



ANTI-RACIST PEDAGOGY

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Purpose

This job aid explores Anti-Racist Pedagogy as one way to acknowledge that systems and structures in post-secondary are not immune to discrimination. Education has the power to be transformative and challenge practises that perpetuate discrimination.

Background

Education has been a primary driver in Canada for systemic discrimination. The last 60 years in recent history has seen a push to acknowledge, reconcile and actively change the education system. There are excellent examples of instructors, administrators and researchers actively working towards an education system that seeks anti-racist teaching practises. This job aid highlights this work, providing transparent examples of anti-racist teaching practises that can begin now, in every learning environment.

Effective Teaching is Anti-Racist Teaching

The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning at Brown University is a great place to start your journey in Anti-Racist Teaching. [Effective Teaching Is Anti-Racist Teaching](#)

Highlighted below are Brown's five key starting points of anti-racist classrooms, designed to magnify the transformative impact of education and mitigate the negative harm.

Intentional Course Outline Design

- Clear and well-designed learning outcomes are one of the most important strategies for effective teaching (Hattie, 2011), and therefore, it follows that anti-racist course outlines would incorporate one or more objectives to foster equitable outcomes.
- Learning outcomes that help students interrogate their own biases or the biases of a discipline can support an anti-racist classroom.
- Learning outcomes can be complemented by [diversity and inclusion syllabus statements](#), which suggest what instructors will do to create anti-racist classrooms.

Class content

- It is important to locate diverse course content throughout the curriculum.
- An anti-racist approach to course content will also be mindful of the balance between deficit- and asset-based depictions of communities.
- Asking students to write about the relevance of course concepts to their own lives [has been shown to promote anti-racist outcomes](#).

Classroom discussions and problem solving

Anti-racist classrooms should intentionally structure classroom interactions through one or more of the following approaches:

- Encouragement of a sense of belonging and positive classroom community, such as through writing or showing diverse images of practitioners and scholars in the field.
- Clear guidelines for participation that allow students the opportunity to set goals that may encompass verbal and other modalities of participation (Gillis, 2019).
- Facilitation strategies such as classroom discussion guidelines, active engagement in checking microaggressions, and amplifying microaffirmations, and calling students “in” to a discussion.
- Teaching students about the potential for implicit bias, such as in small-group Zoom discussions (Adams, Devos, Rivera, Smith & Vega, 2014; Goshal, Lippard, Robas, & Muir, 2012).
- Use of synchronous (e.g., Zoom chat, MS Teams or a Shared Document) or asynchronous discussions (e.g., MOODLE). One study in an engineering classroom found that when teams planned design projects with written discussions, they were more likely to be equitable (Fowler, 2015).
- Well-defined roles and outcomes for pair, team and group experiences, to provide equitable rotations of roles for students to speak, listen, ideate, etc. (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002).
- Equitable access to course texts and materials, by using library reserves and Open Educational Resources (OER). The presence of OER resources has been found to be related to equitable grading systems (Colvard, Watson, & Park, 2018).
- Course supplies may present another barrier and should be considered when lesson planning. Ensure each of my students will have access to all the necessary tools and materials, for the sake of equity.

Assessment

Grading and feedback can be two of the most critical sites of inequities because they are so deeply linked to educational outcomes and students’ sense of self. They also can be deeply imbued with [implicit bias](#). Criterion-referenced grading is an example of an anti-racist approach because grading systems associated with norm-referenced grading (“curving”) tend to exacerbate racial disparities (Hurtado & Sork, 2015).

Anti-racist approaches to assessment include:

- Using strategies to mitigate [stereotype threat](#), such as feedback that emphasizes an instructor’s high standards, a student’s potential to reach them, and actionable feedback to improve (Steele, 2011; Yaeger et al. 2014).
- Using more frequent/scaffolded assignments with less weight (e.g., multiple graded drafts of a paper, practice problems, reading guide), an approach that has been found to reduce opportunity gaps (Eddy & Hogan, 2014).
- Increasing transparency of assignments by clarifying the purpose, steps to complete the task, and criteria for success. (Examples can be found [here](#).)

- Employing contract grading systems, which allow students discretion over the amount (and often type) of work they plan to complete, which corresponds with a certain grade. (See [this example](#) from Inoue, 2019).

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).
- For educators, addressing components of anti-racist teaching is not a straightforward task, but a longer-term work in progress, with many iterations – and failures – along the pedagogical journey. As part of this lifelong work, we need to continually interrogate the racist systems and communities in which we live and work.
- Educators and students do not enter the classroom environment as blank slates devoid of identity or culture. Our beliefs and values impact the decisions we make as we teach.

Assiniboine Community College Centre for Learning and Innovation extends thanks for all of the work Brown University and others have done in this important area. We are committed to working together to bring anti-racist practises to our learning environments.

Sources Identified by Brown University in the Development of their Anti-Racist Resources.

The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning

<https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/effective-teaching-anti-racist-teaching>

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