us accountable to ensuring that no one voice, paradigm, or perspective dominates the learning environment. Co-creation can send a clear message to participants that their full selves are welcomed and that we all take responsibility for shaping the agreements that govern our shared experience and the learning that transpires."
-- Zuleka Henderson

"Community agreements are a key strategy for addressing the insidiousness of white supremacy in the classroom. Community agreements make the often implicit norms of classroom culture and western educational culture EXPLICIT. Having community norms not only functions as a tool for accountability but also as a direct contradiction to the white supremacy cultural norms that are often left unnamed and unexamined."
-- Amelia Ortega

"Anti-racist pedagogy is not just about implementing social science theories into curriculum and discipline. It is also about *how* one is able to acknowledge privilege and positionality and educate within an institution (doing the necessary allyship work that builds capacity to strategize around and survive inequitable experiences within institutions), even when race and racism is not the subject matter."
-- Fatima Mabrouk

"For many students who are coming into grad school without any financial safety net and who are budgeting carefully and anticipating having to pay back $100,000 or more in combined graduate & undergraduate loans, required readings that aren't free can create barriers to learning or force students to choose between their readings and another necessity. We have so many invisible identities, and class is so often made invisible, especially in predominantly middle class and upper-middle class spaces like a university. Striving to have every discussion with the understanding that people with lived experiences of class oppression are in the room is a useful approach and helps to undo the us/them binary that social workers dedicated to social justice must grapple with."
-- Malwina Andruczyk

"It is imperative for educators to understand the oppressive nature of requiring students to be on camera at all times. Everything from webcam fatigue, to eye strain, to signing into a virtual classroom while living in a harmful environment must be considered when developing and enforcing expectations about webcam presence. I understand our desire to engage and connect with our students online, but it's possible to cultivate connection and rapport with students when not on camera."
-- Dawn Shedrick

"The chat or microphone option is a deceptively simple but major way online classrooms practice inclusive education. When a student no longer needs to navigate barriers to classroom participation steeped in ableism, racism, and classism, and can instead fully engage in the exchange of ideas and perspectives uninhibited, the entire learning community benefits."
-- Kristiana Reyes

"Although the sting of experiencing or witnessing a microaggression in class had driven me to retreat in the past, I now respond to the discomfort by reaching across differences and attending to the social and political undercurrents of harm, while centering student relationships. I believe this lesson has significantly improved my experience with students and my facilitation of braver spaces."
-- Christine Holmes

"Anti-oppressive practice includes mindfulness about our learning environments, and how easily we uphold principles of white supremacy. It is essential to recognize that a sense of urgency, perfectionism, competitiveness, 'professionalism,' and 'progress' are contrary to creating equitable space, and to encourage dialogue about these ubiquitous characteristics."
-- Josie Torielli

"There are so many important reasons I could reflect on for critically engaging white supremacy in the online classroom; social work ethics, modeling theory in action, or the imperative of critical dialogue. But I think what it comes down to for me is that to be a good teacher I have to be learning. To deserve my students' respect I have to be learning. And to be learning I have to be working to undo white supremacy."
-- Elizabeth Anable

"Anti-racist and anti-oppressive teaching must be our lens in each and every course—This teaching requires a responsibility to use a trauma-informed approach, create community and trust, and practice from a place of humility to ensure that dialogue and learning can take place. Thus, it is imperative that we commit to engagement in ongoing, critical, self-reflective work."
-- Amy Kapadia

"Trauma-informed teaching centers empowerment, choice, and collaboration, from choosing the course content to grading and giving feedback. Instructors can actively use diverse cultural and historical perspectives throughout their teaching to acknowledge the power and agency in those who have been oppressed."
-- Johanna Creswell Báez

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Citations and further info: hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge. | Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to Be an Antiracist*. Random House Publishing Group. | Báez, J. C., Carello, J., & Marquart, M. (2021, April 15). Trauma-informed Teaching and Learning: Principles, Practices, and Grading in Online Courses. Workshop for the Social Work Distance Education Conference. | CAST. About Universal Design for Learning. | McInroy, L. B., Byers, D. S., Kattari, S. K., & CSWE Council on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression. (2019). The NAME Steps: How to name and address anti- LGBTQIA2S+ microaggressions in social work classrooms. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education. | Marquart, M., Shedrick, D., and Ortega, A. (2021, February 25). A conversation about anti-racist approaches to student webcam requirements in online courses. Roundtable discussion for the 38th Winter Roundtable Conference: A Pandemic of Racism, Teacher's College, Columbia University. | Okun, T. white supremacy culture. dRworks. | Related Columbia CTL resources: Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Action: First Steps, Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia, and Navigating Heated, Offensive, and Tense (HOT) Moments in the Classroom

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