Four Strategies to Engage the Multicultural Classroom

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Presented by:
Mathew L. Ouellett
Dr. Christine Stanley

Mathew L. Ouellett, Associate Director of the Center for Teaching & Faculty Development, partners with faculty and academic administrators campus-wide on initiatives that support teaching excellence, respect, and inclusion; directs the Lilly Fellows Program; and is a lecturer in the Department of Student Development.

In her role as Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity and with research expertise in diversity and faculty professional development, Dr. Stanley is primarily responsible for (1) assessing and monitoring the efforts and progress in diversifying the faculty, staff, and student bodies, (2) assisting the President and Provost in holding units accountable for progress in achieving diversity and promoting a supportive climate for diversity, and (3) planning and implementing programs to ensure diversity and equity among students, faculty, and staff by working with Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Heads, and the leadership of the faculty, student, and staff governing bodies.
Access

The [Name of institution or department] is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements early in the semester.

OR

If you are a person with special circumstances that you believe will affect your class performance (for example, visual, hearing, or learning disabilities, or language differences), please let us know as soon as possible so that we may work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Also please let us know if you have any trouble accessing or using the technologies being used in this course, such as Elluminate, Moodle, and Skype. Please don’t hesitate to let the instructors know if you require assistance or accommodations for any reason. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

Participation / Discussion

This course is based on an educational approach that integrates cognitive development with affective aspects of social learning. Our approach encourages students to interact intellectually and emotionally with the information and perspectives presented in class and readings so that new learning informs the student’s professional and social reality more fully. These goals are reflected in how class discussions and written work for the course are designed such as small group discussions, exercises, presentations, case studies and videotapes.

OR
Active Participation. The value of class discussion depends largely on the quality of your preparation and class participation. Each week you will be expected to show that you have read the assigned materials and thought about how you would apply these to university teaching generally, and in the context your discipline, specifically.

Classroom Communication

In general, if you have questions about the course, I highly encourage you to come see me in person. (Feel free to bring a friend along, too!) Office visits are the best way to ask questions about course material and the major, to discuss classroom issues, or to bring up any concerns you may have about your class performance. It provides us an unhurried and more private context in which we can focus better understanding and responding to your concerns. I do not negotiate assignment grades right before or after class.

Please be respectful and use appropriate language when communicating with me, and each other, over e-mail and in person. Email is appropriate when used to schedule an appointment, notify me of an absence or tardiness, or for short questions to clarify class assignments or specific items from a lecture. Note that I try to respond to email messages within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on the weekend.

Finally, please address as me as “Dr.” or “Professor” and I’ll return this respect by addressing you according to your preference, as well.

RUBRIC FOR GRADING PARTICIPATION

Participation includes peer assessment of your to contributions to creating and sustaining a collaborative learning environment. In your final response paper of the semester you are asked to describe two learning situations you experienced during this course:

a.) One time when you were influenced / persuaded by the insights of one of your peers, and

b.) One time when your comments influenced / persuaded the thinking of one of your peers.
SURVEY FOR FIRST DAY OF CLASS
Course Name and Number
Course Title

Spring 2012

Name: ____________________________  Major / Program: __________________________

Email: ____________________________

1. Why did you choose this course and what do you hope to learn in it?

2. Have you had any prior academic and/or “real world” experiences that you think may help you succeed in this course?

3. Is there anything about you as a learner that you think I should know that would help me to make this a better learning experience for you?

Feel free to use the back of this paper!
SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MULTICULTURAL COURSE DESIGN (ALIGNMENTS OF COURSE GOALS, ASSIGNMENTS, & EVALUATIONS)

Formative Assessment

1. What classroom assessment techniques do you incorporate to explore students’ perspectives on what is working well in the course and what could be improved?

Anonymous, brief writing prompts can be an effective, low risk way to collect student feedback on the usefulness of an assignment or activity. Ask students to pull out a sheet of paper and anonymously respond to one or two open-ended prompts, such as:

- What about this exercise helped you learn the material?
- What about this assignment could be changed to improve your learning?

2. Have you considered the use of a mid-semester assessment tool?

The Small Group Teaching and Learning Questionnaire (SGTLQ) is recommended for small- to medium-sized classes because it offers the best direct feedback from students. The SGTLQ takes approximately 20-25 minutes of class time. In groups of 3-5, students designate a recorder and discuss and decide what their consensus views are in response to three open-ended questions:

- What do you like most about this course and/or the instructor’s teaching of it?
- What about the course and/or the instructor’s teaching of it need change or improvement?
- What suggestions can you offer that would make this course a better learning experience? (Or, a question designed by the instructor.)

3. Do you regularly provide students rubrics for course assignments?

Rubrics make transparent for students your expectations for assignments and provide them models for performance. They also help coach students on how to complete the steps necessary for excellent performance.

Summative Assessment

Do you include questions on end-of-semester summative assessment measures that ask students to share their perspectives on the social climate of the classroom?

Sample questions:

- Are multiple perspectives welcome in this classroom?
- When do you feel most included in this course and/or classroom?
- When do you feel most excluded in this course and/or classroom?

(Such questions can be scored as on a Likert Scale or asked as open-ended prompts for narrative responses.)
SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions are prompts for self-reflection, identifying personal and professional goals, and to get a dialogue underway. (It is not intended that you would necessarily work through all of the questions nor in any particular sequence.) These questions can be answered individually or in a sustained, trusted, diverse learning community.

Complex Identity

1. What do you feel is your “ultimate purpose” in life? What are your “big” goals at this particular time in your life?

2. When was the first time you remember feeling different from others? What happened and how you did you feel about it.

3. How would your friends describe your personality? How would you describe your personality?

4. When was a time you felt powerful socially? How did you respond in the situation?

5. When was a when you felt disempowered socially? How did you respond in the situation?

6. How have you come to understand your complex social identities? Which aspects are most salient for you at this time in your life?

9. In your family, extended family, community, work institutions, and culture, which emotions do you share publicly and how do you express these emotions?

10. What emotions don’t you share (or, only share after you trust the other person)?

Self as Teacher

11. What brings you to teach this course at this particular time in your life?

12. How have you come to understand your complex social identities? Which aspects are most salient for you in the classroom?

13. What do you love about teaching? What challenges you about teaching?

14. What teacher(s) or mentor(s) of yours have influenced your thinking about how to teach multicultural issues (e.g., race, sexual orientation, genders, social class, religion, etc.)?

15. What strengths do you think you “bring to the table”?

16. What challenges do you anticipate?

17. What theoretical and what experiences have influenced your thinking about the complex issues of social identities?

Communication and Conflict
18. What sorts of things do you think should be responded to immediately in class? What sorts of things should we wait on and respond to later?

19. When a student takes a cheap shot at me or implies I’m not being effective, I...

20. When the class is “silent,” it may indicate that ...

21. When the class is talkative, but off-topic, I often ...

22. How do you balance fulfilling an “agenda” with responding to students’ interests?

23. How will we decide “in the moment” what to do?

24. What aspects of conflict do you most embrace / are hardest for you?

25. Can you remember tense experiences in the classroom? How have these been handled?

26. How have your own issues of racism or internalized oppression been triggered in the classroom experience?

27. How do you handle racism and internalized oppression in your students?

28. Students often discuss an interest in having a “safe environment.” What does this mean to you? How do you establish such a climate in your courses?

**Assessment / Evaluation**

29. How and when do I give students regular feedback on their progress in my course?

30. How and when do I explain to students how I evaluate their written work?

31. How and when do I ask students for their feedback on what is working / not working in the learning environment of the classroom (i.e., assignments, discussions, tests, etc.).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


Ouellett, M. L. (Ed). (March 2011). An integrative analysis approach to diversity in the college classroom. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 125. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. In nine chapters, the contributors to this volume offer an overview of key tenets of intersectionality and explore applications of this model in faculty and instructional development in higher education. Gathered from across the disciplines, they draw upon a range of approaches to social identity formation, different theoretical models, and a complement of lived experiences. When read together, these chapters offer a systemic approach to change in higher education by addressing innovations at course, department, and institutional levels.


Warren, L. (2005). Strategic action in hot moments. In M. Ouellett (Ed.), Teaching inclusively: resources for course, department & institutional change in higher education (pp. 620-630). Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press. Warren offers practical advice for facing what he calls “hot moments” in the classroom. Hot moments include a range of possible classroom scenarios in which the instructor might feel on the defensive, attacked, angry, or muted. The text provides ways to “keep the mind in action” instead of reacting without thinking.