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Fast Five with the TFSC

A Newsletter for First Year Faculty at the University of Arkansas

APRIL 2022 THEME: ENHANCING DIVERSITY

3 Quick Tips:

1. Recently the TFSC and the Cultivating Diversity in the Classroom Committee held an event about incorporating diversity in the classroom. To view the presentation: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/wctfscpub/26/> See below for two other resources by the speakers at the event.
2. From Dr. Rogelio Garcia Contreras winner of the 2022 University of Arkansas Service Learning Award: “Access to opportunity has to be part of inclusion. This is the key to create real change.” To do this consider looking at the Arkansas Global Changemakers, a group that Dr. Garcia Contreras co-founded with Dr. J. Laurence Hare of the History Department. The group can help you can access ways to discuss equity and social innovation: <https://globalchangemakers.uark.edu/> .
3. From Dr. Jackie Wiersma-Mosley winner of the Cognella Innovation National Teaching Award for Family Science: “It can be as simple as having students attend a multicultural event, eating a food they have not eaten before, or visiting a museum.” To learn more check out the open educational access book written by Dr. Wiersma-Mosley and Dr. Margaret Miller Butcher of the Department of Communication: <https://uark.pressbooks.pub/creatingculturalcompetence/> .



4. Dr. Kelly Hammond is an associate professor of East Asian History in Fulbright College. She is the author of *China's Muslims and Japan's Empire: Centering Islam in World War II* (UNC Press, 2020) and the recent recipient of a grant from the Stanton Foundation to develop a course about security in Asia.

Including diverse material and course materials into our curriculums is something we should all take seriously. I focus on three main points to enhance diversity in my own courses. Firstly, I ensure that the sources and material we are reading are produced by a wide variety of people. This means that I rarely use a textbook to teach, even in survey courses. I know this is not an option for everyone but supplementing your textbook with sources produced by several different authors provides your students with intellectual diversity. I also try to include information and course material about diverse groups of people. For instance, in all my classes about East Asia, I include material about indigenous peoples and the struggles that they face in places like Taiwan and Japan. Students are generally very receptive to learning about disenfranchised peoples and their struggles. Finally, I try to reflect about the diversity of our own community and think of ways to include course material that highlights specific concerns of Arkansas and Arkansans. For example, when we talk about Japanese internment in World War II, I use all the newspapers produced by internees at the camps in Jerome and Rowher to bring

the everyday experiences of Japanese Americans in the war into much closer proximity for students. I am also currently developing a course called “Nuclear Asia: from Hiroshima to Fukushima” which will explore the history of nuclear security in Asia. For this course, I will partner with the Marshallese Educational Initiative in Springdale to explore the impact of nuclear testing on the Marshallese community.



5. Dr. Leslie Jo (LJ) Shelton is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education and the Higher Education M.Ed. Program Coordinator. In recent years, she has received UofA honors at various levels including superior service awards, commitment to diversity and inclusion award, teaching commendation recognitions, outstanding advising & mentoring award, and outstanding teacher of the year award. She was also recently named a College Student Educators International Emerging Scholar.

Conceptualizing Diversity within an Evolving Teaching Philosophy

This TFSC New Faculty Newsletter prompt is *incorporating diversity topics into the classroom*. This theme connects to my ongoing efforts as I grow as an educator and lifelong learner, and I hope these reflection points and examples are helpful to others who are also engaged in this process. I enter this praxis by conceptualizing what I mean by diversity in the classroom, which for me, draws from my field of higher education/student affairs (HESA) regarding social identities as situated within a matrix of power, privilege, and oppression, particularly at the systemic level (for more information, see the ACPA document “A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization” and the ACPA/NASPA Competencies – Social Justice and Inclusion). Before incorporating this work into the classroom, I start with ongoing intentional reflections on my positionality and reflexivity regarding my social identities, and how these identities shape who I am as a person and educator. These reflections are embedded in my teaching philosophy that reflects learning from thinkers like Drs. bell hooks, Bettina Love, and Paulo Freire who highlight the potential for critical education to be liberatory. I also remain attentive to knowing that how I show up in a classroom space, especially regarding DEI-efforts, is influenced by my own social identities and this will be different for others (ex: see Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquemore’s work on the cultural taxation faced by Women of Color faculty). Engaging in meaningful reflection and critical dialogue with my colleagues allows me to remain mindful of how my privileged and minoritized identities shape my work as an educator, especially as I work to incorporate productive DEI-related learning in the classroom. In addition to this ongoing personal and professional development, some practices I incorporate include the following:

Syllabus

My syllabi are working documents that provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own social identities as an avenue to understand issues of systemic oppression and what that means for their work as HESA educators. In addition to in-class activities that explicitly explore these areas, I also strive to create inclusive syllabus language and learning opportunities via readings

and assignments. Through my own ongoing professional development, I work to employ anti-oppression pedagogy and to update syllabi that include materials from traditionally underrepresented groups such as trans* individuals and women of Color, and historically excluded topics such as Indigenous ways of knowing. Syllabus content also includes inclusive information such as creating a trans* inclusive syllabus statement regarding student names, pronouns, and inclusive restroom options closest to our classroom. I am also working to update a statement on resources for the food pantry to serve food insecure students. These are examples of how I strive to center a humanizing approach to education, to reflect that it is difficult to learn and thrive if our foundational needs are not met. I also aim to make expectations clear in syllabi to provide insight into the “hidden curriculum” of graduate school, which can be particularly exclusionary for first generation college students who may not have the capital to know how to navigate this experience. For example, I outline what I mean by effective, active participation in class (which students can be surprised means more than quantity of times speaking in a large group!) and provide opportunities for participation in multiple ways ranging from individual, small group, and large group work and some online work via Blackboard.

In-Class

Building a classroom community is also central to effectively grappling with challenging subjects together, including DEI-related learning. I start the semester with students submitting a “personal notecard” that is private with me so they can share their name, pronouns (optional), and information such as any challenges they foresee in the semester (students may report caregiving concerns, health issues, etc). Also, on the first day of class, we all create nametags that allow students to share the name they use in class (versus what may be in Blackboard/UACConnect), and the option to share pronouns if they would like to do so. I role model this in my own introduction and sharing as we create a classroom community together. We also add personal touches to nametags by putting “doodles” that reflect their experiences with the class topics. When students share these on the first day of class, they often reflect their own experiences, including those related to social identities, which helps build class community as a springboard for connection during challenging conversations.

On the first day of class, we also co-create classroom expectations with a working classroom contract, including guidelines around how we will communicate together and how to navigate difficult conversations. Throughout the semester, we also engage in identity-based activities and center responsiveness to related current events, which ultimately translates to what this learning means for them personally and professionally in their HESA practice. Throughout the semester, we also work on a “choose your own learning adventure” assignment that provides students with the opportunity to select assignments that are most meaningful to them, and reflects multiple ways of demonstrating knowing, such as storytelling which can be a powerful way of learning and connecting for students from various cultural backgrounds. I also seek feedback from students in various ways, including mid-term formative assessments, to assist in responsive teaching related to DEI efforts.