

Anti-Racist Pedagogy

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PURPOSE

This job aid introduces key principles and strategies for implementing anti-racist pedagogy in post-secondary teaching. It is designed to support instructors in creating more equitable, inclusive, and transformative learning environments. By intentionally designing content, discussions, and assessments with an anti-racist lens, educators can begin to disrupt systemic inequities and foster student success for all.

BACKGROUND

Historically, education in Canada has contributed to the perpetuation of systemic discrimination. In recent decades, there has been a growing movement across post-secondary institutions to acknowledge these harms and work toward equity and reconciliation. Educators, administrators, and scholars are actively reshaping teaching practices to dismantle racism and support diverse learners. This job aid highlights practical, actionable approaches grounded in research and inspired by leading institutions such as Brown University's Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS ANTI-RACIST TEACHING

Brown University outlines five foundational strategies to guide anti-racist pedagogy. These strategies center student equity and emphasize the power of education to either reproduce or resist systemic harm.

1. Intentional Course Outline Design

Develop clear, well-aligned learning outcomes—one of the most effective teaching strategies (Hattie, 2011).

Include learning outcomes that encourage students to interrogate personal and disciplinary biases. Add syllabus statements that articulate your commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

2. Inclusive and Diverse Course Content

Integrate diverse authors, scholars, and perspectives throughout the curriculum—not only in designated modules.

Balance representations of communities, avoiding deficit-based narratives by highlighting assets and strengths.

Use reflective activities where students connect course concepts to their own lives and experiences.

3. Equitable Classroom Discussions and Collaborative Learning

Anti-racist classrooms foster belonging and inclusion through structured and intentional interactions. Consider the following practices:

- **Build a sense of belonging:** Incorporate diverse images, stories, and examples to reflect students' identities.
- **Set participation guidelines:** Offer multiple modes of engagement (e.g., verbal, written, asynchronous) and allow students to set personal participation goals (Gillis, 2019).
- **Facilitate inclusively:** Use discussion guidelines, address microaggressions, amplify microaffirmations, and “call in” rather than “call out.”
- **Teach about implicit bias:** Include mini-lessons on unconscious bias, particularly in group work (Adams et al., 2014; Goshal et al., 2012).
- **Use varied discussion formats:** Blend synchronous (e.g., Zoom chat, MS Teams, shared documents) and asynchronous (e.g., Moodle forums) methods to improve equity (Fowler, 2015).
- **Structure group work:** Assign clear roles with rotating responsibilities (e.g., speaker, note-taker, timekeeper) to ensure all voices are heard (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002).
- **Ensure resource accessibility:** Use library reserves or Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce barriers (Colvard et al., 2018).
- **Plan for material equity:** Consider whether all students have access to the tools and supplies required for success.

4. Anti-Racist Approaches to Assessment

Assessment and grading are critical sites of potential bias and inequity. Anti-racist approaches emphasize fairness, transparency, and student growth.

- **Avoid norm-referenced grading:** Curving exacerbates disparities; use criterion-referenced grading instead (Hurtado & Sork, 2015).
- **Mitigate stereotype threat:** Frame feedback with high standards, belief in student potential, and clear, actionable steps (Steele, 2011; Yaeger et al., 2014).
- **Use scaffolded assessments:** Incorporate smaller, lower-stakes assignments (e.g., drafts, practice problems, reading responses) to reduce gaps in opportunity (Eddy & Hogan, 2014).
- **Increase transparency:** Clearly outline the purpose, process, and success criteria for assignments. See TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching) resources.
- **Consider contract grading:** Allow students to choose workloads and formats that correspond to different grade levels (Inoue, 2019).

5. Knowing (and Re-Knowing) Yourself

“Although we are not responsible for the culture-specific beliefs we grew up with, we are surely responsible for examining and questioning them as adults and as educators.” — Marchesani & Adams (1992, p. 14)

Anti-racist teaching is lifelong work. It involves personal reflection, ongoing learning, and a willingness to confront discomfort and revise our approaches.

Acknowledge that neither educators nor students enter the classroom as blank slates. Our experiences, identities, and values shape our interactions and decisions.

CONCLUSION

The Centre for Learning and Innovation at Assiniboine Community College gratefully acknowledges the work of Brown University and other institutions advancing anti-racist pedagogy. We remain committed to working in partnership with educators to embed equity and anti-racism into every facet of teaching and learning.

Let’s continue this work—imperfectly, iteratively, and intentionally.

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