Antiracist Pedagogy in the Information Literacy Classroom: Techniques to Foster Transformative Learning

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Transformative learning (Mezirow)

“We can become critically reflective of the assumptions we or others make when we learn to solve problems instrumentally or when we are involved in communicative learning. We may be critically reflective of assumptions when reading a book, hearing a point of view, engaging in task-oriented problem solving (objective reframing), or self-reflectively assessing our own ideas and beliefs (subjective reframing). Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations.”

My path to this work

Anti-Racist Pedagogy Across the Curriculum (ARPAC) faculty workshop

- History of systemic racism and power in the U.S. and higher education
- Socialization and racialization
- Antiracist pedagogical strategies

St. Cloud State University, Anti-Racist Pedagogy Across the Curriculum (ARPAC), [http://www.stcloudstate.edu/arpac/](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/arpac/)
Social location and intersectionality

- Socialization around binaries (dominant and marginalized groups)
- Social location is the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, age
- Intersectionality refers to multiple complex, interconnected layers of oppression or power
Antiracism defined

Stems from Critical Race Theory
Focuses on systemic and institutional racism
Requires critical consciousness of internalized racial superiority or oppression
Helps lessen the “risk of flattening difference”
Necessitates activism to dismantle racism

Antiracist pedagogy defined

Combines multicultural education and critical pedagogy to “explain and counteract the persistence and impact of racism using praxis as its focus to promote social justice for the creation of a democratic society in every respect.”

Components of antiracist pedagogy

1. Content that includes issues of structural racism, power, and inequality
2. Teaching methods that encourage students to engage actively, authentically, and critically
3. Critical self-reflection on our own racial identity development
4. Antiracist organizing beyond the classroom
Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

- Information resources reflect their creators’ expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority. It is contextual in that the information need may help to determine the level of authority required.

Information Has Value

- Information possesses several dimensions of value, including as a commodity, as a means of education, as a means to influence, and as a means of negotiating and understanding the world. Legal and socioeconomic interests influence information production and dissemination.
Conversation

• Topics and ideas within information literacy that relate to power, privilege, and inequality based on race
  • Course content
  • Classroom community
  • Organizing beyond the classroom
Tips for designing assignments or activities

- Select search examples that focus on race and inequality
- Seek out diverse perspectives and voices
- Critique the scholarly publication process
- Problematize the notion of academic literacy
- Discuss inequalities regarding information access
- Disclose the control held by commercial publishers
- Encourage students to discover and share what they already know, and to listen to others’ experiences
- Assign meaningful group work
Research process through a critical lens
Requirements of critical self-reflection

- To learn our history and recognize institutional and systemic racism
- To address personal biases, behaviors, and actions
- To understand our individual roles in perpetuating racist systems
- To examine our social locations and how our privilege or oppression operates
- To work through our racial identity development*
- To challenge ourselves to achieve deeper understanding and commitment

Questions to help you prepare for library instruction...

1. How will I encourage community building in the classroom?
2. How will I be mindful of the ways power and privilege impact my teaching?
3. What anti-racist pedagogy method(s) will I use?
   - Highlight diverse voices and research methods that are accountable to communities of color
   - Challenge “authority” in information sources (i.e. popular vs. scholarly)
   - Examine information accessibility issues based on forms of capital (i.e. social, cultural, economic)
   - Reflect on personal or disciplinary bias toward dominant views
   - Other (describe)

Questions to help you prepare for library instruction, continued

4. How will I implement the anti-racist pedagogy method(s)? What specific curricular changes will I make?

5. What kind of resistance might I face in the class and how should I respond?

Questions to help you reflect upon and develop your antiracist teaching

1. How effective was the antiracist pedagogy method(s)? How did the students demonstrate their engagement or disengagement during the class?
2. In what ways did my social location affect the learning environment within the class? Was I aware of this during the class and if so, how did or didn’t I address it?
3. How was white privilege present in the class? How did I or why didn’t I, acknowledge or respond to it?
4. What is one thing I will try differently the next time I teach this (or a similar) class?
5. What did I learn about myself that can help improve my efforts toward antiracism?

Responsibilities as antiracists

**Internal work**
- Address personal biases, behaviors, and actions
- Critically reflect on internalized racial superiority or oppression
- Commit to listening

**Organized efforts**
- Disrupt and dismantle racist behaviors and practices
- Talk to other educators
- Participate in activism efforts

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