Provost’s Course Redesign Competition

Report Guidelines

Program Description: The Provost’s Course Redesign Competition is intended to enhance student learning and promote pedagogical innovation through the redesign of core, foundational, and gateway courses.

Report Submission Procedure and Deadline: Please provide a report of work on the project by September 17, 2012. Your report should be sent as an electronic document (as a Word or RTF document) to Shaun Beaty, Associate Director, The Institute for Learning and Teaching at Shaun.Beaty@ColoState.edu.

Report Guidelines: Your report should include the following items. Some of this information can be found in your funding proposal.

1. Team Leader and Project Team Members. Please include names, titles, and responsibilities.

This course redesign project allowed me to work with a talented group of graduate students and faculty members who are deeply committed to teaching and learning and to improving classroom instruction. Below, I include the names, titles, and a brief summary of responsibilities for the core project team members who were involved most actively in the work associated with the SOC 205: Contemporary Race-Ethnic Relations course redesign process.

Project Lead: Lori Peek, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, CSU

I played a central role in all aspects of the course redesign, including: (a) working with the core project team and project affiliates; (b) meeting with teaching experts through TILT; (c) attending TILT-sponsored seminars for the Fellows as well as teaching lectures aimed at the larger university community; (d) establishing a timeline to ensure that all course redesign objectives would be met; (e) developing the analytic strategy for the teaching resources literature review that the team conducted; (f) assisting with writing up and compiling the two annotated bibliographies that that team created; (g) redesigning my own course syllabus, lecture slides, and lecture/activity notes; and (h) working with advanced graduate students and faculty in my department to assist with new pedagogical innovations in their own courses.

Project Assistants: Galen Ciscell, Ph.D. Candidate and Instructor, Department of Sociology, CSU, Meghan Mordy, Ph.D. Candidate and Instructor, Department of Sociology, CSU, Emily Thorn, Ph.D. Student, Department of Sociology, CSU, Rachel Dembrun, Undergraduate Student, Department of Journalism and Technical Communication, CSU

A substantial portion of the funding from my course redesign grant was dedicated to hiring a team of talented CSU students. Thanks to TILT, I was able to offer financial support to these students, as well as an opportunity to advance their own pedagogy.

Galen Ciscell was the lead graduate assistant on the project. He assisted me with almost all aspects of the course redesign. Most notably, Galen took the lead in searching for relevant literature and developing the two annotated bibliographies that our project team produced. Galen is lead author on
the *Teaching Race and Ethnicity* and the *Teaching Large Classes* annotated bibliographies that we produced. Galen also taught his own section of 40 students in SOC 205 in the spring of 2011, so he was able to implement many of the same redesign approaches that I identified and implemented for my own larger section of 120 students. We met and emailed regularly to compare the outcomes of these various new approaches in our classes.

*Meghan Mordy* also contributed notably to the project. She is a co-author of the *Teaching Race and Ethnicity* annotated bibliography that we produced. Moreover, in the summer of 2011, she taught a small section of SOC 205 which also allowed her to implement several of the redesign activities that Galen and I had identified. Attaining summer teaching appointments in Sociology is difficult for graduate students because there are a limited number of slots; I am certain that Meghan’s role in this TILT grant, and her knowledge of the race and ethnicity literature, helped her to secure a coveted teaching position.

*Emily Thorn* played a central role in the development of the *Teaching Large Classes* annotated bibliography. She, like Galen, Meghan, and myself, read and abstracted dozens of articles from peer-reviewed journals regarding pedagogical strategies for teaching large classes.

*Rachel Dembrun* is an undergraduate student at Colorado State University, majoring in Journalism and Technical Communication. She was also one of my students in SOC 205 the semester when I began implementing many of the techniques from the course redesign. Rachel is technologically adept – she uses Prezi for presentations and she knows how to create visually appealing teaching materials using many different tools and techniques. Because of her work in this area, we invited her to give a seminar to interested graduate students and faculty in Liberal Arts on teaching with technological innovations. Among other things, she taught us how to use Prezi and how to embed photos and videos in various presentation mediums. It was a highly productive seminar that was enjoyed by all.

**Project Affiliates:**

Matt Aronson, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, CSU  
Carla Barela-Bloom, Counselor, Center for Advising and Student Achievement, CSU  
Jackie Gabriel, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, CSU  
Patrick Mahoney, Instructor, Department of Sociology, CSU  
Daniel McLane, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, CSU  
Anne Marie Merline, University Honors Program, CSU

The above individuals, all of whom are past or present instructors of SOC 205, agreed to join the team as Project Affiliates. I invited all of the affiliates to join in team meetings and shared with them the teaching bibliographies and resources that our core project team identified as part of the redesign process.

2. **Course number and title.**

SOC 205: Contemporary Race-Ethnic Relations
3. **Course enrollment.** Please provide the enrollment of the course in its first year of offering following the redesign project.

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Sections Taught by Lori Peek:

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4. **Course Syllabus.** Please attach the current syllabus for the course.

Please see attached.

5. **Challenges addressed through the redesign process.** Identify the key problems or needs that were addressed through redesign of the course.

The objective of SOC 205: Contemporary Race-Ethnic Relations is to introduce students to major concepts, theories, and research studies pertaining to racial and ethnic relations in the United States. In the original application, I identified three main problems to be addressed through the course redesign process. Those issues are summarized below:

   a. **Managing classroom size and maintaining instructional scalability.**

With recent budget shortfalls and related cutbacks, the enrollments for the 200-level classes in Sociology are now capped at 120 students (previously, they were capped at 40 students. As a consequence, in the fall of 2009, my SOC 205 course tripled in size. Although I very much enjoy teaching the larger course, the sheer size of the class has rendered obsolete many of the teaching techniques that I worked so hard to perfect in my 40-45 student classroom. Moreover, given my commitment to keeping certain assignments (such as the social change presentation, which out of necessity is now a group presentation), I spend an additional 9 hours conducting student presentations during non-class times. This is difficult for me, the TAs, and the students, who must arrange their schedules accordingly. I am struggling with “instructional scalability” in this classroom, here defined as attempting to maintain
rigorous scholarly standards and an interactive lecture format while managing a larger classroom environment.

b. Reaching an academically and demographically diverse student population. When SOC 205 only enrolled 40-45 students a semester, most of the enrollees were Sociology majors or were pursuing another major within the College of Liberal Arts. Now that my section of SOC 205 enrolls 120 students per semester, it attracts undergraduates from across the university—from Accounting to Art to Animal Sciences, just to name a few. In addition, while the course is lower division and tends to enroll large numbers of first- and second-year students, it also enrolls juniors, seniors, and even a few self-described “super seniors” who have been at the university for many years. The range of disciplinary perspectives and stages of academic preparation make it difficult to establish a common vocabulary and to teach core social scientific theories and methods within the context of the class. The class also attracts students from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Students from these diverse backgrounds enter the class with vastly different worldviews and experiences of majority-minority group relations. A central challenge and opportunity of this class is respecting these distinct perspectives while also encouraging students to think more carefully and broadly about existing large-scale social problems.

c. Teaching theoretically complex and methodologically rigorous topics. Undergraduates who are first year students and/or non-Sociology majors currently comprise over three-fourths of the SOC 205 enrollment. As mentioned above, the overwhelming majority of these students have yet to be exposed to sociological methods, concepts, or theories. Furthermore, SOC 205 may be the only Sociology course many of these students ever take, so it may be the only time they are exposed to this particular disciplinary perspective. When the class was smaller, it was much easier for me to identify and work individually with students who were struggling with the material. Now that the class is larger, this approach is more difficult to sustain, even with TA support. Moreover, many of the lecture materials that I used to draw on to teach about topics like institutional racism, systemic bias, and white privilege do not work as well in the large class, where there is less opportunity for group discussion. Although students have remained quite enthusiastic about the course, I have observed a 5-10% decline in exam averages (exam averages were close to 80/100 in the smaller section, now exam averages range from 70-75/100 in the large section).

6. Summary of the redesign process. Please provide a synopsis of the activities involved in the redesign process.

The rationale for the course redesign of SOC 205 emerged from three primary challenges outlined in the original proposal: (1) managing classroom size and achieving instructional scalability; (2) delivering course material to an academically and demographically diverse classroom; and (3) maintaining the highest standards of teaching while improving student learning outcomes.

As such, the central goal of this proposed course redesign was to identify and integrate cutting-edge instructional and evaluation techniques for a 120-student race-ethnic relations course.

The project team and I carried out a three-pronged strategy to meet the above goal and to effectively redesign the course.

Course Redesign Phase 1: Conduct a comprehensive literature review of pedagogical “best practices” for large courses, with a special focus on strategies for teaching contemporary race-ethnic relations.
Our team spent several months searching ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, and other scholarly databases and talking to our advisory team and other experts in the field to identify two bodies of literature of central interest to this course redesign: teaching and evaluating students in large courses; and teaching race-ethnic relations. The first phase of the course redesign involved the following activities: (a) conducted a comprehensive search for literature on current “best practices” for large classrooms and a search for literature on strategies for teaching race-ethnic relations; (b) gathered all relevant peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, and other materials on these topics; (c) reviewed and summarized, in written form, the literature; and (d) compiled two annotated resource bibliographies.

The final bibliographies, *Teaching Race and Ethnicity: An Annotated Bibliography* and *Teaching Large Classes: An Annotated Bibliography* are attached. We hope that TILT might be able to post these bibliographies on their website and we plan to submit them to TRAILS, which is the American Sociological Association’s Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology (http://trails.asanet.org/Pages/default.aspx).

**Course Redesign Phase 2: Identify and integrate experiential, in-class activities to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.**

Our course redesign proposal was grounded in the reality that students may learn from lectures, but they retain the most information when they actively engage with the material. Accordingly, the second phase of our course redesign was dedicated to identifying and integrating experiential, in-class activities and other mechanisms meant to promote discussion and engagement. The extensive literature reviews that we conducted informed this second phase and provided us with myriad examples of possible in-class activities to integrate into SOC 205.

It is difficult for me to overstate how much Phase 1 of this redesign has influenced my teaching in SOC 205. For the purposes of this report, several examples follow of how I used experiential in-class activities, visuals, and other new discussion prompts to engage the students in new and diverse ways.

- On day 1 of the course, I now have the students do a “pair share” where they introduce themselves to one another. This gets all the students talking on the first day, which I have found fundamentally changes the dynamic of the class as they feel comfortable speaking the rest of the class as well.
- Throughout the remainder of the class, I now integrate a “pair share” or small group discussion for at least five minutes of the course. I find this breaks up the lecture time and keeps students engaged.
- Because of Rachel Dembrun’s presentation, I now have embedded short (2-4 minute videos) in many of my lecture slides. I also have added more charts, graphs, photographs, and other visuals to better share knowledge via my lecture slides and to prompt discussion.
- As a result of a *Teaching Sociology* article that we annotated for the Teaching Race and Ethnicity bibliography, I added a “Name that Race” game activity, which is designed to help students understand how race is socially constructed and hence has changed dramatically over time. Students regularly report that this is one of their favorite class periods.
- I now involve an undergraduate teaching assistant in the course, who is responsible for holding weekly review sessions and at least six exam study sessions. This has allowed for more small group engagement in the class.
- We integrated a role-playing scenario, “Archie Bunker’s Neighborhood,” which is used widely in diversity trainings and residence life settings. Galen piloted this in his SOC 105 course, and then
we worked together to adapt it to his smaller section of SOC 205. We are still trying to figure out how to scale it up to the large section of SOC 205 that I teach, but it was highly effective in terms of generating student excitement and commitment to learning institutional racism.

Course Redesign Phase 3: Identify and integrate new techniques of evaluation to assess student learning outcomes.

The final phase of the course redesign was to be dedicated to revising in- or out-of-class writing assignments. I have not yet changed the writing assignments in my SOC 205 class for two reasons. First, I dedicated most of my time and energy in the course redesign to (a) developing the annotated bibliographies; (b) working closely with the project team; (c) revising my lecture slides and notes; and (d) integrating new in-class activities. This left little time for me, in advance of the semester, to rewrite writing assignments. Second, the final paper that I require students to write (the Racial and Ethnic Socialization essay) is actually highly effective in terms of encouraging students to synthesize the material they learn; students also regularly report that they actually enjoy writing the paper because it is about their own lives. As such, I am hesitant to do away with that writing assignment.

While I have not yet updated the writing assignments, I did gain many new ideas from the literature review that we conducted, and will likely offer some or all of these writing opportunities in future classes.

- Offering service learning opportunities and an associated journal or final paper in lieu of taking one multiple choice exam.
- Asking students to develop blogs (either as individuals or small groups) where they write about race and ethnicity in daily life – things they see that matter, new things they learn, racism in daily life that they observe, etc.
- Establishing a book club where students read one common book and then meet to discuss the book and write a book review.
- Revising the group paper guidelines that I require students to write, and instead asking them to write up shorter individual papers.
- Developing a historical paper that involves interviews with family members and archival research.

7. **Summary of the assessment process.** Briefly explain how the outcomes of the redesign were assessed and the results of the assessment.

I used four primary criteria to evaluate the success of the course redesign.

**Attendance:** I am very proud that attendance is generally quite high in SOC 205, even though it is a large lecture course. Because I track attendance on a daily basis, I was able to track absentee/attendance rates for the redesign semester compared to prior semesters. Attendance actually improved by 3.5% on the semester of the evaluation, and, somewhat amazingly, I had “perfect attendance” on four days. In a class of 120 students, that is no small feat!

**Exam Scores:** When SOC 205 became a “large enrollment” course, I observed a 5-10% decline in exam averages (exam averages were close to 80/100 in the smaller section, but after the class tripled in size, exam averages were typically in the 70-75/100 range in the large section). The semester of the course redesign, the average exam score was 79 across the three required exams. I will continue to track exam averages over coming semesters to see if this is a long-term trend.
Student Engagement: Of all the possible evaluation criteria, this is obviously the most difficult to measure. However, based on the highly positive numerical evaluations that I received – and the comments that students wrote – I believe that they were engaged and that they truly learned in the class. On the last day of class, I asked students to write about what they enjoyed most in the class and what I should absolutely keep. In many cases, they identified the activities and/or lectures when I had integrated new materials or other new changes as a direct result of this redesign process. I also had three graduate students who asked to observe my course (because they were going to be teaching their own sections of SOC 205). Each one of those observers commented on how shocked they were that students were so engaged and so willing to share. This speaks volumes about the courage and quality of my students, and also I think attests to the comfortable atmosphere in the classroom.

Sections Offered: When I became a new assistant professor at CSU, there were 2 sections of SOC 205 offered in any given semester, which enrolled between 80-90 students between the sections. In the fall of 2012, there were 8 sections offered that enrolled over 300 students. Of course, that growth is not due only to the redesign process – the growth is a reflection of a general trend toward more sections of and more students in SOC 205. But with that said, I do think that the course redesign has helped maintain this trend. As the lead instructor of SOC 205 (I am the only full-time faculty member who teaches this class), I am able to mentor the graduate students and temporary instructors who teach the additional sections of the course. I also think, as the person teaching the largest section, that the positive experience of my students is critical, as it helps to generate more excitement about the course and hence demand for more sections.

8. Overall outcomes of the redesign process. Address implementation, student learning and success within the course, and contributions made to related courses and/or programs.

I believe some of the answer to question 7 may actually fit into the response to this question, so I hope that the response to that question can be combined with this question. Overall, I met the goals and objectives as outlined in the course proposal and also saw immediate and tangible results in terms of attendance (objective) and engagement (subjective) criteria.

9. Dissemination results. Briefly explain how results of the course-redesign project were disseminated within and across programs of study and, if relevant, to disciplinary communities. If you have plans for future dissemination, including scholarly presentations or publications, please describe them.

The results from this course redesign have been, and will continue to be, disseminated through several mediums.

First, as noted above, we generated two annotated bibliographies as a direct result of this course redesign process. I will post those bibliographies on my own webpage; I hope that TILT may consider posting them as well; and finally, we will be submitting them to TRAILS for publication.

Second, Galen attended a Teaching Privilege workshop, sponsored by the Matrix Center at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (http://www.uccs.edu/matrix/workshops-and-training.html) as a result of this redesign process. He was able to collect materials that helped both of us in our respective sections of SOC 205. He also had the opportunity to talk about our course redesign project and to collect materials for our annotated bibliographies.
Third, the bibliographies that we produced have been shared with the Project Team as well as the Project Affiliates and Expert Consultants who were identified in our original course redesign proposal.

Thank you again for the support. This was a marvelous experience for me, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be named a 2011-12 recipient of the Provost’s Course Redesign grant!
Course Description:
The objective of this course is to enhance your awareness of major concepts, theories, and research studies pertaining to racial and ethnic relations in the United States. This course will examine the diverse experiences of various racial and ethnic groups from a historical and comparative perspective, focusing on issues of representation, social exclusion, group cohesion, segregation, and economic exploitation. We will consider the nature and causes of racism, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. We will also analyze the individual and institutional consequences of racial and ethnic inequality, with a specific emphasis on the labor market, educational system, government, criminal justice system, media, housing, health care, and family. Strategies for increasing intergroup awareness and improving tolerance will be explored.

Course Materials:
- Additional required readings and supplemental handouts are available electronically via RamCT.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:
**Readings:** This course is organized around a set of readings that will be used to guide lectures and class discussions. The readings will also be used as a basis for the exams, the group social change paper and presentation, and the socialization essay. Students are expected to complete all readings prior to the class period for which they are assigned. Not all reading topics will be discussed in the lectures; however, you are still responsible for all of the material covered in the required readings. University courses are intense, and it is imperative that you stay on schedule with the readings.

**Attendance and Participation (25 points):** I care deeply about this class and the material that is presented. I hope that you will choose to attend *every class* and participate in a meaningful way. Each day in class I will ask you to respond, in written form, to a question relevant to that day’s topic. I will utilize student feedback to provoke discussion and monitor classroom learning. I will also use the responses to record attendance (1 point will be awarded for each written response – 25 responses x 1 point = 25 points). In order to receive credit for the day, you must arrive on time and attend the entire class session. Students who read the newspaper, talk when others are talking, text message, play games, or otherwise engage in disruptive behaviors will not receive the attendance point for that day. You are responsible for the material presented during class whether or not you attend. Please arrange with another student to get missed notes and announcements.
Exam #1 (100 points): The first in-class exam will be administered on Monday, September 26. The exam will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions designed to reflect your understanding of the sociological concepts covered in the first part of the course. The questions will be drawn from the readings, lectures, videos, and class discussions.

Exam #2 (100 points): The second in-class exam will be administered on Monday, October 31. The exam will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions designed to reflect your understanding of the sociological concepts covered in the second part of the course. The questions will be drawn from the readings, lectures, videos, and class discussions.

Exam #3 (100 points): The third in-class exam will be administered during finals week on Thursday, December 15, from 7:30-9:30 a.m. The final exam will be held in our regular classroom, A-103 Clark Building. The exam will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions designed to reflect your understanding of the sociological concepts covered in the third part of the course. The questions will be drawn from the readings, lectures, videos, and class discussions. For more information, see the Fall 2011 Final Exam Schedule (http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/Registrar/finalexams.htm).

Group Social Change Paper and Presentation (75 points): For this assignment, you will work with a group to research, write about, and present on an initiative aimed at reducing racial inequality. On Wednesday, September 7, the class will divide into groups of four. On Monday, September 19, your group must hand in a typed paragraph summarizing the topic that you plan to explore for this project. On that same day, your group will sign-up for the date of your presentation. Presentations will be held from 5:20-6:20 p.m. on October 10, October 12, October 17, October 19, November 9, and November 16. Because the presentations will occur outside of our normal class time, you are only required to attend on the evening when your group is scheduled to present. Of course, you are also welcome to attend presentation sessions that do not involve your group. Detailed guidelines and grading criteria for the social change paper and presentation will be distributed and discussed in class.

Socialization Essay (100 points): The purpose of this project is to encourage you to apply and synthesize the information you have learned about race and ethnicity and the costs and consequences of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. In this essay, you will write about your own background and socialization with regard to race and ethnicity. Detailed guidelines and grading criteria for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. The socialization essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday, December 5.

Grading:

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Total Points Possible: 500

Grading Scale:

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Statement on Exams:
I will post weekly study questions on RamCT so that you can regularly prepare for exams. You are also invited to attend weekly study sessions on Sundays from 2-3 p.m. in A-103 Clark Building. Please bring a #2 pencil and your student ID number to all exams. I will only consider offering make-up exams under the following circumstances: 1) If you have a serious and documented personal emergency (e.g., death of a loved one, illness, injury, etc.); 2) If you must attend a required university-sponsored event or other legitimate professional activity; 3) If you are observing a religious holiday; or 4) If you have three or more exams scheduled for the same day. The sooner you contact me, the more likely I am to grant you permission to take a make-up exam. If you contact me right before the exam (i.e., just hours or a few days in advance), I am highly unlikely to allow you to take a make-up exam. If you miss an exam and do not contact me in advance, you will not be allowed to take a make-up exam.
Statement on Late Assignments:
Ten percentage points will be deducted, per day, for late assignments. This is not meant to punish you, but rather to be fair to those students who submitted their work on time. If you anticipate being unable to finish an assignment on time, let me know as soon as possible. Please be honest with me, and do not miss class because you do not have an assignment done.

Statement on Final Grades:
Please do not contact me at the end of the semester and ask if I can “bump your grade” by a few points. This is unfair to the other students, and it is unethical. The final grade that you receive in this class is just that—final. I can assure you that I will be careful, thoughtful, and impartial in assigning grades. I also hope that you will come and see me or the teaching assistants if you ever have questions, concerns, or need additional assistance. I genuinely want to see all of my students excel, but we must work together to see that happen.

Writing Expectations:
The College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Sociology are committed to helping students develop communication competencies across the undergraduate curriculum. Thus, 35% of your final grade for this course will be determined by in-class and out-of-class writing assignments. The goals for these writing assignments are to enhance comprehension of course content and to improve proficiency in writing.

Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity is essential to the intellectual vitality of the university and the ideals of education. I expect students to be honest and to conduct themselves with integrity in all aspects of the course. Dishonest conduct—which includes cheating, plagiarizing, or lying for the purpose of influencing a grade or for other academic gain—undermines the educational experience and is simply not acceptable. Any student found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to academic penalty and/or university disciplinary action. See the Colorado State University General Catalog for statements on academic integrity and student conduct (http://catalog.colostate.edu/).

Disabilities Statement:
If you are a student who will need accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be met. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation. You may also want to contact Resources for Disabled Students for additional support (970-491-6385; http://rds.colostate.edu/).

Course Outline:

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<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<td>Week 2 – Slavery and Immigration</td>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>Zinn (pp. 9-17)</td>
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<td>8/31</td>
<td>Steinberg (pp. 337-342)</td>
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<td>Portes and Rumbaut (pp. 12-36) *RamCT</td>
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<td>Week 3 – Implicit Bias</td>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>No Class, Labor Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>Gladwell (pp. 72-98) *RamCT</td>
<td>Group Sign-Up</td>
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<td>Week 4 – Stereotypes, Prejudice, and</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>Merton (pp. 130-137)</td>
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<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Blumer (pp. 125-130)</td>
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<td>Week 5 – Institutional Racism, the Wealth</td>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Pincus (pp. 1-7) *RamCT</td>
<td>Presentation Sign-Up and Submit Group Topic</td>
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<td>Gap, and Hate Crime</td>
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<td>Shapiro (pp. 57-60)</td>
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<td>9/21</td>
<td>Levin and McDevitt (pp. 9-26) *RamCT</td>
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<td>Week 6 – The Continuing Significance of Race and Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Note: Readings from the textbook are marked by author name and page numbers. All other readings are on RamCT, as indicated below.</td>
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<td>9/26</td>
<td><strong>Exam #1</strong></td>
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<td>9/28</td>
<td>✔  Blank (pp. 39-49)</td>
<td>Print RamCT Handouts and Readings</td>
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<td>✔  Fair Housing Report (pp. 1-25) *RamCT</td>
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<td>Week 7 – Privilege, Poverty, and Employment</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>✔  McIntosh (pp. 1-5) *RamCT</td>
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<td>✔  Gallagher (pp. 100-108)</td>
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<td>✔  Guinier and Torres (pp. 109-113)</td>
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<td>10/5</td>
<td>✔  Pager (pp. 246-249)</td>
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<td>✔  Braverman (p. 250)</td>
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<td>Week 8 – Education</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>✔  Kozol (pp. 83-99) *RamCT</td>
<td>Social Change Presentations Round 1 (5:20-6:20 p.m.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>✔  Frankenburg and Lee (pp. 1-23) *RamCT</td>
<td>Social Change Presentations Round 2 (5:20-6:20 p.m.)</td>
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<td>Week 9 – Political and Legal Representation</td>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>✔  King (pp. 1-4) *RamCT</td>
<td>Social Change Presentations Round 3 (5:20-6:20 p.m.)</td>
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<td>10/19</td>
<td>✔  Contreras (pp. 56-71) *RamCT</td>
<td>Social Change Presentations Round 4 (5:20-6:20 p.m.)</td>
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<td>Week 10 – Affirmative Action and the Criminal Justice System</td>
<td>10/24</td>
<td>✔  Reskin (pp. 5-18) *RamCT</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
<td>✔  Reiman (pp. 234-245)</td>
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<td>Week 11 – The Media</td>
<td>10/31</td>
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<td>11/2</td>
<td>✔  Klein and Naccarato (pp. 298-301)</td>
<td>Print RamCT Handouts and Readings</td>
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<td>Week 12 – Housing and Residential Segregation</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>✔  Massey (pp. 165-180)</td>
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<td>11/9</td>
<td>✔  Massey (pp. 180-183)</td>
<td>Social Change Presentations Round 5 (5:20-6:20 p.m.)</td>
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<td>Week 13 – Health and Environment</td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>✔  Zenk (pp. 212-216)</td>
<td>Social Change Presentations Round 6 (5:20-6:20 p.m.)</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>✔  Bullard (pp. 192-203)</td>
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<td>Week 14 – Fall Break</td>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<td>11/23</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<td>Week 15 – Marriage and Family</td>
<td>11/28</td>
<td>✔  Fryer (pp. 377-384)</td>
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<td>✔  Dalmage (pp. 390-398)</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td>✔  Lareau (pp. 400-417) *RamCT</td>
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<td>Week 16 – Looking Ahead: Obstacles and Opportunities</td>
<td>12/5</td>
<td><strong>Socialization Essay Due</strong></td>
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<td>12/7</td>
<td>✔  Gallagher (pp. 416-418)</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>12/15</td>
<td><strong>Exam #3 (7:30-9:30 a.m.)</strong></td>
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Teaching Large Classes:
An Annotated Bibliography

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Teaching Large Classes: An Annotated Bibliography

This annotated bibliography includes reference information and annotations for journal articles on teaching large courses, which may range in size from 50 to over 1,000 students. This bibliography is intended for instructors of college-level courses in the social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, engineering, and beyond. Its purpose is to provide references and annotations to articles on innovative practices for teaching large courses.

The articles that are included in this bibliography were selected via a search of the ERIC and Sociological Abstracts databases. Broad search terms included pedagogy, large classes, and innovative teaching methods. These initial searches, which produced thousands of results, were then narrowed using a number of more specific descriptive terms. These articles have been organized alphabetically.


This article reports the results of a research study to determine the effect of using clickers in a large (150-190 student) biochemistry class on student exam performance and engagement. The course was previously taught without the use of clickers for four semesters, totaling 13 sections. These sections and the other two sections being taught in Fall 2007 (the semester during which the study took place) served as the control group against which the experimental section was compared.

The experimental section was taught in the same manner as the control group, except for the inclusion of clickers. Students were asked questions in class and asked to respond via clickers, sometimes individually and sometimes after consulting with a small group. If a large number of students answered incorrectly, the instructor asked the class to confer and revote before revealing the correct answer.

The results of the study indicated that there was no change in the mean composite exam scores of the experimental section, although more students in the experimental section scored in the 91-100% range than usual. Students also volunteered to take a survey measuring their attitudes about the clicker use. The results of this survey revealed that students were generally positive toward the use of clickers and endorsed using them again. Students who performed poorly in the class (≤70.0%), however, were less likely to display positive attitudes toward clickers on the survey and more likely to classify them as a waste of class time. The authors conclude that the results of the study are still somewhat inconclusive and should be replicated in a longitudinal study, controlling for different instructor styles.

This article describes and examines the (lack of) success of implementing a “virtual team” option for collaborative group work in a large, introductory information systems course. The author first reviews many terms such as cooperation, collaboration (judged to be less structured than cooperation), collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and virtual teams (“a collection of a small number of interdependent, geographically dispersed, individuals that have a common goal and depend on electronic linking in order to collaborate and achieve it”).

The instructor decided to introduce the option of virtual teams because they are most effective in large classes. Participation in a virtual team was optional; students could also choose to meet with their groups face-to-face. Teams were assigned specific tasks to focus on and allowed to structure their group however they chose. These virtual teams were intended to be culturally homogenous groups, but very few students selected this option and many needed assistance in finding a group, resulting in randomly assigned groups. The author was able to monitor the communications of virtual teams online and asked teams meeting in person to make audio recordings of their meetings, for review by the author-as-researcher.

Very few students ultimately elected to work in virtual teams (4%) and these teams were assembled out of convenience, forming culturally heterogeneous groups. The teams were more popular amongst older students who had been at the university for one or more semesters than they were among first-semester students. Only 13 students from the virtual teams completed researcher surveys. These students were not very sure of the purpose of the research. The group found the module less interesting than other students and more difficult than other students. Almost all of the team members said they had discussed assignments offline. The students surveyed indicated that there was no discussion which developed the team understanding of course concepts. Finally, the majority of students surveyed stated that it would not be worth incorporating the option of virtual teams into future courses.

The author concludes that the lack of success of the virtual teams indicates a clear need for detailed preparation and training of the students, both in terms of the technology used and with respect to effective collaboration. If more time is allowed for establishing trust between the group members and participants had a real incentive for establishing virtual teams, they may be able to collaborate together effectively.


This article describes an assessment instrument called “Understand Before Choosing” (UBC), which the authors implemented in their 1,000-student first year biology course in lieu of multiple choice or exams or open-ended question exams. The article first describes UBC, and then contrasts its effectiveness with that of more traditional methods of assessment.
UBC consists of about 100 lines of text that describe a concrete example related to the topic being evaluated. This block of text is divided into short paragraphs of 15-20 lines each, accompanied by a closely-related set of multiple-choice questions with five possible responses each. While the example suggests clues as to the correct answers to the accompanying questions, students must use their mastery of the material to find and understand those clues. This has the benefit of requiring students to locate information in their long-term memories and relate it to the text of each question, therefore synthesizing the information.

Unlike multiple-choice and open-ended questions, UBC enables assessment of not only memorized information, but also of comprehension and application of the material. Statistical analysis revealed little difference in test scores of UBC test and standard multiple-choice of open-ended tests, suggesting that UBC exams are equally rigorous and challenging. Students have echoed this finding, remarking that UBC exams make them think and reflect more on what they have learned. Additionally, students seemed cognizant of the time and effort that went into creating a UBC test, taking this as a sign of the instructor’s dedication to objectively assessing their knowledge.


This article examines the benefits of using a cooperative learning style in a large classroom setting. Specifically, the authors conducted a study to test the impact of cooperative learning, compared to traditional lecture, on students’ engagement and competence in 300+ student sections of Introductory Biology. The benefits of cooperative learning are briefly outlined (e.g., students who help classmates clarify their own knowledge, students provide examples to one another that differ from the instructor’s, and cooperative learning can make large classes less impersonal) and the dearth of previous studies on cooperative learning outcomes in large classes are noted.

The study was conducted over the course of two semesters, although only the first semester was used to compare lecture with cooperative learning outcomes. During this first semester two of the authors were the instructors for two separate sections of Introductory Biology; one of those sections was taught via traditional lecture method, and the other via cooperative learning. Students in all sections were given a pretest before the semester began. All sections received the same PowerPoint lectures, but in the cooperative learning section students were assigned to groups of 6-8. They sat with their group members and collaborated with them for the entire semester. These students worked on questions as a group, then submitted a group answer via a clicker. These answers were then discussed in class. In the lecture classes the instructor worked through each problem in front of the class (students were not asked to work on questions in groups).

To test student performance, the instructors administered several exams and a final exam, along with several quizzes. In the lecture section these quizzes were individual, but in the cooperative learning section groups were allowed to collaborate on quizzes after taking them individually, which then contributed to a portion of their overall grade. The authors measured student
achievement in five ways: 1) all class work excluding the final exam; 2) the final (cumulative) exam; 3) exam questions requiring factual recall; 4) exam questions requiring a conceptual understanding of course material; and 5) relative improvement from the beginning to the end of the semester (as measured by subtracting the percent correct on the pre-test from percent correct on the final exam).

The authors found that using a cooperative learning strategy improved student performance, student attendance, and student perceptions, but that these results were somewhat affected by the instructor as well. Thus, repeated studies with more instructors would be required to confirm these results. The authors conclude with a brief discussion of ideas for improving cooperative learning strategies. These include: assessing students individually, with individual grades impacting the overall group’s grade; and giving students training in effective group interactions and learning strategies before asking them to engage in cooperative learning.


This article address the challenges and opportunities of teaching students who are “digital natives” – those students who have grown up in the digital age of cell phones, iPods, and the Internet (specifically interactive “Web 2.0” sites such as Facebook, Wikipedia, and YouTube). Today’s students spend more time online than they do reading books or attending class, a statistic which begs the question of why we are still using an 800-year-old, lecture-based pedagogy in most of our classes. The author argues that, “If we want to understand an engage with our students, with a view perhaps to enhance their learning; we need to be alert to this groundswell” of peoples using technologies to get things they need from each other (rather than experts or institutions). Information and communication technologies (ICT) and e-learning have become a strategically important resource for reaching students.

The author had his “tipping point” when he noticed that students were recording his lectures. The author reasoned that if audio recordings were useful for some students, they would likely be useful for many students. Thus the author decided to begin recording and podcasting his lectures – making them available for download as mpeg3 files via the Internet. Posting his slides to the Internet also allows the author to embed content links in his slides, sending students off into the worldwide web to learn more about the material.

Students support the use of technology for learning and teaching, however, they do not simply embrace all uses of technology in the classroom. They want to see a real benefit from the technology used. The author argues that podcasting is an excellent use of technology because it is easy to arrange, inexpensive to implement, and allows for a 24/7 learning environment for students in what is rapidly becoming a 24/7 culture. Additionally, the author has found that despite speculation to the contrary, students are actually attending classes more often when they know they will be podcast and even engage more knowing that their questions (and the answers to those questions) will later be available to them in digital audio form.
Ultimately, the author argues that instructors should embrace Web 2.0 technology, using many examples throughout the article. With the transition to hybrid “click-and-mortar” environments, the trick is to find the optimal mix of technology, traditional print materials, and human contact. The article concludes that we need to begin rethinking or pedagogical strategies now to stay ahead of the curve and continue connecting with students.


This article reports the results of a research study to determine the effects of case studies and web-based learning on student test scores. Students who participated in the study came from four different programs but were all given the same information, delivered by the same instructor. A total of 264 students participated in the study.

The inclusion of case studies and web resources was introduced gradually to the students of the course of three months. The first two lectures were taught in traditional face-to-face lecture style. During the third lecture, students were referred to a list of useful web sites covering background information relating to the subject matter. The second half of the fourth lecture was used to introduce a mini case study, after which students were instructed to access the first part of the case study to be completed in the fifth lecture. Additional web links relevant to answering the case study were also provided. The fifth lecture was divided into three parts: an introduction and a description of the case study; detailed information on the subject matter, and questions related to the case study which students attempted to solve in small groups; and laboratory results illustrating the solution to the case study and an explanation linking the study to the subject matter.

The authors evaluated the effectiveness of these strategies by: asking students about their perception of the usefulness of the strategies in surveys and interviews; tracking student access to the web-supported material (via “hits” on WebCT); and evaluating student performance in the summative assessment in relation to web-link access. The survey and interviews indicated that students found both the case studies and web-based resources to be useful. The lecture handouts on WebCT were “hit” at least once by almost every student and many students indicated that they retained the web links for future use. Finally, results showed that the group of students who accessed web-links consistently achieved higher test scores than those who did not.


This article examines the pressures to continue to offer large enrollment sociology classes, the reasons why such classes are so widely detested, and a few strategies for improving the level of instruction and engagement in these courses. The author interviewed 163 department chairs regarding the state of large enrollment classes at their institutions.
The author first reviews the necessity of large classes as well as the unwritten assumption that, “the least experienced instructors should teach the least interesting courses to the least important clientele in the largest possible numbers.” Large introductory classes “buy support” for smaller upper level and graduate courses. No one seems to enjoy large classes, but many argue that they are an unfortunate necessity. A few common criticisms of large classes are: 1) while there are bound to be a small percentage of problem students in any course, such problems are manageable when the number is 3-5 students, but not 15-30 students; 2) students put minimal intellectual effort into courses they see as only relevant to their “general education”; 3) large courses do not incentivize the professor to remain current on material, as students in such classes are not motivated to challenge the instructor; and 4) introductory classes offer little opportunity for serious collaboration with other colleagues.

Many of the department chairs indicated that instructors of large courses were reluctant or slow to introduce new technology into their teaching. Despite conventional wisdom, junior faculty were no more likely than senior faculty to explore new teaching strategies. Several department chairs expressed disdain for large class enrollments and vowed never to succumb to the pressures to offer such courses.

In the last section, the author presents five alternatives to mass instruction. First, the lecture-tutorial system reinvents the standard large lecture-small recitation model by training TAs to act as tutors during recitations sessions, assisting the students with how best to incorporate that week’s sociological concepts into the papers due in class. Second, the modular approach utilizes a compartmentalized syllabus by dividing the course into six independent sections called modules. Doing away with TAs entirely, three instructors each teach two modules (consisting of six one-hour lectures each) per semester, allowing their specific expertise to shine during their modules and giving them free time during their off weeks. All three instructors assist with grading and exam proctoring. Third, the self-paced approach lets students set their own pace, de-emphasizing lectures. Similarly, the fourth approach, diversified learning, allows students to choose their method of learning and evaluation, from textbooks and exams, to “more complex cognitive endeavors.” This method is time-consuming and requires a great deal of effort from the instructor, however. Finally the author discusses TIPS – the Teaching Information Processing System, a computer program available at the time of publication which provided students with frequent feedback on their progress in the course.


This article details a pedagogical strategy for involving students in large classes, specifically in a 400-450 students introductory information systems course. In setting up the course, the goals included ensuring that: 1) the classroom experience is enjoyable; 2) the students have greater control of the learning process; and 3) the students are exposed to and master more difficult material than usual for introductory courses. All of these objectives were accomplished in the design of the curriculum.
The authors begin by offering a brief review of the pedagogical best practices which were incorporated into the curriculum. First, a positive learning environment, characterized by openness, a relaxed setting, and a non-threatening atmosphere is essential for student learning. Second, active learning techniques such as educational games have been proven to have a positive impact on the quality of student learning. Third, students who have control over their learning process, in the form of choices about tasks and exercises, have significantly more positive attitudes toward learning than those who do not. Fourth, students who are given repeated opportunities to practice the material and to understand their misconceptions are more likely to succeed on examinations and to retain the material. Finally, students should receive some form of formative assessment (critical feedback with the opportunity for improvement before grades are assigned) in order to close the gap between their actual and desired levels of learning.

An enjoyable classroom experience is created by dimming the lights, playing soft music, and displaying various works of art before class. The instructor can also engage in discussion with students before class, to create a relaxed atmosphere. Active learning techniques such as guided lectures, discussions, and educational games are interspersed throughout traditional lecture. Game show-like activities pop up on the projector at random times, accompanied by theme music and colorful graphics to engage students’ interest. These game shows allow a group of randomly selected to students to compete in front of the class to earn tokens redeemable in an online “gift catalog” (see below).

Students have the opportunity to control their own learning process by deciding when they complete homework assignments and quizzes and how often they want to submit homework assignments. Homework assignments are completed online and given immediate formative assessment by the proprietary class management program, Orion. These homework assignments may be resubmitted up to two more times, with the most recent grade recorded as the final grade. Likewise, five objective quizzes are administered in a computer lab over the course of the semester. Each quiz is available for five days and students may take the quiz at any point during the week. Before taking each quiz, students must successfully complete (i.e., score 100% on) specific online practice exercises referred to as prerequisites. Students also receive immediate feedback on these prerequisites from Orion, allowing them to learn through trial and error without fear of penalty.

Several extra-credit opportunities are available to students in the course. In addition to the tokens mentioned above, extra credit can be earned by choosing to submit homework assignments early, or to take quizzes early in the week (so long as the student scores at a minimum level of the quiz). In addition, while using Orion up to 45 “pop-up” questions will appear at random times throughout the semester. Answering a pop-up question on Orion is worth extra credit. These extra credit points are redeemable in Orion’s Gift Catalog for due-date extensions for quizzes and homework, permission to retake a quiz, and permission to submit a homework assignment one additional time. A “Rewind” option even allows students to turn in an overdue assignment for which they are normally assessed a late fee.

The class is entirely administered on the Orion course management system, which operates similarly to many course management systems which allow students to check their grades, submit assignments, and post messages. Likewise, the instructor is able to view student grades,
create quiz content, and manage the extra credit options. The instructor for the course holds traditional office hours, although the office is set up to accommodate multiple students at a time. The instructor acts as a facilitator of discussion between students, who largely answer their own questions in this format. The authors conclude that Orion is the most customizable class management system yet developed.


This article reviews students’ response to the use of clicker technology in very large (enrollment 1000+) classes. Students in three first year science courses were introduced to clicker technology and surveyed to discover their response to the technology. The study also used participant observation of every lecture in every target course, as well as e-mail interviews with the course instructors to triangulate the data. The findings of the study were as follows.

Overall, student perceptions were positive. Students liked using clickers because they: 1) enjoyed receiving feedback on how well they understood material; 2) enjoyed the interactivity during lectures; and 3) enjoyed knowing how well they were doing versus their classmates. Conversely, when asked why they did not like using clickers, the largest group said they had no reason to dislike the technology, with technical reasons and poor use of the technology in class being the second and third most cited reasons. With that said, students identified some problems with implementation, including registering the clickers and connecting the clickers in class. Students perceived three main sources of the problems with their clickers: the clicker software or hardware itself, the font and typeface used to register the clicker (which was difficult to interpret), and the students themselves as far as their ability to effectively use the clickers.

When asked how clickers should be used, in ways in which they were not already being used in class, a clear majority said there were not any. When asked how clickers should not be used in class, a significant minority of students responded that they should not be used for testing. Students did not find the use of clickers in any one course to be clearly superior to the other courses.

Responses regarding advantages of the clickers were classified as attitudinal, interactional, and pedagogical. Students’ attitude toward clickers was that they were “fun.” Students said the clickers helped their interaction in class through feedback, ensuring their attendance, and incorporating on-graded surveys. Pedagogically, students said that clickers resulted in increased metacognition, better learning, and testing. Responses regarding the disadvantages of clickers were classified as pedagogical, technical, and financial. Pedagogically, the time spent fiddling around with making the clicker system work was frustrating to students, as was using clickers to force them to attend class. Likewise, many students claimed that a good percentage of the questions posed in class were unhelpful or irrelevant. Technically, there were many problems with registering and activating the clickers. Finally, students felt that the use of clickers unfairly transferred some departmental costs onto the students.
Recommendations for clicker use include the following. Pilot-testing should occur beforehand, on the same scale as the planned implementation. Instructors should have advanced training in problem-solving with the software. The technology must reliably work 100% of the time. Students should have access to their own training at the beginning of the term. Set up and registration of clickers should be streamlined for students. Finally, instructions on clicker usage must be clear, consistent, and fail safe.


This article describes a technique used by the authors to encourage students in large classes to ask questions, as well as the benefits of this technique. This technique – asking students to write down questions at the end of class – was used in an introductory sociology with enrollments from 300-550 and in an introductory chemistry courses with an enrollment of about 150. Students were incentivized with extra credit to turn in written questions and the best questions (as determined by the respective instructor) were discussed for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of the next class period.

Slightly less than 30% of students in the sociology class submitted questions. Participation for the chemistry class was tracked over several terms and increased from 9% to 17% to 22% in subsequent terms. After controlling for previous enrollment in a chemistry course with the instructor, there appeared to be little indication of this increase being based on student familiarity with the system. The average grades of both sociology and chemistry students who asked questions were higher by about half a grade point than those who did not. Some of the most interesting questions, however, came from students who earned average or mediocre grades.

Very few of the questions asked had already been covered in lecture or the textbook. Many questions offered paradoxes that demonstrated critical, analytical thought and several questions forced the instructor to engage in additional research to find the correct answer.

When surveyed, 90% of students found the policy to be a good one, including students who never asked questions. The authors conclude that the policy is beneficial for both students and instructors, who may learn just as much from the questions as the students. They suggest using student questions as possible exam material to keep students’ attention and focus during the discussion period.


This article describes the successful implementation of two experiential learning activities in a large enrollment (643-student) Food Science and Health Nutrition course. The authors goals
were to: 1) create and implement two experiential learning activities in the course and 2) to evaluate the cognitive and affective impact of these activities of student learning.

For the first activity students participated in a basic dietary intake assessment that occurred during a regular class period. Throughout the activity the instruction team assisted the students and provided them with feedback. Students earned 10 points for participating in the activity. For the second activity students were asked to complete on online food safety survey. After hearing a lecture on best practices for food safety, students were asked to complete a reflective questionnaire about their own behaviors.

Separate reflective questionnaires were administered to students for both activities, asking them about the cognitive and affective impacts of the activities. Over 97% of students stated that the dietary intake assessment helped them learn at least one aspect of the course material and 25% stated that the assessment helped them apply the material to their own lives. A majority (85%) of students reported that they liked the dietary assessment. Likewise, 77% of students reported that the food safety activity engaged and assisted them in learning course material and 94% of students reported that they intended to change at least one food safety behavior.

The authors note that these reflective questionnaires were also an integral part of the experiential learning which took place, as they allowed the students to self-reflect on what they had learned. The authors conclude with a few cautions. First, designing and implementing experiential activities for a large class requires a considerable amount of time. Second, presenting the activities to a smaller class first, if possible, is extremely helpful for working out problems with the approach.


This article details the results of using a “token economy” to encourage participation in an undergraduate psychology course of 63 students. The token economy consisted of small wooden tokens which were distributed to the first student to correctly answer an instructor-posed question. These tokens could be redeemed at the end of a class period for extra credit equivalent to 0.25% of the students’ final grade.

The study took place over the course of eleven 75-minute class sessions. The first four sessions were the baseline in which the instructor asked the class questions and waited (up to 60 seconds) for a response, but did not offer any additional incentives. During the next four class periods the token economy was instituted; during this period the instructor rewarded the first correct response to an instructor-posed question with a token. The final three class periods saw a return to the baseline, during which no tokens were distributed.

The results of the study were as follows. Students were twice as likely to raise their hands after a question during the token economy as they were during the baseline. Students were also twice as likely to ask questions or make spontaneous comments (which were not rewarded with tokens) during the token economy as they were during the baseline. Students also responded much faster
(an average of less than 1 second) to questions during the token economy than they did during the baseline (and average of 6 seconds). The instructor and graduate research assistant noticed little change in the quality of students’ responses across all phases of the study. These results strongly suggest that the token economy was responsible for increasing participation.


This article details a group project and mini-conference implemented in a Chemistry 101 course. Students were asked to complete a group project and presentation on the development of an important idea in chemistry, and then present their findings at a mini-conference held in lieu of the final exam at the end of the course.

Students formed groups of four, from which they selected one student to fulfill each of the four roles: leader, research specialist, presenter, and author. Groups were required to submit proposals for their projects early in the quarter; the instructor assigned topics based on the quality of each group’s proposal, group preferences, and a desire to avoid oversaturation of a single topic. Midway through the quarter the groups were required to submit an outline of their presentation, which was used as a vehicle for instructor feedback on the project. Students also turned in a one-page summary sheet at the end of the quarter, to aid their audience in following the presentation.

The group projects were presented in concurrent sessions at a mini-conference at the end of the quarter, during the two-hour final exam period. Three sessions ran concurrently, followed by a break and then another three concurrent sessions. Each session hosted 3-4 presentations and each student was required to attend one session of their choice, at which they were not presenting. In order to facilitate student engagement and active audience participation, students were required to complete a learning log for their elective session, answering the questions, “What is the most important thing you learned from this presentation?” and “What question(s) do you have related to this presentation?” Having questions already prepared helped audience members stay focused and ask meaningful questions after each presentation.

Because the presentations took place concurrently, three moderators were needed. These moderators were given detailed scoring guides to assist in evaluation. Students were also given these guides earlier in the quarter. At the end of the conference, each student completed a detailed self-evaluation and an evaluation of his or her peers, worth 10 points each, 20 points total (out of 100 for the project). The breakdown of points was: 10 for the proposal; 10 for the outline; 20 for the summary sheet; 40 for the presentation; and 20 for the self- and peer-evaluations.

While the results of student surveys suggested that the group projects did not provide sufficiently explicit opportunities for students to learn about science, the projects did seem to help students learn about and become interested in specific chemistry content and practical applications of chemistry. The smaller audience size of the mini-conference format, combined with the require learning logs, reflected a high level of engagement of the audience with the presentations. The
students enjoyed the organization of the mini-conference but were critical of group work, specifically lack of communication and equality of effort amongst group members. Some student suggestions included providing students with in-class time to work on the group project and eliminating the group roles (although the authors suggest allowing students to create and choose their own roles, to maintain some group structure).


This article argues for the feasibility of a large enrollment, writing intensive course. A large course is defined, for the purposes of this article, as a course enrolling over 100 students. A writing-intensive course is defined as a course in which: students write at least 5,000 words per semester; at least 50% of students’ grades are determined through writing assignments; students receive feedback with opportunities for revision; and class size is limited to 25. Although the author’s courses regularly enroll 150-225 students, they are divided into 25-student recitations with a TA. With the support of a number of TA’s, the author argues that even the large course can still meet the aforementioned requirements of a writing-intensive course.

One of the biggest challenges of managing a large, writing-intensive course is grading. The author uses five techniques to ensure grading fairness. First, a holistic, five-point grading scale is used. This helps ensure consistency and does not carry the baggage, for graders, of a letter grade. Second, a rubric is used to guide graders in assigning numbers on the scale (a sample rubric is included in the Appendix). Third, the author engages in grade norming with TAs, reviewing papers with the TAs and discussing variation in scoring. Fourth, graders are instructed to use minimal marking (i.e., simply circling or placing a check mark next to spelling or punctuation errors). This has the dual benefits of being faster for the graders and a better learning process for the students, who must either decipher or ask the TA what error was made. Finally, the author uses a student appeals process to ensure the fairness of grading. Any student can appeal a grade, first to a different TA and then to the professor, who will assign a brand-new grade based on his reading of the assignment. Relatively few assignments (3.3%) have ever been appealed and only 1.2% of assignments ever received a grade change. These statistics are published in the syllabus so that students understand the process is fair. In addition to the aforementioned strategies, the author also ensures that each student has their work grader by several different TAs over the course of the semester, to avoid systemic bias.


In this article the authors discuss integrating sociological research into a large introductory sociology course as a means of engaging otherwise passive students with the material. The authors draw on the work of Wilson, who argues that research can and should be successfully integrated with teaching. While Wilson suggests that only small classes are suitable to such a combination, however, the authors argue that research can be integrated in a large-class setting.
The basic format for this procedure is as follows. Students are surveyed during the second or third class session using an anonymous questionnaire which attempts to measure key concepts of the course. The instructor collects and analyzes these surveys and discusses the results during lectures. Students can be involved in several ways: they can help with data analysis; they can present results to the class; or they can suggest possible hypotheses or new variables. An example of a specific survey follows.

In the fall of 1975 the authors gathered data from 1,043 introductory sociology students with the Bogardus social distance scale. The last study done by Bogardus took place in 1966, so the authors wanted to see if the pattern of decreasing social distance of students to various minority groups had continued. Specifically, the goals were: to replicate the Bogardus studies; to assess the social distance rating of three new groups – “Arabs, hippies, and homosexuals”; and to analyze the influence of the sex of the respondents on social distance. Results which contradicted Bogardus’ original hypotheses, such as increased social distance scores compared to 1966 and women having lower social distance than men, provided fertile ground for class discussion.

The authors conclude that “a kind of enlightenment occurs when students are presented with their own attitudes and dispositions.” They argue that one of the most appropriate and stimulating things to do with students is to study them—and to allow them to study themselves. This technique allows for students to participate by way of response, analysis, and reflection on the research process. Finally, this technique also works well for faculty, who can benefit from professional development and restoration.


This article outlines several strategies used by the authors to improve a large general chemistry course by: 1) providing a foundation of knowledge for future coursework/applications; 2) demonstrating that chemistry is a part of students’ lives; and 3) generating a packaged curriculum that can be implemented by all types of instructors. This was accomplished by introducing active learning strategies into the course, including multimedia presentations, interactive questions, and demonstrations.

Multimedia presentations included PowerPoint presentations with graphics, computer animations, and short video presentations. The interactive questions were posed to the students, who worked to answer them in groups (with a graduate student instructor encouraging discussion) before voting on the correct answer by hand. This method also allowed the instructors to evaluate the students’ mastery of the material. Finally, the instructors performed several in-class demonstrations for the students. Students were asked to watch the demonstration, think about what they learned, and then discuss what happened in the demonstration to the topic being covered that day.

Simultaneously, the instructors implemented a uniform instructional model in each discussion. Students worked on worksheets targeted at improving their problem-solving skills, using topics
previously introduced in the lecture. These discussions would relate to the relevance of chemistry in students’ own lives. To further emphasize the relevance of the material, four take-home experiments were assigned, which the students performed outside of class, using materials provided by the instructors.

The instructors administered three surveys, a follow-up evaluation (four months later), and interviewed students to determine their attitudes toward the new strategies as well as their retention levels. A second section of general chemistry was used as a control group. The results revealed that students in the experimental section (section 500) attended class more regularly than other students, although there was no significant difference between the sections in self-efficacy and motivation to learn chemistry. Likewise, students in section 500 believed that the discussion sections, demonstrations, and multimedia presentations were effective, but did not feel that the take-home experiments were a useful teaching tool. In contrast, many of the students interviewed did talk about the experiments in a positive way. In terms of grades and retention, there was no significant difference in grades between the two sections, but section 500 students showed significantly greater retention of the material after four months.


In this article the author reviews both what an audience responses systems (ARS) or “clicker” is and what it does. This overview is followed by some typical characteristics of clicker questions, including questions which are used to:

- Increase or manage student interaction.
- Assess student preparation and ensure accountability.
- Find out more about students.
- Engage in formative (diagnostic) assessment.
- Administer quizzes or tests.
- Do practice problems.
- Guide critical thinking, review, or teach.
- Conduct experiments or illustrate human responses.
- Make lecture fun.

Motivations for using clickers include: encouraging interactive engagement; increasing classroom participation; sustaining attention and breaking up lectures; revealing (and addressing) student misconceptions; collecting rapid feedback about the course and the quality of instruction; and holding students accountable for pre-class preparation.

Literature indicates that clickers have a generally positive effect on student achievement and engagement. Clickers can increase attendance when tied to grades, particularly as a daily feature of class. Likewise, clickers appear to reduce student attrition. Student attitudes toward clickers are generally positive while complaints tend to center around cost, technical problems, and ‘forcing’ student attention. Instructors also tend to view clickers favorably, with those resisting citing expense and time consuming preparation.
Best practice tips for using clickers are offered next, a selection of which are outlined below.

- Plan ahead when deciding to use clickers.
- Use clickers daily to increase attendance.
- Plan discussion time to respond to clicker answers.
- Be sure to summarize discussions and explain the correct answer afterward.
- Give partial credit for any answer and full credit for the correct answer to discourage cheating.
- Spend some time training students how to use the clickers.
- Find a resource person for support.
- Encourage students to discuss answers with each other.
- Encourage discussion of incorrect answers to reveal unclear wording.

Some suggestions for writing effective questions are also provided, including:

- Address a specific learning goal.
- Identify student misconceptions and include them as answers, plausibly phrased.
- Include answers that contain common errors.
- Limit answers to five or less.
- Include “I don’t know” as an answer to prevent cheating.


This article investigates the use of student-generated questions posted on the web for a large introductory biology course. Learning to ask effective questions is critical for students intending to become natural biologists, so the study examined not only whether students posted questions, but also assessed the quality of those questions as well. The study examined a sample of 200 students who posted 482 questions during the semester. Extra credit was offered to students to entice them to post questions, although this credit was only given for meaningful questions, which were defined as those questions which went beyond asking for information which could be found in the textbook. Responding to questions individually took the instructor about 20 minutes per day.

The results of the study were as follows. Eight out of ten (80%) students asked at least one question on the online discussion forum. While around 63% of students asked meaningful questions on the first two assignments, after instructor intervention and clarification, 78% of student questions were considered meaningful (as coded by research assistants). Most students read the instructor’s response to their questions, with only 3.7% of students reporting not ever reading an instructor response. Similarly, 82% of students reported reading their peers questions, with 44% of students who did not post any questions of their own still reading their peers’ questions. Additionally, 60% of students reported that the question-asking activity had a positive impact on their experience in the class.

Overall, the results indicate that such an approach is both successful and useful to the students, if the instructor takes the time to clarify the types of questions her or she wishes students to ask,
and to respond thoughtfully to both the content and the framing of each question. This technique also has the additional benefit of generating questions for review in class.


This article details the results of a research study examining the effect of a live demonstration on child psychology on the understanding of students in an Introduction to Psychology course. The author recruited nine children, aged 18 months to seven years to participate in the demonstration. These children were placed at the front of the class and supervised by upper division undergraduate students during the class period. Children not engaged in the developmental activities set out for them by the instructor were allowed to play quietly while they awaited their turn. A detailed script for the demonstration was prepared and each child was given four or five tasks, two to three of which were repeated across a variety of ages to demonstrate cognitive development. A handout was prepared for the class listing each child’s name and age, along with tasks they would be given and room for notes.

Students’ reactions to the demonstration were evaluated using surveys. To evaluate whether students’ performance was affected by the demonstration, the instructor administered an assessment of the previous readings and lectures to a group of students before the demonstration (i.e., *before* group) and a different group of students after the demonstration (i.e., *after* group). Students were selected from the class for a group semi-randomly, by last name order.

The study found that the *after* group scored significantly better on the assessment than the *before* group, by about half a letter grade. After removing four items on the assessment which asked about behaviors that had not been successfully demonstrated in the live demonstration, the *after* group showed an even greater benefit from the demonstration.

Participants reported that the demonstration: helped them understand the course content; was more informative than watching a video; increased their understanding of developmental research; and made them want to attend a similar event in the future. The demonstration was also beneficial for the upper division students who assisted in the demonstration, who reported that assisting: aided their conceptual understanding of developmental psychology; increased their interest in developmental psychology; and increased their understanding of developmental research. These students also reported that they enjoyed being engaged as assistants more than simply watching the demonstration.

The author concludes that the demonstration effectively increased students’ understanding and that these gains were seen before any formal debriefing of the demonstration occurred; presumably, even greater gains would be seen after such a discussion. In sum, the demonstration was valuable for both the students observing the demonstration, and for the students assisting with the demonstration.

In this article the author presents a brief overview of the benefits of service-learning, followed by an outline for using service learning as an extra credit opportunity in large classes. Service learning: gives students a chance to explore sociological concepts in action; helps students relate their experiences to data covered in class lectures; and enhances class discussions and fosters debate about social issues. In sum, service learning makes class more meaningful and relevant to students.

The author administers a service learning program as extra credit. Students can receive 1 point of extra credit (0.5% of their final grade) for doing one hour of volunteer work at one of five pre-approved organizations. About half the students in the course participate. The students are offered presentations by representatives of the organizations in class, and then were asked to make arrangements individually with the organization(s) for which they would like to volunteer. Students are held accountable for the hours to which they commit; students who fail to show up to volunteer are barred from future extra credit volunteer opportunities. Each volunteer is required to write a short reflection paper about the experience in which he or she ties the experience to three sociological concepts. The author visits all sites prior to inviting students to volunteer to help ensure that they will have a positive experience.

The author does not indicate how she surveyed the students, but notes that many students had rarely volunteered before taking her class. More than 60 percent of students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to volunteer in the community and approximately 30 percent of volunteers stated they intended to keep volunteering after the course was over. About 95 percent reported that they enjoyed their experience. Community response to the program has likewise been overwhelmingly positive and the author concludes that service-learning is a rewarding and worthwhile activity for students, instructors, and community organizations alike.

El-Rady, Johnny. 2006. “To Click or Not to Click: That’s the Question.” *Innovate* 2(4).

In this article the author discusses his use of clickers in his course, Sex and Today’s World, a biology class focusing on biological sex. The author first used clickers as an extra-credit option in Fall 2004, then as a required component of the course in Spring 2005. The author participated in four hour-long online information session to prepare for the inclusion of clickers in his course.

At the start of each lecture, the instructor administered a short quiz based on the material in the previous lecture. This allowed for real-time feedback and encouraged students to keep up with the material. The instructor also used clickers to test students’ comprehension of key concepts, then asked students to discuss these concepts in small groups, which broke up the routine of lecture when used every 20-30 minutes during a 75-minute class period. Finally, the instructor took attendance at the end of each class, rewarding those who stayed for the entire class period, which increased attendance.
Student exam scores rose by about 5 percentage points with the introduction of clickers. Additionally, students were largely positive about the use of clickers in the classroom, according to an informal survey. Primary complaints dealt with signal reception. The instructor also cited time-consumption as a large drawback to using clickers, but concludes that the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.


This article reports the results of a research study on very large classes (550 or more students). The primary research question was “How can student engagement be achieved in very large classes?” Student engagement, in this case, refers to time, energy, and resources spent on activities designed to enhance learning at the university. Developing such a curriculum requires instructors to shift away from a lecture-based delivery model to a more interactive and student-centered style of teaching.

The study began when one of the authors noticed that students in the “overflow” rooms adjacent to the primary classroom (in which students followed the lecture on giant screens) were disengaged in the class. Other problems with this “simulcast” approach include: students in the overflow rooms cannot ask questions of the instructor; teachers are not able to move around the classroom during lecture; very few questions are raised by students in the main lecture theatre; and supervision is required in each of the overflow rooms. The authors decided to look for ways in which instructors of very large classes engaged students. Engagement, as defined by the authors, involves “providing tasks to deepen the understanding of concepts presented by the teacher.”

In this study, the authors narrowed their sample to 6 very large courses out of 33 taught at the University of Auckland. Two of these courses used the overflow system for additional “streams” (sections) while the other four divided students into streams of 140-550 students and taught in separate lectures. The authors used semi-structured interviews with the instructors of these courses, asking for background information and examples of how student engagement had been incorporated into the instructor’s curriculum. Interviews were coded for thematic concepts; relevant themes included: course management, engagement, learning materials, and student assessment.

A number of participants suggested that a ‘more integrated feel for the students’ was achieved by allowing students to ask questions or by conducting experiments in class. Reducing large classes into smaller groups by streaming also appears to be effective. One coordinator suggested that using PowerPoint slides was a bad idea. Some participants suggested using workbooks instead of slides, which allows even students in the overflow rooms to follow along with the exact same content used by the professor in his or her lectures. Faculty also made a concerted effort to engage students beyond the classroom by providing students with a CD-ROM containing exercises.
The authors conclude with a list of changes to their own classes made as a result of this study. First, they removed all slides from the course book and made key slides available on the evening before the lecture (this provided space for note-taking). Second, they include in-class quizzes and small-group exercises in lectures. Finally, they introduced an automatic feedback system which provided students with an e-mail following multiple-choice quizzes.


“Blogging”, or web-based logs, has become a popular form of modern expression that brings together individualized forms of verbal expression with communal interactions. The authors suggest and demonstrate how blogging may be used in large college courses to facilitate empowerment of students, internalization of course material, and interactions among students. They argue that students are not merely consumers of knowledge, but rather “prosumers,” not only recipients of information, but also creative participants in the construction of knowledge. This article explores how blogging was implemented in an introductory cultural studies lecture course of 225 students at the University of Melbourne.

The authors point to past research that shows that large, lower-division university lecture courses may lead to feelings of isolation and alienation among students. One way of overcoming the negative outcomes of large cohort classes is to use technology to engage students more regularly and actively. Through blogging, the authors hoped that students would become engaged and empowered, as they were allowed more personalized expression as well as more connectivity to the broader class community. Furthermore, implementing blogging as a course component to a Cultural Studies lecture provides students valuable opportunities to engage popular culture directly through media and technology.

As instructors of the course in which the blog was implemented, the authors required students to blog at least once a week for the 12-week semester. The form and content of the blogs was left open to the students so as to facilitate ownership and empowerment of the posts. In addition to regular and in-depth blogging, students were required to read and comment on other students’ posts on a consistent basis. The authors found that the majority of students participated (93%), with 89.4% doing so in a manner that satisfied the course requirement. Students reported feeling a sense of affirmation at having other students read and comment on their blogs. The frequency of blogging for any particular student correlated with the number of comments she or he would receive, thus fueling the conversation. Bloggers were reinforced and encouraged by the feedback they received from their peers.

A unique platform for blogging was designed by the school, which could be administered by the instructors and setup so to facilitate ease of use by students. The platform was closed, so that only registered members could access, read, and comment on the blog posts. The program allowed students and faculty to search posts by multiple criteria and automatically displayed the most recent, most viewed, and most commented upon posts.
Overall, students reported in an end of semester questionnaire that the experience of blogging was positive and facilitated their engagement with the course material and how it relates to their everyday lives. Some obstacles that were encountered during the semester included: greater readiness to read and respond to the instructors’ posts than to other students’ posts; lack of interest in blogs that were not viewed heavily; and the need for more guidance about both technical aspects of blogging and content by instructors.


This paper builds upon the suggestions by other researchers that anonymity plays an important role in the willingness of students to engage in classroom discussions. As university classroom sizes increase, the obstacles to creating an interactive classroom that also provides a comfortable and anonymous learning environment for students become more apparent. The authors suggest that the use of electronic response systems (ERS) in large college classes may facilitate interaction among students and instructors, while also satisfying student preferences to remain anonymous. ERS is usually facilitated by a handheld wireless keyboard that each student uses to answer questions given by the instructor. By implementing ERS technology in a larger (n=129) undergraduate lecture, and surveying students about their experiences and preferences regarding class interaction, anonymity, and ERS use, the authors demonstrate how instructors may create better learning environments in large classroom settings.

The authors discuss anonymity in the classroom as a continuum, with instructors calling on individual students to answer questions at the low end, and students using ERS to respond to questions on the high end. They note that students become reluctant to answer questions when they are called upon as individuals if they are uncertain of the correct answer, if they are shy, if they come from a cultural background that is uncomfortable with criticism, or if the classroom size is large. By using ERS, instructors can increase the rate of student interaction, and tailor course content to meet the needs of the class by being able to evaluate and give immediate feedback to students after a question is given and responded to. The authors emphasize that it is not the technology itself that improves the learning environment, but rather the ways it is implemented and the instruction that accompanies it.

The authors implemented ERS technology in a summer course of 129 students at the University of Sydney. They alternated ERS with hand raising as a method of response to instructors’ questions, then surveyed the students at the end of the semester on their perceptions of in-class questioning, their preferences for anonymity in the classroom setting, and their preferred response method (ERS, hand raising, instructor calling on volunteers, instructor calling on non-volunteers). The results show that students found ERS technology to be beneficial to their learning experience, preparation for classes, and narrowing of learning gaps. Students preferred anonymity from the instructor as well as from other students, and when they were uncertain of an answer. ERS technology was preferred over raising of hands and being called upon my the instructor to answer a question. There were no significant differences in preferences and perception based on demographic data.
Despite research that indicates students prefer anonymity, the adoption of ERS technology in the classroom has been marginal due to funding. The authors suggest future research that uses larger and more diverse sample sizes, more sample sites, as well as the experiences of instructors with ERS be conducted in the future. In addition, finding better proxies for cultural factors other than native language are necessary to understand how ERS may aide instruction in a diverse classroom setting.


The authors discuss the SCALE-UP (Student-Centered Activities for Large Enrollment of Undergraduates Program). SCALE-UP involves organizing the classroom as if it were a “restaurant” wherein students are comfortable interacting with one another and with the instructors, both formally and informally. SCALE-UP has been implemented in physics, engineering, computer science, and literature classes, and the authors express confidence that it holds potential for other disciplines as well.

The SCALE-UP classroom is designed around tables, each with nine students divided into three smaller groups of three. Each student’s name is displayed where other students and instructors can see it, eliminating anonymity. Students may be called on randomly to answer questions, engage in discussions, or represent their group’s work the larger classroom. Students are assigned letters (A, B, and C) that denote what their roles will be during the class session. Student roles may include “recorder,” “skeptic or questioner,” “manager or organizer,” or “summarizer.” Each group of students shares a computer that is linked to the instructor’s computer. White boards are displayed around the room and at each table to facilitate both student and instructor-led discussions. Some SCALE-UP environments use video cameras to display students’ work to the broader class. The authors suggest that one instructor to fifty students is the proper ratio for optimal outcomes. Instructors move about the classroom constantly, fielding student questions, engaging them in discussion, and distributing resources as necessary. Most assignments are submitted through an online homework forum, which cuts back on the time instructors spend grading and allowing them to invest more time in instruction and planning. SCALE-UP is designed to allow the instructors to format class times to meet the needs of the students as they become apparent in the classroom setting.

The SCALE-UP environment allows instructors to use both hands-on activities as well as conceptual and theoretical exercises in tandem to increase the students’ learning. The authors describe classroom activities as “tangibles” and “ponderables.” Tangibles are activities that are aimed at increasing students’ conceptual and estimation skills, while ponderables are geared toward helping students understand the course material. SCALE-UP emphasizes students’ engaging the material directly, through both reading and through activities. Discussions are designed to connect concepts and activities, not to introduce them. A variety of activities are used to teach a topic based on the needs of the class. Activities emphasize collaboration and co-authorship of reports; justification of information and skepticism; and students teaching their fellow students difficult concepts.
The authors discuss the positive outcomes for students in SCALE-UP classrooms, including reduced failure rates among women and minority students and impressive gains in standardized test scores. They note that SCALE-UP has enhanced the education outcomes for both strong and weak students’ conceptual and problem-solving skills.


Hancock discusses the usefulness of audience response systems (ARS) in large undergraduate classrooms, not only as a formative teaching tool, but also as a summative assessment tool. Large class sizes in universities, he asserts, create learning obstacles for students in that they may be intimidating, do not hold students accountable for attendance, and do not allow the instructor to be flexible and reflexive. By giving exams using ARS, the author demonstrates how it is an effective tool that increases student performance, allows instructors more flexibility in evaluating answers, and decreases the amount of material and time resources necessary with paper multiple choice exams. Hancock argues that using ARS for evaluating students may eliminate many of the issues which arise from paper multiple choice exams in large classroom setting, such as cheating, cost of printing and copying, and designating only one correct answer when there may be some answers that are more correct than others.

The author gives a brief overview of how ARS works. Each student obtains a handheld device (such as an i>clicker) from a college bookstore that is then registered to her or his name and student ID number. The instructor is able to poll student anonymously during class, asking multiple choice format questions and evaluating them in a variety of ways. Answers can be recorded for a grade, or can be completely anonymous. The author emphasizes that it is not the ARS technology itself that can lead to improved student performance, but rather how the questions are constructed, how effectively they are used, and how they encourage participation by students.

Hancock reflects on his own usage of ARS in his larger undergraduate lecture courses. He has used ARS in the past largely as a tool to encourage participation and provide students who do participate opportunities for bonus points. He has experimented with different question formats, noting that textbook questions that require a great deal of time and contingent steps do not work well. Rather, questions should be honed to fit on a single PowerPoint slide and should be concise enough to assess comprehension with some degree of specificity in a short period of time. The flexible nature of ARS allows the instructor to increase or decrease the time students have to answer a question, and to tailor the question to the needs of the class in a specific context. ARS has been used predominantly as a teaching tool, but holds promise as an assessment tool.

After two years of using ARS as a formative teaching tool, the author began to implement it as an assessment tool as well. Rather than give paper multiple-choice exams, students were tested using the ARS format. Test questions were presented on PowerPoint slides, and students were given a specified amount of time to answer each. For each question, the instructor was able to give partial credit for answers that were “nearly but not entirely correct,” thus giving room for
students to earn points if they made mathematical errors rather than gross conceptual errors. The results of this trial were test scores 9 points higher than when ARS was used as a teaching tool, and 16 points higher than before ARS had been introduced.

While increases in test scores are impressive, the author notes that student responses to using ARS as a testing method were quite negative. Some students complained that the test timing hampered or rushed them, and that they did not like being unable to skip and return to questions later. The author conducted another exam using ARS style questions, but on paper with paper answer sheets, this time with slightly lower scores. In a second class, the author implemented assessment by ASR, but instead of having long exams that lasted a full class period, he shortened the exams and increased their frequency. The student feedback from this format was overwhelmingly positive. Hancock suggests that the traditional long form exam may be less linked to pedagogical effectiveness than to convenience, and that new technologies, such as ARS, may open opportunities to challenge traditional paradigms in ways that may benefit students comprehension of material.


In this acceptance speech for the 2003 James Flack Norris Award, the author discusses his journey as an instructor of large chemistry classes at McGill University, and how his endeavor to be more effective in the classroom has led him to education programs for the broader public.

Harpp describes the start of his teaching career, which began in 1966. He was assigned as a first year professor to teach two 250-person organic chemistry lectures, which he consolidated into one 500-person lecture. He charts his attempts at using various different media and techniques to hold the students’ attention, demonstrate complex ideas, and visualize compounds and molecules. In 1968, Harpp was introduced to the lap-dissolve projector, which he describes as the predecessor to Power Point. This technology fostered his ability to illustrate chemistry concepts more easily, in ways that made sense to students, and to create animations of chemical sequences. Harpp and his colleagues also used lap dissolve projections at professional conferences to much acclaim.

The use of lap dissolve projections, and now of Power Point presentations, Harpp argues, is moving students closer to the ultimate goal of becoming independent learners. Through visualizations of difficult concepts, students are less confused and more able to deduce answers to problems on their own, freeing lecture time to go more deeply into course material. In large classes, the interaction time between the professor and individual students is reduced, which can decrease the quality of the education. Effective illustrations and animations can increase the quality of education by adding clarity to lectures. He notes that what was a “media miracle” to him and his colleagues early in his career has become “expected” by today’s students.

Harpp briefly discusses another complication of large classes: cheating. He notes that McGill has been able to nearly eliminate copying during multiple-choice exams by implementing scrambled
seating, wherein students are seated randomly so that they might be less prone to cheat off others they know.

Harpp concludes by discussing his move from college teaching to outreach to the general public. He and several colleagues began designing lectures for the public, using the same media technologies he has long used in his classroom. Through public lecture series and courses designed to teach chemistry to any student regardless of academic background, Harpp and his colleagues demonstrated that effective teaching of difficult subject matter could interest broad audiences and result in a more literate and engaged public.


Johnstone and Letton discuss the impossibility of fulfilling high expectations about laboratory learning in college chemistry courses. They begin with a brief challenge to the notion that labs should be about teaching theoretical chemistry, not simply acquiring technical skills. They authors argue that the psychology of learning can inform the ways that instructors teach labs, and what they expect students to learn from the experience.

The authors argue that the student’s brain cannot process the immense amount of information needed to engage in deeper, meaningful theoretical discussions in the midst of laboratory instruction. Rather, the student is inundated with immediate external information in the form of instructions and lab tasks. Working memory, they assert, is limited to about six items of information at a time. During a laboratory exercise, the student is often required to hold and retrieve from long-term memory more than what it is capably of meaningfully processing.

Instructors have trained themselves through extensive work in laboratories to be able to critically think in the midst of experiments, while students still struggle with the instructions, much less developing the capacity to connect a laboratory exercise to its theoretical content. It is the instructor’s task to pass along to students this ability to understand the meaning in lab activities. Johnstone and Letton suggest some practical ways for doing so. Laboratory activities might be better organized as cycles, wherein a student is able to practice a particular method repeatedly, each time adding a deeper level of critical thinking to the process. In this manner, students not only acquire laboratory skills that are useful, thus becoming an “apprentice,” but also develop the skills to tie the activity back to broader theory. The authors are clear, however, about the importance of the laboratory to “do its own thing,” in that it should be meant to pass along a set of skills that are independent of theoretical chemistry lecture course material.


This article describes the results from an experimental peer tutorial program at St. George’s Medical School. First year medical students are required to take a physiology lecture course with
over 350 students per class. The author followed 68 first-year medical students who participated in voluntary physiology tutorial sessions lead by 8 second-year medical student volunteers. The goals of this study were to demonstrate the level of difficulty involved in organizing peer-led tutorial programs, and to assess whether such programs are beneficial to the students who participate in them. The results indicate that the organization of tutorial programs is less burdensome than expected, and that peer-led tutoring is beneficial to both the students who participate in them as well as to the those who act as the tutors.

Of the 354 students in the physiology lecture, 68 or 19% participated in the study, thus dispelling the expectation that the peer-tutorial program would be difficult to organize due to a large volume of interest. Tutorial sessions were not overly time consuming for peer-tutors, who were given a packet containing case studies and answer guides, although preparation of those material required significant time investment by faculty beforehand.

Tutorial sessions were organized to coincide with the topics being covered in the larger physiology lectures. Groups met every two to three weeks and were loosely facilitated by the second-year peer tutor. The tutors were instructed to avoid lecturing, and to only intervene in discussions if asked or if the students had reached an impasse. Students were encouraged to collaborate on case studies to come to a consensus answer. Surveys before (n=45) and after (n=35) the tutorial experience were given to students as well as a quiz on each topic area covered by the tutorial sessions at the beginning and end of the semester. Quiz scores indicated that students benefited from the experience, while the surveys indicated that their expectations before the tutorial session were positively met. Peer-tutors were also surveyed (n=6) and results indicate that the experience of leading tutorial sessions was positive and beneficial to them as well.


The authors examine both effectiveness and equity as outcomes of peer-led guided inquiry (PLGI) over three years in an introductory college chemistry course using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). Effectiveness is defined as improvement in test scores by students in PLGI class settings over students in traditional class settings. Equity is defined as the lessening of the pre-existing achievement gaps between students with stronger high school preparation and those with weaker preparation. While this study demonstrates that PLGI is effective, it does not close pre-existing achievement gaps. However, the authors note that PLGI does not exacerbate inequity among students based on high school preparedness, as some research has suggested is has the potential to do so.

The authors argue that much of the evaluation of classroom reform programs, such as PLGI, do not consider equity outcomes, measured by the reduction of achievement gaps between low and high performing students. Very few published studies have examined educational reforms and equitable outcomes. PLGI involves students working together, helping one another, and teaching concepts to each other in a semi-organized setting monitored by peer leaders who have successfully completed the course. Students in a PLGI classroom setting are divided into groups
of four, and each is given a distinct role in assigned questions and tasks. While past research has indicated that PLGI may be an effective tool to create a more interactive and effective learning environment in large college classrooms, some worry that it may exacerbate inequity among students with different levels of preparedness by bringing to the fore such inequalities in an interactive setting.

The authors use HLM to analyze equity as an outcome of PLGI reforms in introductory college chemistry classes. HLM allows researchers to examine the interactive nature of the classroom setting, as students are nested within classes, and the activities of other student necessarily shape the learning experiences of other students.

PLGI was implemented in one of several introductory chemistry lecture sections during the fall semesters of three consecutive years. The authors used SAT scores as a proxy for preparedness upon entering college. Those with higher SAT scores were assumed to have been better prepared for the course. SAT scores have been shown to be a good indicator of college science performance, and in this study, a good indicator of performance on the final exam of the course. The authors found that PLGI is an effective tool for increasing performance of students, regardless of preparedness. However, PLGI did not translate into more equitable outcomes for students, measured by a smaller achievement gap on the final course exam between students entering the course with high and low SAT scores. The authors note that PLGI did not increase inequities among outcomes, as some research has suggested it might. PLGI did not significantly affect class size retention. Those students in the PLGI class setting did have less of a decrease in test scores over the course of the semester compared to non-PLGI students.

The authors argue that the effectiveness of PLGI is impressive, but the overall aim of lessening equity needs to be given more attention in research and development of educational reforms in large college classroom settings. One drawback of this study is the dependence upon multiple choice exam scores as a proxy for outcomes. The authors suggest more intensive examination of outcomes be conducted in future research to gain insight into how equitable outcomes may be improved in increasingly larger college classroom settings.


This article examines two questions: How can videos be used to reproduce Jerome Bruner’s stages of acquiring knowledge in a classroom setting? And what are the differences between the learning experiences of students in whole class versus small group discussions? The authors design learning environments in freshman physics classes that integrate video clips that sequentially explain and apply the concept of superconductivity with whole class or small group discussions.

The authors review important literature on social constructionist views of learning. They assert that the use of videos and the implementation of class discussions are important methods for increasing student engagement in a larger classroom setting; however, research on how these
methods may be integrated is lacking. Research suggests that introducing students to relevant current research may increase students’ interest in the subject and enhance learning potential. Bruner’s work suggests that any topic of any subject can be effectively taught to students at any level if done so in three stages. The enactive stage concretely demonstrates the concept; the iconic stage uses models and pictures to demonstrate a concept; and the symbolic stage applies the concept and links abstract ideas to problem solving. By organizing lessons this way students engage at different levels depending on their skill level. The authors test Bruner’s theory by designing a three-segment video to explain the concept of superconductivity using these three stages.

Past research indicates that students learn not only from active engagement with the instructor and each other, but also by passively watching other students engage in discussion. They suggest that a great deal of learning in classroom setting may come from instructors and students working through misunderstandings, while other students watch. It has been demonstrated in other studies, however, that students learn more when they engage in discussion with other students with comparable understandings of the material as their own, and that students are more confident in small group discussions, and therefore are more likely to participate. The authors seek to demonstrate how videos using Bruner’s stages may be best applied in the classroom setting through integrating them into small group and whole class discussion.

Twenty-nine first-year second-semester physics undergraduates were separated into two classes (15 and 14), and given a pre-test that evaluated their knowledge of superconductivity, a concept that is briefly discussed in senior-year high school physics. One class was organized to engage in whole-class discussions, while the other was organized around small group discussions. Both classes were shown a segment of the video, followed by a five-minute discussion, followed by two more video segments and discussions. The students were then given a post-test to evaluate their acquisition of knowledge during the exercise. In addition to the post-test, the students were asked to draw diagrams of the concepts they were exposed to in the videos and discussions. In the whole-class discussion format, the instructor was responsible for moderating discussion and prompting students to ask an answer questions, not to lecture. In the small-groups setting, the instructor’s role was to move about the classroom engaging different groups by asking questions. In both settings, notes were taken by a research assistant and were analyzed for content, as were the outcomes of the tests and diagrams. In the whole-class setting, a discourse analysis of the discussion was completed.

The results of this study indicate that videos may be an effective way of applying Bruner’s stages in a classroom setting. Nearly all of the students in the study improved their knowledge about superconductivity regardless of their base knowledge through the videos and discussions. Secondly, this study suggests that small-groups are a more effective way to conduct discussions, as students’ post-test scores and diagrams indicate. Students in small-groups focused more on critical aspects and processes, whereas students in the whole-class discussion were more focused on elementary concepts. In addition, conversation in small groups flowed with greater ease, and more students participated, whereas in the whole-class discussion, a handful of students dominated the discussion while the instructor had to work to keep the conversation flowing and students on topic. The instructor’s role was much more visible, and the task of initiating and
maintaining appropriate discussion was more difficult in the whole-class setting than in the small-group setting.


The purpose of this article is to examine how expectations for large classes differ among experienced and inexperienced students. The authors describe how they encountered issues and student resistance when they began to implement interactive student-centered teaching methods into large college classrooms, despite being successful in smaller settings. The authors draw from Appleby’s theory of education, which asserts that students are most likely to succeed in a course if their expectations match closely with the instructor’s expectations.

Large introductory lecture classes are often populated by both first semester students and more experienced college students due to the fact that they are not linked to a major and may be taken at any point in a students’ college career. Instructors of large lecture classes are often charged with balancing the need to challenge experienced students while not overwhelming inexperienced students. A potentially important way for instructors to deal with this tension is to understand the different expectations students have for the class. Doing so will allow instructors to frame their own expectations in appropriate ways and enhance student socialization into the college culture.

The authors review literature on the challenges of educating students in large college classrooms. They note that research indicates that large lectures that only require students to passively learn require lower order skills, while smaller upper-division classes based on student interaction require higher-order skills. The number of students in many introductory lecture courses prohibits instructors from interacting with students, implementing discussions, giving timely feedback, and engaging in active problem solving activities. Research has also suggested that students are dissatisfied with their experiences in large lecture classes, thus indicating that they may be open to more engaging, activity-centered learning formats. They apply Appleby’s theory of education, which asserts that as course levels increase, the teaching and learning methods become increasingly more active. Higher-level courses foster greater expectations for student engagement. The challenge for instructors is then to foster a culture of engagement in lower-level introductory courses in order to foster a general culture of academic engagement among students.

The authors hypothesized that greater proportions of students prefer active learning experiences over passive learning experiences; that more experienced students are more likely to prefer passive learning experiences than inexperienced students; that experienced students are less committed to introductory lecture classes and would therefore be more unmotivated than inexperienced students; that all students prefer frequent and varied assessment and accountability methods; that students expectations for assessments would evaluate lower-order skills; and that inexperienced students would be more externally motivated and less internally motivated than experienced students.
A 136-item survey was given on the first day of the semester to students in 14 different introductory lecture classes across various disciplines. Of the 1,187 respondents, 865 met the full criteria were included in the analysis. The survey covered five topic areas to assess: students’ attitude and preferences for large classes; students’ expectations for active learning in large classes; the importance of higher and lower-level skills to students’ success in large classes; students’ motivation, using the Academic Motivation Scale; and students’ general information, time use, and demographic information.

Results indicate that inexperienced students are more likely to expect interaction with the professor. They had more positive attitudes toward group work, essay exams, and in-class activities than experienced students. Experienced students, on the contrary, were more likely to prefer passive learning environments and did not perceive group work to be beneficial. Inexperienced students thought large classes would be more challenging, and that attendance was a necessary part of succeeding in class, whereas experienced students believed large classes to be easier and were more apt to see attendance as less beneficial to success. Experienced students expected to do most of their learning on their own or in study groups, while inexperienced students expected to gain most of their knowledge in class or with the professor during office hours. These results indicate that instructors should expect to face more resistance from experienced students than from inexperienced students when attempting to implement student-centered teaching methods in large classes.

The authors argue that resistance to activities and student-centered teaching methods is in line with Appleby’s theory, in that student expectations do not resonate with instructor expectations. Experienced students have come to expect a passive learning environment wherein attendance is not taken and students are not asked to engage. The authors challenge instructors to change the culture of the large classroom by implementing reforms that require students to engage and be active participants in the learning process. They argue that doing so may have lasting implications, including greater retention of knowledge and higher graduation rates. Professors may use many methods for creating a more interactive learning environment, including interactive technology, small-group discussions, role plays, guest speakers, integration of pop culture and media into discussions of concepts, and in-class assignments. Furthermore, instructors may encourage students to apply course lessons to their real life experiences and to pop culture.


This article focuses on the perceptions of social work students in a large lecture course that emphasizes critical thinking and synthesis of complex concepts. The course was designed to integrate several different types of activities, including lectures, films and discussions, guest speakers, small-group discussions, and Clicker surveys.
Research on education in large class settings indicates that larger classrooms do not enhance students’ high-order learning skills, as interaction between the instructor and student is reduced. Consequently, students are more passive than active during the learning experience. In classes where critical thinking and integration of difficult concepts is required, such as the social work class used in this study, this passivity can be debilitating to students. Furthermore, lecture classes that last up to an hour exceed the amount of time students are able to concentrate. The course in which this research takes place was designed so that students engaged in a variety of activities, including passive lecture and active small-group discussions, each no longer than 15 minutes. In addition, Clickers were used to engage students in in-class surveys on topics relevant to the class, and guest speakers and films were integrated into the course design.

Three surveys were issued over the semester to determine students’ perception of the integrated design of the course sessions. The first survey was administered over email and was voluntary. It sought to gather information about which learning activities were most valuable to the students’ learning experience. The second survey was taken in class using the Clickers. It measured students’ immediate enjoyment of class activities. The third survey took place as a final evaluation at the end of the semester, measured students’ satisfaction with the instructor’s teaching, included grade distributions, and was compared to another evaluation of a lower-level social work course.

In the first survey (n=28) Moulding found that the greatest proportion (86%) of students said that lectures and film-discussions were beneficial to their learning. However, 79% reported that small-groups were beneficial, and 82% indicated that brainstorming sessions were useful. An additional 61% responded that Clicker surveys were useful. Qualitative responses to the survey (n=19) highlighted strengths of the course including that it was well organized, the subject matter was relevant to real life, and the instructor was enthusiastic and interesting. A weakness of this survey was the small response rate, and the potential that only highly motivated students responded, rather than a cross sample of the whole class.

Results from the second, in-class Clicker survey (n=80) indicated that 49% found the Clicker most enjoyable, 31% found films most enjoyable, 12% found participatory exercises most enjoyable, and 8% found the lecture most enjoyable. These results indicate opposite results from the first survey. This could be explained by the purpose of the question, which was to measure enjoyment, not usefulness. The final survey, which measured the performance of the instructor, indicated that students in the class were quite satisfied with the teaching methods used, and the design of the class. The course compared favorably with a lower-division social work course evaluation that used lectures as a sole method of teaching.

Moulding concludes that an integrated classroom design that incorporates multiple teaching methods may serve the needs of students better than a singular classroom design that employs only one teaching method. Students responded favorably to the various tools and activities implemented, and indicated the instructor and teaching aides were effectively communicating course material. The generally positive feedback of all learning methods indicate that integrating them into the classroom setting may be an effective way of teaching complicated subject matter requiring critical and analytical thinking into large classrooms.
One concern Moulding emphasizes is the attendance rate in the course over the semester, which was sometimes as low as 50%. As low attendance is correlated to failure for students, she suggests further research on how class design might improve attendance is needed. Connecting subject matter to real life experiences and to the greater context of society is an important tool for creating an effective classroom environment.


Mulryan-Kyne reviews recent literature on the challenges and innovative approaches to teaching increasingly larger classes at the tertiary level. Recent trends in OECD nations indicate that enrollment in universities will continue to increase, resulting in larger class sizes at many schools. Large college classrooms present issues to instructors and students alike. Finding more active ways of teaching large classes may alleviate some of these issues.

Research indicates that larger classes reduce the interactions between students and instructors, leading to reduced attendance, greater attrition, reduction in higher-order cognitive skills usage, increased isolation among students, and lower motivation and commitment to courses. Determining what size is too big is contextual. Some large-enrollment courses are more effective than others. Many factors must be considered, including the accommodations and facilities and the nature of the subject matter. Research indicates, however, that the practical issues faced by students and instructors increase as the size of the course increases.

The author reviews literature on both student and instructor perspectives on large enrollment courses. Research shows that students generally feel more isolated, less accountable, and more dissatisfied with their educational experiences in large classes. Large classes can discourage students from participating in discussions and forming relationships with other students, thus leading to isolation and increasing the chances of attrition. Instructors also express dissatisfaction with their teaching experiences; in particular, discussions become more superficial, and it is difficult to read students’ non-verbal communication. Moreover, in large class settings, it is more difficult for instructors to determine if students understand the course content and to give effective feedback.

While class size has been found to effect the educational experience, an increasing body of literature points to the skill and competence of the teacher as the most important variable in creating an effective learning environment. Therefore, it is may be a good investment of resources to train and build competence among instructors who teach large enrollment classes.

The author discusses some methods used in large enrollment classes, including lectures, brainstorming, short writing activities, discussions, quick surveys, formative quizzes, debates, role playing, student presentations, demonstrations, cooperative learning, and feedback lectures. Active learning is distinguished from passive learning. While lecturing is considered passive learning, the author argues that lectures can be very effective teaching methods in large classes. Many professors have a high degree of unique expertise on subjects students cannot learn from textbooks. The lecture provides a forum for professors to share their expertise. Lectures also can
benefit students when the subject matter would require them to do a great deal of research and synthesizing on their own. Preparing lectures benefits the instructor as well, as it requires her to revise and review the course content on a regular basis. A good lecture is dependent upon the effort and care put into it by the instructor.

While lectures are in important way of communicating information in large classes, they are less effective than more active teaching and learning methods when it comes to retention of knowledge, application of knowledge, the development of higher-order thinking skills, attitude change, and motivation. Active teaching methods must be integrated into the large classroom in order to accomplish deeper, more authentic learning. In order for instructors to do this, they must gain knowledge about active teaching methods, and overcome the risks associated with implementing them. Students must also be taught to engage in active learning, where they are held more accountable for their work and become responsible for participating in their education, rather than passively consuming knowledge.


This article asks the question: How can the professor of a course with high enrollment best optimize the students’ and his or her own time and energy to create the most effective learning environment possible? The authors examine how four pedagogical techniques that seek to “clone the professor” provide more interactive learning environments, teach students better study skills, improve class performance, and increase student satisfaction.

The authors suggest that “cloning the professor” through creating activities where students interact with one another in ways that promote higher-order cognitive skills may improve the education experience of students in large classes. They examine four pedagogical methods for doing so.

*Formative assessment* involves the elimination of mid-term exams for shorter, more frequent in-class exercises that are aimed to apprehend and correct misconceptions on a regular basis. The assessments are not graded, but are intended to improve students’ metacognitive processes and study skills for the final exam. Hybrid formative assessment integrates mid-term exams with in-class exercises.

*Elaborative questioning* (EQ) involves students and instructors engaging in conversation about a topic, processing and articulating concepts, correcting one another, and working with each other to improve comprehension. EQ involves asking questions that cannot be answered using incorrect assumptions or misconceptions, but rather are designed to reveal faulty understandings and correct them.

*Faculty mentoring sessions* are simply time outside of class where the instructor devotes time to helping small groups of students with problems.
Alumni consultation mirrors faculty consulting, but with students who have excelled in the same course leading the session. Both faculty mentoring sessions and alumni consultation happen outside of class time and are voluntary and do not earn points for attendance.

The authors tested the effects of these four techniques in two separate chemistry courses—an introductory course and a more advanced course—over the duration of several semesters. During the first five semesters, the courses did not entail any of these methods. The last four semesters did. The authors gave an identical pretest and posttest in each class to determine how knowledge had increased over the semester. They surveyed students who participated in the classes that implemented these teaching methods. In addition, they examined final grades and test scores to determine if participation in these learning activities had an effect on course performance.

Student scores on the posttest improved significantly over the course of the semesters that formative assessment was applied. Results show that formative assessment and EQ had the greatest effect on scores, compared to the semesters before they were used. Students responded positively to both formative assessment and to EQ. The majority of students in both courses reported these methods helped them perform better on exams, and improved their analytical and studying skills. In addition, those who reported positive attitudes scored higher than those who had negative attitudes toward the methods. Results also indicate that students who participated in faculty mentoring sessions and alumni consultation scored higher on exams and on the posttest than those who did not participate.

The authors’ concern with “cloning the professor” leads them to ways to develop better studying skills in students. They note that studying alone, and studying by re-reading the course text and going over notes, are not sufficient to deeply learn material. Rather, students learn by being tested, and therefore should study in ways that test them on knowledge and concepts. Research indicates that this is best done in groups. Through formative assessment and EQ, the authors argue that instructors can train students to be more efficient studiers, to collaborate more with their peers, and to gain more out of large classes, thus making best use of the instructor’s and the students’ time.

They point out, however, that such reforms will take tremendous effort on the part of instructors. Reformulating courses so that students are trained in metacognitive skills in addition to the course material may require scaling back some content. It may also require that instructors demand students be prepared for class, rather than introducing concepts in the text. They conclude by arguing that instructors may instill a love for their subject matter that will have lasting influence by demonstrating great interest in the success of students through innovative teaching techniques.


This article explores some of the technical, practical, and pedagogical issues and uses of Classroom Response Systems (CRS), or Clickers, in a large enrollment university classroom.
The authors suggest that the use of Clickers in large classrooms may be an effective way to improve the quality of students’ experiences by creating a more active learning environment, increasing the feedback from the instructor, lengthening students’ attention spans during classes, and motivating students to both attend class and participate in discussions.

Some of the issues that arise in large class settings include how to create a more active learning environment in a logistically difficult situation. Researchers agree that active learning requires interactions among instructors, students, and the course material. Research also indicates that both the amount and the timeliness of feedback are important to improve student learning, yet it can be difficult for instructors of large classes to provide effective feedback. Furthermore, motivating students to show up for class when attendance is logistically difficult to document, and participate in discussions when the classrooms are large and anonymous, becomes increasingly difficult for instructors as class sizes get larger. The authors explore ways that using CRS can address these issues.

The ways CRS may help overcome some of the issues discussed above was studied in three large enrollment lecture sections of the same course. One section did not use CRS, one used it only moderately (about 50 clicker questions) and one used it frequently (about 240 clicker questions). Results indicate that students who were exposed to the technology more had more positive perceptions of it than students who were exposed to it less. In fact, students in the high-usage class were overwhelmingly in favor of CRS and saw it as beneficial to their experience. Students who were not exposed to CRS were not favorable of it, and could not understand how it might benefit them. The authors found that overall, students who were exposed to CRS perceived that it created a more active learning environment, increased the frequency and timeliness of instructor feedback, expanded their attention and interest in the subject matter, and motivated them to attend and participate.

Suggestions for others considering using CRS at their universities include using the correct technology and system management, gauging student resistance to CRS, addressing new issues of student integrity including new opportunities to cheat, and finding ways to minimize the cost of clickers to students. The authors suggest that universities use radio frequency (RF) clickers rather than infrared, as they are more reliable. They also suggest that the system be administered within the university rather than being outsourced, so that issues can be quickly addressed when they arise. Furthermore, they argue that CRS software interface with instructors’ presentation software seamlessly, in order to integrate it into lectures more easily.

As a pedagogical tool, the authors suggest that CRS be used as a way to teach students about systems (as an example of one). Using the clickers more frequently improves students’ perceptions of the technology as beneficial. Instructors should also be prepared to explain the reasoning behind incorrect and correct answers on any given clicker question. CRS should be integrated into the course thoughtfully in order to have the greatest effect on student learning. It can be a powerful tool for creating an active learning environment if used appropriately.

Nicol and Boyle compare two social constructionist approaches to creating a more interactive large-enrollment college class environment. Specifically, they compare student perceptions of “peer instruction” and “class-wide discussion” in an introductory engineering course in the U.K.

Peer instruction and class-wide discussion are methods used in American universities, developed by physics departments at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, respectively. *Peer instruction* involves the instructor introducing a concept question, then students are allowed time to consider the question individually. The students subsequently provide individual responses, using a classroom communication system (CCS). Students discuss their answers in small groups, and re-answer the question. The instructor is able to visualize a histogram of student answers, and can provide feedback, explain the correct answer, and summarize the concept for the class.

*Class-wide discussion* involves the instructor giving a concept question, followed by small group discussion. Students then give their group or individual answers using CCS, and the instructor facilitates a class-wide discussion aimed at clarifying the correct answer for the class. The differences between peer instruction and class-wide discussion mainly lie in the time at the beginning peer instruction gives to students formulating an individual response, and the pre- and post-discussion polling of students for their answer.

The authors studied how students in a large first year engineering class perceived the benefit of both of these methods, which had been implemented at various stages during the semester. Semi-structured focus groups were conducted with about one-quarter of the students. Two groups were male only, two were female only, and one was mixed, in order to control for gender bias. Each focus group met twice—once during the peer instruction phase and once during the class-wide discussion phase of the course—and facilitated by one of three different individuals.

In addition to focus groups, a class-wide 36-item survey was given at the end of the semester. The survey used a Likert scale to determine students’ perceptions of the two methods. A critical incident questionnaire with five open-ended questions was used to understand students’ perceptions directly following a class that implemented both methods of discussion.

All three data sources overwhelmingly indicated that peer instruction was perceived as more beneficial by students than class-wide discussions. Students expressed their preference to formulate an answer individually before entering into group discussions, so that they may be more critical of accepting answer from other students. They reported that group discussions allowed them to help and be helped by peers using language that is more comprehensible to them, in line with social constructivist theories of education. In addition, they mentioned that students who have just grasped a concept can better explain it to another student than someone who has mastered the concept, a concept widely known as “scaffolding” in education literature. Students nearly unanimously agreed that discussing concepts and questions with other students is beneficial to their learning.
The authors conclude that peer instruction meets the needs and expectations of students better than class-wide discussion. They note that as class sizes increase, class-wide discussions may become more burdensome and difficult to facilitate. All of the activities in this study involved CCS, and the authors bring up the final question about its role in facilitating large class settings. CCS allows professors to receive immediate feedback from students, track how students are doing over the course of the semester without using homework or assessments, and allows students to be more engaged in large classes in an anonymous fashion. More research into the necessity of CCS needs to be done to determine how necessary it is to improving large class learning experiences.


This article explores the benefits students perceive from using Peer Assessment Learning Sessions (PALS) in a large engineering classroom setting at a university in Australia. The authors argue that PALS is not only beneficial to students for building better learning skills and reflexivity, but also provides instructors valuable feedback and efficient methods of assessment. PALS involves students assessing one another’s work for errors and misconceptions. Students grade other students’ work against a provided key during the class lecture period. The instructor then collects the marked papers and reviews them for correctness and fairness. This reduces the time the instructor must spend grading papers, but still allows the instructor to assess progress in the class, troubleshoot issues that arise, and give feedback. A critical feature of problems-based courses, such as engineering, is timely and appropriate feedback from the instructor to students about their progress. As class sizes increase, providing enough feedback and assessment becomes more burdensome for the instructor. PALS helps to alleviate some of the burden.

In addition to providing assessment and feedback to students on a regular basis, PALS encourages students to become more reflexive and improve their study habits. By reviewing other students’ work against a key, students engage in understanding the process by which the correct answer is found, as well as the common misconceptions their peers and they may have. Students who review their peer-assessed work can then see and correct their own misconceptions and errors. One issue the authors found was students’ lack of review of their peer assessed papers. Ways to incentivize and increase review and reflexivity of a student’s own work need to be explored.

PALS helps to demystify the assessment process for the student, as it makes transparent the ways that exams are graded. As homework assignments assessed by peers resemble the same sorts of questions that will appear on final exams, student are able to understand the processes the instructor and graduate teaching assistants use to grade exams, and are able to be reflexive in the ways they prepare for exams.

In order for PALS to be most effective, students must be convinced of its relevance to their academic and professional careers. Students need to be properly informed about how to peer
assess and be familiar with the assessment criteria. In addition, students should remain anonymous to the students they are assessing or by whom they are being assessed. They should feel confident in the fairness of the method and instructors and tutorial staff should be supportive of the method. In this study, the instructor announced ahead of time the dates on which PALS activities would take place to the students so they could be prepared. The instructor provided the answer keys and gave all students the opportunity to attend tutorial sessions outside of class. The instructor collected the marked papers at the end of class and was then able to review them for fairness, correctness, and misconceptions. The activity was work a percentage of the students’ final grades.

Feedback from surveys given at the end of the semester indicated that students viewed PALS as a beneficial. Between 75% and 90% desired that PALS be extended further and used in more classes. Students reported that PALS aided learning experience, increased their understanding of the subject matter over other courses that did not use PALS, and was fair and reasonable. Students indicated that they would attend PALS even if it were not compulsory, and that it forced them to become more reflexive learners. Informal interviews with students support these results. In addition, students who were actively engaged in PALS, attending all sessions during a semester, were less likely to fail or earn low final course grades than those who did not participate.

The authors conclude by suggesting that PALS be implemented in lower-division college classes so that it is perceived as a legitimate mode of assessment and so students gain the reflexive skills early in their college careers. They suggest that modifications will be needed to implement PALS in larger classes (greater than 350), a topic which the authors are currently researching.


The authors demonstrate how “netnography,” or ethnographic research of an on-line community, can help instructors of “megaclases” improve students’ learning experiences. The authors define a megaclase as a lecture with greater than 300 students enrolled. The purpose of this study is to explore claims that using on-line teaching tools alongside classroom activities can enhance the learning experience in large classrooms.

The authors adapt Kozinet’s netnographic research of on-line communities to study the on-line culture of a megaclase with greater than 750 students enrolled. They call this type of research “educational netnomethodology.” Through the design and monitoring of an on-line forum open to course members only, they build a typology that includes five types of student on-line participants. They identified Slackers and Observers as those students who did not participate in the on-line community. Chatters are students whose engagement on the forum was limited to social interactions, while Keeners engagement was limited to only course-related interactions. Finally, Leaders participated in both social and course-related interactions. The authors arrange these groups along two intersecting axes of degree of course interest and degree of relational interest.
The authors monitored the on-line community, noting the types of interactions students, instructors, and teaching assistants engaged in over the course of the semester. They discovered three themes, or “stories” from the forum interactions, verified by triangulation, which included checking their findings with students who actively participated in the forum. The first theme was the creation of an exclusionary community when a participant deviates from the forum’s norms. The second theme was the development of “clans” based on interests and location, which developed into friendships, study groups, professional relationship, or other beneficial associations. The third theme involved the persuasion that students who posted a great deal and were confident, even if they were incorrect in their assumptions. In the last theme, the instructor felt compelled to intervene in order to re-direct students toward the correct answers to problems or case studies and away from the incorrect but popular consensus.

In addition to the themes discussed above, they found a positive correlation between forum participation and class performance. Even students who registered for the forum but never participated in a discussion performed better than those who did not register at all, suggesting that passive participation offers some benefit. On-line forums create unique opportunities for students to interact anonymously. The relationships students form with one another and with instructors through the forum may decrease the alienation students can experience in large class settings, thus increasing their motivation to succeed in the course and to remain in college.

The authors conclude that not only are on-line forums beneficial for students, as those who participated more often were also those who performed highest in the course; but also studying on-line course forums may help instructors to better understand the needs of the class. In a large class setting, it is difficult for instructors to read body language and non-verbal cues that indicate the effectiveness of the classroom activities. Netnography can help instructors understand the nuances of the course culture and respond to them appropriately through non-obtrusive means. Instructors could encourage forum use by tailoring assignments to encourage collaboration, such as case studies. Instructors and teaching assistants should also closely monitor forums in order to mitigate when persuasive students are leaning others toward misconceptions about course material, or when inappropriate exclusion of forum members is happening.


This article examines how instructors might cater to the varying needs of multiple students at different experience and skill levels through technology-mediated independent projects. As university course enrollments increase, instructors are challenged to meet the needs of students who come from many different backgrounds with a wide-range of knowledge and experience. The author asserts that instructors often will teach to the lowest common denominator in large class settings, thus failing to challenge more advanced and motivated students. This study demonstrates one method instructors might use to engage advanced students using external projects in large classes.
The author argues that the use of technology to create a learning environment may address the needs of all students regardless of their level. This study attempts to show how technology can be used to increase authentic learning for more advanced students in a technological communications course. Student volunteers who self-identified as having experience in technological communications were selected to participate (n=12) out of a 350 person course. Each student was given a laptop and a digital camera (“technology kit”) and asked to design a course-related project that could be completed within the semester. Participating students were released from some of their regular course work to focus on the projects. Student volunteers were also required to participate in an on-line forum with one another, both posting updates about their own projects and offering constructive feedback on others’ work. While some students did not participate actively and willingly in the forum, most used the forum frequently and offered valuable feedback to their fellow students. The final project included a booklet outlining the project’s objectives, methods, and outcomes.

The author found that students initially had difficulty narrowing down their topic to a reasonable scope. Students learned through trial and error how to give constructive criticism, and developed an on-line community that all reported was valuable to their experience. The timeline that the instructor enforced required students to stay on task, although the author suggests that flexibility should be balanced with deadlines in order to promote creativity and goal setting. When surveyed, students uniformly reported that the overall experience was good, the use of technology stimulating, and the sense of academic community rewarding. The author concludes that the project was successful in creating a more challenging atmosphere for more advanced students in a large classroom setting. The students who participated in the program demonstrated higher-order cognitive skills and successfully completed the assignment within the semester.

Drawbacks to this approach are the high costs in both money and time it requires. Not only did each student participant receive a Macintosh computer and digital camera, but he or she also received special attention from the professor who was actively engaged in the projects. The author suggests that those interested in using this approach in their classes first gauge student interest before investing, as participation will require significant time from both instructor and student to be beneficial.


This article focuses on ways to improve the learning experience of first-year university students in large classroom settings through an inquiry-based method of teaching and using technology. The author suggests that re-designing high enrollment lecture courses to be problem-based and using an Internet-based forum to provide feedback to students about their progress may decrease student alienation and improve student-instructor interactions.

The author discusses research about higher attrition rates in larger university classrooms, and the ways this has been addressed through student-centered learning approaches. One such approach is inquiry-based learning. This type of learning involves students in solving problems and interacting with other students and the instructor, rather than passively absorbing information
from lectures. Problem-based courses are more common at advanced classes in universities, where class sizes are smaller and students have developed higher-order cognitive skills. The author argues that such formats may be used in lower-division higher-enrollment classes to challenge students and reduce attrition and isolation.

Inquiry-based learning was implemented in an introductory lecture class with an enrollment of 320 students. The format of the class involved one hour per week of lecture, during which problems were introduced and the lecture content focused on exploring concepts necessary to solve problems. Two types of problems were introduced in alternation with one another: research questions and design questions. An additional two hours of workshops per week were required for all students. Students were broken into groups of 25 for these, and one graduate teaching assistant oversaw each workshop. The focus of the workshops was to further explore concepts necessary for solving the problems presented in class. At the end of the week, students were required to submit their answers to the problems on an on-line forum. The instructor or teaching assistants graded the answers, and feedback was given to each student through the forum within a few days. Through the interactions among instructor, teaching assistants, and students, the course was designed to engage students as active participant in problem solving, rather than passive consumers of information.

An on-line survey was distributed to students, with 125 respondents, to gather information about the students’ perceptions and preferences regarding inquiry-based learning. Results indicate that students were positive about the experience, but more could be done to create student enthusiasm for inquiry-based learning. While 30% of respondents indicated that the method encouraged them positively to take control of their learning and engage more deeply with the course material, 20% responded negatively to the same question. Over 90% of the students, however, were able to list advantages they have gained from inquiry-based learning. The negative responses may be due to the organization of the approach, not the approach itself.

Students overwhelmingly preferred design questions to research questions, perhaps because this allowed them to apply concepts in creative ways. The author suggests that one ways to improve student perceptions of inquiry-based learning is to increase the relevance of the questions to the students, perhaps by using more design questions than research questions.

Inquiry-based learning can be an effective tool in large classrooms, as it calls on students to assume responsibility for their learning, and teaches them how to apply concepts to problems. Furthermore, the use of technology to provide frequent and timely feedback allows students to feel connected to the instructor and teaching assistants, as well as monitor their own progress. The teaching staff in this study also responded positively to the method, although data on this topic was not presented in the article.
Contact Information

If you have comments or suggestions for additional materials that should be included in this bibliography, please contact Galen Ciscell (galen.ciscell@colostate.edu), Emily Thorn (emily.thorn@colostate.edu), or Lori Peek (lori.peek@colostate.edu).

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Teaching Race and Ethnicity: An Annotated Bibliography

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Teaching Race and Ethnicity: An Annotated Bibliography

This annotated bibliography includes reference information and annotations for journal articles on teaching courses in race and ethnicity. This bibliography is intended for instructors of college-level courses on race, ethnicity, and inequality. Its purpose is to provide references and annotations to articles on innovative practices for teaching race and ethnicity. In addition, the bibliography includes articles that address the challenges of teaching the topic in U.S. colleges and university.

The articles that are included in this bibliography were selected via a search of the ERIC and Sociological Abstracts databases. Broad search terms included race, ethnicity, and teaching methods. These initial searches, which produced thousands of results, were then narrowed using a number of more specific descriptive terms.

These articles have been organized into the subject areas described below. We hope this will make the bibliography easier to use for instructors looking for suggestions on teaching courses in race and ethnicity. While some articles fit into multiple categories, each article was assigned to the category deemed most pertinent to its content.

Course Overviews: The article outlines an entire course on race and ethnicity.

Lesson Plans: The article presents a multi-session lesson plan, project, or assignment.

Activities: The article presents one or more single-session, in-class activities.

Teaching Advice: The article provides general pedagogical advice about teaching a course on race and ethnicity.

Research: The article presents the results of a research study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of a particular strategy used in a race and ethnicity classroom.

Teaching Innovations: The article presents ideas or teaching methods that are particularly innovative and stretch the boundaries of typical pedagogies for teaching race and ethnicity.

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In this article, Faye describes her innovative approach to teaching a course on cultural pluralism using the lens of contemporary immigration trends in greater Los Angeles. The major objectives of the course are to help students: 1) determine the links between changing historic, economic, political, and governmental conditions and situations, ebbs and flows of immigration, and the inclusion of racial/ethnic/gender groups; 2) to become familiar with current U.S. immigration laws and practices and their salience for today’s urban immigration; 3) to explore ethnicity among contemporary urban immigrant groups, especially as boundary-marking behavior comes to life in their communal cultural values, traits, and socioeconomic adaptation; and 4) to comprehend the meaning of ethnicity for the nature and extent of integration into mainstream urban America. With these objectives in mind, the course is structured around five topical units.

**Unit 1. Introduction: America’s Immigration Policies and Great Immigration Flows**

The first unit usually extends over the first two weeks of classes. Its activities and materials are designed to:

- Build literacy in immigration policies and events.
- Review for some students and impart to others the meaning and relevance of key immigration concepts such as preference categories, quota systems, bilateral agreements, and isolationism.
- Set the stage for identifying and critically analyzing the connections between immigration, governmental decisions and actions, and their salience for societal institutional arrangements, including incorporation and ethnic-identification among immigrants.

Students are required to read Feagin and Feagin’s 1993 article “A Nation of Immigrants.” The class also reviews a chronological timeline of immigration, developed by the author. On one of the first days of class, the author presents an “immigration map”—a visual designed to introduce students to historical and ongoing movements of immigrants between countries and regions. These readings and in-class materials are used to prompt students to understand the continents and nations experiencing the heaviest immigration and why.

**Unit 2. Two Dimensions of Cultural Pluralism in Modern Multiethnic Societies: Equalitarian and Inequalitarian**

This second unit typically begins in the third week of the course. Its major purpose is to acquaint students with the two major forms of pluralism in modern multiethnic contexts: equalitarian pluralism, that form in which groups voluntarily remain culturally and structurally distinct, but are relatively equal in economic and political power; and unequalitarian pluralism, the form in which the structural segregation of groups is maintained and their cultural differences may persist and ultimately create boundaries that limit access to political and economic resources.
Students read chapters from a text, where they study concepts and ideas from assimilation theory, internal colonialism theory, and other social science explanations relevant to understanding pluralism. Students typically break into groups during this unit to discuss the readings and concepts presented in class.

Unit 3. A Typology of Contemporary Immigrants: Who They Are, What Lures Them, and Their Cultural and Economic Resources
The third unit extends over the fourth and fifth weeks of classes. Its activities and materials are designed to:

- Introduce an immigrant typology.
- Increase recognition of the ties between transported cultural and economic capital (e.g., language, values, schooling, job training, work ethic, experience, and so on) among immigrants, governmental laws, policies, actions, and labor market demands.
- Set the stage for examining groups in terms of their particular “capital” stocks and its effect on their level of equal participation in economic and political institutions.

During this unit, students are introduced to Portes and Rumbaut’s typology of immigrant groups from the book *Immigrant America*. They also view the films *El Norte* and *Cambodian Donut Dreams*. While watching the films, students are asked to categorize the characters according to Portes and Rumbaut’s typology and to interpret major events based on knowledge gained from the prior weeks of class.

Unit 4. Contemporary Immigrant Communities’ Adjustments in Los Angeles: Reflections of the Local Political Economy?
The fourth unit spans a three week period between the sixth and eighth weeks of the semester. This unit is designed to help students see that both similarities and differences mark ethnic groups. A related goal is to encourage students to understand that similarities and differences between groups reflect experiences of similar historical and contemporary social forces and related institutional arrangements.

In this unit, students are required to read a packet of research articles that explore Los Angeles immigrant groups in terms of employment and income, female workers’ status, residential integration, access and mobility in education, political representation, and delinquency and criminal behavior. Students are also given an outline promoting analytical reading skills, to help them to best understand the research articles. During class sessions, the author offers a balance between lecture and open-ended discussion.

Unit 5. Prospects for Future Immigrant Communities: Assimilation, Equalitarian Cultural Pluralism, Inequalitarian Cultural Pluralism, or What?
This closing unit occupies the final two class meetings during the ninth week of classes. The goal of these final sessions is to weave together the topical threads of the prior units while reiterating the ties between policy decisions and immigrant adaptation.

During this final unit, students are required to read a series of “opposing viewpoints” articles that offer pro and con essays regarding a number of contemporary immigration issues. They then
divide into groups in the class and engage in a debate where they employ the knowledge they have gained throughout the semester in concert with the most recent round of readings.

At the end of the description of each unit, the author offers a summary of benefits and outcomes. The end of the article includes two appendices, one with discussion questions for the film *El Norte* and another with a six-step outline to assist students with critically analyzing the course readings.


This article discusses the role of antiracist praxis in teaching and learning, concentrating on the experiences of students and the instructor in the course “Intellectuals and Racism.” The primary aim of the class was to explore intellectuals’ approaches to conceptualizing antiracist praxis, while also presenting alternatives to racism and other forms of oppression.

Because the class was small and taught in a seminar format, students were able to engage in weekly in-depth discussions and theoretical debates. Three guest speakers, all involved in antiracist activism, also visited the class throughout the semester. In addition, students completed three opinion papers and two projects, as described below.

The first opinion paper, which was assigned after the fourth week of classes, concentrated on the definition of racism, antiracism, and intellectuals. The second opinion paper, assigned during the eighth week of classes, examined the kind of challenges faced by antiracist intellectuals. The third opinion paper, due the thirteenth week, explored the question, “What is the most urgent task confronting antiracist individuals?”

In addition to the opinion papers, the students developed two projects. The first was a library project, where participants had to search the Web for antiracist organizations worldwide, with the intention of cataloging them for the library. The second was an action-based assignment where students contributed to activities of a student-founded and student-directed organization called PEACE: Promoting Equality And Community Everywhere. The article offers numerous excerpts from students’ papers, illustrating the fundamental changes that these students experienced as they proceeded through the course.


This article describes a sourcebook developed by the author and used as a method and resource for teaching students to understand the sociological concept of ethnicity. The sourcebook includes excerpts from 51 in-depth interviews with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds and with varying levels of commitment to their ethnic identification. Respondents ranged in age from 14 to 82 and were asked a series of open-ended questions about their own ethnic identification, family history and heritage, and experiences with discrimination. The interview
data were then used to write the sourcebook, which was organized around the following three sections: Section I focuses on concepts of immigration and assimilation, Section II on individual ethnic identity, and Section III on prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes.

The rich interview data in the sourcebook illustrates in micro-level detail the lived experiences of race and ethnicity in the United States and thus serves as an important supplement to the more macro-level perspective provided by most textbooks on the subject. By using the sourcebook in concert with a textbook, the author argues that instructors can more readily encourage students to use their sociological imaginations “to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals.” Indeed, the strength of the sourcebook is that it offers students an opportunity to consider the meanings of sociological concepts on a personal level.

The author notes that while he prepared his own sourcebook for his class, other classes could utilize the same approach by conducting and analyzing their own interviews and preparing their own materials.


This article describes an experiential learning course at Pitzer College called “The Roots of Social Conflict in Schools and Communities.” The field setting for the class, the Alhambra School District, is located five miles east of downtown Los Angeles. The district is particularly interesting because it serves a diverse student population of Asian, Latino, African American, White, and Native American students. The district, like other areas in the county, reflects the rapid demographic shifts in the region. Ethnic relations in the area have been characterized by both conflict and cooperation.

The class was developed as part of a competitive course development grant designed to address the connections between service, participation in the political process, and public policy development. The authors specified several goals in their grant. At the college level, they aimed to operationalize the new educational objective of promoting and understanding “the ethical implications of knowledge and social action.” At the departmental level, they envisioned the course as a pilot program for a new sociology option that would allow majors to engage in the craft of “doing sociology.” At the undergraduate level, the class was designed to link an internship in the public schools with the academic study of communities and school systems affected by demographic change and interethnic conflict.

During the first semester of implementing the course, 20 students were involved in participant-observation research in the three high schools of the Alhambra School District. These students were organized into teams of three or four participant observers and provided access to several classes in the school. Students were trained in ethnographic field research and required to develop full sets of field notes after each observation period. In the end, students identified several important themes that influenced learning outcomes among ethnically diverse students in
the high schools. This first phase of the project was mostly aimed at identifying issues within the district.

During the second phase of the project, the instructors met with administrators in the district and agreed that the second phase of the project would focus on developing and implementing multicultural lesson plans. As a result, during the following semester, another 20 students were assigned to a range of high school classes in the district with the goal of developing their own lesson plans. Again, students came up with a number of important recommendations such as the need to shift seating patterns, encourage cooperative learning, and open the curriculum to more multicultural approaches.

This experiential learning activity allowed the instructors and students to connect theory to practice. At the same time, the authors acknowledged some key dilemmas of experiential teaching including establishing and maintaining access and developing continuity across semesters.


This article describes the Community Tutoring Project, which was a curriculum initiative designed to enhance college students’ recognition of their social responsibility and capacity to contribute to their larger community. The project was part of a three credit course open to students from all majors. In addition to attending a weekly two-hour class session, all students were required to tutor children from surrounding local public schools for four hours per week.

During each class session, students were expected to discuss their tutoring experiences while also placing these moments in a broader historical and intellectual context. In addition to engaging in classroom discussions, students were asked to submit one-page descriptions of their experiences, a journal recording their day-to-day experiences, and a final seven-page integrative essay.

Because most of the students in the class were from white, middle class backgrounds, the experience of tutoring children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds was often challenging and eye opening. The author notes that the format of the project and the classroom sessions asked students to “open themselves up intellectually and emotionally” to the lives of disadvantaged children and was highly successful in challenging racist and classist stereotypes.


Critical pedagogy, particularly the concept of white privilege, often evokes student resistance to the ideas and concepts being taught in the classroom. This article describes classroom practices that engage students in critical pedagogy (i.e., helping students to understand and question their own racial identity) while minimizing the feelings of guilt, anger, and denial which often accompany the process.
The course taught by the author, and the focus of this article, is a composition course on race. The author begins the course by discussing the social construction of race and the concepts of racial dominance and racial resistance. These concepts are illuminated via the reading of several historical speeches which invoke various definitions of black Americans (e.g., Thomas Jefferson, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King, Jr.).

This approach allows students to take a step back from the material and examine the social construction of race through a theoretical lens. This approach also allows students to understand the ideas of white privilege and domination. The author provides the results of a study of his students and students who did not take his course, which confirms that students exposed to the material in this way benefitted in terms of understanding the socially constructed nature of race and the structural nature of racism.

The author offers the following principles for teaching students about race and teaching them to advocate for social change:

- Establish course goals as learning and writing about rhetorical skills practiced by other authors.
- Guide students to appreciate the author’s perspective and rhetorical choices.
- View texts as sites of critical reading where interpretations remain unexamined.
- Engage in the historical, rhetorical moment, not just the present.


Professors at the University of California-Irvine redesigned the sociology of race and ethnicity course in response to the university’s multicultural requirement that such courses impart scientific knowledge about the history and culture of minority groups, develop student awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences, and encourage cooperation and understanding among cultural groups.

The authors reject the commonly taught “group-a-week” format, which presents racial and ethnic groups, one after another, in one to three class sessions. This approach risks simplifying complex cultures and allowing students to believe that they understand a race or ethnic group when they do not actually have a full understanding of the subtleties and complexities of the group in question. This “multicultural tourism” is often used as the structure for textbooks on race and ethnicity, leading to a dilemma of what textbook to use, if any, in teaching a course on race and ethnicity.

The authors outline their own concept-oriented approach to teaching about race and ethnicity in which the focus is not on racial/ethnic groups, but on concepts such as discrimination, prejudice, and the social construction of race. The course outline proceeds as follows:

The concept of race is discussed as a topic of study—should we even study race or not, since it is a social construction, and not a real (biological) characteristic? This is followed by a discussion
of the idea of color-blindness and its effect on our society’s attitudes toward race. Next the instructors address the parameters of race and ethnicity (i.e., race is socially constructed and evolving over time), as well as the distinction between race and ethnicity. Immigration history is used to illustrate the socially constructed nature of race. The course concludes with a look at the intersection of race with other salient social identities such as gender, class, and sexual orientation.

The authors offer a brief (although now outdated) discussion of possible textbooks for a concept-oriented course on race and ethnicity and conclude with suggestions for several films which could be shown to address the “supra-academic” mission of encouraging students to become aware of other cultures and to work together with all people.


In this article, the author outlines the reasons and puts forward suggestions for incorporating service learning components into sociology courses dealing with inequality.

Service learning is more than simple volunteer work; it involves critically reflecting on the relationship between the lived experiences of students and the class material. The author suggests assigning 30 hours of mandatory service learning per course (including any training required). A reading component of the course includes the textbook *Inequality and Stratification*, Kozol’s *Savage Inequalities*, Davis and Moore’s 1993 seminal piece on the functional basis of inequality, and several other articles, including recent topical news articles. A reflective component of the course includes both written and verbal reflections.

Writing assignments include: a “ Desired Learner Outcomes” form to be completed by students prior to engaging in service learning hours; a journal entry for each visit to the service site (including what happened, how events relate to concepts discussed in class, and goals for the next visit); four to six “guided reflections” (two-page essays that encourage students to challenge their cultural assumptions); and a final paper asking students to critically examine their service learning experiences. Small discussion groups comprised of all the students working at a given site meet every four to five class sessions for 20-25 minutes, followed by a whole class discussion.

The article includes a student assessment of the service learning component, which is overwhelmingly positive (with a few exceptions) and offers three strong reasons for including a service learning component in courses on inequality: students are more engaged in the process of learning; service learning raises the level of classroom discussion; and students’ self-confidence is increased by their newly discovered sense of agency.

The author concludes by pointing out two potential trade-offs to including a service learning component: implementing such a component requires a lot of time, and the instructor must necessarily relinquish some control over the course. Both of these trade-offs are acceptable to the author, who encourages others to adopt a service-learning component to their courses.

Goldsmith documents the ideologies which contribute to student resistance in race and ethnicity courses and identifies how mainstream teaching techniques fail to acknowledge and discredit these ideologies. He also describes his teaching method called Writing Answers to Learn (WAL) which aims to move students from ideological to sociological thinking about race.

Students enter college with pre-existing ideologies, particularly racial ideologies. Previous studies suggest two primary ideologies: color-blind racism and simple moral dichotomies. Color-blind racism endorses a liberal, free-market rhetoric in which race is seen to be no longer relevant in our society. All people have equal opportunity. Simple moral dichotomies involve oversimplifying inequality by blaming it on individuals, usually those in the subordinated group.

The typical teacher-centered method of teaching does little to dislodge these ideologies, because students can dismiss the stream of information coming from the instructor as biased opinion unfairly imposed upon the students via the teacher’s authority. In contrast, a student-centered teaching model can challenge students’ ideologies while reducing resistance toward the material and the teacher’s authority. The author combines two student-centered teaching methods, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Exploratory Writing, to help facilitate students embracing the sociological imagination and rejecting their previous racial ideologies.

The method presented requires students to analyze a new problem each week and includes eight stages:

- **Consider a Problem (Day 1):** The instructor introduces a problem to the students such as how should we address inequality in employment by race?
- **Perform the Initial Exploratory Writing (Day 1):** Students spend 10 minutes writing an answer to the problem presented.
- **Engage in Collaborative Learning (Day 1):** Students collaborate in groups of 4-6, sharing and clarifying their initial responses.
- **Read Between Classes:** Students read material selected by the instructor.
- **Learning the Reading (Day 2):** The instructor helps the students understand the assigned readings.
- **Engage in Collaborative Learning (Day 2):** Students return to their groups to dialogue about their initial answers and the sociological understanding of the problem.
- **Write a Final Reflection In Class (Day 2) or After Class (turn in on Day 3):** Students synthesize and analyze the readings and develop their own approach problem in a brief, 10-minute, in-class essay or in a formal paper written outside of class.
- **Receive Instructor Feedback (Day 3):** The instructor provides feedback to individual students and the class as a whole, identifying those arguments and approaches offered by students that depend on ideological rather than sociological thinking when they appear.

The author concludes the article with the results of a pre-test/post-test/follow-up test (6 months later) survey of his students. The pre-test data illuminated four racial ideologies present in his
students, including color-blind racism and blaming the victim (i.e., simple moral dichotomies). The other two ideologies are justifications, in which students argue that inequality should not be ameliorated, pointing to apparent benefits of the inequality; and naturalizations, in which it is argued that inequality cannot be changed. According to post-test data, most students declined in their use of these ideologies and increased their reliance on sociological explanations of racism after taking the course.


In this article the author details her strategy for teaching an ethnic studies course using the tradition of the Chicago School, by having students participate in field research in their own community. The community researched is Lowell, Massachusetts, an ethnically diverse city with high levels of racial segregation by neighborhood. The author encourages all instructors whose schools are located in such areas to utilize it for teaching about ethnicity.

The course proceeded as follows:

Students were tasked with undertaking a first-hand assessment of various ethnic groups in the Lowell community, critically examining the assumption that “religion and ethnicity are still independent variables that influence and determine the dependent variables of values, attitudes, and behavior patterns.” The students also looked at the assimilation of these groups into mainstream society and the degree to which each groups’ cultural identity remained intact.

The instructor spent 4 weeks providing background material and then acted as a consultant for the remainder of the course. The instructor also developed the surveys used by the students, due to time constraints. The students read articles on ethnicity in preparation for their fieldwork. The students were given 6 weeks to collect data and spent the rest of the course analyzing the data and preparing a final presentation for the class, in lieu of a final exam. The profiles of each community included: institutional completeness – to what extent the community was formally organized; ethnic boundaries – the geographic boundaries of the neighborhood; a business survey – to see if local shops catered to ethnic goods and services; an identity survey – to discover to what extent residents participated in ethnic cultural activities and traditions; and participant observations to note any other phenomena that distinguished the communities.

Students found that the various groups were at different stages of immigration and that new immigrants are still arriving. They found dramatic changes in some groups over generations. They noted the existence of national churches and still-functioning ethnic associations.

While the class format faced initial community resistance and some students expressed fear about going into the communities, the students were ultimately absorbed in the project and learned a great deal about the ethnic groups they studied.

The article includes an appendix of the ethnic community survey used in data collection.

Snowden describes how she incorporated the matrix of domination and the sociological imagination into the learning community curriculum at a small, predominantly white Midwestern college. Her teaching goals were: 1) to inspire students to question their assumptions through the use of the sociological imagination; and 2) to teach the sociological imagination through the lens of the matrix of domination. These two goals were deployed to serve the greater goal of transforming students into agents for social change.

A learning community is a collaborative environment in which students share classes, living facilities, and other activities. Snowden used the learning community theme of diversity to develop a transformative pedagogy with her students. Students lived together in one of two dorms; read a common text on race, class, and gender; attended a diversity conference and dorm study sessions; and completed a group project. These assignments integrated the concepts of the sociological imagination and the matrix of domination, including the interrogation of whiteness and the examination of power relations that structure our society around ascribed statuses such as race and gender.

At the onset of the course, students were asked to write an autobiography. They were then allowed to revise this biography, although some students rejected this offer and took their initial grade. This (in)action could be attributed to resistance to the course content, the instructor’s pedagogy, or general apathy. The students next attended the People of Color in Predominantly White Institutions Conference; following which they were asked to develop a group project illustrating their experience at the conference with a focus on gender. Students had a difficult time relating what they experienced at the conference to their topic and seemed to not understand the concept of the matrix of domination and how race, class, and sexual orientation combine to impact women’s lives. This lack of clarity and reflection could also, however, be explained by student immaturity.

In addition to standard student evaluations, the author administered both pre- and post-tests and an open-ended questionnaire at the beginning of the course to evaluate student engagement, course work, and success. The more general benefits of a learning community were not evaluated, although the author notes that students did develop a sense of community and no one failed the course. Most complaints referred to the scheduling of the classes and the lack of time provided to work on the group project.

The pre- and post-test questionnaire included items that measured attitudes about gender, race/ethnicity, and class inequality. The results showed that students were less likely to agree with traditional gender roles after the course (a positive outcome), although there was little change in students’ attitudes regarding race and class. Each category did have a significantly higher standard deviation on the post-test, however, indicating that a mostly homogenous set of student attitudes had become more heterogeneous by the end of the course.

The author concludes that the creation of learning communities should not be based on a one-size-fits-all model, nor should such communities necessarily be structured around class standing.
(grade level). Finally, teaching diversity requires both the students and the instructor to embrace the possibility of feeling uncomfortable as part of the learning process.


In this article the author briefly discusses the merits and drawbacks of an “open class” and then provides an account of his own open class in race relations, as well as his students’ performance and reactions to the course.

An open class is a class in which students are given the freedom to learn what they desire, unencumbered by grades or a strict syllabus. Unfortunately, much of the literature on open classes at the time of publication of this article described classes in primary or secondary school. The author documents his experience teaching an open course in race relations at the college level with the goal of providing university-level example of open course design and management.

The choice to make the course an open class was a last-minute decision for the instructor, who provided the following structure for students of the course: 1) students would grade themselves; 2) class attendance was voluntary; 3) students must submit a final project, of their choosing; and 4) students could set up their own class sessions if they found scheduled sessions uninteresting. The course was sixteen weeks long, with half the sessions consisting of guest speakers. Class sessions were otherwise both theoretically and practically focused and encouraged discussion.

Attendance for the course was below average with an average of 42% of students attending class. The author found the course very rewarding personally and felt that the few problems encountered were outweighed by the benefits of an open class. The most serious problem, however, was a lack of student preparation; students did not do the assigned readings before class.

Student projects consisted of 1/3 typical research papers, ranging from a 100 page thesis to a 2-page reflection. Several non-written projects (e.g., drawings, tapes, collages, etc.) were also submitted. Of the projects submitted, about 10% of these were clearly inferior and 10% clearly superior, with the remainder falling along an expected distribution of quality and effort.

Students had a very positive opinion of both the course format and the instructor and 64% of students stated that they were likely to work harder in a self-graded course than an instructor-graded course, despite the fact that the students read a mean of 4.7 books (out of 14 assigned). Student complaints were mostly targeted at specific guest speakers or topics that were either included or omitted. Overall, the author very much enjoyed the course and recommends the open course approach to other instructors.
Lesson Plans


This article describes an exercise developed by the author with the general goal of heightening students “awareness of the richness of human difference.” In the exercise, students are asked to write a paper based on data gathered through interviews with family members and family documents. The purpose of the exercise is twofold: First, as the student compiles the data for the family history paper, the lives and paths of family members should become illuminated. Second, in sharing completed papers with class members in a small group, students should come to understand the degree to which human behavior is culturally determined.

To gather data for the project, the student conducts interviews (in person or over the telephone) with immediate relatives. Students also analyze family documents such as photo albums, videos, and other written materials. Once the students have collected and analyzed the data, they write an 8-10 page paper where they address aspects relating to the family’s history, immigration, roots, and attitudes. The appendix to the article provides a number of guiding questions that can be used for the assignment.

Once the paper is complete, students share their family history in a small group made up of 4-6 other students from the class. Each small group develops its own guidelines for rotating speakers and discussants. Students take notes on each oral presentation and highlight areas of comparison and contrast across the family histories.

Although the author developed this exercise for a course on Sociology of the Family, it could be easily adapted to other courses such as Introduction to Sociology or Race-Ethnic Relations—essentially, any course where the instructor wants students to gain hands on research experience and to learn how to link theoretical concepts to real world experiences.


This article discusses how to incorporate the Hollywood film “Remember the Titans” into a sociology course, in order to link micro-level processes of social interaction with macro-level stratification practices and inequality in society. The authors review literature on experience and imagery before turning to a discussion of intergroup (specifically interracial) conflict reduction and a discussion of the assignment.

The authors review Kolb’s four-stage process for experiential learning (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract hypotheses, and active learning) and conclude that, while showing a film in class does not on the surface seems like an experiential learning activity, it does meet the criteria of engaging students and immersing them in the experience.
After a short summary of the film (a black coach tries to coach a mixed-race football team to victory in the segregated South), the authors discuss how the film illustrates three intergroup conflict-reduction theories: 1) the contact hypothesis (being in close proximity with others reduces conflict); 2) superordinate goals (having a shared goal reduces conflict); and 3) shared identities (having a shared identity reduces conflict). The coach puts the players in close contact with members of another race at a football camp (contact hypothesis), the players all share the goal of winning football games (superordinate goal), and the players all identify as members of the Titans football team (shared identity). The authors note that the film could also be used to illustrate many other sociological concepts, such as racism, stereotyping, segregation, and the sociological imagination.

The authors made viewing of the film optional (65% of students opted in) and outside of class time, so the film could be shown in its entirety. Students were given a brief summary of the theories to be illustrated by the film before viewing it and then asked to respond to a prompt about intergroup conflict reduction theories demonstrated in the film after viewing the film. The authors conducted statistical analyses to confirm that student retention of the material on intergroup conflict reduction theories was indeed strongly and positively correlated with viewing the film and with thoughtful and abstract thinking on the response to the prompt.


This article posits that most middle and high school students today are not aware that “race” is a social construct, and that by using literature in the history classroom, instructors can help to illustrate this important concept.

After a brief history of the concept of “race,” from its references in the Bible up to the Civil Rights Movement, the authors turn their focus to strategies for using literature in the history classroom.

The authors then turn to the case study of the short story, “Desiree’s Baby” by Kate Chopin. This story, first published in the premiere issue of Vogue magazine in 1893, is considered a masterpiece and one of the first feminist contributions to literature. Described by critics as “perfect” and “one of the world’s best short stories,” the story tells the tale of a male slave owner who marries Desiree, a woman of unknown ancestry. When their baby is born with evidence of African ancestry, Desiree and her baby are driven into the bayou. Only after she has vanished does the man discover a note from his late mother revealing that he is of African descent.

The story is very short (2,200 words) and thus may be easily read aloud in class in 25 minutes or so. If the instructor chooses to share the story in this manner, he or she should be sure to practice the pronunciation of the French words beforehand, to ensure full immersion in the story. The instructor should also carefully distinguish between Creoles and Cajuns, to appropriately set the stage for students. Distributing and reviewing these terms as a pre-reading activity may also be beneficial to students’ comprehension and interest in the story. After the story is read (aloud or
silently), it can be used to stimulate a discussion on class analysis and the changing and fluid concepts of “race” and identity.

Appendices to the article include: Examples of Young Adult Literature that can be used in History Classes; Internet Sites and Resources to Teach About Race; Kate Chopin: Resources; and Lesson Plan.


This article describes the use of “intimate technology” (e.g., social networking sites, YouTube) as a teaching technique to teach students to become anti-racism advocates. The lesson plan developed by Deepak and Biggs proceeds as follows:

Students first discuss their varying experiences with individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina and are asked to consider whether racism played a role in the government’s response to the disaster. Next the instructor provides definitions of racism and anti-racism and asks the students to contemplate them in small groups. Students are then asked to discuss the same questions about Hurricane Katrina victims using these new definitions. Next the instructor uses intimate technology, in the form of YouTube videos, to personalize the lesson.

The first video presented is the actual footage of Kanye West’s comment that “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.” This is a powerful emotional piece and also helps to illustrate the distortion of the mainstream media, who depict West as saying that Bush “hated” black people.

Next the students are shown a video by a white jewelry artist named Poetivity who expresses her own sympathy and sorrow about Katrina and introduces the concept of being an ally.

The next video, *The Truth about Hurricane Katrina*, features a young African-American man who tells of his experience being airlifted from his home, standing in line with many other Black folks injured and languishing in the heat, while uninjured white folks were airlifted to the front of the line. White military officials laughed at the crowds. The video has powerful imagery, which is deepened by the personal transformation of the young man telling the story, a class privileged, light-skinned Creole, who before the storm never believed racism was a serious problem. This video is followed by a discussion of how white folks can use their privilege and power to act as an anti-racism ally.

The final video is Lil Wayne’s song “Georgia Bush” in which the rapper unleashes his anger on President George W. Bush. This video is followed by a discussion of anger as an appropriate and healthy response to racism that can be used to combat racism.
The authors conclude with an analysis of students’ responses to the lesson, which are overwhelmingly positive. They also discuss themes that emerged from student responses, with the common themes of emotion, credibility, and engagement running throughout.


This article describes an exercise intended to facilitate students’ adoption of a relational model of race (i.e., race is viewed as socially constructed through interactions), instead of a presence/absence model (i.e., whites do not have a race; people of color do). The exercise is also intended to illustrate the concepts of privilege and oppression in relation to race—how race affects whites as well as people of color.

The exercise proceeds as follows:

Students are asked to write responses to a number of questions about their first racial memories (first encounters with the concept of race); their hopes and fears for a multiracial society; and some basic demographic information. This information is collected anonymously, and when sharing the responses in class, the instructor must be careful to omit any passages which suggest or identify the respondent.

The exercise has three primary uses in class:

1) A *way to get to know students*. The responses reveal a great deal about students’ attitudes toward race, their experiences with race, and the political climate of the classroom as a whole.

2) A *basis for guided classroom discussion*. If the student composition is a fairly even mix of traditional (under 25) and non-traditional (25 and older) students, the responses can help facilitate a discussion of how racial discrimination has changed over time. The responses also allow students to make connections between discrimination and privilege and between race and social class.

3) A *basis for lecture*. Class lectures can be geared toward the students’ experiences, using examples from the responses to illustrate sociological concepts, rather than drawing on textbook examples. Many “teachable moments” also arise with this approach; instructors must be ready to seize these opportunities, especially when overtly racist sentiments are expressed in student responses.

The exercise proved effective for the author because it was safe and assured the anonymity of the students, allowing students to speak out without fear of reprisal. Students also recognized race in relational terms and began—on their own—to acknowledge white privilege and its relationship to the oppression of people of color. Other benefits included greater trust in the classroom, less defensiveness, sensitivity to the diversity of experiences in the class, and ongoing examination of students’ experiences and privileges beyond the classroom.

This article proposes using commonly-held beliefs about African-American athletic success as a vehicle for discussing the nature versus nurture debate, specifically with regard to race.

Many students are willing and even eager to accept that there are no biological differences between races, except when it comes to African American athletic success. Because African Americans are overrepresented in basketball, football, baseball, boxing, and sprinting, students assume they are “naturally” gifted athletes. A class session dedicated to dispelling this myth can proceed as follows:

The instructor starts by asking whether it is possible that African Americans are naturally more gifted athletes than whites. Next the instructor asks the students for a critique of this argument, supplementing their criticisms with the following evidence. If quickness and strength are natural for African-American athletes, they should also dominate at other physically intensive sports such as hockey, wrestling, and tennis. In-group differences are much larger than between-group differences (e.g., Carl Lewis is tall and thin; Ben Johnson is short and stocky). It is inconsistent to look for physiological explanations for athletic success among blacks, but not other racial/ethnic groups (e.g., why do Canadians dominate at hockey?). Students are then asked to consider why black athletes from other countries do not succeed at the same sports as African Americans. Finally, students are asked to consider how “black” an individual must be to inherit these natural gifts—since most of the African-Americans in the U.S. are actually of mixed race.

In the proceeding stage of the discussion, the instructor turns to the nurture argument, asking the students to respond to the following question: “If genetic advantages cannot fully explain African-Americans’ athletic success, what can?” The instructor allows the students to offer their explanations, supplementing these with the following information: Blacks are denied many other career opportunities and are given the impression that sports are a path to social mobility (one of the few open to them). The lack of professional role models outside of sports also contributes to sports as a perceived path to social mobility. Cultural traditions are instrumental in determining which athletes will succeed in which sports; just as some Canadians are invested in hockey, so are some African Americans invested in basketball from a young age.

A brief, informal study of the author’s students suggests that such an approach does help shift students’ perspectives on this topic, so that they are more likely to believe that nurture, not nature, is responsible for African American athletic success.


Haddad and Lieberman describe their struggles teaching an honors class about the fallacy of scientific racism to a small group of students from mostly privileged backgrounds. Facing student resistance to critical course materials which identified the myths that undergird scientific
racism, the instructors altered the class mid-semester in order to address student recalcitrance and help students embrace the sociological imagination.

Students in the class were overwhelmingly white, excepting one Asian American student. The students were all intellectually gifted, earning merit-based scholarships and entrance into the honors program. Many of the students also seemed to embrace a post-modernist view in which all views were equally valid and there is no single correct “truth.” This led to student resistance to the idea that scientific racism is a myth with no basis in empirical evidence. A vocal minority of students did not wish for the professors to “tell them what to think.” The authors suggest that student resistance to courses on inequality is also on the rise in general. The most troubling form of student resistance is that of color-blind racism in which students avoid being labeled as racist by advocating for a color-blind society in which race is simply a non-issue.

The authors chose to address student resistance by appealing to the students’ desire to feel intellectually special, and by allowing the students’ to discover the empirical realities about scientific racism for themselves. The assignment developed by the instructors was a research paper in which students were asked to critically review J. Phillipe Rushton’s 1997 article, “Race, Intelligence, and the Brain: The Errors or S.J. Gould’s The Mismeasure of a Man.” (Note: The students had read The Mismeasure of a Man earlier in the semester.) Rushton’s article critiques Gould’s article, concluding that there is, in fact, scientific evidence for a racial hierarchy. The instructors provided the students instructions for critiquing Rushton’s article, as well as a list of “Common Problems in Scientific Articles.” The instructors also gave the students the option (which they accepted) to submit their work in a research competition, which motivated the students to excel.

The assignment was very successful with the students drawing their own conclusions in support of the instructor’s agenda. The students also gave the course high marks on their end of semester evaluations.


In this brief article the author discusses the importance of teaching about anti-Semitism and her technique for teaching students about the mistreatment and stereotyping of Jews. The author cites three reasons for including a unit on anti-Semitism in sociology courses. First, anti-Semitism is still alive and well, and not just a relic of the Holocaust. Second, teaching about anti-Semitism helps promote diversity, especially with regards to the treatment of Jews by Christians (both historically and contemporarily). Finally, sociologically speaking, Jews are a sociologically interesting group, serving as a classic example of the “outgroup” or “other.”

The author uses a combination of video segments from The Longest Hatred and lecture, combined with class discussion, to teach about anti-Semitism. The unit on anti-Semitism proposed by Harrod proceeds as follows:
**Topic 1: Jews as the “Other.”** The instructor shows the first 30 minutes of the film, which focuses on how Jews are “othered” by Christians, who see their beliefs and customs as a challenge to the validity of Christian beliefs. The lecture concludes with the point that anti-Semitism is trouble not just for Jews, but for everyone.

**Topic 2: Stereotypes and Conspiracy Theories.** The instructor identifies stereotypes about Jews, including usury, and how Jews have been the target of many conspiracy theories. Holocaust denial is an excellent example of this type of conspiracy theory. This is accompanied by the segment of the video dealing with modern-day anti-Semitism in Austria, Germany, and Poland.

**Topic 3: Jewish Identity.** The next 30 minutes of the video, showing the Jewish exodus to Israel, is shown. Students are then presented with demographic data on American Jews, as well as public opinion poll data. The unit might conclude by speaking briefly about local Jewish congregations.

The author concludes that the unit is very effective based on her evaluation of students’ knowledge and attitudes before and after the unit and offers some variations on the unit for other types of classes. The article includes an appendix of the pretest and posttest questions.


This article offers a description of six different ways that teachers can use John Howard Griffin’s classic book, Black Like Me, in the classroom. Although the suggestions are for high school level U.S. History, American Government, or Sociology courses, these activities could easily be adapted for the college classroom. The article begins with a short summary of the key insights of Griffin’s book, and then offers the following suggestions for teaching the text.

**Focus Activity.** After reading the book, the class is asked to generate three lists to help understand race in the U.S. South in 1959. The first list generated by the students describes how race relations failed to change or changed very little in the South between the Civil War and 1959. The students’ second brainstorming list documents how Southern race relations did change during that period. The final student list should outlines national and global changes in race relations that by 1959 had begun to create conditions for change in the South and weaken the resistance efforts of hardliners.

**Document Analysis.** After briefly introducing the book, the instructor provides students with a copy of important excerpts and quotes, which are also reproduced in this article. The instructor then engages the class in a discussion concerning the book. After the discussion concludes, the instructor provides copies and encourages students to compare the excerpts to other well-known texts such as Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech.

**Oral History Project.** Students are asked to complete an oral history project with their older relatives. First, students generate a list of questions about life in the time period raised by Black
Like Me and then interview older relatives or friends to gain their perspective about race relations in the 1950s.

Writing Activity. After reading excerpts from Black Like Me, the instructor divides students into groups, asking each group to compose a short book review or editorial the perspective of various stakeholders in the period for different newspapers in the Northern or Southern United States or from publications serving black Americans.

Research. The instructor assigns students to research the history of public attitudes about race through published opinion polls and popular magazines in the twentieth century.

Racial Segregation, History, and Contemporary American Society. After discussing Black Like Me, students should examine recent statistical data on segregation. This provides students with the opportunity to evaluate specific cities and states, and to compare historical and contemporary patterns of racial segregation.


Netting describes a social change project she developed to demonstrate to students that they have the power to change society. The project began with students writing about three things they would most like to change in society. Students listed things like world peace, environmental protection, and elimination of racism, poverty, sexism, and violence. After recording the students’ answers, the instructor returned the papers and gave out the social change assignment. It required that students pick one of the items on the list and spend the remainder of the semester (about 8 weeks) trying to make it happen. Students were then asked to write a final essay in which they described: 1) what social change they were trying to encourage; 2) how they went about it; 3) how other people reacted; 4) their feelings while working for change; 5) what changes occurred; and 6) based on the experience, whether they believe an individual can change the world.

Although students were initially resistant to such a seemingly daunting assignment, the instructor assuaged their fears by helping them to develop a number of practical strategies for proceeding. For example, students were encouraged to concretely define their goal and to limit it to something accomplishable in a short time frame. They also were allowed to join other students with similar aims. The instructor found that overall this project worked well for students from minority and majority groups, with either conservative or liberal political views. The project also resulted in real change on the university campus as well as within the broader community.


In this article, the author outlines a strategy for using the oral histories of immigrants to teach about race and ethnic relations. Oral histories are long first-person accounts of extended periods
of a person’s life. Students are asked to conduct an interview with friends, family members, classmates, or coworkers who are ethnically different from themselves. Prior to the interview, students must do a brief review of the literature on the ethnic group of the immigrant they wish to interview.

Students are provided with an interview guide that outlines the major topics of the interview, including: a description of the immigrant individual; residential characteristics; occupational and economic adaptation; and acculturation and assimilation. The project engages students in a face-to-face interchange with a member of another racial or ethnic group, an experience which may help to reduce ethnocentrism. Each student is asked to edit their interviewee’s life history into a 5-page narrative and present it to the class. The narratives are then compiled into an anthology that is distributed to the class.

The goal is to help students think critically and analyze their interview in the context of several immigration models learned in class. The project suffers from three major problems, however, to which the author provides suggestions. First, the project requires more time and energy than most students are willing to give. To remedy this, the author suggests inviting students to use the instructor’s personal library for research, to reduce research time. Second, students often express unease about how to properly cite the literature. Instructors should discuss the format required and provide students with models to ease such fears. Finally, students have little to no experience analyzing and critiquing theoretical models. Students should be encouraged to persist in their efforts to do so.


Much has been written about the depression and despair that students often feel after taking introductory level social problems courses, which deal with seemingly intractable issues like racism, classism, and environmental degradation. Rundblad responds to this “gloom and doom” phenomenon amongst students in these courses by developing a Community Exploration Project. This student-centered project has three explicit goals: 1) to enable students to develop and practice their sociological imagination; 2) to challenge students to discover and understand community efforts to alleviate problems; and 3) to encourage students to initiate social change now and in the future.

On the first day of class, the instructor begins by asking the students which topics they would like to cover in their social problems course. As students brainstorm topics of interest, the instructor lists them on the board. During the next class period, students are to arrive with their top five choices of what they would like to study that semester. The instructor then rank orders the topics from most to least selected. These topics, along with some essential “teacher’s choice” issues, serve as the foundation for the class and the project to follow.

Students are then broken into Community Exploration Groups based on their similar interests. For example, students who placed the environment, race and ethnicity, family, or crime as their primary issue of interest would be placed in a common group. Once in their groups, students
must identify a community group that they will explore. They also must develop different avenues for collecting information, contacts, and data that will allow them to present to the entire class toward the end of the semester. In addition to the final presentation, students are also required to complete 20 hours of service learning at a local social service agency or other grassroots social change organization.

Rundblad argues that this project offers several significant pedagogical benefits. Students learn how to exercise their sociological imaginations while also becoming empowered to make change. Moreover, students recognize their power as “knowledge producers” as they collect information and learn directly about social change. Finally, the student-centered project and approach to teaching creates a more supportive educational environment for both the students and the instructor. Although this project has worked quite well in the past, Rundblad cautions that it is best suited for classes of 35 or fewer students, given the amount of group work involved.


In this short article, Smith describes how he uses Shelby Steele’s essays as a foil for a sociological understanding of race. Smith provides a detailed critique of Steele’s arguments and how he presents them to the class.

Smith recommends that students read three articles by Steele which appeared in Harper’s magazine, followed by a presentation of the PBS documentary Seven Days in Bensonhurst, which features Steele as the correspondent. Steele’s primary argument is that racism is an individual phenomenon and largely psychological. From his perspective, the only thing holding back people of color (in particular Blacks) is their own belief that they are oppressed. He is an outspoken critic of affirmative action, stating that “representation can be manufactured; development is always earned.”

Smith rebuffs these claims by pointing out that Steele’s arguments ignore the structural realities of racism in the U.S. and focus too strongly on racism as a psychological barrier created by Blacks. The lecture includes the works of William Julius Wilson and Ronald Takaki to provide students with a structural analysis of race in the U.S.


This article describes an exercise designed to have undergraduate students explore the various ways in which race is socially constructed as a “scientific” fact. The author points out that in many race and ethnicity courses, there is a tension between treating race and racial categories as social constructions while also using “fixed,” “scientific” categories, such as those included in the U.S. Census. On the one hand students are taught that race is not “real” in a biological sense, while on the other they are expected to accept quantitative analyses of race using traditional
racial categories. These different levels and types of conversations can create dissonance and confusion among students. Thus, the overall goal of the exercise is to sensitize students to the complex ways in which race can be socially constructed through social science practice.

The exercise unfolds over the course of a semester-long introductory sociology class and involves four class sessions and one homework assignment. The steps involved in the exercise are as follows.

First, during week 2 of classes, the instructor asks students to estimate the size of various minority groups in their neighborhoods and in the United States as a whole using questions from the General Knowledge Social Survey. The instructor also introduces the methodological approach associated with social surveys.

Second, around week 8, the instructor distributes a homework assignment that requires that students collect data on the racial composition of their neighborhoods, cities, metropolitan statistical areas, and states. The instructor introduces students to the Census website and various geographical units in preparation for completing the assignment.

Third, around week 9, students submit their homework and the professor tallies the results so as to document the difference between student perceptions of the racial make-up of their neighborhoods and actual Census counts. (Studies have shown that individuals in the U.S. consistently over-estimate the size of the minority groups and under-estimate the size of the white population. This was true among the authors’ students as well.) Students then break into small groups to discuss the homework results and to make connections between their (skewed) estimates and the actual Census findings.

Fourth, during week 10, the instructor works with students to develop a critique of who is in what category from a critique of the problems with scientific categories themselves. After further discussing the findings from the homework assignment and looking at Census classifications over time, the class comes to realize that race is socially constructed even as society relies on so-called “objective” classifications.


This article outlines a method for using films to compare sociological and cinematic representations of Chicano experiences. The course takes a hermeneutic approach, highlighting the different understandings and presentations of Mexican-American experiences and reality. This method of linking films with sociological texts has the benefit of allowing students to draw connections between the individual and structural, or personal problems and social issues, as defined by C. Wright Mills.

The class is structured as follows. Students watch the following films during class time: La Bamba, American Me, and Selena. Students are first given a lecture placing the films in the context of the assigned readings and a set of questions to answer during the films. These answers
become the basis for class discussion following the first screening of each film. Students are then given a take-home essay in which they are asked to integrate the assigned readings, lecture, and discussions with the film. This essay is due the class period after the second screening of the film. Problems with this model include the accessibility of films (i.e., if the instructor does not own the film, it may be expensive to rent for several weeks), the length of films (i.e., a two-hour film must be shown over two 75-minute class periods, disrupting the flow of the film), and the length of each unit (i.e., each film and discussion may take up to four weeks).

In the article, Valdez and Halley outline the constraints of the film form (which is used as an example of the production of culture), identify their criteria for selecting films for class viewing, and describe in detail the three films they used in the class.

The first film, *La Bamba*, presents an example of an American success story in which Ricardo Valenzuela is transformed, through his talent and motivation, into the rock star Richie Valens. His life is glorified as a model of the American dream, but the film excludes many crucial aspects of biography, including his ability to speak Spanish, and how he learned to play *La Bamba* from his family. The movie thus eliminates his ethnicity as a major factor in his life story. This provides ample fodder for students to critique the focus on individuality and the exclusion of social structures in the film.

*American Me* focuses on a Chicano gang without glorifying the gang lifestyle. Students examine the role of sexuality in the film and the portrayal of the criminal lifestyle. The film effectively gives the viewer access to the experience of the social forces acting upon Chicanos, through the viewer’s identification with the main character, and thus effectively connects private problems and social issues for the students.

Finally, *Selena* is another example of the American dream, a female singer who made it big before her murder. Gender roles play an important part in this film as Selena’s success is largely dependent upon the men in her life. The class is also able to compare the stratification literature read for the course, which described the downward mobility of most Mexicans Americans, with the portrayal of Selena’s success.

Ultimately, the combination of sociological texts and Hollywood-produced films allows for a dialogical approach to this material in which students are able to carefully analyze the relationship between personal problems and social issues.

**Activities**


This article describes an opening-day exercise designed to help students understand and critically analyze social definitions of race and ethnicity. The exercise involves a game where students are asked to guess one another’s racial/ethnic identities. The goals of the exercise are to (a) make explicit a tacit racial/ethnic identity guessing game that occurs in our society; (b) make clear the
fallacy that one can determine (biological) ancestry from physically visible characteristics; and (c) challenge and problematize the construction of “race” in the United States.

The exercise proceeds as follows:

At the start of the first class meeting, before students have a chance to get to know each other, the instructor passes out three post-it notes, still attached to each other, to all students. As students arrive, the instructor greets them at the door with the following instructions: “We are going to start class with a game related to the course content. Here are three post-it notes. On the top one, write your first name or the name you wish to be known by. On the second post-it note, write down what ethnic, cultural, or racial group label you think other people would give you. On the third post-it note, write down the ethnic/cultural/racial label with which you identify. After writing these out, wear them with only your name showing.”

Once students are assembled, the instructor asks them to stand up without speaking to one another, walk around the room, and look at each other’s name tags. Then, on their own note card, they are instructed to write each person’s name and predict his or her racial or ethnic identity. Students are asked to complete the exercise in silence, which requires students to make these judgments based on visual and name clues only.

After the students have guessed one another’s identities, the class sits in a circle. A student is select and everyone in the circle contributes their guess as to his or her cultural or racial/ethnic identity. Once guesses have been revealed, then the students can reveal their “predicted” label (what others would say) and then their own self-identification label. In addition to the group discussion, students may be asked to complete a journal entry on the activity.

In classes of about 25 students, it takes 50 minutes to complete the game and engage in the debrief discussion. For larger classes with limited time, professors might consider dividing their classes into smaller groups and asking students only to guess the ethnic and/or racial identity of students in their small group. Also, professors might debrief the class by having only about 15 students volunteer to hear what others guessed their racial and ethnic identities were, and to reveal how they define themselves.


This article describes an exercise designed to make students aware of the arbitrary and unfair nature of stereotypes. It also helps students to see how stereotypes are “recycled” over time, with the same ideas reappearing but being applied to different groups.

In the class periods before the exercise, students may be encouraged during class discussion to identify how people are exposed to negative images of social groups and to talk about how those images may affect any given social group.
The exercise proceeds as follows:

Students are given a list of stereotypical terms that were previously applied to European immigrant ethnic groups (e.g., Biddy, Dutch courage, Dutch milk, stolid as a Dutchman, Irish draperies, etc.).

Then, students are encouraged to work alone to come up with definitions for these terms. If they do not know the meaning, they should offer their best guess. This will take about 5-10 minutes.

Next, the class works in small discussion groups of 4-5 students to offer their ideas and to come up with shared definitions. The instructor allows about 10 minutes for the group discussion and moves about the room as the groups are talking.

Finally, the students come together as a class for a general discussion led by the instructor. The instructor asks students to give their definition for each term before supplying the actual definition (taken from the Dictionary of International Slurs). During the group discussion, the instructor asks the class why they did not know the definitions of most of the slurs. Also, the instructor encourages students to think about how and why these groups were able to shed these stereotypes over time and about which groups are now subjected to the same stereotypical ideas.


This article describes an experiential exercise that the author developed to teach students about how race discrimination may occur on both conscious and unconscious levels. The exercise asks each student to play the role of a jury member in a capital murder case and decide what sentence to give the defendant, who has been found guilty.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature on race discrimination and the death penalty. This review is to help inform the instructor in advance of carrying out the exercise that this line of research has found that racism manifests itself in two ways: 1) Defendants who kill white victims are more likely to be given the death penalty compared to those who kill blacks; and 2) Black defendants (regardless of race of victim) are more likely to receive the death penalty compared to white defendants. Knowledge of this body of literature is important, as the instructor will draw upon these findings when debriefing the class after the exercise.

The first phase of the exercise proceeds as follows. All students are given a two-page handout of a hypothetical criminal case (the case is reproduced in an Appendix to the article). The handout includes background information on the defendant and victim (i.e., age, race, occupation, marital status, prior criminal record), sketches of both the defendant and the victim, and a description of the crime (i.e., where it took place, who did what to whom). Although students should be under the impression that all cases are the same, the instructor randomly distributes four different versions to the class. The versions vary as follows: 1) African American perpetrator/Caucasian victim; 2) Caucasian perpetrator, Caucasian victim; 3) African American perpetrator/African American victim; 4) Caucasian perpetrator/African American victim.
After reading the case, students are asked to impose a sentence on the defendant, either the death penalty or life in prison without the possibility of parole. They also fill out a demographic information sheet about themselves. All information is anonymous, as students should be asked not to put their names on the handouts.

Once everyone is finished, the instructor collects the handouts and organizes students into small groups of 4-5 peers, asking them to discuss what sentences they gave and why. During this time, the instructor compiles the results. In a class of about 30 students, this first phase of the exercise will take about 15 minutes.

During the second phase of the exercise, which takes about 20 minutes, the instructor presents the results to the class without yet making any reference to the differences across race combinations. Instead, the instructor simply presents descriptive statistics including what percent of the class chose to impose the death penalty versus life imprisonment. This should be followed by a class discussion where students offer explanations for the criteria they used to arrive at a sentence.

The third phase of the exercise, which takes about 20 minutes, is designed to introduce the class to the literature on race discrimination and the death penalty, explore how race entered into the students’ decision-making, and raise the issue of non-conscious racism. This phase begins with the instructor asking the class how, if at all, race influenced their decision-making in the case. This question is asked before the instructor presents any findings broken down by race of perpetrator and victim.

After listening to students respond to the question, the instructor presents the tabulation of the students who chose to impose the death penalty across the four perpetrator-victim race combinations. The author, who has used this exercise in both Introduction to Sociology and Criminology courses, often receives varying results. Sometimes the student responses align with the research literature and show that the students are more likely to impose the death penalty for defendants who killed white victims and for black perpetrators. Other times, the student responses actually contradict the research literature. The author argues that regardless of how the results turn out, this exercise can still be used as an effective jumping off point for discussion, pushing students to consider why their results do or do not fit with the literature on race and the death penalty.

Toward the end of this class session, the author encourages students to take the Implicit Association Tests offered via the Internet (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/). The following class session is dedicated to discussing the students’ experiences with taking the test and connecting the findings to the broader literature on unconscious racism.

The fourth and final phase of this exercise involves dedicating part of a class session to evaluate the exercise. Students are invited to critique the exercise.
This article, which is part of a series aimed at bridging the teaching and research gap in the academy, presents three exercises designed to facilitate deep structure learning about discrimination using the article “Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do” by Devah Pager and Lincoln Quillian and published in 2005 in the *American Sociological Review*.

In the research article, Pager and Quillian assess the relationship between employers’ attitudes toward hiring black and white offenders and their actual hiring behavior. While many people assume that attitudes translate into actual behavior, the authors found a substantial discrepancy between what employers’ say and what they actually do. Specifically, the study revealed that 60 percent of employers said they were willing to hire an ex-offender, irrespective of race. In the actual audit, however, only 17 percent of white ex-offenders and 5 percent of black ex-offenders received call backs while 34 percent of white non-offenders and 14 percent of black non-offenders received call backs. Note that white offenders are more likely to get a job call back than black non-offenders.

The authors then present three exercises that use the startling results of this article to challenge students’ assumptions and to encourage them to think more deeply about sociological research methods and theory.

The first exercise, “Does the color of your skin matter? Nudging students out of their comfort zone,” is ideal for the unit on racial inequality in Introductory Sociology or Social Problems courses. This exercise requires two consecutive 50-60 minute class periods. On the first day, the instructor begins class by asking students to complete a thought experiment asking them to imagine four years into the future when they are searching for their first job after graduation. Students then do a 5-minute free-write where they respond to questions such as “Will the color of your skin advantage or disadvantage you in any way in getting this job? Why do you think this is?” For the next 15 minutes, the instructor engages the class in a discussion of their responses. Next, the students view the film *True Colors* and are asked to compare what they wrote to the actual experiences of the black and white discrimination testers shown in the film. The remainder of class time is dedicated to discussing the film and to preparing students to read the research article for the next class period, during which time the article will be assessed in depth. (See the Pager and Quillian article for a framework of discussion questions that help structure this class period.)

The second exercise, “Does what people say match what they do? A collaborative research design,” is intended for use in a research methods course. After students have read the Pager and Quillian article, they should discuss it as a group, paying particular attention to the dual design (survey and audit study) of the research. Instructors ask each group to come up with a situation where they can test the relationship between attitudes and behavior (e.g., apartment hunting, hailing a cab, passing airport security checkpoints). Students should then be asked to complete the following homework assignments, each requiring a one-two page written response: #1 What is your research question? #2 What sociological theory will guide your question? #3 Identify and
define the key concepts in your study. #4 What methods will you use to test your hypotheses? #5 Who will be included in your sample and what sampling procedure will you use? #6 How will you analyze and interpret your data? Students present their research design to the class at the end of the process.

The third exercise, “What’s in it for us? Taking on the role of various interest groups,” may be used in upper-level race-ethnicity or criminology courses. The exercise asks students to identify the policy implications of Pager and Quillian’s study as they take on the role of a particular interest group and ask themselves, “How do the findings (both substantive and methodological) in the study speak to us?” This exercise comes at the end of a general class discussion on the research article. The class brainstorms a list of interest groups that they think should be made aware of the study (e.g., NAACP, state parole officers, prison pre-release counselors, etc.). Then the class breaks into small groups, each group taking on the position of an interest group. Students are encouraged to discuss how the knowledge gained from Pager and Quillian’s study could be used by their particular group.


This article describes and evaluates an in-class activity and project that the author developed to encourage students to think more deeply about the claim that a racial joke—one with race as its subject—is not necessarily racist.

The article begins with a script of a skit that involves the professor for the course and an African American student. Prior to the start of the class, the professor contacted the student and inquired about his willingness to be involved in a class activity. The student agreed and the professor and student met prior to the start of classes. On the first day of classes, the student and professor then “played out” the skit, where the professor tells a racial joke. This provokes the student to stand up, protest the content of the joke, then eventually walk out. The student then returns (the other students applauded, as they had figured out that it was an act, but they were still engaged) and class discussion ensues regarding the question of whether the distinction between a joke with racial content and a racist joke is valid.

After the discussion, the professor hands out a questionnaire and instructions for conducting field research on “joking” on campus (both documents are reproduced in the article). The questionnaire is to be completed by the students in the class, and includes questions, for example, about whether students have heard jokes with racial content in the last month, whether they laughed, and what they think the purpose of joking is. The students are also required to complete a field research assignment in which they approach acquaintances from their same racial/ethnic group and ask them to tell a joke. The student records whether the joke has explicitly racial content and asks a series of follow-up questions as outlined in the field research guidelines.

The data from the questionnaires and the field research assignment is analyzed by the professor and presented to the class for discussion. The professor can also read aloud several of the jokes that the students collected from acquaintances. Presenting the findings from the students’
research and their questionnaires leads to a deeper discussion of the meaning, and potential impact, of race-based “jokes.” Introducing the subject of joking fulfilled two important purposes for the instructor. First, it solved the “first-day-of-class problem” by riveting attention to an interesting issue. Second, it forged a link between students’ experience and larger theoretical questions about prejudice.


This article presents an in-class exercise that allows students to experience inequality first-hand. The goal of the exercise is to combat the belief that structural barriers to equality do not exist.

The professor who developed the exercise requires a weekly ten-point, ten-minute quiz over each week’s assigned readings. These quizzes are normally given at the beginning of the class period. The exercise is designed so that it should follow the class period where social inequality is discussed.

On the day of the exercise, at the beginning of the class period, students are asked to count off by fours so that four groups can be obtained. Then students are asked to rearrange their seats so they are sitting with their group. After they have moved seats, a quiz is handed out and students are asked to keep the quiz face down. The professor should then spend a few minutes reviewing the material on social inequality that was covered in the prior class period. Then the professor should make the following statement: “Since there is general agreement here in class that desire and ability can overcome any structural barrier, I would like to test this conclusion. When I tell you to begin, group four will have two minutes to complete the quiz, group three will have four minutes, group two will have six minutes, and group one will have ten minutes.”

After fielding protests and discussing the fairness of the activity, the instructor should remind the students that they agreed that individual effort can overcome any structural barrier. The instructor then starts the timer. Although the students take the quizzes as individuals, the group dynamics that unfold as the time progresses can be used as a basis for the ensuing discussion. For example, the members of the two-minute group jump into the quiz, but tend to not finish and then begin to violate classroom norms by talking loudly, complaining, etc. The four-minute group also attacks the quiz and students frantically try to complete it, but they at least see a chance for success. The members of the six-minute group usually finish the quiz, double-check it, and then take quick peaks at the instructor and two-minute group. The ten-minute group members are the most methodical of all and they rarely pay any attention to the other groups.

The individual quizzes are collected after the ten minutes have elapsed. They are then scored and the group means are calculated. The ten-minute group nearly always scores the highest, although occasionally students from the two- or four-minute groups also do well. These outcomes can provoke rich discussion regarding structural inequality, individual effort, and other such topics of sociological interest.

This article describes a web-based exercise intend to demonstrate to students the discrimination that occurs when employers are reluctant to hire workers based on race and ethnicity. While the exercise usually demonstrates this pattern, instructors should be aware that non-discriminatory outcomes are possible in the exercise.

The exercise proceeds as follows:

The instructor should set up the exercise in advance, and then have each student sit at a separate computer, divided into groups: employer, green workers, and purple workers. Workers are told their costs to invest will differ from others; in reality the cost to invest for purple workers is much higher (on average) than the cost for green workers. The program asks workers whether they wish to invest their money in skills relevant to getting the job; then the computer randomly assigns them a test score (which is likely to be higher if the worker chose to invest) and displays this test score to the employer, along with the worker’s color. Employers then choose whether to hire the workers.

In theory, a pattern of discrimination develops, as purple workers invest less often (due to higher costs, on average) than green workers and then receive lower test scores (on average) and are hired less often (on average) than green workers, dis-incentivizing them to invest (because that money will be wasted if they are not hired).

Classroom discussion after the exercise should be conducted in a manner that allows the students to first introduce the idea of statistical discrimination, based on their experiences within the exercise, followed by a series of instructor-driven questions to help clarify the concept of statistical discrimination and tie the activity to racial profiling or labor market discrimination. The authors suggest that a discussion on policy recommendations, to break this cycle, is very helpful. The article concludes with a section on further reading and includes an appendix with detailed instructions for running the activity.


In this article the author presents a simulation game exercise in which students are made to feel the effects of racial discrimination. The author then analyzes the language used by students in their feedback on the simulation, using critical discourse analysis (CDA) to interrogate whether racist ideologies remained in the students’ language, despite their increased engagement and purported empathy toward minority groups.

Simulation games are known to increase engagement and empathy and have thus been considered successful at increasing student awareness about racial inequality. The study conducted in this article took place in Japan, where Japanese are the dominant group, with few racial minorities. Participants in the exercise were Japanese students in an English language
The course included a 5-week unit on race and racism. The author chose to use CDA to analyze the effects of this unit—specifically the simulation game detailed below—on her students’ beliefs about racial inequality. The simulation game proceeds as follows.

The simulation is based upon teacher Jane Elliot’s famous classroom exercise in an Iowa elementary school, conducted the day after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, in which she divided the children in her class into groups of brown-eyed people and blue-eyed people. She then proceeded to treat each group differently and asked her students to only associate with people in their group. In the Japanese simulation, students were divided into two groups and the students in one group were given a signifier (in this case a pink sash), designating them as members of the nonfavored group. Note that students switched groups between sessions, to experience both favored and nonfavored status. The exercise and a short debriefing are held during the first class session, while a more detailed reflection is conducted during a second class period. Students are assigned reading materials and receive lectures and watch videos on racism and the history of racism before engaging in the activity.

Because of the sensitive emotional nature of the exercise, participation should be optional. The exercise consists of one group being treated favorably, while the other ‘pink sash’ group is treated poorly. Examples of teacher behaviors include:

- Keeping distance from the nonfavored group.
- Making minimal eye contact with the nonfavored group.
- Using an enthusiastic voice when speaking to members of the favored group.
- Invalidating any efforts of the nonfavored to be like the favored group.
- Praising all efforts of the favored group.
- Using individual names of the favored group and the group name for the nonfavored.

The exercise takes place over three sessions, each of which includes different activities intended to illustrate racist discrimination.

**Session 1**

*Adopt a friend:* A nonfavored group member is adopted by the favored group to show the majority does not discriminate.

*Named by the majority:* The favored group creates a nickname for the nonfavored group.

*Chair vote:* The nonfavored group has a limited number of chairs and not all members are able to sit. The favored group has a surplus of chairs. They vote to decide whether to give some chairs to the non-favored group.

**Session 2**

*Gibberish discussion:* The instructor gives instructions to the class in gibberish, but secretly tells the favored group ahead of time which instructions to pay attention to.

*Paper ball throw:* The favored group is given paper to wad into balls to throw at the nonfavored group. The nonfavored group is given a single piece of paper and discouraged from throwing it.
Session 3

Fake scholarship: The students are given an impossible test rigged such that one nonfavored group members passes it and wins a place in the favored group.

After the exercise the author asked for student feedback, which she then analyzed using CDA. Students developed a greater awareness of racism through noticing their feelings and actions when experiencing each group; however, their language indicated a discourse of diversion. Such a discourse included strategies such as focusing only on overt racism and refusing to challenge more subtle forms of racism or acknowledge their own privilege. The author concludes by suggesting that this discourse analysis should be part of any simulation exercise and the results included as part of the teaching pedagogy used to explain racism to students.


This article presents two in-class activities designed to teach students about structural inequality. The Vanishing Dollar focuses on class inequality and Bittersweet Candy focuses on racial inequality and the Patricia Hill Collins’ Matrix of Domination.

The Vanishing Dollar proceeds as follows:

Prior to the activity, the instructor lectures on the unequal distribution of both income and wealth in the United States, focusing on the relative percentages of the total income/wealth of the country owned by each quintile of the population (i.e., top 20% to bottom 20%). Students are then divided into five groups to represent the five quintiles.

Each group is given the correct proportion of ten dollars (photocopied) corresponding to their quintile’s share of income, which means that the instructor is forced to tear a dollar bill in half – and then into even smaller pieces – to accommodate the correct percentages. The process is then repeated for wealth. Optionally, the instructor may allow the students in each group to use their money to purchase classroom items such as admittance, individual advising and tutoring sessions with the professor, or an A in the class (hypothetically). Discussion on the myth of meritocracy should follow, drawing on the students’ experiences in the activity.

Bittersweet Candy proceeds as follows:

The instructor sets up a series of chairs at the front of the classroom and informs the students that those who are able to get into the special seat will get a candy bar. He or she then asks the students to line up according to height. The shorter students are lined up closer to designated seats while the taller students are lined up farther away. The instructor also places intervening obstacles (such as additional chairs and tables) between them and the designated seats. The students are then told that whoever reaches a designated seat will receive candy and to begin! Students who do reach a seat receive candy; those who do not reach a seat do not receive candy.
Discussion of the activity should draw on students’ experiences both as the winners of the exercise, to reveal privilege, and as the losers, to reveal structural discrimination. An extensive discussion guide is provided in the article.

Both activities were rated strongly by students who participated, both in terms of their understanding of the topic and the relevance of the activities.


Khanna and Harris set out three objectives in this article: (1) To review the strengths and weaknesses of currently popular in-class activities related to the social construction of race, (2) To examine the concepts of the social construction of race and how effectively in-class exercises communicate these concepts to students, and (3) To inform readers about two new in-class activities which the authors believe better illustrate for students the concepts of the social construction of race.

The three existing activities concerning the social construction of race suffer from one of several problems. They may: rely on a diverse student body; be awkward for students; be too abstract for students; or only work with a small class size.

The article reviews the social construction of race, briefly touching upon the contested validity of the biological concept of race, cultural and national differences in racial categories, and the historically situated nature of racial categories. The authors also mention the existing federal guidelines regarding race, which are both confining and insufficient to account for all races (e.g., persons of Arab decent are classified as White, while people of both Japanese and East Indian decent are classified as Asian). The authors then introduce the exercises they developed.

Exercise One: What’s My Race? The first in-class activity is designed to introduce students to the concept of race as a social construction and to demonstrate how difficult it is to actual categorize people by race. The activity should proceed as follows:

1. The students are given 10 minutes to answer a set of questions, the most important of which being “how do you decide what race someone belongs to?”

2. The students then look at a series of 15 photographs and try to determine the race and/or ethnicity of the individuals pictured, within the guidelines of the U.S. Census. Many of these individuals are celebrities, and some are intentionally chosen to be outside current racial categories (e.g., Australian aborigines, whites from Africa).

3. Students are asked to share their answers as a class for each individual before the “correct” answers are revealed, to illustrate the breadth of opinions and difficulty to racially classifying an individual. A class discussion on the social construction of race should follow.
Exercise Two: Black or White? In this exercise, students learn about the historical construction of race – the “one drop rule.” The activity should proceed as follows:

Students look at 18 photographs of individuals and are given 10 minutes to attempt to identify whether those individuals are Black or White. All of these individuals are actually Black, according to the one drop rule (and are historical figures who were considered Black during their lifetimes). Again, students are asked how they made decisions regarding who was White and who was Black. A class discussion follows the revelation that all of the individual are considered Black.


The authors of this article present an exercise intended to immerse students in a case study about the realities of racism. The case study is set in Chiapas, Mexico, in the Human Rights Center, which is run by Jesuit priests and staffed by both Mayans and Mestizos. A Mayan staff member discovered that the Mayan employees were paid about one-half of what the Mestizo employees were being paid and brought this issue to a meeting for discussion.

In the role-play students were given specific roles of individuals involved in the case, either Mayan or Mestizo, from the director of the center, Father Juan, to community organizers such as Miguel. Role-play notes include roles, information to keep secret, and information to disseminate to the group, as well as personal goals. The role-play reproduces the meeting at the center, with about 25 employees involved.

After the 45-minute exercise, the students are asked what they thought of the activity and whether it has helped them to better engage with and understand racism. In the authors’ experience, students’ overall impressions were favorable, especially regarding the experiential component of the activity. Students expressed some discomfort with not knowing enough about the cultural and political context of the setting, but also appreciated that the role-play was based on a contemporary situation. Students also extended empathy during the role-play, an important facet of diversity education. The true educational value, according to the authors, was to help students strengthen their commitment to social justice and to allow them to critically examine their values and beliefs rooted in the dominant paradigm.

The authors conclude that other educators wishing to develop a similar role-play scenario should “state the major problem, define the objective of the case study, describe key players within the organization, and identify the process of service delivery and decision-making.”

This article introduces three exercises intended to use students’ racial memories to help make the connection between their memories and contemporary institutional racism. The authors argue that in a climate of color-blind ideology, powerful personal examples of ongoing, systematic racism are needed to help students understand the continuing significance of race in our society. Having students share their own early racial memories makes personal experiences central to learning, which embodies the feminist approach to education.

Three adaptations of this exercise (asking students to write about their racial memories) are outlined below.

**Discovering Patterns of Racial Identity.** In this exercise students are asked to free write for 3-4 minutes about their first racial memories (these instructions are left purposefully vague). Students should not write their name on the papers, but should include their gender and race. Afterward students are asked to voluntarily share their memories with the class. The instructor should tie individual experiences into course material to gradually introduce the students to systematic racism. For example, a personal story about a white woman living in a neighborhood with only one black family could be used to introduce the term “racial segregation.”

**Data Analysis Exercise.** In preparation for this exercise the instructor types up all of the students’ racial memories, about 3-4 to a page, and then makes enough copies to provide each student with a page of memories. Students are then divided into small groups and asked to code the memories using either a word bank of definitions provided by the instructor, or their own codes, drawing on the course material learned thus far. For example, a memory about a white woman whose aunt did not want her cousin to attend a high school because of the large number of African-American students attending that school was coded as including educational segregation, racial prejudice, white privilege, and whites policing interracial conflict.

**Everyday Life Application.** Students are asked to conduct observations of the social spaces they inhabit, such as campus, places of work, the supermarket, etc. and to identify the patterns of racial difference which shape those spaces. Students should be given analytical tools to recognize the presence of white privilege or the oppression of people of color.

All of the exercises have proven very successful, with the third exercise being the most empowering for students. The primary challenge is creating a safe classroom environment in which students are comfortable sharing their experiences; for this reason the exercises may not be appropriate for large classrooms.

The authors conclude with some advice on teaching through resistance and dealing with emotions in the classroom. Explaining that racism is more than simply individual attitudes—that it is systematic and structural—is helpful in responding to the resistance of some white students. The authors also provide in-class examples of historical laws which legalized discrimination and racism against African Americans and provided students with Peggy McIntosh’s list of white privileges as a starting point for discussion. In dealing with emotions during discussion, both
authors use such emotions as teachable moments and will often turn the discussion to a conversation about the importance and emotional significance of language, showing the intro to the web site “Abolish the ‘N’ Word” (http://www.abolishthenword.com/) as an example.


This article presents an in-class activity intended to demonstrate to students the social construction of race. Students often have a difficult time understanding and accepting the social construction of race, believing race to be a biological characteristic like sex. Before engaging in the activity it is important to first demonstrate the social construction of race to students by reviewing the historical development of racial categories over time.

Instructors should establish the social construction of race with students before attempting to demonstrate this concept via the activity. One discussion strategy is to ask students to categorize ethnic groups of ambiguous race, such as Middle Easterners, Pacific Islanders, or Latinos. Students will often come up with different classifications for these groups, revealing the subjective nature of race. International students can also help demonstrate this concept by sharing how race is constructed in their home cultures. Finally, the instructor can ask students to define the characteristics which are used to identify race and, in doing so, demonstrate how subjective these characteristics are. Once the social construction of race is firmly established, the following activity can be used to demonstrate the concept.

The instructor provides students with a handout containing six circles divided into halves or quarters, or not divided. Each section of each circle is either filled, empty, or partially shaded. Students are then asked to organize the circles into two separate categories (which may include uneven numbers of circles). The instructor asks students to share their categorization schemes, which invariably differ. Only then does the instructor reveal that the circles represent the human species and the created categories represent the races.

Discussion of the activity follows. The instructor asks students which category is the “right” one; their varied answers demonstrate that there is no “correct” way to categorize the circles (and people) and reveal the subjective nature of the various categorization schemes. This can be reinforced by raising the fact that other cultures do, in fact, use alternative racial categories based upon different combinations of physical characteristics. A final discussion topic is the similarity of circles in relation to a smaller group of circles; students may group the circles differently if provided with a different set of choices. This can be linked to the idea that some members of a racial category actually appear more similar to members of another racial category.


This article presents an in-class activity designed to demonstrate how institutional discrimination perpetuates inequality and the logic behind affirmative action. Several problems frame this
activity. The first is the problem of getting students to understand institutional discrimination and how members of disadvantaged groups end up in structurally undesirable positions. The second problem is the controversy of affirmative action; students who are potential beneficiaries of such programs are often reluctant to speak out in favor of these programs because of the hostility of white students toward what they perceive as unfair ‘reverse discrimination.’ This activity aims to address both problems. The activity proceeds as follows.

First, the instructor asks for a handful of volunteers for an in-class exercise. While not required, it may be helpful for this group to include some racial and gender diversity. Next these students are asked to wait outside of the classroom. While the volunteers are absent, the instructor teaches the class two new terms (the author uses de facto and de jure segregation, but any terms relevant to the course will do). Afterward, the volunteers are asked to return to the room and offered an apology for leaving them in the hall and thanked for their cooperation. Class then proceeds as usual, with a lecture on institutional discrimination, emphasizing the historical roots of contemporary institutional racism. This lecture is then followed by a quiz, to test the students’ knowledge of the material they just learned. As the quiz is outside the normal grading rubric, extra credit is offered. The quiz asks the students to define the two terms learned while the volunteers were outside the classroom. Absolute silence is required of the students, who may otherwise protest verbally at this point. Quizzes are collected and the class discussion begins.

The three topics discussed are: 1) Was the quiz fair?; 2) Why was it unfair?; and 3) What should be done about it? This allows the instructor to tie the experience of the quiz to the larger concepts of institutional discrimination and affirmative action. Students inevitably argue that the quiz was unfair because the students who left the room did not have access to the information tested on the quiz. The instructor points out that the students were allowed back into the room, an apology was offered for their exclusion, and that, after being welcomed back into the class, the students were treated as equals for the rest of the period. This exercise helps the students recognize that present-day policies and attitudes do not make up for the accumulated disadvantages generated by histories of discrimination.

The question of what should be done about the unfair nature of the quiz generates the most controversy and can be used to illustrate the logic behind affirmative action. After allowing students to brainstorm ideas the instructor limits the choices to two options: the students can either keep the quiz or throw it out all together (no one will receive extra credit). This leads to a discussion on how each group (excluded and not excluded) feels and has thus far always resulted in a class decision to throw out the quiz. While this is an abbreviated exercise in which the privileged and oppressed groups are artificially created, the author argues that it illustrates institutional discrimination well.
Teaching Advice


This article begins with a lengthy vignette where a professor is talking with his department chair about a recent rejection of his proposal to teach a cross-listed course between sociology and Chicano studies on the topic of “Chicano sociology.” This vignette is intended to illustrate the “academic stock-story”—or the story the institution collectively forms and tells about itself—in relation to ethnic studies courses. Aguirre argues that while institutions strive to portray themselves as meritocratic and fair, what is often hidden in the subtext of discussions such as the one included here is that ethnic studies courses are too “narrow” and that they only “make sense” if they are linked to “special” diversity curriculum initiatives. Also, ethnic studies, and especially Chicano studies, courses have long been portrayed as activist-oriented and “not intellectually rigorous,” and thus not worthy of inclusion in more mainstream curriculum initiatives.

The remainder of the article is dedicated to examples of how academics interested in teaching Chicano sociology courses can respond to the academic stock-story. Aguirre argues that first, it is important to emphasize that Chicano sociology classes are structured to identify the sociological context for Chicano sociology and then to describe the content of the class. Second, the sociology exists in the study of critical interpretations by Chicanos of the social science research on Chicanos. Third, students will be introduced to more general critiques of social science research by reading articles about the ways that the classical social science paradigm has excluded the unique social and cultural experiences of Chicanos. These arguments are meant to illustrate the academic rigor and important role that these courses can play in “mainstream” academic curricula.

Aguirre concludes with a brief discussion of the “fragile context for inclusion.” While the last two decades have been marked by a rising number of multicultural initiatives in academia, these initiatives do not necessarily indicate an acceptance of a multicultural curriculum at the highest levels of the academy. As such, these programs of study and particular classes are continually vulnerable to attacks and the “academic stock-story” that is often told about them.


Integrating a critical review of the literature and her own experiences as a black woman graduate student in overwhelmingly white classrooms, Blackwell argues that the current practice of anti-racist education holds very few benefits for students of color. In particular, the Blackwell critiques the movement toward whiteness theory and the politics of identity and difference in anti-racist education and the emphasis critical educators put on making white students conscious of white privilege and racism. As a consequence of this emphasis, students of color are all too often rendered invisible, and only become visible when their stories are used as a springboard to teach white students about racism.
Blackwell notes that students of color thus end up playing three roles in the classroom: 1) *cultural experts*, where students are encouraged to offer up testimonials that capture the authenticity of their racial ethnic heritage and convey their experiences of racism to white students; 2) *aides*, where students of color assist the anti-racist educator in helping white students move past defensiveness and guilt and toward developing a critical race awareness; and 3) *witnesses*, where students of color are cast as observers of white students struggle with grasping the reality of race. When students of color are pressed to choose from this confining set of roles, there may be little room for them to play the most critical role of all: engaged student.

Blackwell offers several suggestions for making education anti-racist for students of color. First, she asserts that those who teach critical white pedagogy and anti-racist educators should question themselves: what does this lesson/course have to offer students of color? Also, she asserts that anti-racist classrooms should examine issues of race and racism using black feminist standpoint theory as a lens for considering the needs of students of color. Finally, Blackwell questions whether students of color should advocate for separate spaces where they can carve out an academic space that is free from the all too often hostile and restrictive racial dynamics of the classroom.


Bohmer and Briggs describe in this article how they came to use the concept of oppression to teach about race, class, and gender because it helps students, especially those from white, middle-class backgrounds, to comprehend the existence of oppression in our society on both an institutional and a personal level. Although the authors draw on their experiences from teaching an introductory social psychology course, the suggestions they offer could easily be adapted to other introductory-level sociology or ethnic studies courses.

The authors begin the relevant section of the course by defining oppression as “those attitudes, behaviors, and pervasive and systematic social arrangements by which members of one group are exploited and subordinated while members of another group are granted privileges.” After introducing this definition, students are invited to comment upon the core ideas. Next, the instructor asks the students what images come to mind when they hear that someone is “oppressed” or “privileged.” Then, students are invited to generate a list of the different types of oppression that exist in the United States (e.g., sexism, racism, etc.) and to identify the oppressed and the privileged group involved in each (e.g., men/women, racial minorities/whites, etc.). As students produce the list, the instructor should write this information on the board in a table format, so that subsequent discussion can ensue.

Once the multiple forms of oppression have been introduced, the instructor discusses institutional aspects of oppression and encourages students to think about how oppression plays out across various social institutions including the family, the economy, and education, for example.
After discussing institutional aspects of oppression in some detail, the authors suggest that it is then appropriate to present students with materials that address prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes on an individual level. To help students make the connection between stereotypes and oppression, students are again asked to engage in a listing activity where they name stereotypes of women and men, leaving race and class groups unspecified. Later, the students revisit the list and assign race and class to the stereotypes. Through this intersectional analysis activity, students become more aware of how race, class, and gender interact to shape stereotypical images in different ways for say, a white woman versus a black woman.

The authors describe two homework assignments that they use to encourage students to think in greater detail about their own as well as others’ experiences with oppression. The first assignment requires that students pick any topic from the syllabus (e.g., socialization, language, altruism) and to write a short essay that relates this topic to their own life applying a social psychological lens. The second assignment is to rewrite the first assignment from the perspective of someone of a different race, gender, and/or class background, addressing the following question: How would the events you described earlier, or your interpretation of them, change if you were a member of a different group (or groups)?


This brief article makes the case that instructors should attempt to engage students both cognitively and affectively in the classroom. Chasteen points out that since World War II the American college has focused almost exclusively on the cognitive area, treating emotional and spiritual concerns as peripheral.

Chasteen offers two primary examples of how he attempts to engage all of his students’ senses in his race relations class. On the first day of class, students file into the room and each is asked to draw a sealed envelope. Inside is their new identity for the semester: Black, Indian, Mexican, Japanese, or Jew. After a weekend spent getting into their identity they return to class for the next step: they draw a second envelope. Inside is the name of a particular person they will be: Booker T. Washington, Malcolm X, or Sitting Bull, for example. For the next 14 weeks, students are expected to “become” these people. They are relegated to certain areas of the classroom reserved for “their kind”: the ghetto, the reservation, or the concentration camp.

Chasteen also assumes a series of identities throughout the semester. When lecturing on Native Americans, he might play Red Cloud. On another day, he would act out the role of Roy Wilkins, former executive director of the NAACP.

Chasteen argues that these approaches have been highly successful based on the attention the class has attracted on campus and in the community and due to the quality of the written comments received from students at the end of the semester.

This article discusses three potential student reactions to learning about social stratification (including racial, gender, or class stratification, among others): resistance, paralysis, and rage.

*The resisting class.* The resisting class may be comprised of students who deny the existence of or need to address inequality; or of advantaged students who see individual deficiencies as the source of inequality; or of individuals from marginalized groups who deny that they must face such overwhelming obstacles. Suggestions for addressing the resisting class include: in-class exercises which focus on forms of stratification that students have in common (e.g., the student-professor hierarchy); simulation games like “Star Power,” in which the persistence of inequalities over time are embodied by the students themselves; humorous anecdotes, which can help take some of the sting out of the data about inequality; student experiments, which vividly illustrate for students the continuing impact of stratification, and articles that support these experiments; guided fantasies in which students are asked to take on a different social identity and imagine their life as the “other”; and films and guest speakers who can bring to life the realities of inequality in our society. Resistant students must be guided and gently challenged, but instructors must take care not to be too prescriptive in their lectures.

*The paralyzed class.* The paralyzed class may result from teaching about inequality without a corresponding focus on alternatives or solutions. Students feel powerless to change what seems like an inevitable system of stratification. Suggestions for addressing the paralyzed class include: films that demonstrate how collective action has succeeded in addressing inequalities in the past; historical and cross-cultural examples of different systems of stratification at other times or in other countries; personal examples or examples of incidents of social change on campus to illustrate the possibility of actually achieving change close to home; and Gloria Steinem’s 1983 essay “Far From the Opposite Shore.”

*The enraged class.* The enraged class may be comprised of students who have actually experienced much of the discrimination being discussed in class, or students who are simply outraged by such injustice. Unfortunately, this form of thinking may lead to students lashing out against the nearest representative of the dominant group in question, including other students in the class. Angry students may also engage in reductionist thinking, blaming capitalism, patriarchy, or racism for everything wrong with society. Suggestions for addressing the enraged class include: focusing and directing student anger (i.e., not suppressing it); having students compose anonymous essays about how they feel; showing films or inviting guest speakers to illustrate how others have directed their anger in constructive ways; offering humorous anecdotes which help defuse some of the tension in the class; and sharing inspirational songs and music such as “We Shall Overcome” to direct the students’ anger in a more positive direction.

Based on her own experiences teaching introductory courses on multicultural populations and diversity issues, De Anada outlines her advice for designing race and ethnicity courses. Her recommendations range from characteristics of the teacher and the students of the class to how the content of the course and how it is structured and taught. De Anada’s advice follows.

*The Teacher.* The teacher should be bicultural; which means that if he or she is not a racial minority, then he or she would have grown up in a distinctly different culture than that of mainstream America. The teacher must relinquish authoritarian control over the class and allow students to guide discussions. The teacher must create an atmosphere of safety and security in the classroom so that students feel comfortable sharing. The teacher must highlight the strengths of various ethnic and cultural groups. The teacher must demonstrate infectious enthusiasm. The teacher must be able to work with students’ discomfort with the topics, and not just write this off as student resistance.

*The Students.* Students must be ethnically/culturally diverse, at least to some degree (the author is very clear on this point). Diversity in terms of age and experience is also helpful for illustrating the changing and historical nature of race. Students must be willing to take risks.

*The Structure.* The degree of intimacy facilitated by the structure of the course is most important. Seminars, oddly, seem to be least capable of producing this environment, while a large lecture class followed by small discussion groups is often a more effective format. Lectures must be interactive to some extent, calling on students’ experiences and dilemmas. Using dynamic guest speakers can be useful, but not if the speaker’s celebrity status takes away from the content.

*Content and Method.* Learning is a holistic process. To facilitate students’ learning, the instructor must help them gain information about “others” while also enabling their capacities for self-reflection about their own formative years and “critical incidents.” Moreover, students must experience diversity firsthand, outside of the classroom, in the larger community. The ethnographic interview is a one potential assignment that creates this dynamic. First person narratives (books or films) are also powerful tools. These methods help students understand the context of behaviors they witness. The instructor must be careful not to oversimplify ethnic or cultural groups, especially in a survey course. Use both micro and macro perspectives and indicate the linkages between the two. Highlight the impact of historical events across generations. The concept of white privilege must be an integral part of the course. Remember that the transformative process is not necessarily linear for all students. Consider how you will evaluate students when the (unstated) course goal is the transformation of students’ perspectives.


This article describes both the possible pitfalls of using novels to teach about race in a sociology classroom, as well as suggested selection criteria for such novels. Fitzgerald, an African
American female professor at a small, liberal arts college, also briefly discusses the impact of her own racial identity on her students’ reactions to the novels selected for an introductory sociology class.

Novels allow students to experience the sociological imagination by allowing them to forge ties between historical accounts and biographical accounts (i.e., the macro and the micro). They also promote critical thinking and reflection amongst students.

Fitzgerald selected three novels for her introductory sociology class: Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* (1970), Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1982), and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970). Students had a variety of responses to these novels, the predominant reactions included: (1) blaming the victim: an overly person-blaming approach assigning the blame for the protagonist’s problems to his or her own personal faults; (2) blaming the victor: an overly structural approach rendering the protagonists as helpless victims; and (3) complaints about the author’s bias: objections that African American authors could not write objectively about African Americans.

Based on this feedback, Fitzgerald proposes the following guidelines for selecting the “right” novel:

1) *The novel should yield detailed information about the culture.* Novels that succeed at doing this portray protagonists from non-dominant cultures, detailing this group’s institutional structures, histories, and values, while also providing examples of how members of this group experience individuals and institutions from the dominant culture.

2) *The novel should reflect the culture of the setting.* A linear progression is necessary for students to follow the timeline and understand the social context of the narrative being presented. It is helpful for the students to have some awareness of what was happening historically at the time the novel is set, in order to provide context for the character’s choices and actions.

3) *The novel should not assume a skill level beyond that of the student.* This excludes most satirical, futuristic, or otherwise literally complicated novels, in favor of novels that allow students to really concentrate on the detailed cultural and historical information contained in more straightforward stories. It is important to note that critical thinking is still integral to the process, regardless of the level of complexity of the novel chosen.

The author includes three potential assignments to help students better understand what they are reading and to be used as predecessors to a written paper on the novel. The assignments include data collection, data analysis, and a discussion of the minority group’s response to domination.


This article offers a full text reproduction of the case study titled, “A Very Slender Thread.” In the case, a young woman, “Maggie,” is having dinner with her uncle while her mother listens on. Maggie’s uncle would often flaunt his bigoted views, attempting to engage Maggie in an
argument. As she became more educated and aware of concepts such as white privilege, it became more and more difficult for Maggie to simply ignore her uncle’s comments as she had done in the past. In the case study, she finally confronts her uncle, he storms out of the house, and her mother becomes upset. Maggie shares the story of the confrontation in her college class, but is rebuffed by a student of color who is impatient with the need among whites to “explore” their privilege while people of color suffer ongoing indignities.

Cases such as this are particularly useful in discussions about racism and privilege in courses in which students have not yet developed trust and confidence in their group interactions. The case described above offers many potential jumping off points for class discussions regarding topics such as the role of the family in shaping racial attitudes, the difficulty associated with challenging racism, the trajectories of racial identity development, and the tension that can emerge between whites and people of color as whites adjust to “seeing” their privilege for the first time.


Heinze argues that racism should be viewed as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, and that teaching racism in this way makes it easier for instructors to deal with student anxiety about the issue, and for students to think critically about what “racism” means.

Heinze lists three of his pedagogical assumptions: 1) Society should view (and teachers should teach) whites as “raced”; 2) understanding white culture will help students understand and be sensitive to other cultures; and 3) awareness of white privilege and unconscious racism helps students understand other cultural groups in a substantively different way. Heinze also argues that having white students discuss racism often desensitizes them to accusations of it, so they are less likely to respond defensively when it is brought up.

Heinze describes two exercises he uses in his courses: “The Benefits of Being White” and “The Race Game.” The former deals with identifying white privileges (students of color are more adept at this than white students), while the latter deals with the “normalness” of being white. Heinze also uses “The Color of Fear” film to discuss the continuum of racism, using the white man, David, as an example. Finally, the author details how he incorporates psychoanalytical concepts into the course. He also warns instructors to be wary of dichotomizing individual and institutional racism, for the two often affect one another.

Heinze also uses himself (the instructor) as a model for students—by acknowledging that he, too, sometimes uses stereotypes or thinks racist thoughts. Heinze thus models for students how they can express such sentiments without fear of ridicule or censure. This takes a great deal of courage from the instructor, who must be aware of his own conscious and unconscious racism and open to receiving critical comments. The continuum of racism model is crucial to this model of self-disclosure, however, and the instructor must be careful to seize upon teachable moments as students make “racist” comments. Such students must be treated with respect and honesty, and Heinze recommends thanking them for their question and turning it over to the class for discussion.

This article provides a pedagogical model for addressing racism and other uncomfortable topics in the classroom. It also offers several examples of action-oriented activities for dealing with racism and race-related issues.

Jakubowski makes the case that “the instructor and students in the college classroom must collectively take responsibility for and work towards creating a liberating pedagogical environment.” As such, instructors and students must rethink the “stratified, unequal relationship that traditionally exists between instructor and student.” The first phase in reconceptualizing the instructor-student relationship involves the instructor inviting students to share their insights on a particular theme or issue, thereby initiating the process of dialogue. During the next phase, codification, students must capture their ideas (through writing, music, etc.) and present them to the class. During the third phase, decodification, the group as a whole should critically engage in an interchange of ideas designed to move the discussion from a concrete to an analytical level. With this pedagogical framework in place, students may achieve higher order thinking and learning while also working within a safe environment to confront uncomfortable subject matter.

Jakubowski concludes the article with three action-oriented teaching strategies. The first is a description of a case study of the 1951 movie version of *Showboat*, a production that chronicles the lives of a white southern family. Students are asked to watch the movie and to write about and discuss the racial representations of whites and blacks in the film. A second activity is an anti-racism training that Jakubowski and three students conducted for a local high school teacher and her students. The final example of an action-oriented approach is the “Homework Club,” a successful local initiative involving college students who tutored local school children from predominantly low-income and immigrant backgrounds.


In this article, Kirk and Durant provide an auto-ethnographic account of an incident involving both of them, “Professor D” and “Professor R.” Kirk and Durant relate the story and offer their reflections on the incident and its aftermath. The authors stress that this incident is an excellent example of a *kairos* moment, in which the incident called for the professor’s best response even when she was unaware of what that response was.

The episode described happened as follows. Professor D set up a Weblog for her “Managing Diversity” business management course. The purpose of the Weblog was to provide links to current articles and videos, as well as to invite students to reflect on these links. The specific link in question was an article describing how a local city manager was fired after revealing that he intended to have a sex change operation. Students were asked to reflect on this article. Most
students were indignant or outraged, but one student described his disgust with the city manager, whom he described as “disgusting,” a “thing,” and someone with “serious psychological issues.”

Professor D was upset and angry with the student, but chose to consult with her colleague, Professor R, before responding. Professor R helped to calm Professor D and together the two planned a strategy for dealing with the student’s comment.

Professor R pointed out that the student was having a predictable response to having taken for granted socially constructed gender categories. Professor D agreed and the two decided to have Professor R come and be a guest speaker in Professor D’s class.

As the primary obstacle was judged by both professors to be the dichotomous view of gender and sex that students have been socialized to accept, Professor R lectured on the concepts of the construction of dichotomies and “both/and” constructions in which supposed dichotomies overlap. He explained that it is normal to feel challenged or anxious when someone crosses between categories. His conclusion to the class was this: “Where you see difference, look for similarities. Where you see similarities, look for difference.”

The authors conclude that when topics get too emotional, instructors should turn to theory to explain why this is the case. Furthermore, it is helpful to share some degree of personal uncertainty with students, in order to open up a space for dialogue. Finally, while the student who started the process did not appear to be substantially changed by the experience, it remains the responsibility of teachers to create opportunities for such epiphanies to occur.


Writing in 1996, Lucal proposed what at the time was a new model for teaching students about race and ethnicity: the concept of white privilege. Although it is dated, the article is worth returning to for how it succinctly describes the weaknesses in mainstream models of anti-racist teaching which tend to focus only on the oppressive aspects of race relations, overshadowing how race privileges the dominant group – whites.

Lucal points out that most teachers of race and ethnicity use the “absence/presence” model of race, in which race is only applied to people of color and white is therefore both normal and natural. White people therefore find it difficult to understand that even when they do not have overtly racist beliefs, the fact of being white still gives them power that people of color do not enjoy. This makes it difficult to address issues of historical and institutional discrimination and the problems of white privilege and supremacy in the classroom.

In her “relational” model of race, Lucal shifts the focus to the ways in which any ‘race’ is constructed only in relation to other races. White people are privileged by race, even as people of color are oppressed by it. This model helps white students to see that race both privileges them and oppresses people of color, thus clearly illuminating to white students that race does, in fact, affect them. In addition, this approach helps to refocus students’ attention on the power dynamics
of race and racism, especially the structural dimensions of race. This approach focuses attention not only on the oppression of people of color, but on white privilege and white supremacy as well, and the ways in which whites benefit from the current racialized structure of our society.

After explaining her model, Lucal provides a few suggestions for teaching this model in the classroom. Instructors using the relational model are likely to encounter student resistance, because it calls into question many deeply held beliefs about fairness and meritocracy.

After suggesting several readings, Lucal provides the following recommendations to teachers: (1) Classroom climate is vitally important to using this model successfully; in particular, trust, openness, and confidentiality are vital. (2) White teachers should critically assess their own white privilege and take account of that privilege before presenting this model in the classroom. (3) To address white students’ negative reactions in the classroom, it may be helpful to use class privilege as an entry point, as many lower or working class students can identify with this social position and the lack of privilege it entails. (4) Focus students’ attention on the structural aspects of privilege and domination, shifting the blame and guilt away from the students themselves and onto the institutions and structures which have perpetuated this system of oppression and privilege. (5) Give positive examples of social change and help white students understand that they may be white, but they do not have to enact that whiteness and embrace the system of racism.


Moulder argues that we should do more to include a message of hope in classes where the curriculum is based largely on learning about systems of oppression. Specifically, she calls for the inclusion of resistance and change in courses where structures of domination are the primary focus. Many students are disheartened after taking a course in race and ethnicity or social problems; a message of hope is critical to reversing this trend and empowering students, rather than driving them into despair.

The author briefly reviews several race and ethnicity textbooks available at the time of printing and concludes that the majority spend less than 15% of the text discussing resistance and social change. A few textbooks, including those by Ringer and Lawless (1989) and Jaret (1995) do a better job. In addition, mostly race and ethnicity textbooks, while possibly including the theories and perspectives of minority sociologists, are written by white authors. This sends a hidden message to students that experts are white people. The author then briefly discusses the fact that students of the 1990s have (mostly) never participated in a large-scale social movement and thus have few white anti-racist role-models to look up to.

In the second section of the article the author offers her suggestions and examples for including a “message of hope” in a race and ethnicity course. First, she asserts that the course outline should include a focus on theories of social movements and change and the history of such struggles, as well as theories of oppression and domination. Moulder provides a short list of readings on such movements and theories.
Two assignments are presented. The first is an assignment in which students are tasked with taking ‘action steps’ to address racism on an individual basis, by talking with family members, reading a multicultural book to younger siblings, attending a church service of a different ethnic group, and so forth. A second assignment asks students to answer a few questions about the causes of racism and its prevalence in our society at the beginning of the course, and then to reflect on those answers and whether the students’ views have changed at the semester’s end.

Moulder concludes by suggesting two classroom experiences. The first is the inclusion of guest speakers (representative of local minority groups) who are activists for social change. The second is the inclusion of videos which address change and resistance (in addition to videos which address oppression and domination).


In this article, the authors propose that critical race theory (CRT) be adopted as the paradigm for teaching social work students about diversity. In the past social work education has tended to follow a more multicultural approach to teaching diversity, which emphasizes either cultural sensitivity or cultural competence. CRT, by contrast, acknowledges that social location is a function of institutional arrangements, considers the intersection of multiple identities, and explicitly works toward social justice for oppressed groups. The majority of the article is devoted to explaining CRT, with a short discussion of its applicability to social work at the end.

CRT is part of critical postmodern theory, which rejects universal truths and master narratives. Proponents of CRT are committed to social justice, finding the voice of the marginalized, and exploring the concept of intersectionality. CRT promotes social change in both institutional arrangements and in personal interactions simultaneously, thus bypassing the dichotomy of the micro and the macro. CRT assumes that race is a social construction that exists primarily for the purpose of social stratification and which is defined (and redefined) by the dominant group, for the benefit of the dominant group.

CRT asserts that race is pervasive in, and endemic to, social life and provides tools for understanding the various ways racism manifests itself in society. The authors briefly review the concepts of *micro aggressions*—covert or overt actions directed at persons usually without malicious intent—and *macro aggressions*—affronts directed at a group, not a specific person. CRT highlights the institutional arrangements which benefit the dominant group and reflect an inherent racial bias. Control of social practice by the dominant group can be seen in other areas of society such as knowledge generation and individual therapy, both of which are based on Euro-American cultural beliefs about individualism.

CRT is committed to transformative practices that lead to social justice, and does not hide this fact. It is also committed to advancing the voices of marginalized persons, recognizing that research can serve multiple purposes aside from simple discovery of the “truth.” Identifying resistive behaviors of subordinated peoples can help located the voice of marginalized groups, as
can counter-storytelling. Finally, CRT embraces the concept of intersectionality – the idea that one must consider the whole person and his or her complete situation when analyzing domination and subordination.

The authors conclude that CRT provides social work educators with several methods for teaching diversity and conceptualizing transformative social work practice. CRT requires students to analyze the institutional structures of society and recognize how they may disadvantage members of subordinated groups. CRT advances the idea that a person is much more than just culture, it is not prescriptive, and it is transformative in its pursuit of social justice via action.


This article reviews the various constructions of both ‘racism’ and ‘anti-racism’ in the U.S. and proposes some suggestions for helping white students become anti-racists by effectively challenging covert racism in their everyday interactions.

Racism in the U.S. is often thought of as an all-or-nothing proposition, with only the most overt bigots being labeled racists. But racism is more subtle and insidious. Students often convey racist ideas via coded language, such as the use of ‘ghetto’ as a stand-in for Blacks. Teachers must first illuminate covert racism before students can be taught how to engage in anti-racist work.

The literature has defined anti-racism in several different ways, from deliberate and public social action, such as a protest, to an intellectual and emotional understanding of the issues of race, to a daily social practice driven by combating racism. Unfortunately, the most common thread amongst these definitions is the perceived impossibility of the occurrence of white anti-racism among students. Whites ultimately must accept the paradox that while racism is their problem to fix, their actions and opinions must always take into account the experiences and thoughts of people of color.

Rebollo-Gill and Moras argue that most white individuals spend their energy finding ways to avoid being labeled racist, rather than actively challenging racism. Few whites actively police others’ words and behaviors. Some have suggested white anti-racist support groups, but these are problematic for several reasons: 1) whites do not experience racism; 2) these groups privilege white thought; and 3) such groups foster the notion that engaging racism is “something extra” white folks can do instead of something at the center of white people’s lives. The authors call instead for the “unmerciful creation of un-safe spaces for white Americans.”

After sharing their own experiences in the classroom as a man of color (who is immediately seen as “non-white” and thus as other), and as a white woman (who benefits from a great deal of privilege based on her skin color), the authors conclude the paper with a section on reflexivity in the classroom. Counter-narratives, they argue, are the key to promoting anti-racism in our classrooms. White students must be taught to actively breach social norms, calling out covertly
racist behaviors and coded language. For example, students might be taught to ask peers telling a story whether they really meant to say “Black” when they used the term “ghetto.” This calling out of coded language forces the original speaker to clarify his or her language, and momentarily introduces a counter-hegemonic narrative into the story, even if the speaker quickly corrects the error, by clarifying that ghetto was meant to imply “poor” or “raggedy.” The idea of counter-narratives can be used in the classroom as well, calling out students who use coded language to disguise racist talk, but should be done with care.


This article consider the role of emotions in the college classroom, especially in the diversity course, as well as strategies for managing these emotions. The cultural diversity class, as defined by Roberts and Smith, aims to teach students how to appreciate and respect difference. Emotions in cultural diversity classes may be heightened because of the intensity of students’ beliefs and because the course content gets at who students are as individuals.

The authors use a symbolic interactionist approach, combined with the concept of emotion management to address how teachers can best understand the classroom context. The classroom climate is shaped by the degree to which students and teachers follow rules about feelings – those social norms which prescribe the appropriate emotional responses in a classroom setting. Teaching requires emotional labor on the part of the instructor, but teachers must also effectively manage student emotions in the classroom as well.

The authors review four popular teaching methods and discuss the benefits and limitations of each, with regards to emotion management strategies. Cooperative learning is a method in which students work in teams, depending on one another to learn the course material. This strategy promotes teamwork and acceptance of peers. Collaborative learning involves collaboration between students and teachers, who sometimes act as co-learners and co-instructors. Friendships between students and the instructor can help to ameliorate potentially emotional conflicts. Instructors should also be careful to avoid tokenism (i.e., asking one student to speak for a whole group). A service learning approach melds course content with community service. Instructors should be aware that experiences in the community may alter the classroom climate and that such experiences can be emotionally intense, even overwhelming for students. Instructors may need to commit additional time to working with outside agencies and meeting with students to mitigate some of this emotional overload. Student-centered learning is a method which incorporates active learning activities with lecture, holding students responsible for their own learning. This creates a classroom climate welcoming of questioning and critical participation, but also invites discomfort, as students cannot be asked to think critically without experiencing some anxiety. Instructors may also need to attend to their own emotion management in processing their response to student resistance in such a course.

The final section of the article presents several strategies for managing student emotions in the diversity classroom. Aside from the many proactive strategies for keeping the classroom welcoming and safe (e.g., build a helping alliance, establish rapport, manage assignments
effectively, etc.) the authors present several strategies to deal with emotions which inevitably arise in the diversity classroom. Dyad exercises can expose the existence of norms and the social policing of these norms which occur in every interaction. Teachers can also use modeling of their expectations for safe and vibrant interaction as a tool to manage emotions. When conflict arises it should be treated as a teaching moment, to address both course content and the emotional content embedded in hurtful language. Teachers should also avoid personalizing student resistance, so that they may remain objective and theoretical when responding to such resistance. It can be helpful to create guidelines for discussion which present the students with baseline assumptions about racism as a common starting point. Framing the course around concepts rather than racial/ethnic groups can help to frame classroom discussions in a way that avoids “cultural tourism” and focuses discussions on the meaningful impact of race in our society. Finally, instructors should take care to be aware of students’ feelings of despair and hopelessness and counter these with messages of hope and activism.


In this article the authors briefly review the many challenges posed to teachers of race and ethnicity courses, especially instructors of color and graduate students. The authors then propose several institutional (i.e., departmental) and individual pedagogical strategies for addressing some of these challenges.

The strategies were developed as part of an experiential teaching group in the authors’ sociology department. The group was created after hostility in race relations classes noticeably increased and the department began to participate in the American Sociological Association’s Minority Opportunities Through School Transformation program. The group was founded on the premise that many of the classroom problems in race relations courses could be solved by communicating with others who shared similar concerns. The group placed emphasis on the graduate student perspective and helping teachers of color on both the departmental and individual levels.

The authors then discuss institutional sources of problems in the race relations course. The hierarchy of power in academic departments dissuades students or untenured faculty who teach such classes from asking for help from senior members of the faculty. A culture that empowers students to file complaints against instructors can also be a barrier to successfully teaching these controversial topics. Increasing workloads mean both limited resources and increased class sizes, which are not conducive to many of the suggested strategies for dealing with student resistance, such as experiential learning and small group discussions. Finally, graduate students of color are often asked to teach such classes to expose students to people of color, thus putting undue stress on this pool of instructors, who must also act as ambassadors as well as teachers.

Strategies for mitigating these structural challenges are discussed next. The first step is adjusting the culture of the department to allow for an understanding that teachers who teach such controversial classes will need help and should be encouraged to ask for it. Likewise, an official mentoring program which requires tenured faculty to share their experiences will help younger
instructors. A discussion group of race relations instructors can provide a safe space for them to discuss their challenges as well. The task of teaching these courses should be shared by members of all races and all instructors of race relations courses should combine resources to reduce their overall workload.

Finally, the authors discuss potential strategies for individual classroom pedagogy related to teaching race relations classes. They recognize that graduate students of color who teach such classes face additional obstacles from the first day of class, and therefore aim to help ameliorate some of these challenges. Helping students to understand institutionalized racism is the first step in helping them to become “part of the solution.” It can also be helpful for minority instructors to explicitly discuss the concept of power with students, to push them into an open discussion of race relations. Students can even be encouraged to claim power through discussion and exercises which force them to share information and experiences with others. Some teachers may ask students to serve as co-teachers. While emotionally taxing, it can be useful to weave the personal into a discussion of the political, interweaving personal experiences of the instructor with a discussion of sociological concepts. This can be strengthened by requiring students to attend office hours at least once a semester, allowing the instructor the opportunity to make a more personal connection with each student. Finally, teachers are encouraged to weave a “message of hope” into their readings and discussions throughout the semester, to counter the despair that many students often feel when faced with the sociological realities of race and racism.


In this article the authors present their three-part model for teaching about minority groups. This model includes the familiar concepts of prejudice and discrimination, but adds a third concept, advantage (defined here as “the benefit, economic or not, actually or potentially derived from discrimination”). Students are faced with a simplistic view of race and racism in their everyday lives and many competing theories and ambiguities in their sociology textbooks and courses. This model aims to remedy this problem.

When examining discrimination it is important to also examine what is gained by whom and how. The authors propose that instructors examine the role of advantage in each instance of discrimination, for one is not possible without the other. Advantage is conceptualized as akin to Peggy McIntosh’s concept of privilege, yet different. Whereas privilege is often characterized by its individual impact, advantage focuses on the macro-level social dimensions of these benefits. The authors argue that, “In short, evidence of advantage is best discussed at the macro level while its experience is best understood at the individual one.”

The authors cite three reasons why the concept of advantage is a useful classroom tool. First, it enables identification of economic advantages as well as other benefits such as regulation of marriage, residential arrangements, etc. Second, advantage avoids the “zero-sum proposition” that someone must always benefit if another person suffers (a purely economic argument). Finally, advantage allows for the refutation of charges such as reverse discrimination by, for
example, casting opposition to affirmative action as a play by the dominant group to regain lost advantage.

The authors then provide a cyclical concept map of their advantage model, showing advantage leading to discrimination leading to prejudice, leading to advantage, *ad infinitum*. They cite three benefits of this model. First, the model is usefully textured, meaning that the three elements are all structurally intertwined in any historical situation. Second, the model is functionally correlational, meaning that the persistence and magnitude of discrimination is linked to the persistence and magnitude of advantage. Finally, the model is comprehensive, accounting for both macro- and micro-level social dimensions.

The authors conclude that their model would benefit from the instrumentalization and measurement of advantage and that it is restricted in its ability to explain certain individual-level incidents like hate crimes. They are unsure of students’ reactions to the use of this model, having collected only a handful of informal (but positive) comments.

Research


In this article, Harris evaluates the effectiveness of her teaching methods and pedagogy in transforming student attitudes toward race and racism. She aims to create a safe space for the students in her course to discuss issues of race and racism by establishing ground rules for classroom discussion with her students. The article reports on a study the author conducted where she collected narratives both individually and in focus groups from the students enrolled in her class. The article outlines the results of this study.

The goal of the study was to determine whether the course reduces racial prejudice and promotes racial sensitivity and awareness amongst undergraduate students. Through the analysis of student narratives, three themes or “domains” emerged: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

**Cognitive Domain.** Students experienced an intellectual (re)awakening that transformed their thought processes about race and racism. Students were better able to conceptualize the idea of race and their knowledge about race began to inform their out-of-class experiences.

**Affective Domain.** Students experienced an emotional (re)awakening. Students were able to better understand why racial minorities are perceived as angry and this emotional connection led to more emotional and intense classroom discussions.

**Behavioral Domain.** Students began to perceive themselves as activists using their interpersonal interactions to eradicate racism, instead of as passive victims or innocent bystanders. Students began to adopt specific communications strategies to address racism.

Housee begins this article by describing her experiences teaching race and racism before proceeding to detail the results of six interviews that she conducted with other teachers of the subject, focusing on how instructor’s students’ racial identities impact classroom dynamics and course results. Housee is of South Asian origin with dark skin, which she references throughout the article to illustrate how she is treated differently than her white peers.

Housee initially focuses on the reaction of black students to white instructors teaching race and racism: “Only those who feel it can teach it.” This criticism focuses not on the academic ability of white lecturers, but on their ability to understand the lived experience of students of color. Housee recounts an incident in which black students did not classes in a course jointly taught by her and a white colleague on the days that her colleague was lecturing. Critical race theory addresses the concerns of these students, calling for recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color, which white lecturers cannot provide.

The second concern raised by black students was that “It isn’t [because] you’re white – but what whiteness has come to mean.” Black students did not feel they could trust the power and privilege of a white instructor’s “whiteness,” premised on power relationships born out of slavery and colonialism. Housee argues that while black experience is important, white lecturers can bring an important anti-racist experience to the class as well and are better positioned to challenge and ‘mark’ whiteness in the classroom. Housee cautions that setting a standard that only people of color can teach race and racism may result in the sub-discipline becoming ghettoized, associated only with black instructors. She argues that no formal academic teaching space should be exclusionary.

While Housee is able to use her racial identity to help teach about race and racism, she believes that all instructors can use their racial identities to do the same, if students can be taught to grasp the social construction of such identities. Housee interviewed six other instructors (four females: two Asian, two white; and two males: one African-Caribbean and the other white) about their experiences teaching race, querying the instructors on such themes as whether teaching these courses differed from their experiences in other classrooms, the effects of race or ethnicity on teaching and learning, and students’ perceptions of the teaching of race and racism. Housee offers several pages of quotations from these interviews and the results are summarized below.

The interviews confirmed that lecturer and student identities do shape classroom dynamics. For black lecturers, their presence helped dispel the myth that universities are white places. White instructors spoke to how black students often challenged their right to speak on race and racism, and emphasized the importance of using an anti-racist strategy at such points. Whiteness also seems to matter less if the instructor interrogates power issues associated with “whitarchy” which is the idea that whites dominate society. Ultimately, the author concludes that what counts in the classroom is less how one’s identity is used and more how the teacher is able to include and challenge students of all races, by challenging whitarchy and honoring black students’ experiences.

Jacobs focuses in this article focuses on interactions between students as well as interactions between students and the instructor in race and ethnicity courses. She concentrates in particular on moments of conflict and tension and identifies those topics which most frequently generate discord, the protagonists of the conflict and its impact on witnesses, and the underlying conditions which produce intense interactions. Jacobs interviewed race and ethnicity instructors in England to conduct her analysis.

Minorities continue to be underrepresented amongst this population of university teachers in the U.K. and, while all instructors find the courses challenging to teach, minority instructors face different challenges than white instructors. Almost all the instructors said that teaching about race and ethnicity is a very different experience than teaching any other sociological topic.

The author identifies three types of conflict: overt expression of individual racism; indirect expressions of racism; and overt group conflicts. Overt conflict was reported frequently in this study, with the greatest number of conflicts emerging from discussions about Muslim people. Gender and sexuality was the next most conflict-generating category, followed by anti-Jewish racism, anti-black racism, and English nationalistic sentiments.

In terms of who experienced this conflict, women instructors experienced more conflict in their seminars than men and such conflicts were more acute in nature. Ethnic minority women were especially affected.

The causes of conflict were identified as follows: inherent difficulties in learning about discrimination and racialized violence – students become very upset when learning about severe oppression; wider political conflicts – external issues of major importance to students can lead to conflict; identity politics – shared experiences of injustice and oppression amongst marginalized groups can lead to conflict with the dominant group; and the emotional undercurrents of teaching race – this is an emotionally charged topic.

Jacobs concludes that while there is no single strategy for addressing conflict in race and ethnicity classes, teaching strategies which emphasize respect for others and open communication are a good start. Students should be able to understand a multiplicity of experiences and identify the role of power relations in shaping social outcomes. Finally, she argues that the productiveness of conflict may outweigh its potential harm.


In this article, Marullo compares the learning outcomes of two differently designed race and ethnicity courses: one course included a service-learning requirement while the other used an experiential learning option. Marullo begins the article by reviewing the literature on service-
learning and sociology and briefly describes the service-learning programs at Georgetown University which included an integrated course in which service learning is part of the course content and a one-credit option in which students could choose to volunteer for an organization whose goals are related to the content of an existing course. The latter program did not integrate the service-learning experience into the course content.

Marullo taught two sections of Race and Ethnicity and did not decide until flipping a coin on the first day of class which would be the experiential class and which would be the service-learning class. Students in each class were given a 20-page, 400-question pretest and posttest surveys, mainly consisting of 5-point Likert items. The overall hypothesis was that students in the service-learning class would benefit more in the areas of citizenship, empowerment, diversity awareness, leadership, moral development, and attribution of structural rather than individual causality for social problems. Because of a small sample size of 40 students per section, many indicators showed no difference between the two sections, but there were still several differences between the two classes, supporting the original hypothesis.

Students in the service-learning section showed significantly greater increases in two indicators of citizenship: voting in local elections and fighting for what one believes in. These students were also significantly more likely to report an increase in their rate of participation in community affairs (empowerment). Service-learning students were more likely to report increases in the diversity indicators of trying to understand things from a friend’s point of view and respect for the views of others, while the experiential students actually showed an increased likelihood to make up their minds right away (a negative indicator). Service-learning students felt more able to lead a group at the end of the semester and showed significant increases in moral development. Finally, while both groups increased their sensitivity to the claim that individuals suffer from problems beyond their control, the service-learning students were less likely to accept the claim that individuals have control over whether they are wealthy or poor. Overall, ten items indicated significant improvement specifically for the service-learning students.

Students in the service-learning section also rated their “special learning exercises” better than did the students in the experiential learning section. The experiential students did, however, rate the course higher overall than the service-learning students, possibly due to the instructor’s previous experience teaching experiential learning courses and the perception that such activities were more “fun” than service-learning. Students in the service-learning section also had slightly higher overall course grades. While the service-learning component required additional instructor time, Marullo stresses the many benefits of including a service learning component in a race and ethnicity course and believes that the time, effort and even aggravation inherent to including a service-learning component are far outweighed by the benefits of doing so.
Teaching Innovations


This article blends Paulo Freire’s problem-posing method, youth participatory action research, and case study methodology to introduce an alternative instructional strategy called Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP). The author notes that hip hop has long illuminated problems of poverty, police brutality, patriarchy, misogyny, incarceration, and racial discrimination, as well as themes of love, hope, and joy. Likewise, one of the central goals of CHHP is to respond to issues of racism and other aspects of social difference that Black people/people of color face in urban and suburban schools and communities while also analyzing how hip hop can be used as a tool for social justice in teacher education and beyond.

CHHP starts from the premise that hip hop is an important lens for socio-political analysis and representation of marginalized communities. The fundamental elements of CHHP are as follows:

- It is participatory and youth-driven.
- It is cooperative, engaging students in a joint research process in which each contributes equitably.
- It foregrounds race, racism, gender, and other axes of social difference in the design, data collection, and analysis.
- It helps prospective teachers focus on the racialized, gendered, and other intersections of social differences, experiences within and by communities of color.
- It challenges traditional paradigms, methods, and texts as a way to engage in a discourse on race that is informed by the actual conditions and experiences of people of color.
- It is committed to co-learning, co-facilitation, and multi-directionality.
- It is trans-disciplinary, drawing on Black/Africana Studies, Raza Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Women’s Studies, to name a few.
- It involves capacity building.
- It is an empowering process through which all participants can increase control of their lives.
- It seeks a balance among critical thinking, reflection, analysis, and action.
- It emphasizes a union of mind, body, and spirit rather than a separation of these elements.

The remainder of the article is dedicated to describing ways that the author and colleagues have implemented CHHP in the classroom. Two goals drove this implementation. First, Akom and colleagues decided that if their course was going to be taught through the lens of CHHP, it needed to be a collaboration between hip hop scholars and hip hop artists that utilized hip hop as a vehicle to explore social justice themes. A second goal of the class was to develop a counter-hegemonic sphere in which students explored deep-seated norms about race, class, gender, culture, language, and the availability of institutional resources and privilege inside and outside of schools.
To meet these goals the author and colleagues developed the “Inside the Hip Hop Studio” project in collaboration with a local radio station. The goal of the studio was to provide a public forum for debate and intellectual engagement of issues related to the production and consumption of hip hop culture and life. The main component of the studio was a series of interviews, public performances, and debates with prominent figures in the hip hop industry. Given the location of the university (San Francisco), the students had ready access to such artists.

A second project, “The Community Case Study,” was developed from the idea that communities of color are places of strength—not just so-called places of pathology. The purpose of this assignment was to use hip hop as an educational tool for creating social change. Groups of no more than five students selected a social and local community issue, and were asked to use hip hop to educate the general public about the issue being studied. The case study assignment project involved the following steps:

- Begin with a question: For example, do young people who identify with hip hop culture view race differently?
- Analyze the problem: Conduct background research to respond to the following questions:
  - Who? Identify the actors.
  - What? Describe in detail what you are seeing.
  - When? Document things like date, time, etc. and describe the significance of various events to the community.
  - Where? Note the location and history of the community or the subject of study.
  - Why? How? Encourage students to think more broadly about the conditions influencing the topic of interest.
- Guide the fieldwork with a plan: Review the literature, look for gaps in the literature that the case study illuminates.
- Design the key elements of the research: Write a methods section that emphasizes the goals of the research, the application of different methodologies, and background information. Be reflexive.
- Implications/Evaluation: End the project with a critical evaluation and discussion of the key findings.


This article begins from the position that while U.S. schools are more culturally diverse than at any other moment in the nation’s history, educational curricula continue to emphasize mainstream culture. Asimeng-Boahene advocates for the use of counter-storytelling in the form of African proverbs as a tool for teaching the concepts of social justice in urban school settings.

Counter-storytelling embraces the use of languages, skills, attitudes, interests, and concerns that reflect and validate culturally and linguistically diverse children. The goal of counter-storytelling is to help the reader understand what life is like for others and to invite others to understand and experience new and different worlds. Asimeng-Boahene offers several examples throughout the
article of how proverbs from peoples in Africa can be used to teach U.S. students about social justice while developing their global understanding. For example, the Zimbabwean proverb “Treat the days well and they will treat you well,” can be used to teach students about the importance of returning kindness when it is shown. The appendix to this article offers several examples for how proverbs can be used both within the classroom context and as part of assignments.


This article describes a new approach to social justice education that looks at diversity through the structural dynamics of power and privilege: the Storytelling Project. The goal of the project was to develop a theoretical framework to guide the design of curricular and professional development activities that can effectively engage people in a crucial examination of race and racism through storytelling and the arts.

The Storytelling Project brought together a diverse team of scholars, artists, public school teachers, and undergraduate interns for an intensive process of collaborative exploration, experimentation, and collective theory building. The project team met for a full day once a month for an academic year. In preparation for these intensive meetings, team members completed a series of readings on critical race theory, social justice education, the psychology of race and racism, and critical art theory. The present article summarizes some of the key theoretical and methodological insights gained from the readings that the team completed. In particular, the Storytelling Project was informed by four key interacting concepts that were most salient from the readings: 1) race as a social construction; 2) racism as an institutionalized system of hierarchy that operates on multiple levels; 3) white supremacy/white privilege as key, though often neglected, aspects of systemic racism; and 4) colorblindness as a problematic notion that serves as both an ideal and barrier to racial progress.

Over time, the team developed the Storytelling Project Model. At the heart of the model is attention to the dynamics of consciously creating a community in which stories about race and racism can be openly shared, respectfully heard, and critically discussed and analyzed. The authors refer to this process as creating a counter-storytelling community. These communities may involve four distinct story types that may be used for analyzing race and racism:

- **Stock Stories** are the stories about race and racism that are most public and ubiquitous in the mainstream institutions of society. These stories are told by the dominant group and are used to rationalize the status quo. They are passed on through historical and literary documents and celebrated through public rituals, law, the arts, education, and media representations.

- **Concealed stories** exist alongside stock stories, but most often remain hidden from mainstream view. These stories reveal both the stories told from the perspective of racially dominated groups and stories uncovered by a critical analysis of statistics and social science data about the differing ways that race shapes experiences and life chances in our society.
• **Resistance stories** show how people, both historically and in today’s society, have resisted racism, challenged the stock stories that support it, and have fought for more equal and inclusive social arrangements. These stories are rarely taught in history books or represented in popular culture.

• **Emerging/transforming stories** are new stories deliberately constructed in a storytelling community to challenge the stock stories, build on and amplify concealed and resistance stories, and offer ways to interrupt the status quo to work for change.

By placing the four story types side by side and making them worthy of critical inspection, it becomes obvious that stock stories are just one among many, and thus are contestable. Moreover, by expressing these various story types through the arts, storytellers can be encouraged to engage emotions, physical senses, bodies and imaginations, while committing more deeply to the knowledge that emerges through these explorations.


This article describes using museums to teach about ethnic relations. King describes seminars that she offers in ethnically-diverse cities in the U.S. and Canada. These short (1-2 week) classes aim to help participants examine the meaning and concept of ethnicity, apply sociological theories of education, and incorporate the use of museums into teaching, learning, and living. The seminars also bring participants into interaction with a variety of resource persons in multicultural schools and museums by traveling to visit multicultural cities. Due to the serious time and financial commitment of these courses, it is important to outline all course responsibilities and costs ahead of time.

The remainder of the article gives examples of how the course is organized in three locations: Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; and Vancouver, British Columbia. In each city the participants visit several museums (both fine art and cultural), a multicultural school, and a few smaller venues (such as art galleries) with the goal of gaining a greater understanding of both the broad concept of multiculturalism and the more specific sociological concepts of power, status and roles, as well as the functions of education; the ramifications of social class, gender, and ethnic affiliation; and respect for culture and heritage.

Instructors wishing to use museums as a teaching tool must prepare in advance; it is especially important to contact one’s chosen resource people in advance to brief them on the course content and goals. The instructor should also gather information on the area and visit the locations in advance, to ensure that the sites will meet the course needs.

This article describes the value of art in teaching diversity courses. Artistic expression in the classroom helps students to build empathy skills because it facilitates students imagining they are someone else. Art is also a socially acceptable means of displaying anger, an emotion often experienced in classrooms focused on diversity education.

The authors conducted a statistical analysis to answer the questions of what type of student was the most likely to resist artistic guest speakers and what patterns existed in this type of resistance. Each of the authors invited a guest speaker to help educate their students about diversity issues; these guest speakers were all artists specializing in music, visual arts, or dance. The speakers were also all members of a racial or ethnic minority. The speakers shared their life stories with the students, which then became a reference point for classroom discussions.

The authors collected over 1,000 questionnaires completed by students and included all of these in their analysis. The questionnaires included both open- and closed-ended questions. The results demonstrated that, overall, students found guest speakers to be both entertaining and thought-provoking. Some groups found greater value in these guest speakers than others, however.

Older students were more likely to appreciate the artists’ contribution to course content than their younger counterparts; female students made the same assessment at a higher rate than males. Likewise, students majoring in the arts appreciated the program more than business or engineering majors. The authors speculate that young students and men are more likely to be influenced by neo-conservative ideologies that promote opposition to diversity education.

The authors conclude that guest speakers are an effective means of teaching about diversity and that even resisting students can prove useful to the class by providing a dissenting view to be processed and understood with empathy. Finally, while bringing in ethnic and racial minority members as guest speakers is useful, optimal diversity education requires classrooms populated by a diverse student body.


Dominance and oppression are not only abstract relational positions, they are also micro-processes that are embodied and enacted in interaction. The goal of this article is to review the literature on the sociology of the body and provide three in-class activities which enable students to understand how their habits and behaviors in interaction with others contribute to processes of stratification. Nonverbal cues such as gaze and interpersonal distance reinforce the superiority of dominant individuals and the inferior status of oppressed individuals. The body is a key link between interpersonal interactions and the social structures of power relations.
The goal of the activities presented is to disrupt students’ conception of body-mind duality and emphasize the falseness of this concept. Abstract theories are connected to physical movements to reinforce the relationship between the body and self. The three activities are outlined below:

**Student Confederates and “The Meeting.”** In this activity a selected group of students are asked to role-play high school staff members, taking on the characters of the principal, administrative assistant, English teacher, math teacher, etc. The students are asked to enter the room and seat themselves at a table, in preparation for a staff meeting. They interact with one another while seated, using primarily nonverbal cues. The remainder of the class then attempts to guess the roles portrayed by each student, and are largely successful, according to the author. This demonstrates how nonverbal cues display status and power (e.g., the principal sits at the head of the table).

**The Pink Couch and The Panhandler.** These two activities are similar in design. In the pink couch activity students take on the body positions of characters in a sculpture showing a man relaxing on a couch with his legs and arms splayed carelessly while a woman seated next to him has drawn her legs drawn under her, placed her hands meticulously in her lap, and straightened her back. Students often feel uncomfortable taking on the opposite role to their gender. Women experience feelings of dominance and men feelings of sadness or submission. The panhandler activity is similar, except the students portray a panhandler with his or her hat out asking for money from a passerby.

Students were asked how they felt when engaged in these activities. They overwhelmingly reported that the activities prompted them to reflect deeply about the subtle mechanisms of stratification – more so than simply reading or talking about social stratification. Students were largely supportive of the activities and enjoyed them. A few limitations include the static nature of simply holding positions in the second and third activities (rather than engaging in movement) and the inability for an instructor to fully instruct or control the actions of the role-players in the first activity. Finally, instructors should be mindful to use questions to prompt students to reflect on how the body supports stratification and forms of dominance and not jump to provide the answers; the goal of the activities is student reflection.


This short presents several songs by artists popular in the early 1990s, along with the sociological themes these songs address, such as prejudice and discrimination and race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

After listing the songs and explicating the lyrics, Martinez describes students’ reactions to the use of music in the classroom. While mostly positive, reactions ranged from intense emotional responses epiphanies about the concept of institutional racism as well as to complaints that music should not be part of the class time.
Using music is a useful way to expose students to material on sociological topics in a way that is both engaging and meaningful to students. Contemporary songs and artists who emphasize the themes of the course should be used to maintain student interest and relevance to the students’ lives.


In this short article, Martinez describes how popular music can illustrate for students two different African American leadership styles: the politics of accommodation exemplified by Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr. and the politics of protest exemplified by W.E.B. Du Bois and Malcolm X. Marvin’s Gaye’s “What’s Goin’ On” and Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror” serve as examples of the accommodation approach. Gil Scot-Heron’s “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” and NWA’s “Fuck the Police” represent the protest mode.

Martinez provides advice to instructors wishing to use such an approach, focusing on students’ response to the use of music in the classroom. It is helpful, she writes, prepare a list of discussion questions before playing music. Moreover, students should be warned about any graphic lyrics in the music and allowed to leave the classroom before it is played if they choose to. The instructor should explain how the lyrics directly relate to lecture material and let students express their responses freely.

Martinez concludes that playing music creates a unique learning environment which enhances the quality of student interaction and discussion.


In this article, Nichols and Berry develop an experiential activity designed to teach social stratification. The activity is riding the bus and the purpose of the assignment (which includes a reflection paper on the students’ experiences) is for students to experience some of the barriers faced by low-income people while gaining personal insight into how structural inequalities manifest themselves in everyday lives.

Nichols and Berry note that community-based learning helps students encounter others and can dramatically illustrate issues of stratification and inequality, but it is not without its drawbacks. Students interact with individuals in other social positions in a very limited context. The authors offer a three-part process to overcome these limitations: student exposure, experience, and examination of what they experienced. These three elements are captured in the experiential activity which follows.

Students are first exposed to stratification concepts via class lectures and Alex Kolowitz’s book There Are No Children Here. Students begin to understand the role of structure in shaping life chances and engage in an in-class activity in which they examine educational stratification within their own city.
Students next experience stratification by riding the bus from their university to a location about 50 minutes away, in a very different (low-income) section of town. Students are asked to record their observations (a guide is included in an appendix) about who takes the bus in different parts of the city, how the neighborhoods differ as the bus progresses long its route, and the structural factors affecting the bus route (e.g., if it was on time, how long it takes, how much it costs, etc.). The authors recommend that instructors ride the bus route they wish to select first to ensure it meets their needs and offer suggestions for picking a bus route in an appendix.

After their experience, students are expected to complete a paper describing their experience, the details of their bus ride, and the demographics of the people and neighborhoods they observed. They also reflect on what it would be like to be in the place of someone who relies upon public transportation, answering questions such as, “What would it be like to use public transportation to drop a one-year-old child at day care and a six-year-old child at school as well as get to your 36-hour-a-week job serving food at the university’s cafeteria?” Finally, students are asked to compare their experience with the conditions described in There Are No Children Here.

The examination portion of the activity involves class discussion of the issues and concepts that students observed and experienced on their rides. Nichols and Berry emphasize the importance of highlighting the intersection of race, class, and gender and use local demographics collected from the transit authority to illustrate how these structured inequalities impact how easily people are able to realize common necessities. The class also discusses the cost of taking the bus versus owning a car and the logistics of paying for a discounted bus pass when living month-to-month.


This article describes a powerful field experiment project and subsequent presentation designed to teach both senior-level and first-year students about the realities of covert and overt discrimination in their community. The idea for the project emerged after the first author, Pence, experienced resistance from white students who viewed the film True Colors. The film shows a white man and black man, both equal in all characteristics except for the color of their skin, going into various social settings. Time and time again, the white man is treated well, while the black man experiences various forms of hostility and discrimination. Although the film is often well received, students sometimes dismiss the findings by saying that is different or more tolerant than the city shown in the film.

To overcome this resistance, Pence created a field experiment involving a research team with two male discrimination testers, both students, who were matched as closely as possible on all characteristics except for race. The team also included four observers. The team worked together to select three sites, also shown in the True Colors film, and objective criteria for measuring differential treatment. The two testers, one white and one black, then visited a department store, car dealership, and an apartment complex. In each location, one tester entered five minutes after the other had left. The findings of the study were startling. For example, when the black student entered a car dealership and asked to test drive a car, he was told by the salesperson that the keys
were unavailable for “at least two hours.” The white student arrived just five minutes later and inquired about the same car. The same salesperson tossed him the keys and told him to “come back when you know the car.”

The senior level students who completed the field experiment prepared a presentation that they gave to first-year students in introductory sociology and social problems courses. They also gave presentations in other classes, across the campus, and on the campus radio.

The article concludes with a discussion of project concerns, including the possibility for seriously upsetting and/or angering students who become witnesses to discrimination as well as student demands to identify the businesses that engaged in the discriminatory activities. The article also includes a discussion of impacts on first-year students who heard the presentations and on the broader campus community.


In this article the author presents a successful classroom exercise. The exercise requires students to attend a church service of a different racial group, take detailed notes on the experience, and then submit a paper analyzing their experience and observations sociologically.

The exercise has two versions: in the first, students are assigned a church service and asked to attend it individually; in the second the class attends an African American fundamentalist Baptist church service as a group. Students have responded positively to both versions, being fearful at first, but ultimately enjoying the experience, with few exceptions. Interestingly, African American students from Northern states enjoyed the experience, but found white church services to be “boring.”

Instructions for facilitating the exercise follow.

The instructor should first locate appropriate churches within visiting distance. Next, the instructor should attend the services personally to appraise their suitability for the exercise.

For the first version of the exercise, the instructor should gather demographic information on the students, pair them with local churches, and inform the students of which churches they will attend. Students should attend the principle services of the week. If students feel unsafe, the instructor should offer to go with them. Students can also be asked to share their experiences with others who have yet to attend a service, to encourage them. When the whole class attends a service together, the instructor should arrive beforehand to greet each student at the door.

Students are asked to use the participant observation research method, waiting until after they leave the church to jot down notes from memory. Giving the students a writing guide for the essay beforehand will help focus their observations. Evaluating students “before and after” reactions is important to understanding learning that may occur as a result of the activity. Class discussion after the service(s) could focus on: 1) the social processes of assimilation and
acculturation; 2) the concepts of “manifest” and “latent”; 3) sociological method; 4) social organization; and 5) change in class attitude.

The author concludes with three suggestions for future research. First, she recommends further exploration of the differences between the reactions of northern and southern African American students. She also suggests measuring how long the positive effect on attitude lasts. And finally, she questions whether visiting a fundamentalist church leaves white students with the impression that all African Americans are emotional and uninhibited.


This article presents a “back door” into discussing race and ethnicity in four steps: 1) asking students to contemplate healing and suffering; 2) providing them with tools to analyze the self and others; 3) asking students to apply these principles to the study of the culture of the Ukraine; and 4) asking students to contemplate how narrative feels.

The authors begin by sharing their backgrounds, including their experiences with yoga, meditation, vision quests, psychotherapy, dream work, hypnotherapy, art, shamanic journeying, play therapies, extended retreats, and ritual celebrations, all of which have led to the non-rational mode of knowing embedded in their pedagogy. Inspired by the film The Color of Fear, the authors decided to use the sharing of stories about racism as a way for students to see healing in action.

Because few of the privileged students at the University of Virginia have ever experienced or witnessed racial discrimination, the authors chose to begin with the universal concept of suffering, to which any human who has ever suffered can relate. They employ the observing ego and the participant observation method, asking students to think of a recent dream and note if it has qualities of personal relevance to them. Students also learn meditation techniques to look inward and decorate white gift bags to express themselves in non-rational ways. The intellectual component of the course proceeds simultaneously, teaching students about folklore in the Ukraine. Comparisons to The Matrix and Saving Private Ryan illustrate the concept of the historical relevance of folktale epics.

The students then learn about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which the instructors link to the psychological state of African slaves brought to the United States. The students have watched The Color of Fear in the interim and are collecting their own stories about traumatic situations. The students also watch and analyze the film Slam. Journal topics begin to focus on experiences with race and racism.

The results of this method have been very positive, with students strongly praising the use of meditation in the class. The authors suggest that their methods have been successful in reaching “that place between the mind and heart where true empathy lies.” The true power of the method lies in “planting seeds which will later develop in ways now invisible, but no less powerful.”

In this article the authors introduce the concept of a learning center and explain how they set up several learning centers to help immerse their sixth grade class in African American culture. Although this article is geared toward instructors teaching younger students, it may be of interest to college instructors who engage in service learning activities or otherwise work with younger people in the community as part of their university curriculum. Active learning centers are distinct spaces in a classroom which students spend 7-10 minutes interacting in before moving to the next learning center. The centers might include: a collection of texts, physical artifacts, videos, music, interactive web sites, or visual art.

The instructors created six learning centers, based on their belief in teaching about the African American experience, from Africa to slavery to the modern day. Three times during the semester the entire class period was dedicated to learning centers, which the students moved between. The individual centers were designed to encourage students to think critically and question their assumptions about race. The instructors were lucky to have the assistance of the school librarian, who allowed them use of the library for the class periods using the learning centers.

The authors provide a detailed account of the each week of learning center. During the first week, the initial center featured African artifacts such as a zebra skin, a metal spear and sword, and a wooden mask. The second center provided a series of nonfiction texts; after reading the texts, students were asked to discuss what they learned about African culture. The third center presented the students with a variety of traditional African music. The fourth center displayed emotionally moving illustrations (paintings) about slavery. The fifth center asked students to reflect and imagine what it was like to be invaded by whites, to be a slave master, and to treat slavery as a business. The sixth and final center was an interactive quilting web site illustrating the codes used by African slaves.

The second week focused on information about the Underground Railroad, Civil War, reconstruction, jazz, and the Harlem renaissance. The third week took students on a journey through the Civil Rights movement, current African American culture, and current African culture in present-day Nigeria. Examples of the content and activities at each learning center are provided in the article..

The authors experienced very positive reactions from students and recommend this technique to other instructors looking to immerse their students in the culture of another race. This type of activity also has the benefit of accommodating many different learning styles. The authors conclude with three pieces of advice for instructors looking to use learning centers in their classrooms: 1) the centers require a great deal of time to prepare, so be ready; 2) tap into colleagues and the school librarian to help find resources; and 3) the process is always evolving; learning center content can and should change over time.
Contact Information

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