

# Creating Inclusive Courses: Practical Approaches for Faculty



Angela Linse, Ph.D.  
Executive Director & Assoc. Dean  
Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence  
The Pennsylvania State University

Original workshop co-created by Suzanne Weinstein, Ph.D.

# Does this sentiment sound familiar?



*“I confess, my usual response to the thought of a diversity workshop is ... well, you can guess. Not that I don't value it (I do!), but in my experience these workshops usually seem far afield from what I can use in my course.”*

– Science faculty member

# What makes a classroom inclusive?



Each student is respected, belongs,  
and able to make unique  
contributions to the course.



# In this session faculty will:



- Identify inclusive strategies most relevant for their courses
- Recognize that they can take actions that matter
- Begin to explore two of the most elusive challenges to inclusive teaching



# Faculty are already using many inclusive teaching strategies!



1. Read the “Strategies” handout and mark each item with the following:
  - not appropriate
  - × I already do this
  - ≈ I sort of do this
  - \* I want to try it
2. Identify 1-2 strategies that you didn't realize were inclusive & discuss with others.

# We all belong to many different groups.



# Memberships & Identities Activity



1. Make a list of  $\geq 5$  identities or groups of which you are a member.
2. Find a partner that you do not know.  
**Without speaking**, make a mental list of 5 possible membership groups for your partner.  
**You will not share this list with your partner.**
3. Share your own membership list with your partner.

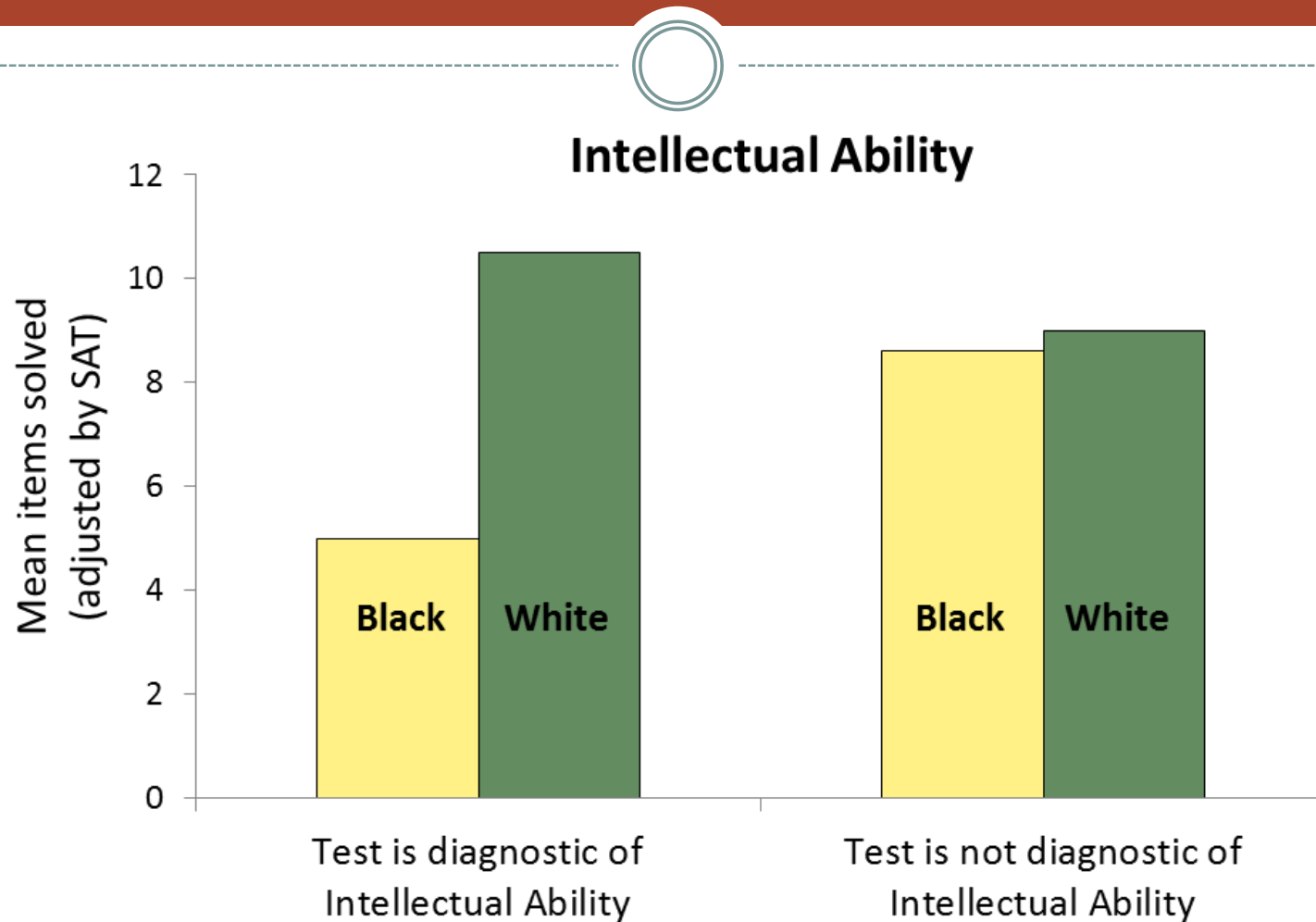
# Memberships & Identities Activity



1. Make a list of  $\geq 5$  identities or groups of which you are a member.
2. Find a partner that you do not know.  
**Without speaking**, make a mental list of 5 *possible* membership groups for your partner.  
**You will not share this list with your partner.**
3. Share your own membership list with your partner.



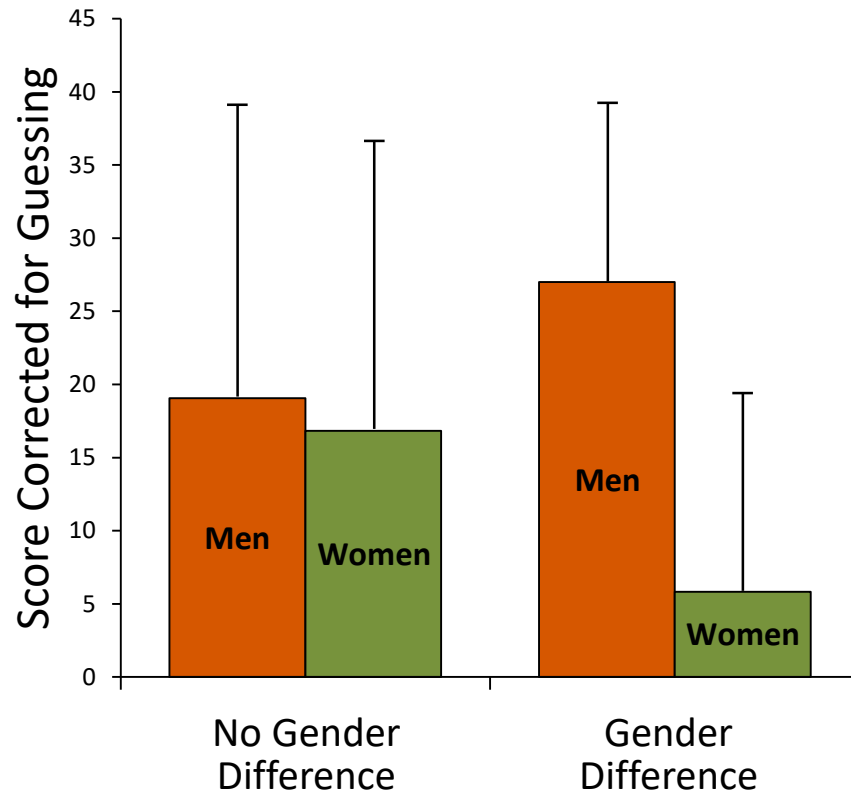
# What could explain these results?



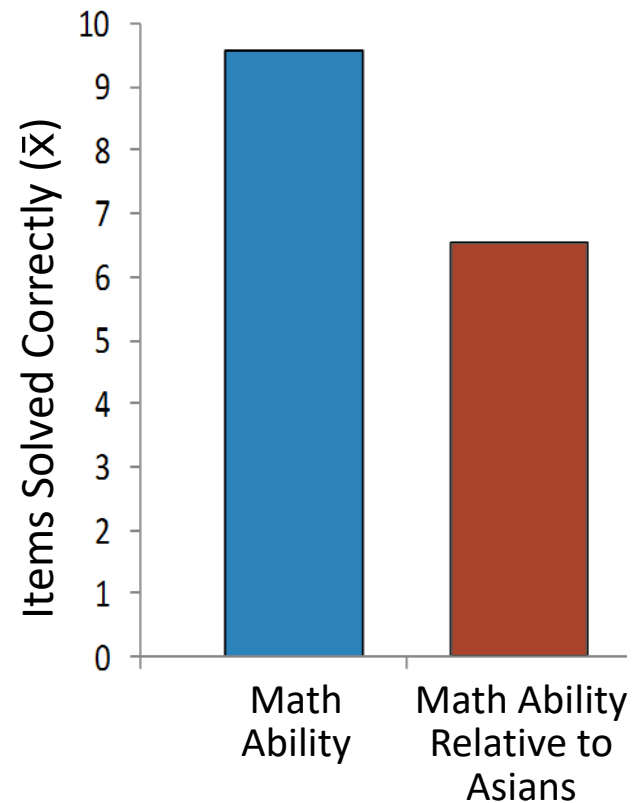
Steele, C.M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans. *Attitudes and Social Cognition*, 797 - 811.

# Does the same phenomenon explain these performances?

## Women's Math Ability



## White Male Math Ability



# What is Stereotype Threat?



The possibility of confirming a negative stereotype about your group in important evaluative situations.



# We are all susceptible to stereotype threat. If so, why is it important for inclusion?



## 1. It applies to those with:

- high ability / high level of skill
- high self-esteem / confidence
- strong motivation to succeed



## 2. We are most at risk when performing challenging cognitive tasks.

## 3. We are not all equally exposed to triggers.

## 4. Primary conditions:

- Evaluation of an ability
- Importance of the ability to the individual

# How can we reduce stereotype threat?



Communicate that:

- Students have already met high standards and you believe they will succeed
- Achievement is based on learning and learning is a result of hard work and persistence, not simply innate ability
- You evaluate students based on standards, not perceptions
- Everyone struggles or does poorly sometimes and struggle is not necessarily a sign of inability

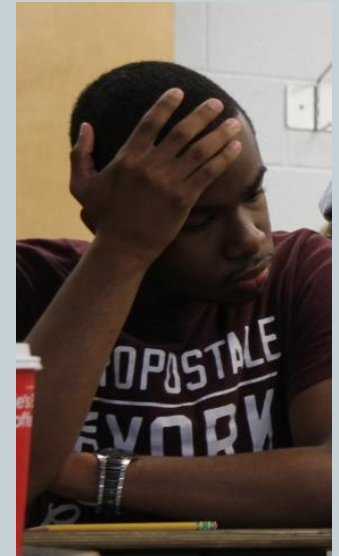
# What are microaggressions?



Micro-aggressions are indignities that harm individuals because of their group membership.

They are:

- subtle or brief
- commonplace
- intentional or unintentional
- verbal, behavioral, or environmental



# What are some examples of microaggressions?



You speak English so well!

You don't *sound* Black.

I don't think of you as disabled.

You're too pretty to be a trans girl.

Are you even legal?

You're just being oversensitive.



# What can faculty do?



1. Do something!
2. Be open to discussing biases that arise in the classroom. Practice!
3. Create course guidelines.
4. Understand how your identity may impact students.
5. Acknowledge and explore your own biases; take the Implicit Bias Test.



# We can change the way we interact



- If it's OK with you, can I ask you more about \_\_\_\_\_?
- I don't know much about this, but I am wondering if I can ask you about...
- I may make a mistake in the way I phrase this...

# Take ACTION!



**A**sk clarifying questions

**C**arefully listen

**T**ell others what you observed

**I**mpact exploration

**O**wn your own thoughts feelings

**N**ext steps: request appropriate action



**Thank  
You!**

**Please don't hesitate to  
contact me:**

Angela Linsē

[arl15@psu.edu](mailto:arl15@psu.edu)

# Strategies for Inclusive Classrooms: Workshop Activity

## Activity

- 1) Please rate each strategy in the following way:
  - Strikethrough any strategy not appropriate for your course(s)
  - ✓ I already do this in my class
  - ≈ I sort of do this, but I could make it more explicit/visible
  - \* I'd like to try this
- 2) Discuss one ✓ with each other.
- 3) Discuss how you might strengthen an item marked with ≈ or \* with each other.

Note: the items below should *not* be considered a 'checklist' for creating an inclusive course. No instructor will use every strategy, nor would using all guarantee an inclusive learning environment. Creating inclusive learning environments requires effort, attention, and intention.

## Design an Inclusive Course Curriculum

- Use visuals that do not reinforce stereotypes, but do include diverse participants.
- Choose readings that consciously reflect the diversity of contributors to your field; consider whether tradition-based reading lists represent past stereotypes (or present ones).
- Use varied names and socio-cultural contexts in test questions, assignments, and case studies.
- Analyze the content of your examples, analogies, and humor; too narrow a perspective may ostracize students who have differences.
- Invite guest speakers and ensure that they have varied backgrounds and experiences.
- Recognize how your choices of materials, readings, and content organization reflect your perspectives, interests, and possible biases.
- Teach the conflicts of your field to incorporate diverse perspectives.

## Motivate Learning/Establish Relevance

- Situate the course in a broader global and/or societal context.
- Connect the course to other courses within or outside of the major.
- Discuss how the course will help students function more effectively with a diversity of people.
- Relate specific topics within a course to previous and future topics.
- Provide students opportunities to make connections inside and outside of the course.
- Use personal anecdotes to create interest among students.

## Meet your students as individuals & create opportunities for students to do the same

- Examine your background and experiences (so that you understand how your students see you!).
- Consider your academic traditions and the biases that they may inadvertently reinforce.
- Learn students' names.
- Ask about students' interests.
- Ask about students' experiences with and concerns about the subject matter.
- Provide opportunities for students to learn about each other and from each other.

## **Create an Inclusive Course Environment**

- Set high standards and communicate your confidence that each student is capable of achieving them.
- Let your students know that you believe each has important contributions to make.
- Applaud creative solutions and sincere efforts to learn.
- Help students understand that intelligence is not a fixed ability, not all academic challenges are a result of personal inadequacies, and many academic challenges can be overcome.
- Talk to students about how they learn best and how to adopt compensatory strategies.
- Do not ask or expect students to represent an entire group, either by look or by request.
- Encourage multiple perspectives (as opposed to consensus) in discussions.
- Establish ground rules.
- Use a variety of strategies to encourage contributions and to reduce over-participation by verbally assertive students.
- Create a culture of shared-purpose by periodically collecting feedback to learn how students are experiencing your course.
- Avoid assuming that a student needs assistance, which can convey that you have low expectations and further hinder their learning.
- Do not ignore or change the subject when students voice negative comments about a group.
- Make diversity and the free-exchange of ideas an early discussion topic.
- Do your best to correctly pronounce the names of your students.
- Avoid religious holidays when scheduling tests.
- Avoid expressing racially charged political opinions.
- Do not ask individuals with hidden disabilities to identify themselves in class.
- Avoid assuming the gender of any student.
- Do not assume all students speak English fluently.
- Ensure that the physical classroom space is inclusive for all students; e.g. are students who are alternately-abled or marginalized in some way?

## **Provide Varied Opportunities for Success/Achievement**

- Allow students to accumulate grade points in a variety of ways.
- Allow students to select the weighting of different aspects of the course.
- Provide explicit information about your grading criteria using matrices or rubrics.
- Allow students to collaborate/cooperate on homework and class assignments.
- Offer a variety of ways for students to participate in class other than speaking aloud.

## **Teach Inclusively**

- Use a variety of teaching methods; do not rely solely on lectures and didactic questions.
- Use pictures, schematics, graphs, simple sketches, films, and demonstrations.
- Provide a balance of concrete information (facts, data, real or hypothetical experiments) and abstract concepts (principles, theories, models).
- Balance material that emphasizes practical problem-solving methods with that emphasizing fundamental understanding.
- Provide brief intervals during class for students to think about what they have heard, seen, & learned.
- Provide opportunities for students to use or apply the course material/content.
- Have students work on class activities in pairs, triads, or small groups.
- Assign group membership randomly. Do not allow students to choose their own groups.
- Allow students to work on projects that explore their own social identities.

## Creating Inclusive Courses References

- Aronson, J. (1999). When White men can't do math: Necessary and sufficient factors in stereotype threat. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 35* (1), 29-46.
- Aronson, J., Fried, C., & Good, K. (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 38*, 113-125.
- Boysen, G. A. (2012). Teacher and student perceptions of microaggressions in college classrooms. *College Teaching, 60*(3), 122-129.
- Chatman, S. (2008). Does diversity matter in the education process? An exploration of student interactions by wealth, religion, politics, race, ethnicity and immigrant status at the University of California. *Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California Berkeley*  
<https://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/does-diversity-matter-education-process-exploration-student-interactions-wealth>
- Cheung, F., Ganote, C. M., & Souza, T.J. (2016). Microaggressions and microresistance: Supporting and empowering students. In, Faculty Focus Special Report: Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom. Magna Publication. <https://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-college-classroom/>
- Gardenswartz, L. & Rowe, A. (2010). *Managing Diversity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.
- Gurin, P., Dey, E. L., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002) Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(3). 330-366.
- Landis, K. (Ed.) (2008). *Start Talking: A Handbook for Engaging Difficult Dialogues in the Classroom*. Anchorage: University of Alaska Anchorage. <https://tinyurl.com/StartTalkingUAA-pdf>
- Mallinger, G., Gabbard, J., Starks, S. (2016). Managing microaggressions in the college classroom. . In, Faculty Focus Special Report: Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom. Magna Publication. <https://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-college-classroom/>
- McGee, Ebony (2011-2012) *From Stereotype Threat to Stereotype Management and Beyond: Successful Asian, Black and Latinos in Science and Mathematics*. National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship. <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/ebonymcgee/>
- Milem, J. F., Chang, M. J., & Antonia, A. L. (2005). Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective. Making Excellence Inclusive Series. Association of American Colleges and Universities. [http://www.aacu.org/inclusive\\_excellence/documents/Milem\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/documents/Milem_et_al.pdf)
- Nash, R. J., Bradley, D. L. & Chickering, A. W. (2008). *How to Talk About Hot Topics on Campus: From Polarization to Moral Conversation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nelson Laird, T. F. (2011). Measuring the diversity inclusivity of college courses. *Research in Higher Education, 32*, 572-588.
- Portman, J., & Ogaz, J. (2010). *Addressing Microaggressions – A Focus on the Little Things*. Presented at the 11th White Privilege Conference – La Crosse, Wisconsin.
- Purdie-Vaughns, V. (2015). *Identity Matters: But Not How You Think It Does: How Stereotypes Affect Where We Live, Learn, And Play*. Keynote address presented at the CORED Spring Symposium. Penn State University. February 23, 2015. <http://equity.psu.edu/cored/events/cored-spring-symposium-2015>
- Rankin, S., Weber, G., & Blumenfeld, W. (2010). State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People. Q Research Institute for Higher Education. Charlotte, N.C.: Campus Pride. <http://www.campuspride.org/wp-content/uploads/campuspride2010lgbtreportsummary.pdf>

- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.
- Steele, C. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
- Sue, D. W. (2012). *Microaggressions in the Classroom: Manifestation, Dynamics and Impact*.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW3tFpThHzI>
- Sue, D. W. (2013) Race talk: The psychology of racial dialogues. *American Psychologist*, (68(9), 663–672.
- Yeager, D. S. & Walton, G. M. (2011). Social-psychological interventions in education: They're not magic. *Review of Educational Research*, 81. <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/81/2/267>
- Zesiger, H. (2013). Racial microaggressions and college student wellbeing: An annotated bibliography for student affairs and health promotion professionals in higher education. Institute of Public Health, Georgia State University. <https://tinyurl.com/RacialMicroaggressionsEmory>

## Creating Inclusive Courses Resources

### Microaggressions

Responding to microaggressions in the classroom: taking ACTION, Tasha Souza, 4-30-2018. Faculty Focus, Magna. <https://tinyurl.com/Microaggressions-ACTION-Souza>

Microaggressions in the Classroom: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact, Derald Wing Sue, American Psychological Society, August 3, 2012, <https://youtu.be/sW3tFpThHzI>

What is a Microaggression? Derald Wing Sue, <https://youtu.be/BJL2P0JsAS4>

Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics and Impact, Derald Wing Sue, 9-16-2014 <http://equity.psu.edu/workshop/fall-2014/fall-2014-materials>

Microaggressions in the Classroom, Center for Multicultural Awareness, University of Denver <http://otl.du.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/MicroAggressionsInClassroom-DUCME.pdf>

Racial Microaggressions, Voices of Students in the Classroom @University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, <http://www.racialmicroaggressions.illinois.edu/files/2015/03/RMA-Classroom-Report.pdf>

How Can Teachers Reduce Racial Microaggressions? Gwendolyn Miller, Aug. 18, 2014 <https://racialmicroaggressions.wordpress.com/2014/08/18/>

### Stereotype Threat

Walton, G., Cohen, G. and Steele, C.M. (2012) Empirically validated strategies to reduce stereotype threat. <https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/interventionshandout.pdf>

Rising to the Challenge of Stereotype Threat, Joshua Aronson, 2012, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahN-dSh\\_ITc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahN-dSh_ITc)

### Creating Inclusive Classrooms

An Approach for Teaching Diversity, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater <http://www.uww.edu/learn/aboutdiversity/approachdiversity>

Diversity and Multicultural Education Teaching Tips, Center for Instructional Innovation and Assessment, Western Washington University, [http://cii.wwu.edu/cii/resources/teaching\\_tips/diversity.asp#diversity](http://cii.wwu.edu/cii/resources/teaching_tips/diversity.asp#diversity)

Ground Rules for Class Discussion, <https://edocs.uis.edu/plang1/WGS333/classdiscuss.htm>

Adapted by P. Langley from: Weber Cannon, L. (1990) Fostering Positive Race, Class and Gender Dynamics in the Classroom, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 1 & 2: 129-133.

Diversity Web, <http://www.diversityweb.org/>, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Setting Ground Rules, Critical Multicultural Pavilion Awareness Activities, Paul C. Gorski, <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html>

Speak Up! Identifying and Confronting Bias and Prejudice & Guide to Facilitating Dialogues, Mizzou Diversity, University of Missouri, <https://diversity.missouri.edu/education/handouts/speak-up.pdf> <https://diversity.missouri.edu/images/handouts/guide-to-facilitating-dialogue.png>

Teaching: Educate Yourself and Others, Breaking the Prejudice Habit, Virginia Ball Center for Creative Inquiry, Ball State University, <http://breakingprejudice.org/teaching/>



## **Exploring Your Implicit Attitudes**

Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center, Implicit Attitudes Test (IAT)  
<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/test-yourself-hidden-bias>

## **Other Useful Resources**

Gender and Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom, John F. Dovidio, <https://youtu.be/CeDGkSCf2Fg>

Improving Courses and Curricula by Including Diversity, T. F. Nelson Laird, Penn State, 10-5-2011  
<http://equity.psu.edu/workshop/fa-2011-follow-up-materials>,

Making Excellence Inclusive, American Association of Colleges and Universities'  
[http://www.aacu.org/compass/documents/MEINewsletter\\_Fall11.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/compass/documents/MEINewsletter_Fall11.pdf)

**Please be sure to watch any video before showing it to make sure it is appropriate for your audience!**

## **Microaggression Videos**

Look Different: MTV, in association with the NAACP, Anti-Defamation League, and the Trevor Project

Look Different Playlist

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBPLVvU\\_jvGssvzwax\\_GijPAnZqbiQqyB](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBPLVvU_jvGssvzwax_GijPAnZqbiQqyB)

[Your English is so good](#)

[You don't look Jewish](#)

[What up, Bin Laden?](#)

[You're pretty for a dark girl.](#)

[How'd you get into that school?](#)

[I can't tell Asians apart.](#)

<http://www.lookdifferent.org>

<http://www.lookdifferent.org/what-can-i-do>

<http://www.lookdifferent.org/videos>

## **“Reverse” Microaggression Videos**

Where are you from? Ken Tanaka, <https://youtu.be/crAv5ttax2I>

If Latinos Said the Stuff White People Say (cursing in one scene), <https://youtu.be/XnFUDx3wC-Y>

If Asians Said the Stuff White People Say, <https://youtu.be/PMJI1Dw83Hc>

If Black People Said the Stuff White People Say, <https://youtu.be/A1zLzWtULig>

## **Other Videos**

21 Things Asian People Are Tired of Hearing, <https://youtu.be/0hwGuXWdBQc>

24 Questions Black People Have For White People, <https://youtu.be/GuVMJmC0V98>

33 Questions White People Have for White People, <https://youtu.be/z1PviSrWYqw>

What is Privilege? (e.g. of the privilege walk), <https://youtu.be/hD5f8GuNuGQ>

## **Ahsante Bean Videos**

I, Too, Am Harvard (short version), <https://youtu.be/uAMTSPGZRiI>

Constructing Space | A Documentary, [https://youtu.be/4JmQU\\_3v6gA](https://youtu.be/4JmQU_3v6gA)

## Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom\*

### Prior to the Course

- Be aware of issues that raise strong feelings in you so that you can prepare or practice an appropriate response.
- Consider how students see you and how they might hear what you say as other than you intend.
- Learn about perspectives other than your own.
- Explore your own biases (e.g. take the Implicit Attitudes Test, <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/test-yourself-hidden-bias>).

### At the Beginning of and During the Course

- Ask students to develop ground rules for discussion. If students do not suggest it, ensure that the list includes items about students being respectful to each other and avoiding personal attacks.
- Encourage open discussion of difficult material.
- Be open to multiple perspectives.
- Ask students to argue responsibly.

### In the Moment

#### Manage yourself

- Model the behavior you want to see in your students; maintain control of the classroom and try not to be visibly rattled.
- Breathe deeply – take time to calm yourself.
- Taking a moment where you are silent is also fine.
- Do not take remarks personally, even if you are attacked. You may be a target because you are the authority figure in the room.

#### Manage your perceptions

- Take a step back from the specific comments being made. Visualize yourself at a higher elevation in order to see what is happening from a broader perspective.
- Listen for what the student trying to express. A student may be trying to say something other than what their words reflect.

#### Help students manage their thinking

- Address the issue. Do not ignore it. A lack of response to bias or disrespect will likely be perceived as agreement or indifference. If you need time to think about the incident/comment, tell students that the issue is important and you will return to it in a future class session.
- Refer to the course ground rules.
- Turn the comment into a general issue for all students to discuss. For example, you could say “Many people think this way. Why do they hold such views? Why do those who disagree hold other views?”
- Ask students to listen carefully to the other point of view and restate the position.
- Ask students to write about the issue. Consider having students argue the position with which they most disagree.
- Ask students to reflect on what they might learn from the moment; consider asking them to briefly write about what they have learned.
- If a student breaks down or discloses a past injury or harm, give them the option of leaving the classroom. It is best to do this while talking individually with the student, rather than stating it in front of the class. Talk with them while other students are busy, or after class. If appropriate, let the student know where they might seek counseling; perhaps walk with them to the counseling center.
- Talk with students outside of class to help them learn from the experience—about themselves, about others, about possible perspectives, about the topic as a whole—and how to voice their thoughts so they may be heard.

## 10 Responses to Student Incivility & Other “Uh Oh” Classroom Moments

The author encourages you to edit these starter statements to fit your own “voice,” tone, or pedagogy. Next, you need to practice, practice, and practice by saying them aloud. Of course, how you respond will depend on your context, institution, course, pedagogy, and the incident. However, if you have an idea of what you might say, it should better equip and prepare you to act, and more immediately, when troublesome classroom moments arise.

### Turn it into a discussion or learning moment

1. *What does our course material say about what was just said?*  
Possible follow-up: How might our course material guide how we address these comments? How might scholars in this field respond? How might the materials we have read/discussed explain this statement?
2. *What is the logical extension of what was just said?*  
Possible follow-up: If we extrapolate from what was just said, what else could we assume? What other ideas might be connected to that statement?
3. *You seem to have a strong emotional reaction. I am giving you an opportunity to pause and recover **before we proceed**.*  
Possible follow up: Use this time to think about why that might be the case. We can discuss that reason in the context of learning and mastering the course material.

### Inform the student(s) to stop/behavior not allowed

4. *Your behavior violates the code of conduct/policy and is not allowed in this classroom.*  
Possible follow up: Remind and reiterate to the student(s) of the next steps. For example, this is a formal warning and if this behavior continues, you will be referred to [Dean of Students, Student Conduct Committee].
5. *A raised voice, personal attacks, aggressive language, and stereotypes are not tolerated in this classroom.*  
Possible follow up: Students who engage in these behaviors disrupt the learning environment for other students and will be asked to leave.

### Remind of classroom goals & expectations

6. *This classroom is a place where we can discuss and interrogate ideas however we do so with respect and **in the context** of the course material.*
7. *You do not have to agree with the course material. However, by enrolling in the course you agree to demonstrate your understanding and communicate the scholarly perspectives of the course content.*
8. *Freedom of speech does apply in the classroom, but all students are expected to learn to respectfully **share their** perspectives as it relates to the process of learning the course material.*  
Possible follow up: As this is a course and classroom in a college setting, ideas and perspectives must be articulated in a manner consistent with the behavior expectations of the classroom/university and so that it furthers students’ mastery of the presented course material.

### (Begin to) Recover if you didn’t immediately address the incivility or the “Uh Oh” moment or if you made the problematic statement.

9. *Ten minutes ago/Yesterday/Last week a statement was made in class that I did not address at that time, but I want to do so now.*  
Possible follow up: I want to return to it now because it is important for me to affirm and uphold the behavior expectations and/or learning objectives of this course. Specifically, a student said/did “\_\_\_\_\_”. This is not aligned with the behavior expectations or learning objectives of this course and thus will not be allowed. In the future, I will do my best to more immediately address similar incidents.
10. *I apologize for saying/doing “\_\_\_\_\_”.*  
Possible follow up: What I said/did was not in line with the behavior expectations or learning objectives of our course because I\_(e.g. stereotyped a group). In the future, I will be more mindful and reflective about my statements/behaviors in an effort to maintain the learning environment of our classroom