

# On Diversity in Teaching and Learning: A Compendium



Faculty Teaching Excellence Program

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Office of Academic Affairs

## Table of Contents

	Page
The Faculty Teaching Excellence Program	1
A History of the Series on Diversity in Teaching and Learning	2
Fostering Diversity in the Classroom: Teaching by Discussion Ron Billingsley, English Department	3
Developing and Teaching an Inclusive Curriculum Deborah Flick, Women Studies Program	7
Fostering Diversity in a Medium-Sized Classroom Brenda J. Allen, Communication Department	11
The Influence of Attitudes, Feelings and Behavior Toward Diversity on Teaching and Learning Lerita Coleman, Psychology Department	14
The Nature and Problem of Stereotypes William Wei, History Department	18
Dialogue on Diversity in the Classroom Janet Jacobs and Michele D. Simpson, Women Studies Program	21
Head Tip: A Teaching and Learning Discussion Polly E. McLean, School of Journalism and Mass Communication	26
Encouraging Participation in the Multicultural Classroom: Using Visual Resources Albert Chong and Claire Farago, Fine Arts Department	33
Diversity and Education: Sexual Orientations Ralph Hexter, Comparative Literature	38

Diversity and Language: ESL Students in the University Classroom Anne Bliss, University Writing Program	46
Enriching Science through Diversity Margaret Asirvatham, Chemistry Department	51
Diversity, Individual Differences, and Students with Disabilities: Optimizing the Learning Environment Christine Yoshinaga-Itano, Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences	53
Teaching Diverse Students: A View from Asian American Students Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Department of Ethnic Studies	56

# The Faculty Teaching Excellence Program

The University of Colorado at Boulder's 3,200 faculty members have been served by the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program since 1986. The Program offers a wide range of services to faculty members. In the area of mass offerings, it sponsors the Professional Lecture Series and the Instructional Workshop and Symposia Series. Generally, these events represent faculty members sharing their insights and innovations with colleagues. To address the needs of individual faculty members, the Program offers a voluntary and confidential consultation system with a flexible range of services.

The Faculty Teaching Excellence Program has published three volumes in a series entitled *On Teaching*, featuring articles written by Boulder faculty members on pedagogy, usually from a practical and personal point of view. A third publication—*Compendium of Good Teaching Ideas*—has been developed from interviews with teachers on the Boulder campus who have been cited for excellence in the classroom and contains 113 practical teaching tips. To assist faculty in keeping up with developments in the field of teaching, the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program sifts through the mass of articles written on instructional methods and distributes copies of the best to all faculty. Appearing three times each semester, this series is entitled *Memo to the Faculty*. The work of the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program is heavily dependent on research on teaching. In order to improve teaching, the Program both monitors work being done at other universities and conducts its own research on classroom teaching.

The University of Colorado and the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program are committed to embracing diversity in each and every aspect of the campus community. The Faculty Teaching Excellence Program wants to explore the variety of ways in which faculty members enhance diversity in the classroom both between and among students as well as in the curricula of courses. To that end we wish to provide these ideas to our community of teachers, scholars, and students.

Mary Ann Shea, Director  
Faculty Teaching Excellence Program and  
President's Teaching Scholars Program

January 1999

## A History of the Diversity in Teaching and Learning Series

This is a collection of monographs on embracing diversity in teaching and learning published by the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program and mailed to faculty at the University of Colorado. The original mailings were funded by the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, Academic Affairs and a modest grant from the President's Fund for the Retention of Minorities and Women.

In order to begin and develop the project, a committee was established whose members included:

- Ron Billingsley, English
- Lerita Coleman, Psychology
- Shu-Ling Everett, Journalism
- Deborah Flick, Women Studies
- Estevan Flores, Sociology
- Robert Pois, History
- William Wei, History

It took the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program several semesters to develop the appropriate format to address issues of diversity in teaching and learning at the University of Colorado. The Program first set out to put together a *Compendium of Good Ideas on Teaching and Learning: Focus on Diversity*. The committee members served as advisors in developing a 19-item survey of descriptors which asked students to assess the impact that diversity had on their learning experiences. These surveys were then administered to classes of selected faculty on the Boulder campus.

The next step was to interview these faculty members and to ask them to comment on the categories in which students had rated them very highly. Then tapes of the conversations were reviewed to identify concrete teaching tips for the improvement of teaching and learning with respect to diversity.

While the tips we extracted from these conversations were excellent, it quickly became apparent that they were relevant within different pedagogies and teaching methodologies of faculty. Since the Program's goal was to provide concrete teaching tips that could be readily adapted or adopted by faculty who wanted to honor diversity in their classrooms, the pedagogy had to be examined and explained. The tips would only be useful to other faculty if they were framed in a pedagogical context.

The Program therefore decided to ask faculty members known to be experienced in creating an atmosphere in their classes that fosters diversity to author a brochure with concrete teaching tips. Those tips are prefaced here by a short narrative in which the framework is set within which the teaching tips are suggested.

The response our first brochures received was very positive and clearly reflected the need our faculty colleagues and the community had for more such information. It also suggested that we had chosen an appropriate format to address the complex issues of diversity in teaching and learning at our university. We therefore decided to make our *Series on Diversity in Teaching and Learning* available to you in this form.

This volume may be purchased through the University Book Center at the University of Colorado.<sup>1</sup> We hope it will assist you in fostering diversity in your classroom.

Mary Ann Shea, Editor

### Fostering Diversity in the Classroom: Teaching by Discussion

---

#### Professor Ron Billingsley

English Department  
University of Colorado at Boulder

Cultural diversity is a fact, often unacknowledged, of our national history. And while

---

<sup>1</sup> **Mail orders:** Univ. of Colorado Book Center, Attn: Deborah Silverman, Order Dept., Campus Box 36, Boulder, CO 80309-0036. The cost is \$8.50 per copy. Please include \$3.50 shipping and handling for one copy, \$4.00 for two copies. For three or more copies you will be charged the actual postage cost.

it is true that fostering diversity is an idea which is consistent with some of our most enduring national ideals, such as respect for the right of each individual to pursue life in their own fashion, promoting these ideals in the classroom can often prove very difficult. The difficulties which must be overcome stem from several sources:

1. A basic lack of knowledge about the diverse peoples and lifestyles that have always been a part of the American experience.
2. Inherited prejudices and stereotypes, many of which are unacknowledged and/or unknown.
3. Deep seated feelings of guilt, anger, frustration and anxiety which are stirred by discussion of diversity issues.

A successful pedagogy must start with an awareness of these difficulties and some fundamental strategies for overcoming them.

While a variety of pedagogies can be fruitful, it seems especially helpful to provide an environment where students can comfortably engage in discussion (as opposed to recitation in which a "right" answer is sought). True discussion sends a message of empowerment between equal agents who all have something significant to contribute to a common enterprise. Although sharing the principles and facts of one's discipline with students is very important, preparing an environment of comfort, trust and mutual respect must also be seen as a primary task. Such an environment makes it possible for meaningful human exchange to take place on complex and often frightening issues. It can enable students to experience a common ground of mutual experiences and respect which can bind students together and simultaneously make it easier to understand and celebrate many differences.

The pedagogy of teaching by discussion places a heavy burden on the Professor. She must establish not just a *content* of diversity but a *process* that actualizes and **demonstrates** appreciation of diversity. It is important to bear in mind that students are observing and learning the faculty member's *behavior* as well as her *rhetoric*. This type of classroom environment not only embodies the fundamental value of appreciation of diversity but it can also yield great rewards in terms of critical thinking skills, especially the ability to appreciate sophisticated multiple perspectives on complex intellectual and moral issues.

The following tips are practical suggestions that undergird the pedagogy of teaching by discussion. In addition, the tips on teaching and learning suggested below assist in creating an atmosphere which embraces diversity in the classroom.

1. Create an environment of trust and mutual respect so that discussion is not inhibited by fear. Introduce one or more ice-breaking activities that allow students to get to know one another fairly well. They should know each other's first and last names, hobbies, majors, place of birth etc. Think up questions that are of interest to you and related to your subject area on which students can exchange information. Use some class time to mention things that students have in common. Let students know of others in the class that have similar interest.
2. You must make it absolutely clear that no one in the classroom is under attack, or is seen as the official representative of a particular group. Explain that no one in the class is viewed as responsible for the ethnocentric behavior of anyone else or of any other group (majority or minority) past or present. Students must be assured that one important point of the class is to explore and understand diversity. The strategy must be **to celebrate everyone and to**

**denigrate no one.** Surely, many aspects of the historical and cultural past will be discussed. Many of them will be negative. But it will not be the job of the professor or other students to point the finger of blame at anyone in the classroom. The right of each person to choose what group and what issues to identify with or to disregard must always be protected and respected. Above all the instructor models appropriate behavior by treating all students with great respect, even though he may not, for a variety of very legitimate reasons, agree with some of their opinions.

3. Minority students must be viewed and treated as *individuals* rather than racial, ethnic or gender *categories*. No one should be forced to assume the position of a particular group. If they choose to speak as a member of a minority group, their remarks become one more resource that can be utilized in the same way that a contribution from any non-minority person would be incorporated into the classroom dialogue.
4. Universalize the ethnic/gender experience whenever possible so that students can identify with those that they might have previously seen as "other." Find examples from your subject area that illustrate how people of diverse identities share many common problems, issues and solutions. Activities such as eating, dancing, making art, courting, child-rearing, playing etc. can be explored in the search for commonalities. Students need to experience the marvelous paradox of human diversity, that **WE ARE ALL THE SAME IN DIFFERENT WAYS.**
5. When there is a sharp difference of opinion between two students ask both of them to explain their positions. The listener must explain in his own words what was said by the first person. When the first speaker is satisfied that she has been understood accurately, then the two can reverse roles. In this way you can build accuracy of communication and encourage mutual respect. Often differences that seemed great initially are minimized and even eliminated.
6. If arguments between students start to become abusive, interpose yourself between them. Take the place of the student that is being attacked and answer for him until tempers cool and the two initial adversaries

can safely face one another again. This is your opportunity to clarify language, but above all it is your opportunity to demonstrate that the essence of diversity in the classroom is mutual respect.

7. Use your discipline to make clear what the rewards have been historically for various forms of prejudicial behavior that have opposed the expression of diversity. Students need to understand the psychological, economic, and political reasons why diversity has often been undermined in various societies in the past. Use examples from the immediate society/ environment, so long as they are not embarrassing or accusative of participants in the class.
8. Establish respect for the values of diverse peoples by using specific examples, from your field of study, to show how culturally varied people have contributed to western history and civilization. In particular, use examples that illustrate the value and beauty of the ethnic/ racial/gender group under discussion.
9. Try to attract students to your classroom who represent diversity. For example, you might notify people from counseling and advising staffs that you are interested in issues of diversity. Although such students would not be "used" as representatives of their group (see #3 above), their participation will inevitably provide a wider range of input than is available from a homogeneous group.
10. Be sure to give students many opportunities to work together in small groups (3-5) on a variety of problem-solving activities which stress the importance of using personal experience. Problems that are of universal significance (see #4 above) are particularly useful for small group work.
11. Use language that is gender neutral or that

uses female pronouns as often as male pronouns. This can be done with great effect when describing unknown or hypothetical individuals in positive, creative, or authoritative positions.

12. Enhance the self-respect of individual students by referring to valuable ideas and comments they have made in previous classes.
13. Use specific examples and ideas from your discipline which serve to exhibit the functions of stereotypes and their destructiveness. Try to introduce exercises which show the extent to which most of us are susceptible to belief in some kinds of stereotypes. In the field of American literature examples are abundant. The black child, Pecola Breedlove, in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, accepts Euro-American stereotypes of beauty so completely that she fully believes her dark eyes and brown skin are emblems of absolute ugliness. She prays for the blue eyes of white girls whom she sees, stereotypically, as beautiful and eternally happy.
14. Be sure to indicate to students the arbitrary nature of cultural and intellectual agendas. Students need to understand that while particular cultural forms may be useful (such as quantitative forms of analysis), they are not absolutes. We may judge specific forms of behavior by these standards, but never individual worth. In a diverse classroom it is essential to be able to separate worth from behavior. The worth of each student should never be questioned, and it must be clear that the value of individual levels of behavior or achievement is a convenient convention that is established in many different ways in various cultural groups.

#### References

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

#### Recommended Reading

To explore the topic further, Ron Billingsley suggests the following reading:

Banks, James A. (Ed.) *Teaching Ethnic Studies: Concepts and Strategies*. National Council for the Social Studies, 1973.

Freire, Paulo. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Goodlad, John. *A Place Called School*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984.

Hawkins, David. "On Living in Trees," in *The Informed Vision*. New York: Agathon Press, 1974.

Holt, John. *How Children Fail*. New York: Dell, 1988.

Kohl, Herbert. *36 Children*. New York: New American Library, 1967.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Death at an Early Age*. New York: Bantam Books, 1968.

Illich, Ivan. *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Postman, Neil and Charles Weingartner. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1969.

#### Ronald G. Billingsley Biography

Ron Billingsley was raised in Los Angeles, California and received his undergraduate degree in English from the University of Redlands. After serving five years in the Navy as an officer and aviator he went to the University of Oregon where he earned a Masters and Ph.D. in American Literature. While in Oregon he developed a love for photography, for the mountains, and for outdoor sports such as backpacking, cross country skiing, cycling and kayaking. During his twenty-one years at the University of Colorado his interest in teaching and curriculum development has been primary. While at C.U. he has taught some thirty different courses offered in six different programs and departments.

Billingsley has participated in a number of interdisciplinary and experimental programs such as the Honors Program, Experimental Studies, Farrand Hall Residential Academic Program, and the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. His three voyages around the world with the Semester at Sea program served to raise his concern for global issues and environmental problems and prompted him to design a number of interdisciplinary global studies courses. Additionally he has a deep and sustained interest in teacher training and most



aspects of teaching and learning; he is especially concerned with interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches to education. His current role as the Associate Director of the President's Leadership Class allows him to exercise many of his abiding interests in interdisciplinary studies, curriculum development, and teacher training.

Over the years his interest in literary approaches to American culture has remained very strong. He is passionate about sharing the richness of American literature with his students. Although he started teaching African-American literature twenty-five years ago, in the last decade he has increasingly broadened his focus to include other ethnic literatures and issues of diversity. His pedagogy is the product of wide study and years of continual experimentation in the classroom. He feels very strongly that all education should strive to be experiential, but especially teaching that relates to issues of diversity. Students must come to know the people and materials they are studying in ways that are not narrow and abstract so that the great humanizing potential of ethnic and gender studies can be realized. Professor Billingsley feels that it is critically important to embrace diversity in the classroom because of its multiple benefits to the individual and the

larger society. Through such studies the individual is able to live in a larger and more varied cultural world and to experience a deeper sense of his or her own humanity by perceiving the underlying needs and impulses that all people have in common. An emphasis on diversity permits students to gain the seemingly paradoxical, but essential, ability to appreciate *both* the ways in which they are similar and the ways in which they seem different from others, to enjoy that fact that *we are all the same in different ways*. This capacity to appreciate differences while perceiving binding similarities provides a perspective and a set of experiences that are essential for structuring the kinds of creative dialogues that are necessary in democratic societies.

Ron Billingsley won the SOAR (Student Organization for Alumni Relations) Teaching Recognition Award in 1990 and the Farrand Hall "Teacher of the Year" Award in 1988. He has given public lectures on such topics as "The Mandala Earth," "Shadow Work: Teaching the Ethnic Experience," and "Leadership in the Multicultural Workplace." In 1988 his book *Women in the Workplace: A Man's Perspective*, coauthored with Lloyd S. Lewan, was published by Remington Press.

# Developing and Teaching an Inclusive Curriculum

---

## Senior Instructor Deborah Flick

*Women Studies Program  
University of Colorado at Boulder*

Developing an inclusive curriculum is a transformative process for the instructor and the students. It entails a paradigm shift in which basic assumptions are examined and changed. Thus, undertaking the project requires desire, curiosity, willingness to travel into un-known pedagogical terrain, and patience with oneself and with one's students.

Women and men of color, white women, and the working class and underclass have been absent from the "center" of analysis, research, theory, and the curriculum. To locate the members of these groups at the "center" from the standpoint of their experience and perspective is an important step toward creating an inclusive curriculum. What does it mean to make this move and what are its implications?

Considering that this undertaking is a process, it is helpful to look at it in terms of phases (McIntosh 1990):

Phase I: White, middle/upper class, male experience, authors, and theorists are the focus of the syllabus. Their experience is considered to be synonymous with "the human experience." Their theories are thought to be "objective" and "uncontaminated" by political considerations.

Phase II: An exceptional white woman or person of color, author or theorist, is added to the Phase I syllabus. They are treated as an anomaly, the exception.

Phase III: Issues concerning people of color, white women and/or the working class are addressed as "problems" and "special topics." Members of groups that were invisible or distorted in Phase I and given token status in Phase II are coming into focus at the margins, but they are not yet at the center.

Phase IV: The lives of people of color, the working class, and white women are located at the center of the syllabus. To paraphrase McIntosh (1990), if you start with the lives of people of color, for example, you will get to the lives of white men and women, but if you start with white men and women you will not necessarily get to the experience of any person of color. Thus,

race, class, gender and sexual orientation are treated as interactive systems that shape *everyone's* experience and all social institutions.

Of course, as in the case of all stage theories, one may move back and forth from one phase to the other or experience aspects of more than one phase at the same time. Nonetheless, the phases illustrate, in broad strokes, what it means to embark on the journey toward the development of an inclusive curriculum.

### Checklist

This checklist, an adaptation from Collins and Andersen (1987), is offered to help assess whether or not a syllabus is in concert with a Phase IV curriculum.

1. Does thinking about gender, race and class pervade the entire syllabus or are these issues treated as "special topics" or "social problems"?
2. Are all groups recognized as being affected by the interactive structures of race, class and gender or only white women, people of color and the working class?
3. Is one group's experience held as the norm against which others' are measured and evaluated?
4. Does one group dominate in defining the other groups, or do groups define themselves? Is diversity within that self-definition represented and articulated?
5. Does material in the syllabus reinforce prejudice and stereotypes or does it expose and refute them?
6. When teaching about people of color, are the assigned readings by authors of the same race and ethnicity as those you are studying? This is especially important when studying the status of women in non-Western cultures and so-called minority cultures in the U.S.A. Are readings assigned by women within the culture who critically analyze their culture as well as by those who endorse the status quo?

### Teaching Tips

The following teaching tips are divided into two sections. Section A provides two peda-

gical techniques to help students embrace and benefit from an inclusive curriculum. Section B offers practical suggestions for the instructor so that her/his behavior in the classroom is congruent with the spirit of a diverse curriculum.

### **A. Pedagogical Techniques**

#### *Fostering Empathy*

Many students, particularly those who belong to one or more categories of race, class, and gender that have been privileged and dominant, have trouble understanding and relating to people who are different from themselves. "Why do we have to hear all this stuff about Jim Crow, World War II internment camps, and broken treaties? I came to school to learn sociology. What does this have to do with sociology or me?" One can help to bridge this chasm by providing students with an opportunity to explore a time in their lives when they felt "different" from the dominant group or the majority.

1. Ask students to recall a time when they felt "different." Tell them to write it down. Give students a lot of latitude in defining the experience of being different. Some of them will need it.
2. Ask them to write about how others reacted to them. How they felt. How they behaved. For example, did they try to hide their difference? Accentuate or exaggerate it? Ask them to explore why they did what they did and whether it worked.
3. Finally, ask the students to write what others, from whom they were different, could have done to support them. Ask them to be very specific.
4. Ask students to share what they have written with two or three others in a small group.
5. Facilitate a discussion with the whole class with an eye toward building bridges and common ground. This is an opportunity to explore how the "same" treatment is not necessarily "equitable" or "fair" treatment. It can also be helpful to clarify differences among differences. For example, the experience of being the only ballerina among a group of friends who are tap-dancers is different from being a Chicana in a predominantly white school. The former is situational and limited in its impact. The latter, in contrast, carries with it the effects of

historical and institutionalized prejudice and discrimination.

This exercise can be referred to during future lectures and discussions to help address denial of the issues at hand, blaming the victims and to examine what it means to take responsibility if one is a member of the dominant group or if one is "different."

#### *Disabusing Stereotypes*

Race, gender and class stereotypes are socially created lenses through which complex people are reduced to distorted but "manageable" characteristics. Such stereotypes are very resistant to change. Consequently, regardless of how scrupulous one is about trying not to reinforce stereotypes, there is always the risk that students will inadvertently draw unintended conclusions. The following exercise is useful in heading off the likelihood of this occurring.

1. Ask students to "brainstorm" stereotypes for a particular group whose experience is at the center of focus, e.g. African-American women. Write them on the chalkboard.
2. Examine the "sources" of the stereotypes. Where did students learn them? From family? Friends? Religious institutions? Textbooks? Media? Be specific.
3. Test the verity of the stereotypes. For example, "most women on welfare are African-American." This stereotype can be disabused by offering the following information: Most women on welfare are white; most African-American women are in the labor force; there is a significant population of highly educated middle-class African-American women.
4. Explore with the class why such stereotypes persist when they are factually wrong. Whose interests do such images serve? African-Americans? Middle and upper-middle-class whites? How do they serve those interests, i.e., what social contradictions and tensions do the stereotypes resolve and for whom?
5. Create new positive images from the point of view of those whose experience is being discussed. Be prepared with ideas of your own. Your students might find it difficult to generate nonstereotypic images. DO NOT single out students who represent the group under consideration to answer this question.

6. Compare and contrast the new images with the original stereotypes. Explore their implications in the context of the interrelatedness of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation in the society under discussion.

### **B. Concrete Teaching Tips**

1. Do not ask students of color or a white female to give "the African-American point of view" or the "woman's point of view" on any given topic. An individual cannot speak for a group. To ask a student to do so is not only potentially embarrassing for the student, but it implies that there is not a diversity of perspectives within the group.
2. Do not expect, and do not ask, students of color to be knowledgeable about their history or culture. The same applies to language. For example: do not ask a Chinese-American student, "How would you say this in Chinese?" Many students of color have not had an opportunity to learn the history, culture, and/or language of their ethnic heritage. Even those who have had such cultural and educational opportunities may not wish to be involuntarily singled out.
3. Become conscious of your assumptions regarding students of color. For example, do you assume that all Asian students are good at math? Asians are highly intelligent? African-American males are not very smart and are attending college on athletic scholarships? Students of color are less qualified or intelligent than your white students? Be careful not to act on these assumptions, or other assumptions if you hold them, when relating to your students.
4. Anticipate students' tendency to negatively stereotype women, people of color, and lesbians and gays. By so doing, the stereotypes can be made conscious and dispelled. For example, before beginning the study of an American Indian nation, invite students in a nonthreatening way (e.g., brainstorming) to identify stereotypes of American Indians. Examine and dispel the stereotypes one by one. (See *Disabusing Stereotypes*)
5. You are a role model to your students. Share your own process of developing awareness of gender, class, sexual orientation, and race/ethnic stereotypes and issues. Help students understand the value

of a diversity perspective in their personal, academic and future professional lives. Use examples from your own life.

6. Learn to use gender inclusive (non-sexist) language. Encourage your students to do the same when they speak in class as well as in their writing.
7. Use (learn) group facilitation skills to productively manage discussions regarding the difficult subjects of race, gender, class and sexual orientation.
8. Create a comfortable climate for students who are in the minority in your class by not making them inappropriately visible. For example, in a class in which women are a clear minority, don't say something like, "We shouldn't make sexual references like that; we'll embarrass Sally and Jane."
9. Be aware that silence on the parts of students of color and women does not necessarily mean they are comfortable with the class. It might mean the contrary and that they are reluctant to speak up about it. If you are concerned about this, do not single out, publicly or privately, students of color or women and ask them how they feel about the class. They likely would feel uncomfortably visible and you probably would not get a candid response. Rather, approach the whole class with something like, "I am concerned that some points of view are not being expressed. I think we are missing out on important, diverse opinions. What would make it safer and easier for more of you to speak up?" The faculty member might suggest some diverse opinions that are missing as well as ask for examples. Invite everyone in the class to contribute.
10. Be clear about your motivation for creating an inclusive curriculum. If you are doing it for other than personal and/or scholarly reasons, e.g., approval of your students of color and women students, you might be disappointed. For any number of reasons your efforts might not be appreciated. Also, be prepared to address the concerns of students who feel confused or resentful of an inclusive curriculum. (See #5)

### **References**

McIntosh, Peggy. *Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Revision with Regard to Race*. In press, SUNY.

Collins, Patricia Hill and Andersen, Margaret L.  
*An Inclusive Curriculum: Race, Class and Gender in Sociology Instruction*. Washington, D.C.: ASA Teaching Resources Center, 1987.

### **Recommended Reading**

To explore the topic further, Deborah Flick suggests the following books and articles:

Anderson, M.L. and P.H. Collins, eds. *Race, Class and Gender*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992.

Davis, Angela. *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage, 1983.

DuBois, Carol Ellen and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds. *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Frye, Marilyn. *The Politics of Reality*. Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1983.

Giddings, Paula. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Bantam, 1984.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984. McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women Studies." In *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by M. L. Andersen and P.H. Collins, 70-81. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992.

Rothenberg, Paula S., ed. *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

### **Deborah Flick**

#### **Biography**

Deborah Flick is a senior instructor in the Women Studies Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She received an M.A. in Psychology from Sonoma State University and a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Colorado.

Deborah originally came to appreciate and value diversity as a result of her work in feminist organizations. Specifically, she founded Denver Safe House for battered women in 1977 and in that context learned first hand how sexism, racism, classism and homophobia inflict pain and suffering on everyone, albeit in different ways. Struggling with these issues personally and publicly led Deborah to the certain knowledge that embracing diversity in the classroom is essential to the honesty and integrity of the curriculum as well as to classroom dynamics and interactions. Much of what Deborah has learned and is learning about

curriculum development and teaching techniques is the result of interaction and support from colleagues, her reading of diversity literature, and experimentation, which inevitably includes a fair number of failures along with some successes.

Deborah speaks widely on women's subjects, delivering papers on such topics as violence against women, feminist organizing, and the empowerment of women. She has helped to develop programs for battered women in cities throughout the state of Colorado and has consulted with a number of public and private organizations—including IBM, the city of Boulder, and Hewlett-Packard—to improve the position of people of color and women in the workplace.

# Fostering Diversity in a Medium-Sized Classroom

---

## Professor Brenda J. Allen

Communication Department  
University of Colorado at Boulder

In her inaugural speech (October 4, 1991), President Judith Albino encouraged all members of the University community to become involved in the daily commitment to "the imperative of diversity." One essential area where faculty members can fulfill their obligation to this imperative is the classroom. Billingsley (1991) delineates difficulties that they must overcome in order to foster diversity while teaching, and he offers excellent guide-lines for "creating an atmosphere which embraces diversity."

His suggestions, however, are geared toward discussion courses. Consequently, some of his ideas may not be easy for faculty members to employ when working with more than 15 to 20 students. Here, I submit a few tips for those of us who work with medium-sized groups of 80 to 100 learners, as contrasted to what Middleton (1987) calls "thundering herds" of 200 or more.

Pedagogical style is a key factor in the formula for being a successful teacher. I tend to use an interactive approach, which encourages students to engage themselves actively in the learning process. Although this strategy is harder to exercise in large lectures than in seminars, using it is both possible and crucial to promoting diversity in the classroom.

In some ways, an interactive approach is similar to the discussion method Billingsley describes. For instance, he advocates creating an atmosphere of comfort, trust, and mutual respect, and he emphasizes the importance of "the faculty member's *behavior* as well as her *rhetoric*."

Middleton (1987) cites an element of teaching large classes that also applies to an interactive approach for medium-sized classes: "an awareness of a personalized relationship between the professor and the students, first as a group but then, at first gradually but with quickening pace, between the professor and individual students" (p.24).

To establish such an environment in a medium-sized classroom, however, a professor cannot literally involve each student in every discussion. But she *can* set a tone that allows all students to feel like part of the process, whether they express themselves through speech or not.

Delineated below are some practical tips for creating an interactive scenario that fosters diversity in the classroom. I also strongly recommend Billingsley's brochure as a complement to these ideas.

1. Establish and maintain a climate of openness and interaction by disclosing personal information about yourself. As an African-American professor, I often divulge facts about myself that illuminate my similarities to and differences from my students.

For example, I usually share my abbreviated autobiography with students during one of the first class sessions. Then, I ask them to tell me about themselves as a homework assignment. Invariably, their autobiographies include the same kind of information as mine does.

Furthermore, I periodically reread their autobiographies throughout the semester and personalize discussions by referring to them. For example, if a student is from Ohio (as I am), I might make a comment about midwesterners and say, "Isn't that right, Susie?"

These kinds of tactics help to maintain an interactive atmosphere and to reinforce Billingsley's point that WE ARE ALL THE SAME IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

2. Those of you who are members of ethnic plurality groups should help students to understand that you *do not represent* your group. Rather, you are an individual, as are any students in your class who happen to be nonmajority persons.
3. Since "actions speak louder than words," try always to be mindful of your nonverbal behavior. To help students feel like part of the process, establish eye contact with each one during the session. Move around the classroom as you talk (especially when you expect students to contribute to the discussion, but also while you are lecturing). Also, try to appear enthusiastic, relaxed, and comfortable.
4. Consider assigning seats according to alphabetical order, for at least two reasons: (1) you can learn students' names more easily; and (2) students who otherwise

might not sit next to each other may have an opportunity to meet someone who is "different" from them.

5. If your subject matter permits, incorporate a few exercises that require groups of students to interact with each other. Billingsley recommends:

"Be sure to give students many opportunities to work together in small groups on a variety of problem-solving activities which stress the importance of using personal experience. Problems that are of universal significance are particularly useful for small group work."

6. Wherever possible, integrate (no pun intended) information about diversity into your classroom materials. Again, Billingsley recommends:

"Establish respect for the values of diverse peoples by using specific examples, from your field of study, to show how culturally varied people have contributed to western history and civilization. In particular, use examples that illustrate the value and beauty of the ethnic/racial/gender group under discussion."

"Use specific examples and ideas from your discipline which serve to exhibit the functions of stereotypes and their destructiveness. Try to introduce exercises which show the extent to which most of us are susceptible to belief in some kinds of stereotypes. In the field of American literature examples are abundant. The black child, Pecola Breedlove, in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, accepts Euro-American stereotypes of beauty so completely that she fully believes her dark eyes and brown skin are emblems of absolute ugliness. She prays for the blue eyes of white girls whom she sees, stereotypically, as beautiful and eternally happy."

7. Before the middle of the semester, devise an assignment that requires students to meet with you individually. If possible, review the student's autobiography before the meeting. The purpose of this activity is to give the students a chance to talk with you privately and to let them know that you are approachable. This may be particularly meaningful for ethnic plurality students, who (in my experience) sometimes seem

apprehensive about talking one-on-one with their professors.

## References

- Billingsley, Ron. "Fostering Diversity In the Classroom: Teaching by Discussion." *On Diversity in Teaching and Learning*, no. I. Boulder: Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, Univ. of Colorado at Boulder, 1991.
- Middleton, Charles. "Teaching the Thundering Herd: Surviving In a Large Classroom." In *On Teaching*, Vol. I, edited by Mary Ann Shea. Boulder: Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, Univ. of Colorado at Boulder, 1987.

## Brenda J. Allen

### Biography

Brenda J. Allen is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Colorado. She received her Ph.D. in Organizational Communication from Howard University in Washington D.C. Her specialty area is computer-mediated communication. Brenda is a member of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Minority Affairs, the University's Outreach Council, and the Alumni Association Board of Directors. She also has been a faculty advisor for the Black Student Alliance and the Black Athletes Association. As service to the community she has given lectures and seminars on such topics as "Language and Race," "Celebrating Diversity" and "Communication and Racism" at public schools and government agencies. In 1990 she received the Outstanding Faculty Member Award of the Black Student Association.

As an African-American educator at a predominantly white university, Allen has become quite aware of the importance of fostering diversity within the university's community. She has noticed that many students segregate themselves according to their ethnic backgrounds, and she has heard disturbing reports about incidents of racial discrimination. Through diligence as well as trial and error, Allen has developed techniques which help to promote diversity in teaching and learning during her first three years at CU.

Brenda Allen strives to encourage students to embrace and celebrate diversity by addressing relevant issues in the classes she teaches, and by helping to coordinate campus activities which engender interaction among a variety of groups. She believes that through these types of activities, students and other members of the community will have wonderful opportunities

to enhance their educational experience by getting to know more about others (and themselves).



# The Influence of Attitudes, Feelings and Behavior Toward Diversity on Teaching and Learning

---

## Professor Lerita Coleman

*Department of Psychology  
University of Colorado at Boulder*

Developing an inclusive curriculum and creating classroom environments to foster diversity offer excellent opportunities for faculty members as conveyors of knowledge to examine their own ideas and feelings about gender and diversity. Most professors are socialized to believe that once they have begun their first teaching position, much of their personal (self-) development is complete. Frequently we think of our initial years in the professorial ranks as the time to focus on professional development. Self-development activities (e.g., seminars, faculty development, self-help groups, therapy), however, are important components of professional development. Self-development, self-acceptance in particular, is inextricably tied to our performance in the classroom, especially with respect to how we handle differing perspectives and perceptions and how we relate to others who are different. As we become more comfortable with who we are, we also become more comfortable with "differentness": different worldviews, as well as cultural, ethnic, racial or gender "differentness."

Teaching about ethnic and gender diversity, therefore, allows us to examine our own feelings about gender, race and diversity and to determine how our feelings affect what kind of material we present in class and how we present the material. Questions that we might ask of ourselves in this regard are: Do I have biases? Do I really believe in the equality of members of all ethnic and gender groups, and if not, how do I convey this attitude to my students? What aspects of racial or gender diversity make me feel uncomfortable? Why? For example, am I comfortable being around successful women? What kind of general attitudes do I hold about specific types of people (e.g., Black males, White females)? Where did these attitudes and feelings originate? Hence the process of creating an open classroom environment where students feel comfortable discussing often volatile issues begins with an examination of our own attitudes, feelings and behavior regarding diversity.

Examining our own personal reading habits provides another way to determine our underlying attitudes about ethnicity and gender: Do I read widely? More specifically, when have I

read any fiction or non-fiction written about or by an Asian-, African-, Native- or Latino-American or female writers? Do I value these literatures and the lives and experiences of people who are racially, ethnically and culturally different? How much do I really know about the origin and history of Asian or African, Latin or Native American culture? What do I know about women's studies or women's history?

An exploration of attitudes, feelings and behavior about diversity can be extended to how we relate to colleagues and graduate students who are different. In this domain we might address such questions as: Do I feel uncomfortable when a woman or a professor of color publishes a paper in a prestigious journal in my discipline or acquires a major grant or fellowship? Do I attribute most or all of their successes to "affirmative action" and not to their hard work, intelligence, perseverance and competence? Do I seek out the expertise of my female colleagues or colleagues of color or do I see my role as primarily a mentor to them? In summary, how symmetrical or egalitarian are our relationships with colleagues, graduate students and staff members who are "different"?

We may also need to explore whether we have developed competencies outside our own area or domain of specialization. Do we see other disciplines or the cultural experiences of others as an opportunity to enhance our own research or teaching? Do we make use of what is known in literature or history in our research in the social sciences? In turn, can scholars in the humanities and sciences learn from anthropology, sociology or psychology? In studying identity, for example, can I utilize information from African-American or Latino-American studies? In understanding environmental design, how can the literature and history of

Native American people elucidate my thinking?

Exploring the personal and professional issues outlined above are excellent guides to understanding how we may present issues of ethnicity and gender in the classroom. Student-teacher relationships, in particular, help us to realize that students are teachers also, and our interactions with them offer a wealth of opportunities to learn about ourselves and the differing perceptions of the world that people have constructed.

### **Behavior Toward Students Who Are Different**

Given that we can learn from teacher-student relationships, we might ask ourselves about how we respond to different kinds of students inside and outside of the classroom.

1. Can you see beyond a student's ethnic or racial background and see an intelligent, evolving person? Do you treat your students differently? Do you have different expectations for them? Are you surprised when a Black or Latino student earns the best grade on an exam or writes the best paper in the class? Claude Steele in his work on student achievement asks the question of all educators—Do you see ability and intelligence as a limited capacity or an expandable commodity?
2. Have I encouraged any bright students of color to assist me with my research or join my research lab? Have I encouraged him or her to pursue graduate school? Have I encouraged students struggling with diversity issues to work with professors who are conducting research on such topics?
3. How do I feel about students of color and women at the graduate level? Am I eager to engage in research with them?

### **Specific Teaching Tips**

1. Advise *every* student to take an ethnic studies or women's studies class no matter what their ethnic background or gender is. Being immersed in the literature and history of another group is an enlightening experience and will help to loosen rigid conceptions of "other people."
2. Attempt to provide a variety of perspectives about all of the topics you teach. Rather than always beginning with the Western societal version of a topic and then talking about "the other people" as an aside,

try to introduce alternative ways of looking at issues from the beginning. Also try to help students understand the origin of different epistemologies or worldviews associated with ethnic, racial or gender groups. It is quite evident that most epistemological traditions are linked to different ecologies (i.e., ways of surviving). Rather than showing that a particular worldview is wrong, discuss with students why groups of people developed a particular epistemology, cognitive style or behavioral tradition.

3. Attempt to help students understand how we (as a society or as individuals) construct the meanings attached to certain racial, ethnic, gender or social class, and other groups and how each person also has the ability and the responsibility to examine these meanings. For example, why does being female mean being "less valuable than a male" in many cultures? What is the verity of this meaning associated with gender and why is it perpetuated?
4. Ask students to write a paper about the meaning of race (and its relevance for your academic discipline). Ask them to talk with another person who is not of the same race or ethnic background about what race and ethnicity means to them and then have students compare the two views.
5. Do not allow students to make unsubstantiated statements (e.g., most African-American college students are athletes, Asian students study more than the average student, women are not good at math and science) about members of ethnic, racial or gender groups. Ask any student who makes such a claim to conduct research in the library or obtain statistical information from the appropriate sources to support such claims.
6. Try to answer personal questions about gender and racial issues as honestly as you can (e.g., what would you do if your son or daughter chose to date someone of another race?).
7. Do not avoid controversy. In fact, have students openly discuss stereotypes that they have about different racial, ethnic and gender groups. Talk about where these stereotypes originate and why they are perpetuated.

8. Encourage students to engage in individuation. This is the process by which we attempt to move beyond stereotyping a person to seeing him or her as an individual. Help students to understand that stereotyping people and acting on these stereotypes are bad habits that can be dissipated with each interaction. Assist them in trying to see beyond social categories to the individual (e.g., Do you say hello to the janitor? Why not? Can you have a conversation with a server in the dining hall? If not, what is inhibiting you?).
9. Stop the class when students are having trouble talking about a topic. For example, students often have difficulty talking about racial issues. Ask them to talk about their discomfort, especially their feelings (which often range from guilt and anger to fear). Once the class is able to transcend the inhibitory affect, you can return to discussing the relevant issues at a more conceptual and abstract level.
10. Do not allow students to attack each other in class. Instead, try to get them to explain why they feel the way they do. It is helpful for them to rephrase an attack such as "You are so racist and sexist" to "When you stereotype all members of a racial or gender group, I feel offended and angry."
11. Encourage students, especially those who seem to be angry about racial or gender diversity to come by your office to discuss the matter in greater detail. Usually such anger stems from personal feelings of insecurity or fears about one's future occupational success. In extreme cases, such students might benefit from a referral to the counseling services.
12. Try to assist students in understanding how their specific racial or gender makeup may help them to get more in touch with their humanity. Being a member of a particular ethnic or racial minority group may teach one strength or compassion that one might not have being a member of a majority racial group. Or certain characteristics associated with gender groups (e.g., gentleness or autonomy) are attributes that exist in everyone and can be nurtured and developed for the good of all. Basically, try to help students understand that there might be some greater purpose for their ethnic,

racial or gender background (besides being angry at the "outgroup") that can help them be more comfortable with who they are and make the world a better place for all of us.

## References

Steele, Claude. In press. "Minds Wasted, Minds Saved: Crisis and Hope in the Schooling of Black Americans." *The Atlantic*.

## Recommended Reading

To explore the topic further, Lerita Coleman suggests the following books and articles:

- Ainlay, S., G. Becker, and L. Coleman, eds. *The Dilemma of Differences: A Multidisciplinary View of Stigma*. NY: Plenum Press, 1986.
- Coleman, L. "Stigma: An Enigma Demystified." In *The Dilemma of Difference: A Multidisciplinary View of Stigma*, edited by S. Ainlay, G. Becker and L. Coleman, 211-231. NY: Plenum Press, 1986.
- Coleman, L. "Language and the Evolution of Identity and Self-Concept." In *The Development of Language and Language Researchers: Essays in Honor of Roger Brown*, edited by F. Kessel, 319-338. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988.
- Crocker, J., L.L. Thompson, K.M. McGraw, and C. Ingerman. "Downward Comparisons, Prejudice, Evaluations of Others: Effects of Self-Esteem and Threat." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52 (1987): 907-916.
- Cross, W. Jr. *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.
- Goffman, E. *Stigma: Notes on a Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963.
- Helms, J.E. *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research and Practice*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Jones E. E., A. Farina, A.H. Hastorf, H. Markus, D.T. Miller and R. A. Scott. *Social Stigma: The Psychology of Marked Relationships*. NY: Freeman, 1984.
- Kallen, E. *Label me Human: Minority Rights of Stigmatized Canadians*. Toronto: University Press, 1989.
- Matthews, S.H. *The Social World of Old Women: Management of Self Identity*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979.

## Lerita Coleman

### Biography

Lerita Coleman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and an Adjunct Professor at the Center for the Study of Ethni-

city and Race in America at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She received her B.A. with Highest Honors from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Harvard University. Among the many academic honors Lerita has received as a student and professional, she has been a Fellow of the Rockefeller, Ford, and Spencer Foundations and a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. She was the recipient of the Colorado Black Women for Political Action Education Award in 1991. Lerita is an ad-hoc reviewer for numerous psychology journals and was a visiting scholar at Western Michigan University in 1991 and Kalamazoo College in 1992. In 1990 and 1991 she served as a Faculty Mentor for the SMART (Summer Minority Access to Research Training) Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her research focuses on stigma, identity and self-concept.

Lerita Coleman's first conscious encounter with issues of diversity came when, as a student at UC Santa Cruz, she was required to take a core course on World Civilization. To her great surprise the course material focused solely on Greek and Roman history and art. Being a rather astute but naive student, Lerita approached her professor with the question, "What happened to the rest of the world?" She believes she is still a bit resentful about not being exposed to African, Chinese, South American history and art as well as the history and literature of a host of other cultures. Much of what Lerita knows about people other than Northern Europeans and Americans is self-taught.

Several years later, as a new assistant professor at the University of Michigan, Lerita realized that she had an extraordinary opportunity to ensure that the students she taught had a different experience than she had had as an undergraduate. She thought, if as an African-American woman she does not make changes in the curriculum, who will? Therefore, in every class she taught, in addition to covering the "basics," she made certain that students understood what was known about how women and people from a variety of cultures experience social psychological phenomena. She wanted them to understand that many of the concepts they discuss in psychology may carry a very different meaning for women and for people in other cultures. Lerita emphasizes how epistemologies and worldviews play a major role in how people perceive and construct reality.

Lerita Coleman's recent work on stigma, identity and self-concept has helped her to understand how one's concept or construction of self may be related to how comfortable he or she is with embracing diversity. Many students reveal that people who are comfortable with themselves (accepting one's own positive and negative attributes) and people who have high self-esteem are much more comfortable with people who are different. To celebrate and learn from our differences as well as to acknowledge our similarities with all human beings is perhaps the greatest challenge Lerita faces and that she believes others face as well.

# The Nature and Problem of Stereotypes

---

## Professor William Wei

*Department of History  
University of Colorado at Boulder*

Stereotypes are an ingrained feature of American society and an integral part of our socialization process, transmitting a patchwork of traditionally inaccurate images and clichés from one generation to another. They are based on preconceptions that are derived from existing sources of information about certain people and selective perceptions developed to explain their behavior. Stereotypes are a function of social relations between groups or political relations between nations, not extensive personal experience or knowledge. We use them to justify certain prejudices that we have and to strengthen our self-image at the expense of someone else. Indeed, their primary purpose is to degrade others as a means of accentuating our own humanity.

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of stereotypes is that they weaken our ability to think critically and serve as a major source of disinformation about others, especially women and minorities. Instead of challenging the stereotypes that we encounter in our daily lives, we accept them as representing reality and erroneously equate them with valid generalizations based on accurate data about a group of people. In actuality, they are nothing more than standardized mental pictures reflecting an oversimplified opinion and have little or no ascertainable basis in fact. They project unidimensional caricatures, masking the diversity that is an inherent feature of every group of people. Only Euro-Americans are depicted as representing the entire spectrum of humanity. Stereotypes, however, do accurately reflect one social reality: unequal relations in society and in the world.

Using Asians and Asian Americans as illustrations, I would like to suggest a way for you and your students to deal with the problem of stereotypes. But first, a cautionary note is in order: The issue is not whether specific stereotypes are politically correct or incorrect, negative or positive, but rather that they are, by definition, basically false and misleading. A case in point is Asian Americans as a "model minority," a positive stereotype that emerged during the 1960s and is used to make invidious comparisons with other people of color. It embodies a "cultural determinist" argument, that Asian Americans have overcome extra-

ordinary adversities through the strength of their cultural heritage.

For educators, what makes Asian Americans a model worth emulating is their exceptional school performance. This perceived performance, however, is excellence in a limited number of areas. It is an article of faith that Asian Americans are "born" mathematicians or scientists, but are unable to master English even if they try. While many have certainly done well in school, many others have not, a fact that is conveniently ignored or overlooked. Moreover, the "Model Minority" stereotype fails to take into consideration the high psychological costs of academic achievement.

1. Before you can successfully address the problem of stereotypes, you have to recognize not only that it is a universal problem but also that it may be a personal one as well. So it will probably be necessary first to ask, "Am I burdened with race, gender, and class stereotypes?" It is a difficult question to ask and answer, since none of us want to believe that we harbor and promote stereotypes. The beneficial result of this self-examination is self-empowerment, for when it is over you will have greater control over what you think and who you are, and a better understanding of what Carlos Cortés (1979) refers to as the "societal curriculum," that "massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, mass media, and other socializing forces that 'educate' us throughout our lives."
2. The best way to tackle the question of whether you have unintentionally stereotyped a group of people is to do so head on and on paper. Writing out your thoughts and feelings enables you to see more clearly what is in your mind's eye and, equally important, take ownership of it. One way is to write it out in the form of a tree, with the more fundamental ascribed characteristics where the roots are, and derivative ones where the leaves are. Another way is simply to write down five adjectives that you think best describe a people. For example, given the Japan bashing that has been going on in the United States, it might prove instructive to compare what you have written down about the Japanese, who are increasingly perceived as our newest "enemy," at least in

the economic arena, and what scholars know about them.

3. After identifying potential stereotypes, it is essential to subject them to critical scrutiny and factual verification. Asking Asian Americans to tell you what is true and false about the portrait that you have created may seem convenient but is foolish. Unless they have studied their group's history and culture, they will probably know as little as you do. Even though Asian Studies has been in existence since shortly after World War II and has produced a wealth of information about Asia and the people who live there, and even though Asian-American Studies was established in the late 1960s, there is no certainty that Asian Americans (or other people, for that matter) have studied either field. Besides, you risk embarrassing them if they cannot answer the question.
4. If what emerges is a stereotypical portrait of a people, then the question becomes: What are the origins of these stereotypes? A Gallup Organization public opinion poll about the Chinese is instructive (China Council). In 1966, Americans described Chinese as hardworking, but also as ignorant, warlike, sly, and treacherous. But by 1972, the highest ranking adjectives for Chinese in the same poll were hardworking, intelligent, progressive, artistic, practical, and honest. Within the space of six years, negative opinions were replaced with positive ones. It is no coincidence that these changes occurred during a period of improved Sino-American relations.
5. Since stereotypes permeate popular culture, an effective way to engage students is to have them collect examples from a medium of their choice. For instance, a survey of advertisements in national magazines or on television could yield a wealth of images for analysis and discussion, activities that will impart critical thinking skills. Among the questions that could be asked are the following:
  - Are these images accurate? What purpose do they serve?
  - Do these images affect Asian-American self-identity? How do they affect the rest of society, especially Euro-Americans?
  - Are counterportrayals useful? Or do they simply promote a different stereotype?

- Are there any perceptual, moral, or marketing reasons for advertising agencies to alter these images in any substantive way?
  - What do these images imply about American culture?
6. Ultimately, someone will ask, "If these images are inaccurate or unidimensional, what are Asians and Asian Americans really like?" Since students know that there are characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another, they will want to learn what these traits are. This is the most demanding part of the process, since it requires real knowledge that can be acquired only through study.

### References

- China Council of the Asia Society. "Looking for China: American Images (Part I)." Color Slides and Cassette Tape Unit, n.d.
- Cortés, Carlos E. "The Societal Curriculum and the School Curriculum: Allies or Antagonists?" *Educational Leadership*, 36, no. 7 (April 1979): 475-479.

### Recommended Reading

For those interested in learning more about the problem of Asian-American stereotypes, the following books are recommended:

- Dower, Hohn W. *War without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
- Iriye, Akira. *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967.
- Isaacs, Harold R. *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India*. New York: J. Day, 1958.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Wong, Eugene. *On Visual Media Racism: Asians in the American Motion Pictures*. New York: Arno Press, 1978.

### William Wei Biography

William Wei was born in Tinghai, China, and raised in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in an ethnic neighborhood consisting of East Europeans and Puerto Ricans. It was in New York City that he developed an awareness of cultural pluralism and an appreciation of its significance for American society. Influenced by social movements of the 1960s, he became involved in the Asian-American Movement, an

ethnic-consciousness movement for equality and empowerment. It was when he began working as an Asian-American curriculum specialist for the Ann Arbor public school district during the seventies that he realized the need to change America from a predominantly Euro-American culture to a multiethnic one.

William Wei is an Associate Professor of History. He has been active in service to the University, especially in Asian Studies and minority affairs. He organized the "Colors of Colorado," a project to integrate minority scholarship into the college curriculum, and was a founding member of the Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America. In 1988, he received the University of Colorado faculty award for Equity and Excellence; in 1985, he won the Kayden Faculty Book Manuscript prize for *Counterrevolution in China: The Nationalists in Jiangxi during the Soviet Period*.

# Dialogue on Diversity in the Classroom

---

**Professor Janet Jacobs**

and

**Michele D. Simpson**

**Instructor/ Research Associate**

*Women Studies Program*

*University of Colorado at Boulder*

Below, we present a dialogue that addresses some of the concerns we believe are important for teaching diversity. In turn, we have asked each other questions about our teaching, our classrooms, and the problems we encounter in diversifying education and the curriculum in the university. These questions, along with our responses, provide a framework for integrating perspectives that can challenge students while transforming the academy.

**Michele:** Janet, thanks again for asking me to co-author this piece with you. Since you extended the offer, I have been doing even more thinking about diversity in teaching and learning. More specifically, I have been thinking about the teaching methods I employ in my own classes and reviewing what has worked well and what has fallen flat.

**Janet:** I am really pleased that you agreed to make this a collaborative effort. We have talked at length about our experiences in the classroom, the problems and challenges we encounter as women who take a feminist perspective and who have strong cultural ties to African American and Jewish communities. Maybe we could begin our discussion with your ideas about diversity in the classroom.

**Michele:** I find that a lot of my ideas about diversity in teaching and learning are captured in the following words from Vincent Harding's *Hope and History*:

In a society increasingly populated by peoples of color, by those who have known the disdain and domination of the Euro-American world, it would be fascinating to ponder self-love as a religious calling. How are people, beginning in their earliest years, nurtured to act with self-respect and self-responsibility? How are they encouraged to move through the world with a spirit which unselfrighteously challenges everything that threatens to crush the human spirit, the human ability to love ourselves and others? Can we explore such fundamental questions with our students, wondering aloud with

them about the fascinating possible spiritual connections between the capacity to love ourselves and the willingness to love and serve others?

My classes at CU are typically small (20 or more) or medium-sized (40 or fewer). I would say that 90 percent of my students are women, and usually 25 percent are women of color.

In-depth classroom discussion is possible in a course of this size. Student participation is essential. Through discussion students can be encouraged to analyze critically what they think and hear. And of course classroom discussions can sharpen listening skills. Additionally, through this public exchange of ideas, students can begin to interweave concepts like race, class, and gender—issues we revisit again and again.

**Michele:** Janet, how do you incorporate diversity into your classes?

**Janet:** One of the most significant challenges for me was pointed out in an earlier essay in this series by Deborah Flick, who discussed the problem of reinforcing stereotypes. It has been my experience that introducing diversity into the classroom may reinforce rather than eliminate stereotypes. This unintended consequence is more likely to occur in schools where students have little interaction with individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and come from communities that are similarly homogeneous.

**Michele:** What is the typical make-up of your classes?

**Janet:** My introductory classes tend to have about 100 students, of whom 10 percent may be from diverse backgrounds. Under these conditions, interaction with cultural diversity may in fact be limited to the classroom and the course material. The result is that students tend to approach this material with preconceived assumptions and biases that may be strengthened rather than diminished by the reading of autobiographies, the discussion of cultural values, and the examination of culturally diverse social behavior. To limit this effect of a relatively homogeneous student population, it is important that the instructor discuss stereotypes and the way in which racism, sexism, and homophobia are reinforced. This exposure to difference affirms the "we and they" understanding of cultural pluralism.



**Janet:** *What kind of experiences have you encountered when you introduce diversity into the classroom, Michele?*

**Michele:** Well, often my mere presence is an introduction of diversity into the classroom. However, many students feel threatened by topics that focus on race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. And even students with a fair degree of openness may still find the process of exploring diversity difficult, even painful.

When fear and pain are present in the classroom, both instructor and students usually experience discomfort. While it may be difficult, it is best to confront the feelings that have been unleashed. Resist the impulse to discount or rationalize the pain. Generate a discussion around the idea that we can begin changing how we perceive pain. Talk about our society's approach to pain. Talk about the prevailing notion that to experience pain is bad or a signal that something is wrong. Encourage students to consider that the pain may manifest new perspectives, increased knowledge, and ultimately growth. Instructors sometimes hesitate to call attention to more than one topic at a time. If one is teaching a unit on the institutionalization of racism in the academy, for example, one may be reluctant to focus on how racism, when it intersects with gender, causes problems specific to women of color. Calling attention to gender does not necessarily devalue or subordinate a discussion of race.

It has been my experience that at predominantly white institutions, students fear that courses which have a decidedly diverse focus will detract from their academic achievement and progress. For students who already feel alienated and unwelcome, certain courses will appear to be beyond the pale (no pun intended), not mainstream enough. And students entering these classes do so with some perceived risk to themselves. This risk I think is worth acknowledging.

It is important to emphasize that courses which incorporate diversity can broaden the intellectual scope of all students. And for students whose lived experiences are explored and discussed in these courses, the information they gain can deepen self-awareness, while simultaneously providing an intellectual and methodological base that can be used in other courses of study.

**Michele:** *Janet, what do you do when you have created a relatively safe space for students to discuss ideas and the discussion leads to negative remarks?*

**Janet:** Discussions of diversity, whether focused on gender, race and ethnicity, or sexual orientation, can create a class environment that lends itself to open discussion and the honest expression of thoughts, opinions, and attitudes. While this academic environment is conducive to learning, open discussion of difference may also result in public remarks that, however intended, are discriminatory in content. A student might begin a discussion of Italian-American culture by saying, "I'm not prejudiced or anything, but when I was growing up my father always said how Italians were all in the Mafia." Comments such as these, which may be expressed about any number of marginalized groups, are frequently heard in classrooms in which diversity is stressed. These remarks can be used to explore biases and assumptions that permeate the culture as a whole. Rather than ignore such statements, the instructor should ask the class to consider the kinds of ideas about a group that are generated from beliefs such as these.

A second question to pursue is "How do ideas about difference affect our understanding of diversity?" While it is not helpful to label a student as anti-semitic or racist, it is helpful to acknowledge that we are all socialized with stereotypes of the "other"—whether these stereotypes are based on race, gender, or sexual orientation. Discriminatory remarks become an expression of negative stereotyping that can be pointed out. Ignoring such statements out of embarrassment or discomfort confirms to the class that ideas such as these will go unchallenged.

**Janet:** *Michele, since you teach a course on Black women, how do you incorporate your own experience into the classroom?*

**Michele:** I always begin my classes by talking about my own life. I do not give a verbal résumé. Instead, I try to convey some sense of how I arrived at this place, teaching this class. I talk about my own discoveries regarding the intersection of race, sex, and class, speaking as ONE Black woman.

It is important to provide space for students to tell their own stories. This gives all of them an opportunity to give voice to their own historical and ethnic links, differences, similarities. Encourage the students to interact with all the storytellers. They usually ask each

other questions and get excited when they hear something in another's story that strikes a chord or warrants further explanation or discussion.

**Janet:** *How do you incorporate other perspectives in your class?*

**Michele:** I love inviting different voices into the classroom. No matter how often I try to make the point that Black women are not a monolithic group, nothing drives home the idea better than living, breathing Black women. Panels, guest speakers, and films can also be helpful, but I always work up to them. Without a context, students do not have any place to put what they will hear.

**Janet:** *What about issues of authority and authenticity in the classroom?*

**Michele:** Try to recognize where the class materials fall short and provide supplementary texts, films, and so forth. For example, I sometimes use Paula Giddings' book *When and Where I Enter*. However, that text makes no mention of the contribution of lesbians. And I am not just talking about a "chapter on lesbians" missing. Lesbians who have been integral to the struggle of African American women are not even mentioned by name. Acknowledging this shortcoming allows us to work together as a class to fill in the gaps. Of course I use other texts that do recognize the contributions of lesbians to the richness and complexity of Black life.

Gay men, lesbians, people of color, white women, and various ethnic groups share the dubious historical distinction of having our experiences interpreted and written about by a group with greater power. And it did not stop there; this same powerful group then became the "experts," the "authorities" to consult about the experiences of the "other."

In the classroom, when we teach, discuss, and analyze the experiences of a group to which we do not belong, we must think about what Bell Hooks calls "the ethics of our action." We must consider whether or not our work and words will be used to reinforce and perpetuate biases, stereotypes, and supremacist attitudes.

Can we make room, in our introductions to the works of groups to which we do not belong, for a discussion of the ethical issues of privilege? Extra-group perspectives, however provocative and informed, are limited. When a student in the class or a colleague has the same or deeper knowledge, coupled with a lived experience of the culture being studied, can more of us

consider sharing our role as instructor / authority?

**Michele:** *Janet, what is it like to teach a predominantly white group when the discussion turns to issues of race and inequality?*

**Janet:** Discussing social oppression and injustice in the classroom elicits a variety of responses from students who, consciously or not, are identified with the dominant culture that is held responsible for racism, sexism, and homophobia. The reactions may vary from extreme defensiveness to deeply felt guilt. In class-rooms where diverse student populations are being educated about the meaning of diversity in the lives of those who have been marginalized and excluded, the expression of guilt may evoke anger from students who have experienced discrimination and injustice. At the same time, students who feel guilty may seek approval and acceptance from those who have suffered discrimination.

One approach to this situation is to discuss with the class how guilt limits the discourse on diversity. Guilt tends to shift the focus of learning away from difference and inequality and toward the subjective experience of the dominant culture. While "feeling bad" about social injustice may be a first step toward breaking down cultural bias and oppression, learning cannot take place unless students move beyond guilt and into an intellectual dialogue where they seek knowledge of the other for its own value rather than out of a sense of guilt or obligation.

Guilt allows students to remain focused on themselves rather than on the subject matter of the class. Because guilt tends to inform classrooms that validate a sensitivity to diversity, it is important that the instructor examine his or her own attitudes toward discrimination and social injustice so that the class does not become polarized by reactions of anger on one side and shame on the other.

**Janet:** *What do you think is the ideal learning situation for diversity?*

**Michele:** The ideal situation for learning is always one where there is a diversity of voices and an exchange of challenging ideas. We are all capable of teaching and learning about an ethnic / racial group and studying history, art, literature generated by cultural groups different from our own, even if no person from that group is present in the room. In one all-white class I taught, students were mindful that Black

women might approach the texts, films, and questions we explored in a very different way, depending on a whole host of factors like class, sexual orientation, and geographical home. In that case I think it helped that students were encouraged to acknowledge that their insights and ideas, although they might be different from those of Black women, were of equal value.

Ideally, students and instructors would not abdicate responsibility for being in the world, for responding to works by men and women different from themselves. They would understand that to withdraw might very well reinforce racist attitudes. I am not comfortable with students or instructors who assume a passive position and do not assert their ideas about cultures of which they are not a part. On the other hand, problems arise when any of us, regardless of group affiliation, need to assume the questionable role of "authority."

One primary function of teaching is to prepare students to live and act more fully in the world, not protect them or ourselves from it.

None of this is easy.

### References

- Albrecht, Lisa, and Brewer, Rose M., ed. *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances*. Philadelphia: New Society Publisher, 1990.
- Harding Vincent. *Hope and History*. New York: Orbis Press, 1990.
- Hooks, Bell. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989.

### Teaching Tips

1. Acknowledge, *again and again*, the difficulties inherent in exploring issues of diversity. Create an outlet for students to express their fears and discomfort both inside and outside the classroom.
2. As was pointed out by Lerita Coleman in a previous brochure on diversity entitled *The Influence of Attitudes, Feelings and Behavior Toward Diversity on Teaching and Learning*, it is essential that students be encouraged to take courses that challenge their world view. It is important to emphasize both the intellectual and personal benefits offered by courses that focus on diverse issues.
3. It is important to acknowledge the real and/or perceived personal risk(s) many students take when signing up for such courses.

4. Provide space for students to tell their own stories, thus laying the groundwork for discussions that focus on historical and ethnic links, differences and similarities.
5. Struggle with your own issues around being the only and final "authority" in the classroom. Recognize where your expertise and class materials fall short. Invite different voices into the classroom via films, guest speakers, campus and community groups.
6. Compile a list of resources (bibliographies, literature reviews, films, etc.) so that students can expand their interests outside the classroom.
7. Explore stereotypes and the ways in which racism, sexism, and homophobia may be reinforced through a "we and they" understanding of cultural pluralism.
8. In introducing topics of diversity, explore biases and assumptions that permeate the culture as a whole.

### Recommended Reading

To explore the topic further, Janet Jacobs and Michele Simpson recommend the following:

- Hooks, Bell and West, Cornel. *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*. Boston: South End Press, 1991.
- Hull, Gloria T., Bell Scott, Patricia, and Smith, Barbara, ed. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*. New York: The Feminist Press, 1982.
- Sage VI*, no. 1: Black Women's Studies (Summer 1989).

### Janet Jacobs

#### Biography

Janet L. Jacobs is an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado, where she has been teaching women studies and sociology classes for over a decade. It has always been her goal to represent diverse perspectives on social and cultural experience so that knowledge and scientific truth are not limited by gender, race, or class.

Janet believes that the university classroom is the appropriate forum for expanding the knowledge base of students so that their college education truly reflects a multiplicity of viewpoints and experiences. Her approach to the discipline of women studies has by

definition included diversity as an educational value, as differences among women must be respected and studied.

Throughout the years Janet Jacobs has taught, she has assigned texts that reflect diverse theoretical perspectives which are incorporated into class discussions on difference. This approach challenges students to examine world views that differ from their own.

Some days Michele feels as though she had been struggling with issues related to diversity for a lifetime. Sometimes longer. And then there are those *other* days. . . .

## **Michele D. Simpson**

### **Biography**

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Michele Simpson has lived in the South, the Midwest, the West Indies, and, for the past twelve years, in Boulder, Colorado. She has worked as an attorney, as an employee relations specialist, as an entrepreneur, and as foundation program officer. Constants in her life have been short story writing, community work, and teaching. Once a year Michele teaches a class entitled Historical and Contemporary Issues of Black Women. Currently she is working on a film that will explore the possibility of friendship between Black and White women.

Having experienced firsthand the pain of invisibility, Michele's commitment to diversity in the classroom grows out of a need that is connected to a commitment to assist her students and herself in the process of becoming more fully human.

As an undergraduate she attended a historically Black university. There she made contact with some of the best teachers she has ever had at any time during her tenure as a formal student. They have been present in every class she teaches and continue to influence what she does in the classroom.

Women and men teachers, mostly Black, made sure that their students understood that there was much to learn about themselves as one group of the African diaspora and members of the world community. They introduced Michele to the idea that there were a host of ways of seeing and knowing. She and her fellow students were not given the choice to be anything but active learners at her school. A lot of emphasis was placed on taking what had been learned and applying it to the world. Education and service were not divisible.

Alice Walker, in several of her essays in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* says that her best teachers were those "who taught by the courage of their own lives." Her words reflect Michele Simpson's educational inheritance.

## Head Trip: A Teaching and Learning Discussion

---

### Professor Polly E. McLean

*School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Colorado at Boulder*

Why is it so hard to change? Why is it even harder to help other people change? I want to share with you some rather personal thoughts about why it is difficult to change the curricula to focus on diversity and inclusion, how I went about doing it, and what I learned in the process. I like to think of myself as a risk taker, an open person. I like to think that I am not just intellectually but viscerally willing to change when adequate need is shown. Still, change is difficult for me.

Several years ago, I decided in the spirit of enlightened self-interest to shift from one principal teaching focus to another. This led to creating two new courses—"Women in International Development" for Women Studies and "Ethnic Notions," a first-year seminar on unlearning racism and sexism funded by the Council on Academic Programs in the Residence Halls for the Hallet Hall Diversity Program taught through the Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America. It also meant taking a long, hard look at my traditional media courses in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

"Why would you want to do that?" I was asked by a colleague. "Isn't that extra work?" "Your research will undoubtedly suffer," another remarked. As I listened to the comments, I began to have self-doubts. It reminded me of the time I decided to change the sequence of my morning routine. It turned out to be a difficult and energy-expending adjustment for me. I eventually gave up. Recently a friend suggested that I get an answering machine at my home. My immediate reaction was, "I don't want to do that. . . . If it's important, the caller will call back!" I still don't have an answering machine. So as I began to think about creating new courses and reformulating old courses to incorporate diversity in an informed and constructive way, I became the subject of my own change. Here is what I learned.

Simply being interested in such issues as race, class disparities, disabilities, and sexual orientation was not sufficient. To work on correcting past inequities, I had to be willing to make both an intellectual and pedagogical shift. This was a scary thought, especially when I had to admit to my pedagogical shortcomings. For

example, I found students eager to talk about race relations, but those discussions were at times volatile. I did not learn teaching skills in my graduate education to prepare me for any classroom situation, far less one in which students' voices would be heard above mine. I also discovered that students of color, who were less assimilated, brought much of their culture into the classroom which my social class and cultural background did not prepare me for. As one African American student recently remarked, "I have a real difficult time when the discussion is interesting to follow classroom procedures of raising my hand to be acknowledged by the professor. I just want to jump into the discussion at any time. It frustrates me to follow turn-taking behaviors of White people."

I also thought that I could easily remedy the monoperspectiveness of my courses by adding into my syllabus works about people of color, women, the aged, the differently abled, homosexuals and other traditionally excluded groups. However, what I ended up with were courses that relegated these groups to the "other" category, permanent victims of mainstream culture, deprived and incomplete. Without realizing it, I had designed my courses based on the victimization approach, the same victimization approach that governs much of society's attempts to solve many of its social problems. How many interventions are targeted for students of color to adjust to, feel comfortable in, fit into predominantly White campuses? Yet study after study suggests that the difficulties students of color encounter lie with the uncomfortable environment created by members of the dominant group. Still, so many of our interventions are designed to produce changes in the victims, not the victimizers.

Both in and out of the classroom we continue to use formulas that interpret the lives of people traditionally excluded from the canon based upon a universal norm that has little to do with the reality of history and people's experiences. How different, for example, a course describing the experiences of Chicanos and the media would be had I begun with *El Semanario* and *La Voz* (two Colorado bilingual newspapers) rather than *The Denver Post*. How differently students might read African American identity if they were to use Zora Neale Hurston's definition: "*But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow damned up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not*

*mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world —I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife."*

As I moved away from interpreting these groups from the eyes and experiences of the dominant group, I became more conscious of recreating courses based on studying people on their own terms. When I began to study people on their own terms, I found out that I had to discard many of the theories and concepts that never took into consideration the people they seek to embrace today. For the first time, I was taking a critical look at the realities of power and oppression that are embedded in the history and development of my field. This meant often beginning from ground zero, building from the bottom up.

I also found out that in spite of my years of education, I did not escape learning and believing stereotypes and biases that undergird people with different sexual preferences, people who are differently abled, and people whose color is different from my own. For me, challenging these stereotypes became the first step in the embrace of diversity.

Although I could very easily point to overt oppressive and discriminatory behaviors from members of my own group, I failed to see the overriding covert behaviors that had become so much a part of me. Once I became conscious of my covert oppressive behaviors, I had to be prepared to deal with my denial, frustration, anger, hurt, and guilt. Thus, heightening my sensitivity to my unconscious and inadvertent behaviors was an essential second step in the embrace of diversity.

Needless to say, change was not easy. I went through a period of hanging on to the old and familiar. I was defensive, rigid and, at times, visibly angry. But as I went through this process, I learned several valuable lessons. **To change the pedagogy and curricula to reflect diversity and inclusion, I had to begin with me. I had to be willing to be open, receptive and ready to unlearn whatever residual oppressive attitudes I held that would prevent me from helping students to be less racist, more open to difference, and generally less oppressive to others. Diversity is not just teaching anti-oppressiveness, appreciation and tolerance of other cultures, it is intellectual rigor that stands the assumptions inherent in the social and behavioral science disciplines**

**on their head. I also learned that I had to place equal value on changing content and pedagogy to reflect diversity and inclusion. To do this, I had to abandon the solitary pursuit of teaching, come out of the closet and acknowledge my pedagogical shortcomings, and ask my colleagues for critical and honest feedback.**

What implications did this transformation have on my teaching and on student learning in general? Fundamentally, I learned to have a greater appreciation for and legitimization of the unlearning process. Since I was aware of my change, I was able to better understand what students go through to change. When students begin to look at old things in a different light (as I did), their old world often becomes shattered. For some, the transition is easy. For others, it is painful and difficult. This made me build into my courses flexibility and support by facilitating, through classroom work, student-to-student contact, enabling group building and at times including the Cross-cultural Consultation Team (CCT) from Counseling and Career Services: A Multicultural Center.

The transformation also changed my philosophy of teaching. I moved from a teacher-to a student-centered classroom. This change had a profound effect on my students. Essentially they became more responsible for their learning, more creative and productive. Students question, debate, interact and disagree more than in the traditional teacher-centered classroom. They also learned how to listen. However, the most difficult adjustment is the unpredictability of classroom dynamics and the fact that I became more vulnerable. Giving students power means that they will use it. I never know when they will use it, or how they will use it. Especially when they will challenge me or each other.

Although I had devised clear ways of measuring learning, I discovered that students experienced significant personal learnings. I wanted to understand these leanings as well as to help students assess their own learnings. I found that using a journal was decisively helpful in tracking these serendipitous learnings. The following are a few additional examples that can work in any classroom that deals with the issues of change and unlearning.

#### **1. Openness and Confidentiality**

Students learn in relationship. The classroom atmosphere, the mode of instruction, the relationship between students in the class, and between the teacher and the students all impact learning.

After introductions, I discuss my philosophy of teaching and learning and why the course they are taking is important. The next step is working with the students on the classroom atmosphere by setting the ground rules. We usually acknowledge that in a classroom where diversity is celebrated, self-disclosure is often a part of the unlearning process. In such a classroom, listening and respecting each other's position become critical. Students then agree to respect and keep confidential personal materials that are shared. I also make it clear that at no time will their grades be affected by their disclosure. For instance, in my "Ethnic Notions" and "Mass Communication and Public Opinion" classes, many White students are often vehemently opposed to Affirmative Action, and their opposition can be quite passionate. Students in an unlearning environment must feel totally comfortable to raise issues such as Affirmative Action without fear of punitive measures from the teacher.

## 2. Teacher Candidness

In a classroom community that supports the acceptance of diversity the teacher is not a bystander. Just as students are asked to self-disclose, teachers also must recognize that they need to operate from a high degree of candidness. For example, when I ask students to talk about the stereotypes they hold about people different from themselves, I also talk about my own stereotypes and how they were developed.

## 3. Dispelling Myths

Students arrive in my classroom with elaborate maps about the nature of reality, themselves, and others. In my "Ethnic Notions" and "Mass Communication and Public Opinion" classes, I ask students what issues they feel are important to African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and Native peoples. I then ask how they arrived at these issues. Most of the time, it is through the mainstream press. I then give them an assignment to find out from people of these particular groups what issues concern them and how they view those issues. Students use a number of strategies to identify members of these groups ranging from student groups on campus to local Boulder and Denver community organizations. I also assign them to read various ethnic newspapers produced by members of these groups. For example, I distribute copies of

the *New York Amsterdam News* (an African American newspaper) of which I periodically collect back issues from Norlin. Students are asked to read the entire issue and report on how African Americans from New York City define their local and national concerns and to compare the views in the press with those arrived at in class. This is probably one of the most shocking and eye-opening assignments for many White students. They begin to see African Americans for the first time as complex, multidimensional human beings. Typical responses are: "I never thought sports would get such low coverage in a Black newspaper." "There is much more emphasis on political empowerment and education than in the regular newspapers." "Until I read this paper I thought Jesse Jackson was the only Black leader in the country." "I felt good about reading a paper that had a clear position and ideology." "I noticed more ads for hair and hair salons than other products." The last comment has almost become predictable. I frequently follow this up with the video "Hairpiece: A Film for Nappy Headed People," and a discussion on Black hair as culture, the historical context associated with developing Black female personhood, the concept of Europeanized beauty, and how this has affected both Black and White female self-identity.

## 4. The Awareness Assessment

During the first week of class, I give students an awareness assignment. In this assignment, students are asked:

1. What is your ethnic background and gender?
2. What has it meant to belong to your ethnic/gender group?
3. Where did you grow up and what other ethnic groups resided there?
4. What was your first experience of feeling different?
5. What are your earliest images of race or color/people with different abilities/people of different sexual orientations?
6. What advantages/disadvantages may be associated with belonging to your ethnic group/particular gender/sexual orientation?
7. What were your concerns and feelings while answering these questions?

I use this assignment in a number of ways. First, it helps to flesh out some of the course by allowing me to personalize the content each semester. This gives me the option of adding or deleting some readings. Second, this assignment aided in stimulating discussions and is a meaningful tool for me in evaluating the individual student's reality. The latter helps me to initiate discussion during my office hours among students who may be too apprehensive to be open in class. Finally, I have also used the assignment to call on the CCT for advice when I identify a problem beyond my expertise.

#### 5. Defining Terminology

Hispanic, Latino, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Black, African American, queer, underdeveloped, Third World—what we call ourselves and what others call us and the gap between the two are critical issues. Language is culture and beyond what some may mistakenly label as political correctness, there is debate in many communities regarding terms that particular groups had no say in creating about themselves or in defining their experiences. It should be no surprise to any of us that if Indians wrote the history of Columbus in the Americas, the word "discover" would never have made it in. Since language, like culture, is continually evolving, it is important to raise these issues in class because language tells us a lot about ourselves and people we seek to know.

I handle the terminology issue in three ways. First, I begin by clarifying or establishing semantic parameters so as not to impose judgments. For example, the term "minority" is variously interpreted as a euphemism referring specifically to Asians, African Americans, Latinos, and Native peoples. I discuss why it is currently seen by many as an oppressive term that connotes disempowerment and poverty. Since the term "minority" imposes a hierarchical standard and value judgment, such usage is best reserved for quantifiable and verifiable statistics. Terminology such as "people of color" on the other hand, acknowledges racial or ethnic heritage independent of value-laden language. A similar argument could be used for the term "Third World," a value-laden ranking that relegates most societies of Africa, Latin America, and Asia to a lower status than the

more economically advanced societies. Likewise, the term "handicap," historically connected with a cap-in-hand begging image, refers to the consequences of society's prejudices and barriers and not to a person's disABILITY.

Second, I discuss language that oppressed groups have reclaimed and redefined (the word "queer" is a good example here). Language can also be reclaimed and redefined by members of the dominant culture. When the Kappa Sigma fraternity at Colorado College (CC) wanted to pledge their first African American student in 1968, the national body was in an uproar. So much so that former Senator John Tower and Vice President of the National Chapter paid the CC chapter a visit. In an effort to demean the action of the CC chapter, they were subsequently labeled the "Negroid" chapter. In response, the members of the chapter reclaimed the word and some twenty-five years later still call themselves the "Groids."

Finally, I raise terms that many of the undergraduates are exposed to from the popular culture of particular groups. For example, one cannot view a Spike Lee film or listen to a particular genre of rap music without hearing the word "nigger." I find students' understanding of the word is based on two concepts: "White people don't call Black people nigger" or "Blacks like calling each other that." In this case, it is important to point out to students the historical development of words. I discuss the word from the original corruption of *negra* (Spanish for black), to its usage as a racial slur and means of demeaning people without human status, to its contemporary redefinition among many African Americans. To understand the word "nigger" from a contemporary African American viewpoint, I discuss how the situation, tone, gender, class and age play into the definition. In this way, the word can be used selectively as a term of endearment, in humor, a greeting, identifying a close buddy, to illustrate a point, stopping in-group stereotypical behaviors, as fighting words, to move Black people to "Blackness" (as the liberation poets did in the 60's and 70's), or as some female students in a Denver high school recently explained to me, "a nigger could also be a male ho." Although the word has various



definitions among many members of the African American community, it still symbolizes hundreds of years of anti-African racism and cultural repression.

#### **6. Assumption of Homogeneity**

Letting go of ethnocentrism is hard; fighting against negative stereotypes is even harder. But embedded in these preconceptions of individuals and groups, is a deeper and more subtle problem: the view that people with different sexual orientations, the differently abled, African Americans, Latinos, Asians and Native peoples are homogeneous. For example, gays and lesbians are often depicted as united in a common culture with sexual practice being the only defining characteristic. Despite same-sex attraction, there are many homosexualities. To get students to move from a one-dimensional, homogeneous approach, we begin to discuss diversity among White heterosexuals, since this is the dominant group in my class. Particular attention is paid to class differences among Whites. Once students begin to see their differences, they can then begin to focus on other people. I also use the videos "Lifetime Companions" and "Paris Is Burning" to talk about heterogeneity among gays. After viewing the videos, I devise several themes on difference (e.g., the concept of the nuclear family vis-à-vis the family structure depicted in "Paris Is Burning") and ask students to write on one of the themes.

Along the same lines, it is important to dispel the homogeneity myths that are embedded in students' heads or not to foster further homogenization when using a guest speaker who is different from the dominant group. For example, I often find my students believing that their one Indian friend means that they know all Indians and can speak on behalf of the group, or because they went to school in El Paso, they know all Latinos, or their one trip to Jamaica means they know all Caribbean people. I point out clearly that our Puerto Rican lesbian writer guest speaker simply means that they know her experiences and not all Latina lesbian writers.

#### **7. Service Learning**

Students' relationships with people both in and outside of the classroom impact learning. Getting the students involved with organizations and groups they have had

little contact with is critical to diversity and inclusion. I built into my "Ethnic Notions" class a three-hour weekly service learning component that is worth 15 percent of the final grade. I selected the site(s), met with the staff, discussed their needs, the students' needs, the evaluation form that will be used by the staff to assess student learning, and the organization's operating procedures. The staff conducts an orientation for the entire class on-site. I monitor their work through monthly phone calls to their supervisors and by spending the first 10 minutes of each class discussing their previous week's service. This helps to illuminate the positive learning experience, the links back to the classroom, to identify problems, and to offer alternative solutions. Service has also helped me to get students involved with other units on campus. For example, I have referred students to the Bueno Center when they are assigned to help tutor a bilingual child. The impact of service learning on the students' development has been tremendous. Students have changed their majors, they have been able to better connect the theoretical foundations in the classroom with first-hand experience, and they have also begun to understand their role as Whites in a pluralistic nation. The most profound learning is the dismantling of the assumptions they bring into a grassroots organization simply because they are White or students at a major state university. By mid-semester, they come to understand that winning loyalty is a matter of commitment and their willingness to listen.

#### **8. Individualized Change**

Once students' awareness has been raised and they begin to recognize how power, privilege and oppression in American society impacts upon them and others, they become inundated by this new knowledge. When this happens, students either feel the need to use their new knowledge constructively or they feel powerless. During the last two classes, students work towards change by developing an individualized anti-oppressive plan. To assist them in developing their plan, we begin by discussing the kind of world they would like to live in. This is followed by situations they have previously encountered in which oppressive attitudes and behaviors were exhibited. We list the kinds of statements they have heard and then discuss

how they would now behave with their new knowledge, the kinds of responses they could possibly make and the risks they would face in becoming agents of social change.

I would not want you to think that success in diversity and inclusion depends only on a certain "kind of faculty" or only in "certain kinds of courses." Similarly, I would not want you to feel guilty for not shaping your courses to become more inclusive and diverse. When we concentrate on the guilt, we become immobile. In reality we are all for diversity and inclusion for some very straightforward and self-interested reasons. Yet only with a vision of what this could mean to students, coupled with the courage of faculty to make intellectual and pedagogical changes, are we going to have a chance of making it happen.

### References

- Hurston, Zora Neale. (1979). How it feels to be colored me. In Alice Walker (Ed.), *I love myself when I am laughing... And then again when I am looking mean and impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. (pp.152-155). New York: The Feminist Press.
- Derman-Sparks, L., and ABC Task Force. (1989). *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*. (pp.111-118). Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

### Polly McLean Biography

For Polly McLean diversity has always been a part of her life. Raised in a trilingual home in Trinidad and Tobago, in a community that included East Indians, Venezuelians, Lebanese, Africans, Chinese, and a hodgepodge of mixed ethnic groups, there was never a question that life was not a rainbow to appreciate and absorb. She moved to the United States when she was 14 years of age and settled in Brooklyn, New York, in a neighborhood that included African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Panamanians, Hassids, and people from both English and French speaking Caribbean islands.

After graduating from the High School for the Performing Arts, she entered City College in New York in hopes of pursuing a degree in Theatre Arts. But as a born change agent, she dropped out after her first semester and joined VISTA, trading big city life for rural Illinois, as a community organizer. Dubbed a super-VISTA, she was one of two VISTA's selected at

completion of service to go to Detroit to train the first wave of community VISTA's.

With a renewed vigor and some very different interests, she returned to college to pursue a major in African History, with a pre-colonial emphasis. It was here that she received a full scholarship to the University of Ghana, Legon, for intensive study on African political systems and religion. After graduating with highest honors, she immediately went to Columbia University where she completed her Masters with honors in Community Media. After five years of community activism work in New York City, she returned to the University of Texas, Austin, Department of Radio-TV-Film, where she completed her doctoral degree in media research and theory with an emphasis in development communication and social change.

Today, she is an internationally recognized specialist in family planning information, education and communication, and communication policy and planning. She has lived in West and Southern Africa and the Caribbean, where she has studied and conducted research. Between 1987 and 1989, she worked in Swaziland as the Senior Development Communication Specialist in rural development, agriculture, family planning, and human resource development. From 1990 to 1992, she served as the chief technical advisor to the Family Life Association of Swaziland in family planning research and education.

As a professional and a role model, she believes not only in giving back to her African home but she still takes time to return every year to her adopted community in Brooklyn, where she works as a political advisor and consultant to various African American elected officials. She also serves as a role model for young people not only in Brooklyn but in Colorado High Schools where she lectures widely on self-esteem, internalized racism and adolescent sexuality.

Stemming from a background where there was never a question of diversity, she sees the discourse based often on individual resistance to change and the way we have symbolically and culturally constructed "otherness." Because of this, she strongly believes that multicultural education is only valid when the racism that has denied non-White cultures is confronted and studied. She often says that to learn about the racism and sexism, for example, in one's own culture is to approach other cultures and genders more objectively.

She is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, where she teaches courses in media and culture, new

media and development, media theory and public opinion. She is an affiliated faculty with Women Studies where she teaches "Women in International Development" and the Center for the Studies of Race and Ethnicity in America where she teaches "Ethnic Notions". She has published in the areas of population and communication, media policy, popular culture, and diversity.

In 1986, she was the winner of the Chancellor's Equity and Excellence award for faculty, and the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's faculty teaching award. She has also received recognition in 1991 and 1993 from CU's Mortar Board Honor Society for excellence in teaching. In 1992, she received the Community Service Award from the Boulder County I Have a Dream Foundation.

# Encouraging Participation in the Multicultural Classroom: Using Visual Resources

---

**Professor Albert Chong**

and

**Professor Claire Farago**

*Fine Arts Department*

*University of Colorado at Boulder*

There are at least two senses in which we interpret the phrase "multicultural classroom." First, "multicultural" may refer to the issues presented, while the audience continues to be made up of students who identify themselves in primary ways with the dominant culture and its privileged institutions. Second, "multicultural" can refer to racial and ethnic diversity among the students themselves. Unfortunately, this second interpretation of the term is not currently possible in most of our Colorado state university classrooms. At best, our student body (like our faculty) includes racial and ethnic minorities. We hope that this *status quo* will change in the future. Cultural diversity in our educational institutions and integration of issues concerning racial, gender, and class plurality throughout the curriculum benefit everyone. We enthusiastically recommend that you read another publication in this series, Deborah Flick's "Developing and Teaching an Inclusive Curriculum," in conjunction with our teaching tips.

The following suggestions are intended to foster a climate of openness, which develops when a bond of trust is established. A painless way to begin this process on the first day of class is to have everyone (including the teacher) disclose concrete information about his/her cultural background. How, you might ask yourself as *you* make this commitment, have recent cultural changes in America affected what I teach in the classroom?

University professors usually do not consider incorporating the visual arts into their curriculum. But images can be a real barrier-breaker:

1. Images embody diverse ideas—pictures that embody traditional values or document actual conflicts over them provide obviously relevant subject matter in art, anthropology, sociology, history, and other fields. Everyone can discuss concrete visual examples with interest. And images can provide cultural context for other fields. How, for example, do people in different

places learn mathematics? What does a classroom in the South Bronx feel like, compared with one in Bronxville?

2. Images can defuse tension—put conflict at one remove—so that the class can deal with issues concerning class, gender, race, and ethnic conflict without overpersonalizing sensitive areas of political difference.
3. Images of stereotypes—people, situations—can expose prejudices and make the relativity of normative values apparent.
4. Even if there is no diversity in the classroom, images can stand in for excluded voices, groups that would otherwise be distorted or altogether invisible. How did the artist/photographer treat his/her subject? Who is the intended audience for this image? How do you react to this representation? How would the person represented react to your point of view? How does the meaning of the image change depending on who the viewer is? In other words, how does context determine meaning?
5. Images can de-center notions of cultural or scholarly authority. Incorporate not only images **of** diversity, but images **by** diverse makers.

## **Pedagogical Practices**

Many different kinds of images can be incorporated into your curriculum, regardless of your subject matter. Use them as catalysts for discussion. You might consider images as alternatives or adjuncts to exercises with words. In the transformative process of creating an inclusive curriculum, you may not find a suitable textbook—but do not let this deter you! Images can help you structure the course around diverse readings instead of a text. Is there a book illustrated with art that you absolutely love, that you would consider sharing with your students? Is there a book in the media that has generated controversy, e.g. Madonna's sex book, or Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*? Bring it in and let them thumb through or read selected passages. Sources for images are provided at the end of this brochure.

1. Use images to address concerns relevant to the students' actual cultural backgrounds. Events current in the media provide concrete situations and alleviate self-consciousness. Consider discussing recent race-related violations of individual civil rights and their subsequent impact on individuals and their communities; current affairs as they affect the rights and survival of culturally marginalized peoples; issues such as Amendment 2, sexual orientation, gay and lesbian rights; women's rights, the abortion debate, and the right of individuals to govern their own bodies; the rights of individuals to cause their own death or assist in the death of others who may be terminally ill or in constant physical pain. These topics range from birth to death; the common thread that joins them is the rights of the individual or group living in societies that limit and in some cases completely disregard individual freedom.
2. Do not make any individuals feel responsible for the ills of society. NEVER allow any individual or group in the classroom to serve as the object of the critique.
3. Use student-centered teaching techniques. Your students can make and collect images as well as discuss the ones you bring to class. You can incorporate visual art into your multicultural curriculum painlessly by devising ways in which images could clarify and enrich the issues and information you want to teach, then letting students implement your ideas. Have your students bring in a picture of a stereotype from the media, and let them describe it or imagine its opposite, or analyze what its intended message is, how the audience is supposed to respond to it, who the audience is, who it isn't. And one year's harvest can become the next year's seed.

Good teachers do not rely on formulas; instead, they funnel experience through the individual. The difference between teaching techniques and communicating ideas is like the difference between knowing how to use a camera and making a picture.

### **Developing a One-World Point of View**

Multiculturalism slips and slides liberally from the lips of the politically correct, who often espouse it only in the context of race, ignoring

its application to differences in sexual or religious orientation, gender, or class. The true multicultural classroom must embrace a philosophical support for cultural pluralism that is reflected in the syllabus of the instructor and the curriculum of the institution. To cite an example in the Department of Fine Arts, from which we hail, art history, which historically has been euro-centered, now is taught so that Europe is not elevated above Africa, even though the bulk of our information, our teaching materials, and our own education is euro-centered. In the studio arts it is also important for the instructor to be abreast of intellectual trends in contemporary culture. We must include not only works from the hyphenated cultures of America and of the world but also works that challenge existing paradigms and that constantly ask the student to reevaluate his or her position about art and culture. We must establish an understanding that "minority" cultures too are not fixed or static, but are constantly reinventing themselves to fit changing times, taking with them the baggage of a history of struggle for recognition from a white cultural hegemonic elite.

Recruitment and retention of students and faculty of color continues to be a major problem within this institution. True multiculturalism, devoid of the lip service that has pervaded so much of academia and the progressive communities within American society, is based on the inclusion of diverse points of view, first in the forming of our own personal world view, and then among our families, friends, and, most importantly, our students. A balanced curriculum should contain a reading list of scholars, research scientists, artists, writers, curators, and critics who are clearly outside the mainstream of our disciplines. The present infrastructure of our society incarcerates more non-white people than it educates. It costs more per year to imprison people than it does to educate them. In order for the multicultural classroom to exist, our children must have access to *good* elementary, undergraduate, and graduate education—*good* meaning education free from the cultural biases currently embedded within the educational system. Students of color must feel welcome within these institutions, and the curriculum must at some point in their school career be relevant to their respective cultures.

### **See Further...**

Academic Media Services can supply a list of media-equipped classrooms of all sizes. You may also rent or make videos, rent equipment,

and buy services—even get some (like slides made to order) free. For a one-time nominal \$5 fee, you can check out slides from the Department of Fine Arts Slide Library: call 492-6136 for information. The adventurous can use three permanent facilities with rotating art exhibitions right on campus: Sibell-Wolle Gallery of the Department of Fine Arts (for information, call 492-8003), the University Museum, with excellent permanent collections of Native American and other arts (492-6892), and the art galleries in the University Memorial Center, second floor (492-7465). Also available to professors who are interested in incorporating images, photographs, or rare books into their curriculum is the rare books room of the Art and Architecture Library, which contains a special collection of books on and about photography. Many intriguing and thought-provoking photographic portfolios can also be viewed here, and viewing pictures can be a stimulating diversion in a business-as-usual semester.

Another opportunity to introduce diverse points of view into a teaching curriculum via art and images is to either assign or accompany your class to attend the Visiting Artist Program lecture series in the Department of Fine Arts. The program features the most innovative and diverse artists in all fields of art making, theory, and criticism. Lecturers are on alternate Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m. in room N141 in the Fine Arts Building. To check the schedule and information on the artists, call the Department of Fine Arts at 492-6504. Videotapes of past lectures are available.

### Useful Reading

- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge (MA)-London: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington-London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Flick, Deborah. "Developing and Teaching an Inclusive Curriculum." *On Diversity in Teaching and Learning*, no. 2. Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, University of Colorado at Boulder.
- Hooks, Bell. *YEARNING, Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.
- Image of the Black in Western Art*, foreword by Amadadou-Mahtor M'Bow, 4 Volumes. New York: Marrow, 1976.

- Lippard, Lucy. *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1990.
- Preziosi, Donald. *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Reed, Ismael. *Writin' is Fightin'*. New York: Atheneum, 1988.
- Torgovnick, Marianna. *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*. Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Walker, Alice. *The Temple of My Familiar*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989.

### Claire Farago Biography

Claire Farago's field of specialization is Italian Renaissance art theory. She has published a book and numerous articles on Leonardo da Vinci's comparisons of the arts and related issues. About four years ago, she began working on the changing status of the arts viewed in a crosscultural framework: how, she initially wanted to know, did the importation of non-European objects and the exportation of Renaissance humanist values contribute to later notions of the hierarchy of the visual arts? How are the cultural boundaries put in place in the early modern period still part of our contemporary assumptions about the role of art in society?

Claire is currently working on three book projects, several related articles, and classroom teaching that grows out of these interests. Out of her long-standing study of Renaissance texts, she is collaborating with an international team of scholars under the general editorship of Martin Kemp to produce a modern critical edition of Leonardo da Vinci's "Treatise on Painting," which laid the foundation for academic training of artists and has been widely read for four centuries. Second, Claire is writing an essay style book entitled "Art as Institution: 'Race,' Nation, and the Writing of Art History." This project grows out of the realization that the professionalization of the discipline of art history in the nineteenth-century has never yet been viewed in the context of discussions of cultural evolutionism at the time. The hierarchy of painting, sculpture, and architecture defined in European terms is as much a product of those events during the age of emerging nationalism as it is a product of sixteenth-century cultural exchange. Her study treats both periods, together with discussion of current critical issues concerning the power of images.

Third, Claire is writing a book and producing with her students an accompanying

exhibition on southwestern devotional art, known as santos. This project, provisionally entitled "Living in Two Worlds: The Power of the People. The sacred practice of daily life in the American Southwest, 1800-1995," looks at the ethnic complexity of the visual culture that developed in this region. Her study examines current models of hybrid culture in light of the visual evidence, taking into account her own position as a scholar working in a historical continuum. It is unlike previous studies in that it does not compartmentalize Spanish versus Native versus other ethnic groups on a nineteenth-century model of national culture: instead it examines the hybrid cultural products that emerged over the course of two centuries of colonial and post colonial contact. She and her students are especially careful NOT to reveal the visions of people who intentionally exclude outsiders: instead they examine the circumstances that led to such measures of secrecy in the first place.

## **Albert Chong**

### **Biography**

Born in Kingston, Jamaica on November 20, 1958 of African and Chinese ancestry. Albert Chong is the last of nine children of merchant parents. He left Jamaica in 1977 to permanently reside in the United States. He attended the School of Visual Arts in New York from 1978-1981 graduating with honors.

Chong's exhibiting career started in 1981, and in that year his son Ayinde was born. He has a daughter as well, Chinwe born in 1987 and he is married to Frances Charteris also an artist. Chong taught at the School of Visual Arts, in New York from 1986-1988, and at Mira Costa College in Oceanside, California from 1989-91. In 1988 Chong, Charteris and family moved to San Diego where he attended the University of California, San Diego. In 1991 he was awarded the Master of Fine Arts degree from UCSD, and in that year as well he accepted a faculty appointment in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Albert Chong's photographs are included collections both public and private, national and international. The three main bodies of his photographic work include the *I-Trait series*, *The Still life's*, and the *Thrones for the Ancestors*. Other aspects of his work include mixed media sculptural installations, book works and fabricated to be photographed objects.

His works have been widely exhibited nationally. Recent venues exhibiting his work include the Ansel Adams Center for photography in San Francisco, Sangre De

Christo Arts Center in Pueblo, Colorado. Upcoming venues include the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Havana Bienal in Cuba.

He is the recipient of several artist fellowships, including a 1994 CO Visions Recognition award from the Colorado Council on the Arts, a regional National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Photography, and a 1992 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Photography. His work is represented by Porter Randall Gallery in La Jolla, California, Catherine Edelman Gallery in Chicago and Carla Stellweg Latin American & Contemporary Art Gallery in New York. Chong's work has been the subject of numerous

essays articles and reviews in daily publications such as the New York and LA Times and in art periodicals and books. A book of his photographs has been published by the

friends of Photography in San Francisco and is titled *Ancestral Dialogues: The Photographs of Albert Chong*.



# Diversity and Education: Sexual Orientations

---

## Professor Ralph Hexter

*Comparative Literature*

*University of Colorado at Boulder*

### I. Introduction

The Faculty Teaching Excellence Program has created an important set of guides on diversity/-ties and on fostering diversity in the classroom. The pamphlets in the series "On Diversity in Teaching and Learning" address a variety of issues, techniques, and contexts, which are all relevant to my topic. For example, the exercises devised to expose unexamined assumptions and challenge race or gender stereotypes could be adapted to initiate discussion on sexual orientation.

I take my brief to be somewhat different: to focus on a wider range of issues positioned around one of the parameters of diversity, **sexual orientation**. This is not because sexual orientation is ignored by the other pamphlets in the series; on the contrary, it is not infrequently mentioned, just as it is prominent as one of the parameters of difference the current campus-wide diversity initiative expects each unit to consider as it develops its diversity plan. However, there is no disguising the fact that almost without exception, sexual orientation is the parameter which is likely to cause the most discomfort, to judge from public and private discourse at least. Likewise, while it is now illegal to discriminate on the basis of "race, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap, creed, religion, or veteran status," controversy rages over the question whether discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation ought also to be prohibited by law. (Recent Colorado history makes it possible to say this without fear of contradiction or the accusation of hyperbole.) Legal protection against discrimination on other grounds emerged over time, and from our vantage point in history it is not possible to predict whether future Americans will look back on this period of contestation over "gay rights" the same way we now look back on the civil rights movement, say, or the fight for women's suffrage, or whether they will perceive it as something that might have been but never was, like the presidency of William Jennings Bryan. It is not my aim to enter the arena of this ongoing debate, much less of other controversial issues, such as legal recognition of same-sex marriages or equal access to adoption for gay men and lesbians (or even equal access to

custody of their own children). Rather, it is to offer fellow teachers a series of observations on pedagogical issues that arise in connection with this topic precisely because it is controversial.

The "Faculty **Teaching** Excellence Program" has named this current series "Diversity in Teaching **and Learning**." Quite rightly, for only in the larger context of "learning" does "teaching" occur in the first place. I reject a division of labor according to which teachers teach and students learn. Rather, we all, teachers and students alike, learn over the course of our lifetimes, not least of all by the dialogue and debate that is explicit or implicit in every classroom, on every university campus, and in our democratic society. Although teachers may—and I emphasize "may"—have a grip on more and more accurate information than their students, it is not sufficient for the teacher merely to pass on a quantum of that information nor is it possible or even desirable for the teacher to pass on one "right" interpretation of that information. For teachers do not hold some static truth to be inculcated, and while those who give the impression they do may be regarded as memorable teachers by some students, in my book they fail at the most basic mission of education, which is the fostering of an insatiable spirit of inquiry in others as well as the nourishing of that spirit in one's self.

For the very reason that sexual orientation, what it is and what its ramifications in our society are, currently provokes disagreement among many and discomfort in some, it is an ideal topic for intellectual inquiry and debate, and thus for learning without end. I often think of this in spatial terms: the word that seems best to describe the trajectory of open-ended inquiry and debate this kind of life-long learning demands is "out"—all puns intended. This is the "out" of the Latin behind **education**, a leading outward or away from one's initial positions and ignorance, quite clearly the opposite of **indoctrination** of any kind. This is the "out" of the outback and outer space—the unknown that sparks the kind of exploration and discovery, expeditionary, scientific and imaginary, our culture prides itself on valuing and encouraging. And of course it is the "out" of "out of the closet," a turn of phrase that has now entered mainstream diction and is being used of all sorts of revelatory self-identifications besides the original application of the metaphor, that of being openly gay/lesbian. The links between all

these "outs" have yet to be explored and fully realized. What I am proposing is that today, in our society, the issues behind and surrounding what it means to be "out" can serve as a healthy provocation to education, the life-long process of moving our minds and imaginations ever further "out" along a potentially infinite number of axes.

Note: I address the gay/lesbian distinction briefly in IV, below. For efficiency, I occasionally use either word to stand, by way of example, for both. Moreover, as will become clear, I do not exclude either bisexual or transgender as categories for discussion. I also employ "LesBiGay," which is coming into increased currency and covers many if not all possibly relevant bases.

## II. Sexual Orientation and the Curriculum

The most obvious way sexual orientation as an issue can serve pedagogical purposes is as a theme of intellectual inquiry in a college course. For example, courses on gay and/or lesbian literature are not uncommon on college campuses today. Anyone who has thought about devising such a course immediately faces the question: what is gay literature anyway? What defines literature as lesbian? Is it explicit theme? The author's sexual orientation? If so, does this have to have been conscious on the part of the author? The reader? Such questions should be built into the course and, at least in more advanced discussions, lead to consideration of "sexual orientation" itself. Is it omnipresent as a recognized variant in human societies, and are the different cultural expressions of variations along the parameter of the relative genders of individuals involved in erotic liaisons and attractions roughly congruent and comparable? Or is each culture's recognition (or lack of recognition) of difference along this parameter more a product of that culture's construction of difference altogether?

Indeed, to carry that last question one step further, is the whole issue of insisting on sexual orientation as a significant difference, in societies and as somehow defining for individuals, a product of a peculiar set of institutions and circumstances in late nineteenth-century Europe and North America? The word "homosexual" was after all first attested in English in 1892 (a fact of which Halperin 1990 makes a great deal, esp. pp. 15-18). This is in brief the debate between "essentialism" and "social constructionism" engaging many scholars of

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Studies. Both positions come in a variety of shades and intensities. The dispute itself would make a stimulating course in intellectual history or philosophy, for some maintain that this controversy is but another instance of the debate about the status of essences which has been lively since Plato and formed the ground for the European scholastic controversy between nominalists and realists. (So Boswell in Duberman et al. 1989 17-36.)

The status of such distinctions needs to be interrogated cross-culturally as well as historically. Are such lines drawn in other cultures? What is the validity of our own categories when applied to other cultures? How do our society's views and expectations affect our very perceptual apparatus as observers? Indeed, how have they, picked up on by our informants, limited the information to which we have been given access and even in some cases begun to alter long-standing traditions and institutions? Anthropologists are particularly attuned to this last set of questions.

My main point is that to bring sexual orientation into the classroom as a stable and seemingly self-evident *thing* is begging the question. Sexual orientation must be approached under the sign of the question and must itself be the object of the intellectual quest. Nor need this inquiry be limited to courses on gay or lesbian literature. Indeed, it is, at some level, unavoidable (except that it has so often been avoided) in many courses on the traditional canon. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, contrasting the issues involved in gay and lesbian studies with debates we have become familiar with in the cases of Women's Studies or, say, African-American Studies and with the type of meditation that goes back as far as Virginia Woolf's on Shakespeare's (imaginary) sister, poses the following mind-benders: "Has there ever been a gay Socrates? ...a gay Shakespeare? ...a gay Proust?" (1990 52). Is the issue legitimately avoidable when we teach Shakespeare's sonnets? In a more introductory class, which might not approach those difficult poems but rather stick to more standard dramas, it will be up to the teacher to complicate the students' reading of, for example, *Romeo and Juliet*. However desperate the teacher is for his/her students to "make connections," for them to read this play (or see the Zeffirelli film) as if it were several weeks of *Two Teens of Verona* probably does more intellectual damage than not reading it at all. That is, I know, a very strong statement, but it is bred of the old Socratic conviction that citizens must be

disabused of their readiness to equate what seems with what is. Here the issue is one of anachronistic projection. If the students are not challenged to consider that the universe of erotic desire represented on the Elizabethan stage cannot be understood without reference to the entire system of Elizabethan erotics, from Marlowe and his boys (and his *Edward II*) through Will with both young lord and dark lady all the way up to the virgin queen herself, they will remain as complacently unreflective about their own positions with respect to media-presented eroticism and sexuality today. Not to mention the conventions of Elizabethan acting, since Juliet will have been played by a boy in girl's clothes, so that on the stage even the most "heterosexual" of relations had homoerotic overtones.

I have offered this extensive example because it happens to be common and closer to my area of expertise than others, but there is hardly a field (taken broadly) that cannot be made to yield some story, and some history, by our questioning what sexual orientation means in its terms. I would not say that this rejected stone should become **the** new universal cornerstone of intellectual inquiry, but it is well recognized that focusing on the marginalized in any field is an efficient way to figure out how the central coordinates of that field are devised and drawn. (Compare in experimental science the importance and challenge of outliers, singularities, and apparent anomalies.) Obvious case studies could include: sexual orientation in psychology, sexual orientation in biology, sexual orientation in the law, sexual orientation in politics, sexual orientation in ethics and religion, where "in" means "as it is conceptualized by." By looking at the field "sexual orientation" one asks not merely how gays and lesbians were treated, but also to what degree heterosexuality is intrinsically the norm in the standard view of these various perspectives, and what dislocations (if any) this brings in its wake.

### III. Sexual Orientation as Pedagogic Provocation

In teaching, as in understanding, simplifications and handy schemas are valuable first steps, but such first approximations are only valuable insofar as they serve as stepping stones towards more informed and more nuanced views. The fact that the debate about many aspects of sexual orientation is both current and obviously complicated means that it can frequently be made to exemplify for

students the complexity of representation. Other pamphlets in this series have suggested media analysis, and representations of gay men and lesbians also lend themselves to analysis. What makes discussion even more layered in the case of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals is that there is not merely a question of *how* they are represented publically (e.g., stereotyping or mainstreaming), but whether they should be, or even are being represented. This all came out in the debate, no more than a few months back, about the advertisement for a furniture store which presents two men discussing "their" home and design preferences.

We need to help our students interrogate a whole set of representational practices that, when we note their distortions and asymmetries, appear less mimetic than constitutive of what we take to be "reality." To exemplify distortion, one might consider why the TV commercial I saw a few weeks ago for an upcoming adventure film of Hercules presented him as a "lady's man"—I'm *not* making this up—while Classical antiquity knew him as equally muscle-bound, yes, but also a lover of boys and, in one famous episode, a cross-dresser. It might be interesting for students to consider why these episodes are not likely to show up soon on commercial TV. Asymmetries are abundant, and students can be asked to look out for them and bring them in for discussion. For example, why is it that news reports of gay people always identify the person(s) involved as "homosexual" (even to the point of redundancy, as in "Laura, Eve's homosexual lover"), while never identifying anyone as heterosexual (as in "Mr. X, her heterosexual rapist" or "Baby Y, abused by her heterosexual parents")? On a deeper level, why is "sexual orientation" itself always taken to "mean" LesBiGay, rather than a set of categories which leads to "straight" just as much as to gay, lesbian, or bisexual? Here one compares "gender studies," still largely regarded as "women's studies." At this point it might be productive to introduce students to the concept of marked vs. unmarked as an analytical tool not limited to linguistics.

To return to the case of the furniture store advertisement, why does it remain outrageous to so many, or at least to such vocal people, that the two men shown might constitute a gay couple? The controversy itself could and should become a topic of discussion. Although the very currency of the issue presents particular challenges to teachers to insure fairness and respect for all participants in the discussion, whatever their positions, that currency almost guarantees the discussion will be lively, even

passionate. That passion can be harnessed so that students will articulate their positions with ever greater force and precision—they will have to, because there will be vociferous opposition on at least some of their points. I like to think of "sexual orientation" as a powerful "provocation" to students to question a whole range of conventional assumptions, valuable whether the outcome for the individual student is a change of mind or a clearer and more informed presentation of his or her original position.

#### IV. Groups and Individuals

It often happens that when LesBiGay people are identified as a "minority," somehow, before you know it, the discussion has become one in which the "rights" of one minority are being pitted against those of another. This is another arena in which contextualizing may help move debate from smoke- to light-generating. The passion evident behind the opinions expressed should be able to be redirected towards an inquiry about "rights" as an abstraction. Is the business of rights in a democratic society a zero-sum game? There is certainly no reason to indulge in "comparative victimization": in a properly nuanced discussion, acknowledging the historical suffering or disadvantages of one group in no way lessens respect for the suffering other groups, or a particular other group, has experienced. Egregious victimization may, indeed, must be noted, but victimization less egregious is not thereby rendered trivial. What may emerge more clearly is that there are certain patterns of discrimination, repression, stereotyping, and pseudo-science that are remarkably similar even when the groups against which discrimination is directed differ markedly.

Another line of inquiry may be to examine whether we do (or, a different question, whether we should) have rights as individuals or members of a group? In either case, how are groups of all sorts defined and what is their ontological status? How have they been conceptualized in other times and in other cultures? It is in the context of these last questions that a field of inquiry one might call "comparative minorities" is constituted. Introducing "sexual orientation" as a parameter of difference to be explored along with race, gender, ethnicity, class, and so forth, will productively complicate the discussion in so far as sexual orientation is among the most controversial. But of course, just how settled are the other modes of classifications? Exposing the

historical and cultural contingencies of certain aspects of traditional or recent classifications of the human population is itself likely to provoke anxiety, even hostility, to the degree that affiliation with one or more of various groups is constitutive of many individual's sense of identity. But if examination and exploration of the history and status of such group identifications cannot be undertaken in a university setting, with its multiplicity of voices and perspectives, where can it be?

This kind of ever-subtler analysis can be fostered as well by discussion more narrowly focused on Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender issue. As the proliferation of "/"'s suggest, there are complexities involved in the constitution and subdivision of what used simply to be called "homosexuality." How has this space been marked and named, and by whom? What are the similarities and differences between "gay" and lesbian"? How does the label "bisexual" fit in the picture? What further complexities does the category "transgender" add, and how do they all challenge a whole range of assumptions about sex and gender? Again, what is "sexual orientation," and to what degree does "choice" (and at what level or levels) have to do with it, as indeed, with other expressions of sexuality or even other aspects of human identity?

That the field as a whole generates more questions than answers suggests that it is a ripe area for investigation, inquiry, and discussion. The controversial nature of some of the questions may inspire students to take a more critical view of various empirical studies, demanding to be satisfied about sampling methods and statistical analyses, and questioning whether even established correlations necessarily imply causation. The whole set of questions sketched above should help students move away from more elementary analysis in terms of static, all-too-frequently binary oppositions, and help them articulate descriptions and analysis that can accommodate degrees, scales, historical and cultural difference, and overlapping and intertwining "allegiances."

#### V. Addressing Anxiety in the Classroom

A recent pamphlet reminded us never to allow any individual or group in the classroom to "feel responsible for the ills of society." And no individual or group is responsible. Given the breadth of debate, this could, in different eyes and classrooms, cut different ways. But

focusing, as I would, on the resistance to inclusion and acceptance of les/bi/ gay/transgendered individuals, one is immediately confronted by the topic of "homophobia." What is it, and why are they saying such terrible things about it? Others have queried its status, and I cannot here enumerate, much less examine, all their objections. I would begin merely by observing that characterizing anyone's position as "caused" by "homophobia" is not very helpful, either as an intellectual argument or as a pedagogical maneuver. In fact, it is counter-productive. Furthermore, it seems to me that the concept of "homophobia" itself deserves to be put under the same question mark as "sexual orientation." Is it a psychological phobia like claustrophobia? Psychologists and psychoanalysts may be able to provide a better answer, but to my knowledge, it is not a clinically-recognized disorder. And if it were, is it not telling that none of those who are "diagnosed" with it are rushing for treatment? It seems in fact that this is a figurative phobia, where outspoken negative opinions about homosexuality and homosexuals are figured as an illness affecting members of society on a case-by-case basis. It is noteworthy that in no other case is anxiety about or abhorrence of a subset of society—neither racism nor anti-Semitism or anti-Catholicism, for example—termed a "phobia." The most closely comparable word, "xenophobia," is applied not to individuals but to entire countries or cultures, and is understood to describe neither a psychological condition affecting individuals nor a personal pathology but a cultural norm. And so, let's face it, is what we, ducking the issue, carelessly call "homophobia." To be sure, hostility to homosexuality may be more acute in certain individuals, but it is nonetheless a widespread cultural norm. When we hear voices of resistance, we aren't hearing the voice of pathology but of society, or a sizable portion of it. Whether or not we replace "homophobia" with some (admittedly awkward) phrase like "anti-homosexual prejudice" doesn't alter the fact that "homophobic" discourse and practices, like all discourse and practices, are learned. It is the business of teachers and students alike to examine that discourse and those practices, their sources and ramifications. Doing otherwise, and avoiding the responsibility of engaging in true debate by charging that one's interlocutor is incapable of unprejudiced participation in discussion (even when it may be true) is not what should be going on in a university classroom.

## VI. Towards an Open Classroom

Authors of a recent pamphlet on the multicultural classroom suggest an exercise whereby all participants, on the opening day of class, identify their identities according to a range of parameters. One can imagine some people for whom saying "lesbian" is no more problematic than saying "Louisianan," but given the status of the debate, there will be others for whom this would be difficult. More important, whatever the speaker's view, there are almost sure to be listeners who will quickly forget what state a person comes from but will think of nothing but her sexual orientation every time she opens her mouth to speak. It is this that makes the question of "coming out in the classroom," already fraught for many people, so difficult, both in practice and in analysis. There are individuals who wax dogmatic about this, but I find such approaches unrealistic. I am torn between idealism (as much of what follows will strike some readers) and reality both as I have experienced it and as others, who have had more unhappy experiences, have relayed it to me or described it in print.

Since teaching is personal, I should say that I personally, as a teacher, don't focus on the problematic of "coming out" in the classroom. If at a certain point in the life of a class that means in a relevant context referring to my partner and using a masculine pronoun, then so be it. Before proceeding with this line of thought, let me acknowledge that I am well aware that my experience, and style, is not independent of my authority in the classroom, which was always that of the white male product of "elite private institutions," as they are called, now further bolstered by the title "Professor." Clearly, the impact on the classroom dynamic and how students feel they could respond would almost certainly be different if a female and/or minority assistant professor or teaching assistant came out. (On the other hand, I know of a Boulder faculty member quite similar to me who has received FCQ's with "fag" scrawled over them—ironically, the teacher is heterosexual.)

More broadly, I no longer regard "coming out" in any context as something a gay person has to do over and over again. "Coming out" is a very important process for gay and lesbian people in this society, but it is the society that makes "coming out" necessary and largely shapes it. Many other gay people agree with me that in the mid-1990's, "coming out" is no longer the point: it's "being out," whether we make a point of it in a particular situation or not.

Indeed, acting as if being out is no big deal can itself be the message and the point. One cannot hold this point of view without regard to the communicative situation in which one finds oneself. It would be as absurd for me to imagine that because one group of students happened to learn I was gay, all subsequent groups would know it, as it would be for me to expect all subsequent classes to understand the Latin passive periphrastic because I taught it to a previous year's class. Furthermore, in the larger world, given the current climate and cultural norms and expectations, not being out is still tantamount to being not out. Being straight is the unmarked category.

All teachers, gay or straight, need to be attuned to the fact that a student's or students' "coming/being out" in the classroom can change classroom dynamics as radically as if the teacher had done so. However, in my view, the issue isn't whether the teachers or students are or come out. The real issue is: Is the classroom open, explicitly and implicitly, to the diversity of sexual orientations? A teacher does not have to be gay or lesbian to make his/her classroom an open one. (Indeed, I have known closeted homosexual teachers who constructed much more oppressively heterosexist classrooms than any number of enlightened heterosexuals. One might say in their defense that these teachers were probably terrified of exposure and were themselves targets of the antihomosexual discourse of the society, but by passing as straight—in part by passing on that discourse—they did much damage, particularly to the gay/bi/lesbian students who were in their classes.) The more open the classroom, the less impact anyone's being out will have on classroom dynamic.

A classroom open intellectually in all dimensions is likely to be an intellectually exciting and challenging space for students and teachers alike. What defines such an open classroom as far as sexual orientation is concerned, and how would you go about creating one? You would begin by not assuming that everyone is heterosexual, neither everyone alive today nor everyone who has ever lived. In every subject, from mathematics to economics to language courses, some of the hypothetical examples could involve a girl and her girlfriend or boy and his boyfriend. In many subjects, one will be able to add diversity simply by reporting what has hitherto been obscured, whether it's Michelangelo's sonnets (which may change how we look at his statue of David) or Hercules' boyfriend or Gertude Stein and Alice Toklas. You wouldn't say "members of the

opposite sex" as if that's the only way humans bond and ever have. Most importantly, you wouldn't assume all your students are straight. You thus wouldn't force them to choose between, on the one hand, coming out and falsifying your assumption and, on the other, remaining silent and letting the lie stand.

As above, there's no reason why the very problematic of the issue shouldn't be a topic for discussion, both in material and in classroom interaction. Why did someone go to the trouble of editing Michelangelo's poetry to remove him from the ranks of the sodomites in the first place? Why is it that identifying oneself as lesbian or bisexual is considered by most people a revelation? If the atmosphere suddenly gets frosty—and colleagues have frequently reported this fallout from coming out—or, as one colleague eloquently phrased it, "What happens when the teacher [or another student] becomes the text?," we have another golden opportunity to talk about cultural expectations and practices. There is no reason these should go unexamined, especially if we regard the university, as I certainly do, as the place where nothing should go unexamined.

### Select Bibliography

- Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, David M. Halperin, eds. *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey, Jr., eds. *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. New York: New American Library, 1989.
- Jonathan Goldberg. *Sodometries. Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- David M. Halperin. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Karen M. Harbeck, ed. *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet. Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers and Curricula*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 1992.
- Martha Nussbaum, "The Softness of Reason," *The New Republic*, July 13 & 20, 1992, pp. 26-35.
- Richard D. Mohr. *Gay Ideas. Outing and Other Controversies*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- Richard A. Posner. *Sex and Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

**Ralph Hexter**

## Biography

Ralph Hexter hails from Cleveland, Ohio. He went to Harvard College, where he majored in English literature (with a special emphasis on the medieval period). Upon hearing that there was such a thing as Comparative Literature, he determined to take it up, since under that rubric he could also include the French, German, Latin, and Greek he also studied. He was graduated *magna cum laude* in 1974, leaving Harvard with both the first Bowdoin and Briggs prizes in English and a fellowship to study in England. He read Classics and Modern Languages (Greek, Latin, and German) at Corpus Christi College in Oxford, taking First Class Honours in 1977 after spending as much time on the continent as possible and adding Italian to his list of languages. He then entered the graduate program in Comparative Literature at Yale University. A grant from the German government supported his research in Munich for two years (1979-81) and he returned to Yale to start teaching in the Classics department in 1981, receiving his Ph.D. in 1982. He taught at Yale for ten years, both in Classics and in the then newly-formed Humanities Major, leaving as Associate Professor. He held administrative posts within several departments and programs and served for one year as Acting Associate Dean of the Graduate School. He came to the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1991 as Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature and Director of Comparative Literature. He has served as Director of the Committee on Medieval and Renaissance Studies and Acting Chair of the Department of French and Italian, and on many too many committees. He taught as a guest lecturer at the Folger Institute and has been an NEH Fellow of the *Villa I Tatti*, Harvard Center for Studies in the Italian Renaissance in Florence. He is the author of *Equivocal Oaths and Ordeals in Medieval Literature* (1975), *Ovid and Medieval Schooling. Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's Ars Amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto and Epistulae Heroidum* (1986), *A Guide to the Odyssey. A Commentary on the English Translation of Robert Fitzgerald* (1993), and articles on Vergil, Horace, Goethe, and a variety of topics in Medieval Latin. He is co-editor of *Innovations of Antiquity*, published in 1992 in Routledge's series "The New Ancient World." He is frequently asked to lecture on his work (most recently in Italy and Berkeley), and his current projects include Homeric interpretation and Vergil, classical and medieval literary history, and Renaissance Latin drama.

Ralph Hexter began college right after Stonewall, and from nearly the beginning he was engaged in gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. He was involved in the formation of the

Harvard-Radcliffe Gay Students Association (as it was then called); his senior year he was its second president. At Yale he participated in the faculty/student/staff group which hosted multiple national conferences, established a research fund, and convinced the university to extend spousal benefits to same-sex partners. Since Harvard days he has worked closely on many projects with Professor John Boswell of Yale's History Department, author of *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* and the recent *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*. With Professor Boswell he organized a conference on "AIDS and its Metaphors" for the Kinsey Institute, and he continues to work both on and off campus at the intersection of academic and diversity issues, from serving on the Chancellor's Standing Committee on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues to editing, translating and speaking widely on two fifteenth-century Latin plays about the entrapment of a homosexual priest. He and his partner of fifteen years live in the mountains and enjoy hiking, cross-country skiing, riding, and—lest there be no truth to stereotypes—opera.



## Diversity and Language: ESL Students in the University Classroom

---

### Anne Bliss, Ph.D.

*University Writing Program and ESL Coordinator  
University of Colorado at Boulder*

As increasing numbers of students, faculty, and staff who speak English as their second language (ESL) join the university community, they inject not only diversity in the use of language, but differences in attitudes and cultural orientation as well. Although there is no count of the number of ESL students on campus, we know that for the 1995-1996 academic year foreign students make up 4% of the total student population. 2.3% of the undergraduates and 12% of the graduate students are international students. Add to this group the immigrant and long-term resident ESL students, and we have a sizable percentage of students who are not native speakers of English. Especially in the university classroom, ESL students often find themselves at a loss for words. They may not comprehend the logic underlying the instructor's lectures or expectations for assignments. Their home culture may affect their behavior in the class, with instructors, and with other students. Often, a second language student may feel and act "at odds" with the system and the culture of the university.

Stereotyping ESL students is just as damaging as stereotyping "minorities," and lumping all ESL students as "foreign students" ignores important differences in background, culture, and language. The Malaysian woman studying chemistry and covering her head to show her devotion to Islam may be very different from the Kuwaiti woman who *appears* much the same, with a scarf covering her head. The immigrant student may have been in the U.S. for many years or may have arrived recently, and in either case may be making a desperate attempt to acculturate *or* to cling to the home culture and language. Furthermore, an ESL student may be a member of a family that has resided in the U.S. for many generations but has elected to speak a language other than English as the home language or "mother tongue." And, of course, a student who struggles with English is not necessarily a student who "is stupid," "can't hear," or "doesn't understand."

When we look at international ESL students on campus, we should realize that we are often viewing the "cream of the crop"--those very able students who, in their home countries,

competed for and won sponsorship to study in an American university. These students were judged by the same admission standards as native English speakers, except that the international ESL students also had to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL is hard; native English speaking students often have great difficulty with the vocabulary, reading, and analysis sections of the test. These international students or their sponsors are paying a premium for their education; not only do they pay for out of state tuition, room and board, books, and fees, but they may have very high airfare costs and opportunity costs that may go unrecognized by the university. And in most cases they are not allowed to take jobs while they are in this country.

ESL immigrant students may have escaped from Vietnam on a boat, have immigrated from Mexico or farther south with parents who are now custodians at the university, or been stellar students and athletes in republics of the former U.S.S.R. Many of these students have well-educated parents who, because they did not know English, have taken entry level jobs to support their families. These students are generally motivated, hard working, and very serious about getting an education. Trying to learn English at the same time they're carrying a full load of classes and working 20-40 hours a week to cover expenses is no fun; if an immigrant student seems "sleepy," there may be a very good reason.

Finally, students who may or may not be minority but who grew up speaking a home language other than English, or a dialect other than standard American English, may have special understandings to offer, as well as special needs. The student from a big city who uses Black Urban Dialect may write "he be" in an essay exam response rather than "he is"; the student understands the meaning, but expresses that meaning in non-academic, non-standard English. The student who grew up speaking Italian at home and English at school may have some interesting sentence structures, as will the bilingual student who speaks Korean most of the day and omits articles (a, an, the) from both oral and written English. It is important to recognize the difference between surface structures and comprehension. A student may understand the course material perfectly well but use sentence structures, diction, and style that are very confusing to

native English speakers. Or, of course, the confusing surface structures may keep you from seeing that the student is misunderstanding the course material in exactly the same way as are your non-ESL students.

How can we value these second language students and help them in their studies and their lives at the university? First of all, recognizing that there is great diversity among ESL students leads to appreciation for those differences and sensitivity to the varying challenges they face. It is important to make sure *all* students are welcome and comfortable in the classroom; color, culture, religion, gender, language, and other differences should be valued. Classes would be pretty boring if all students were clones.

Coupled with other techniques for working with diversity in the classroom, the information presented below may provide some means of understanding and working with ESL students.

1. Consider the logic of the student's home language. How does it work? Some languages follow the linear structure of English; others employ a more circular or repetitive structure. The student who seems to be repeating the same idea in different words and who never presents a thesis or comes to a conclusion may be following the rhetorical structure and logical patterns of the home language.

Arabic, for example, allows and may even encourage diversion from the main point; when an Arabic speaker writes a paper in English, the paper may make sense for a while to the English-speaking audience, and then suddenly it may seem to go way off track. Eventually, the paper may seem to regain its focus, only to lose it again. This rhetorical structure, which appreciates adding interesting information or a story to a linear text, is beautiful and correct in Arabic, but it generally does not work well for papers at a Western university, which we usually expect to follow either a deductive or an inductive pattern, with a thesis at the beginning or a conclusion at the end. Or consider a Korean student who may seem to write or speak in a repetitive, circuitous form. In Korean, if the repetition is well structured, the audience is guided subtly to the student's conclusion, even though that conclusion may never be stated. When this student writes in English, however, an American reader may keep wondering when the student will make his or her point or why the student seems to keep repeating *almost* the same idea. The student understands the material and how to

think about it according to Korean linguistic and cultural patterns; the instructor can help the student reorganize the material for a reader or listener who expects academic English: a linear structure and a stated thesis or conclusion.

Instructors and students may also benefit from considering the distinctive linguistic structures and habits of English. For example, English uses articles (a, an, the) to mark indefinite or definite nouns; many languages do not have such markers and instead rely only on the context to determine which item may be under discussion. Misuse or no use of articles can complicate the student's speaking and writing. Also consider the complex ways in which English uses verb tense and voice to indicate subtly whether or not one agrees that the findings of a particular experiment are accurate or generalizable. A student who writes, "the results were applied to the majority of cases" but intends to say "the results apply to the majority of cases" may confuse the reader or convey inaccurate information. A second-language writer who has not mastered this convention may innocently convey a skepticism, or an endorsement, that he or she does not intend.

Academic English, in particular, uses many "attributors" to mark the "ownership" of particular statements: which assertions are claimed as the author's own; which represent other scholars' work with which the author agrees but for which the author takes no direct responsibility; which represent counterarguments with which the author disagrees, etc. Even native English speaking students may be confused about how to interpret these markers in their reading or how to use them in their writing; consider the difficulties for second language students. The results can be disastrous when students omit attributors---anything from apparent self-contradiction to apparent plagiarism. You can help by showing students exactly why their text is confusing and where to insert the appropriate ownership signals.

2. Some ESL students may seem shy or unwilling to participate actively, particularly if the class is interactive. These students may not want to expose themselves as ESL speakers; they may worry about whether the instructor or students can understand them. In some cases, the students have experienced ridicule in other classrooms or an impatient teacher who was unwilling to wait for the student to put ideas into words. Some cultures place a high

value on reticence. Others have oral languages, such as many Native American languages, that encourage listeners to form mental pictures of what they hear. This takes time, and it takes even more time to sort the images and reach a conclusion. Patience and respect for the students' culture and language usage are important. ESL students are a diverse group, but rarely are they students who "are stupid," "can't hear," or "don't understand."

For some students, a participatory class may be a new experience, as their previous schooling may have featured only lectures and seat work. In some cultures, teachers are revered and treated with the utmost respect. Students may have been taught not to look directly at the teacher, but to keep eyes downcast. These students will generally be reluctant to participate, and they may be especially reluctant to speak directly to the teacher. Some students have been taught by teachers who themselves were not native speakers or were speakers of a dialect of English. These students may be uneasy with academic English and native English speaking instructors. Encourage them to visit you during your office hours; you may learn a great deal from each other.

3. Think about homework assignments, quizzes, midterm exams, and final exams. An ESL student who comes from a schooling system that gives exams only at the end of the school year will need to make a major adjustment. Perhaps turning in homework assignments will be familiar, but a weekly quiz or three exams during the term may be quite confusing, even threatening. A brief explanation of the exam system and the differing expectations for different types of tests will help these students.

4. Schedules can also cause problems for some ESL students, particularly the international students. Cultures and languages treat *time* and *space* differently. Some languages, such as Vietnamese, use the same word form for action that happens in the present and for action that happened in the past. Vietnamese speakers report that time simply "is"-- it's "all around." English tends to treat time as linear, and in the university, deadlines are "approaching" and "the term is flying by."

Time in the university culture moves fast. In English, we tend to think of the future coming toward us from the front and the past leaving behind our backs. In some other

cultures and languages, the future is behind the speakers' backs because they can't see what will happen; the past is in front of them because they can see what has happened. Some students from Senegal once claimed that "time just keeps rolling around"-- they had no sense of urgency, of deadlines, of planning a certain amount of time for a project, or of scheduling their daily activities. The university culture and the linear concept of time posed many difficulties for them.

We can help these students understand and cope with class schedules and a linear time frame by providing a well-organized syllabus at the beginning of the term and referring to it occasionally, especially before beginning new topics, papers, or projects. Some instructors organize classes according to a calendar format, which gives a visual representation of assignments, tests, and projects. We can also help students understand our expectations for meeting deadlines by explaining how much time an assignment may take, and by reminding them to allow extra time for reading or writing in a second language. Native English speakers sometimes have trouble meeting our deadlines; consider how an ESL student with a different time frame must adapt.

5. The high percentage of ESL students in the sciences and engineering may speak to their interest and skill in math or structured sciences. Or those students may simply have recognized their difficulties with English and steered away from such fields as psychology, history, or political science. Some ESL students have confessed that they really wish they could study literature, but reading so much English is very difficult; meanwhile, they have a 3.6 GPA in chemistry or a 3.4 GPA in computer science engineering. Others claim that the reading and writing are not too hard, but they have problems thinking about "philosophical ideas" or "theories" in English.

We can integrate language learning across the curriculum. Clarification of theoretical or philosophical elements of courses will help not only the ESL students, but others as well. Instructors in the sciences can encourage students to read humanities and social science literature related to science. Such reading can provide fresh perspectives on pure and applied science, broaden the students' outlook, and serve as the basis for class discussion. Faculty teaching reading-intensive core courses who meet with second language students during office hours can ascertain that the students understand what they've read. Such

techniques facilitate development of language as well as critical thinking.

6. The university expects ESL students to adhere to the same standards as other students. Since ESL students are especially likely to need help in meeting those standards, yet be reluctant to seek assistance, it is important that you, your TAs, and your students be on the same page in the rule book. International students may come from countries with vastly different standards concerning getting help, plagiarizing, cheating on exams, etc. Likewise, instructors have variable standards about how much expert or tutorial help is allowable, when students may work together, and so forth. The best course of action is to spell out your own rules, and put them in writing. In particular, if you are willing to make allowances for surface errors in the written work of second language writers, make sure your students and your graders know the limits exactly.

Perhaps the answer to many ESL difficulties lies in patience, understanding, and time. Research shows that concentrated effort may lead to near-native expertise in a second language after five to seven years. Our students don't have that much time; they feel a sense of urgency to get an education and get to work. We must find ways to sharpen their English as we teach them other subjects. Discussing the culture of the classroom, including the expectations, rules, and procedures, can help international students adjust to a strange and scary situation. And a few minutes of counseling or explaining how to organize written or spoken English for academic purposes can go a long way with most second language students. Our classrooms offer sites for growth and learning; sharing the linguistic and cultural understandings of our ESL students brings diversity and enriches us all.

**Sources for Assistance:**

If you wish to learn more about second language issues or to obtain assistance for your ESL students, the following campus resources are available:

- Developmental ESL Courses  
International English Center (IEC)  
492-5547  
Linguistics Department  
492-8041  
University Learning Center  
492-1416
- Equity/ Diversity/ Curriculum Library  
492-3359
- ESL Writing Courses  
University Writing Program  
492-3606
- Tutorial Assistance  
Academic Skills  
492-5474
- International Student Issues  
Foreign Student and Scholar Services  
492-8057  
Office of International Education (OIE)  
492-7741
- International Teaching Assistants  
Graduate Teacher Program  
492-4902

## **Anne Bliss**

### **Biography**

Anne Bliss is an instructor for the University Writing Program; she serves as the Program's ESL Coordinator and as the Learning Disabilities Liaison. She holds a bachelor's degree in English language and literature, and a master's degree in linguistics with a specialization in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Her Ph.D. studies were in bilingual and bicultural education, and her dissertation was the first published study of the effects of intensive pre-graduate training on international students. Her current research interests include English as a Second Language, comparative and contrastive rhetoric, the effects of computer

usage on composition, and long-term studies of the effects of American graduate education on international students.

Anne is also internationally recognized in the field of natural dyes made from plants and other natural materials. She has published several books on natural dyes, including North American Dye Plants, and written numerous articles about natural dyes, handspinning, and handwoven and handcrafted textiles.

During the summer of 1995, Dr. Bliss spent a month doing collaborative research and teaching English with the English faculty of Novosibirsk State Technical University, Novosibirsk, Siberia, Russian Federation. She also served on a Ford Foundation team in Hanoi, Vietnam, teaching English to researchers at the Center for Family and Women Studies and to members of the Vietnam delegation to the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women.

# Enriching Science through Diversity

---

## Margaret Asirvatham

Director, General Chemistry  
University of Colorado at Boulder

and her family:

Simon Low-Nam

Nisha Low-Nam

Shalini Low-Nam

*Unity through diversity is the only true and enduring unity.*

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Diversity abounds in the living world, and in *The Diversity of Life*, Edward O. Wilson (1992) presents a thrilling account of the evolution of diverse species and how humans are destroying that diversity. The AIDS virus has affected people all over the world, regardless of race, color, or ethnicity. Scientists from many different countries continue to search for new drugs and strive to find a cure for the disease. The hope for AIDS patients provided by Dr. David Ho, using antiviral “cocktails” including protease inhibitors, follows the pioneering work of scientists like Robert Gallo and Luc Montagnier. Science classrooms abound in opportunities to empower teachers and students from diverse backgrounds to explore the problems that affect mankind.

Science-related issues provide a platform to unite students regardless of their ethnic differences. Dwindling supplies of fossil fuels and the need for new energy sources, food supplies to feed the ever-burgeoning masses of humanity, and the disposal of radioactive and hazardous wastes—these are some topics that can be discussed to excite young people to seek ways to understand the problems and to work together to find solutions. Sheila Tobias (1990) in “They’re Not Dumb, They’re Different: Stalking the Second Tier” cites the experience of Stephanie Lipscomb: “. . . I was certainly not given the belief that I could give something back to science and that it could give something back to me.” Scientific issues can be discussed and debated in small classes, while group assignments encouraging diversity in the group can be worked into large classes. Discussion of these issues are beneficial to both the instructor and the students, and emphasize the need for interdisciplinary action as well as international cooperation to attack global problems.

In the science classroom, the instructor is challenged to use a variety of teaching styles to accommodate the needs of students with

different learning styles. In physics and chemistry, mathematical models are used quite extensively and many abstract concepts are discussed. The instructor must strive to present the information at a level that most students feel comfortable, and be prepared to review basic concepts. It is a misconception that Asian students have excellent math abilities, and that female students cannot grasp mathematical concepts as quickly as their male peers. An educator strives to bring out the best in each student while passing the torch of knowledge to the next generation.

International teaching assistants can play a very important role in heightening the awareness of diversity in the classroom. They must be trained to create an educational environment that is enhanced by the creativity and richness resulting from increased diversity.

The laboratory situation provides excellent opportunities for students to cooperate and to bring out the best in each other as they work towards shared, common goals. Students should be encouraged to share ideas, to respect other points of view, and to work as a team to find the best solution to the assigned problem.

Laboratory work is a very essential part of any science course, and instructors face a great challenge in accommodating the needs of disabled students in the laboratory. In our chemistry laboratory, we were very successful in working with a wheelchair-bound student, but most of the credit should go to the young man who worked very well with his peers and was a positive influence on them. However, it has been difficult to accommodate the needs of blind students in the chemistry laboratory. Many efforts are currently underway at the national level to use computers to provide laboratory experience for students with special needs. Stephen Hawking, a renowned British physicist, is a paraplegic who has continued to amaze the scientific community with his stellar contributions in physics.

## Teaching tips

1. Remind students that science is a human endeavor and requires contributions from many different people to solve problems that could affect all of us. Incorporate scientific issues that affect society at the local, national, and global level.

2. Make a special effort to emphasize the contributions of a diverse group of scientists.
3. Treat all students with respect, show that you really care about their learning, and strive to provide an atmosphere where all students feel comfortable to ask questions.
4. When calling on students in class, try to include as many different students as possible. Be sensitive to cultural differences.
5. Use a variety of teaching styles and instructional technology to address the different learning styles in the diverse classroom.
6. Encourage study groups which bring together students from diverse backgrounds, to foster mutual respect and cooperation.
7. As part of TA training, encourage teaching assistants to embrace diversity and facilitate interactions in the laboratory that are beneficial to the learning process.
8. Address the special needs of women, minority and disabled students by providing information on resources such as the Minority Arts and Sciences Program or Disabled Student Services.
9. Encourage students with special needs to see you during office hours, and offer to visit dormitories to facilitate informal interactions with your students.
10. Offer review sessions, especially welcoming those students who are shy or intimidated to approach you in a large group.

### References

Wilson, Edward O. *The Diversity of Life*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992.

Tobias, Sheila. "They're Not Dumb, They're Different: Stalking the Second Tier." Research Corporation, Tucson, Arizona, 1990.

### Margaret Asirvatham Biography

Margaret Asirvatham teaches in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. She is the director of General Chemistry. In 1996, she was awarded Boulder Faculty Assembly Teaching Excellence award.

Professor Asirvatham's main teaching interests are the training of graduate teaching assistants and the application of multimedia instructional technology to the teaching of general chemistry.

# Diversity, Individual Differences, and Students with Disabilities: Optimizing the Learning Environment

---

## Christine Yoshinaga-Itano

*Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences*

With the advent of the Americans with Disabilities Act, CU will have increasing numbers of students with disabilities matriculating in undergraduate and graduate programs. What can faculty do to accommodate these students and optimize the learning environment for them?

The disabilities most often found among CU students are as follows but not in any particular order: (1) educationally significant hearing loss, (2) educationally significant visual impairments, (3) language/learning disabilities, (4) physical disabilities affecting either fine or gross motor systems, such as cerebral palsy, (5) speech disorders such as stuttering, or need for augmentative devices, (6) neurological damage caused by traumatic head injuries from automobile or sports injuries, or by strokes, or (7) emotional/behavioral disorders such as severe depression, anxieties, or paranoidias.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) guarantees all students access to information, as well as physical access to educational institutions. Students with disabilities may need accommodations in order to receive both oral and written information that is communicated by instructors, fellow students, textbooks, films, etc. Adaptations to examination procedures may be required, such as additional time. Students should be informed through the syllabus, at the beginning of each class, that it is their responsibility to tell the instructor about any modifications or adaptations that will be required, so that the instructor has ample time to accommodate the students' needs. The following accommodations are the *right* of people with disabilities. They should not be provided in a spirit of pity or patronage.

### **Amplification Devices for Individuals with Hearing Loss**

FM (frequency modulated) auditory devices allow individuals with sensori-neural hearing loss, as well as those with central auditory dysfunction, to hear the instructor's voice without extraneous classroom noise, which may be exacerbated by the reverberation characteristics of the room, its acoustic treatment, and its amplification system. The instructor wears a radio-frequency microphone

and transmitter; the student wears a radio-frequency receiver. Occasionally the instructor may have to wear more than one microphone—the classroom system microphone and the microphone for the individual auditory amplification devices. While the Office of Disabled Students makes available several different technologies, all of them require that the speaker wear a microphone transmitting on a specific radio frequency. Therefore, in class discussions in large classrooms, the disabled student will be unable to hear the questions or comments of other students unless the professor repeats the information or allows time for the other speakers to use the microphone.

### **Sign-language Interpreters**

Visual transmission of information takes longer than auditory transmission, so occasionally, if the professor speaks rapidly or is using numerous technical terms that must be fingerspelled, a sign-language interpreter may have to request that the lecturer repeat a piece of information or slightly slow the pace. Questions and remarks should be directed to the student, not the interpreter, although the interpreter will voice the student's responses and the student's own questions for the instructor. Additionally, the instructor should attempt to ensure that other students refrain from interruptions or talking simultaneously, since this situation presents significant obstacles both for the interpreter and for the hearing-impaired student.

Interpreters are also available for student-faculty meetings outside class. They may be used to interpret examinations to assure that the same language (American Sign Language) that was used in interpreting the lecture is also used in the examination. In fact, since American Sign Language is a different language from English, students who use American Sign Language may have many of the same problems as those who use English as a second language. Foreign students with English as a Second Language (ESL) who are experiencing problems with written language in English should refer to the Academic Skills Program or take advantage of the coursework offered through the University Writing Program.

### **Enlarged Visual Displays**

Students with visual impairments often require enlarged overheads and handouts. Use



of the Internet and Web pages to give students notes and outlines not only ensures information access for both visually and hearing impaired students, but also enhances the learning environment for all students.

### **Internet "Classroom" Discussions**

Students with speech disorders are often reluctant to participate in classroom discussions. Virtual classroom discussion provides access for all students irrespective of shyness or disability.

### **Internet Access to the Instructor**

Often questions posed by one student are questions that other students have had. Internet communication with instructors allows students to get immediate clarification or discussion of specific content within the course lectures or reading material.

### **Captioned Videos**

Captioned videos, originally intended for individuals with significant hearing loss, can also serve students with central auditory dysfunction/learning disabilities, as well as students who use English as a second language. All newer televisions can show these videos; older televisions on campus can be enabled to decode closed-captioning by adding a closed-captioning decoder (available through Academic Media Services). Remember that when films and videos are shown the room is darkened as for the use of overheads and slides, thereby causing significant difficulties for students who must rely upon sign language interpreters. Therefore, if videos are not closed-captioned, the student may request that a special viewing time be arranged with an interpreter.

### **Consistent Organization and Structure**

Sudden changes in requirements communicated solely through oral classroom announcements may open the door to miscommunication with a number of students who have disabilities. Again, using Web pages or the Internet to communicate class information can avoid such problems. Class lecture notes can also be provided on the Web to give better information access to students who must struggle to hear, process auditory information, or write down notes from a lecture. Access to these notes ultimately benefits all students enrolled in the course.

### **Avoiding Stereotypes/Stigma/Discomfort**

Students with disabilities, like those from ethnic minority groups, are often perceived, by teachers and other students, as having inferior intellectual abilities or knowledge. They may also be perceived as all alike. Students with disabilities are a diverse group. Each student can speak for himself or herself but not for all individuals with the same disability.

Students with disabilities have the same desire for contact with the professor as all other students. Often people fear those who are different and avoid communication because of discomfort with interpreters or fear of saying the wrong thing.

It is often helpful for teachers to explore their own feelings about people who exhibit different physical and communication characteristics. Do you assume that individuals who have speech disorders are not as competent as those who do not? Do you assume that students with learning disabilities are intellectually inferior to other students? Do you assume that students with mental health issues are less capable?

### **Avoiding Discrimination**

Understanding the rights of students with disabilities is not only the right thing to do but also the legal thing to do. While this information is ultimately intended to protect the rights of students with disabilities, it should also protect professors and the university from violation of the law.

**Christine Yoshinaga-Itano**  
**Biography**

Christine Yashinaga-Itano studies the development of language and cognition in deaf and hard-of-hearing children and has twenty-seven years of experience teaching individuals with disabilities. She is the Principal Investigator of three federal grants from the

National Institutes of Health, Maternal, and Child Health and the Office of Education. Additionally, one of the grants is an investigation of bilingual Spanish and English language development in young infants and toddlers.

# Teaching Diverse Students: A View from Asian American Studies

---

**Lane Ryo Hirabayashi**

*Department of Ethnic Studies*

By 1992, the population of the U.S. was comprised of 25% Native American, African, Chicano/Latino, or Asian American descent, part or whole. For the twelve year period between 1980 and 1992, this represented a 40% increase, as compared to a less than 13% increase in the overall population. This trend is likely to continue as we move into the twenty-first century. In spite of this, the presence and contributions of members of these groups are often elided.

The professoriate has a fundamental choice in responding to contemporary challenges of diversity. We can assume that an implicit task of a university-level education is to ease students into the mold of the dominant (e.g., male- and heterosexually-oriented) society. This is often the case with many traditional institutions. Nevertheless, while carrying out the missions of general education and the major, we can engage diversity to enrich our course content and teaching methods.

Given the history of immigration, and the multicultural physiognomy that is now a self-evident characteristic of America, effective teaching methodologies must address diversity for at least two reasons. First, a firm knowledge of the contributions of all people who have helped build this nation must inform university curriculum. A wider, more encompassing vision will inevitably promote a more realistic American narrative that does not effectively exclude its many participants. Second, attention to diversity enriches the curriculum for all parties involved in contemporary university life. Students shaped by the ideologies of the dominant society can develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the U.S. if they have the opportunity to consider all aspects of America as "others" have experienced them, both historically and currently. Students from minority communities that have been subject to racialization can better relate to course material if their own histories and experiences are explored in (and not excluded from) the curriculum. The disciplinary narratives would thus be more complete, and an increased understanding between the different groups may also come with increased knowledge.

A university education can and should provide real opportunities for students to learn about the multiplex character and dynamics of the U.S. in an imaginative and constructive fashion. It is precisely in responding to diversity, then, that our courses can make a significant and long-term contribution to students who will have to learn to live, work, and participate effectively in an increasingly heterogeneous society.

My comments are the product of fifteen years of classroom work. Although I focus on the specific field of Asian American studies, the same approach can be applied to address an even wider range of "differences," including those that involve class, gender, and sexuality.

You might ask: Why is diversity an inherent dimension of teaching Asian American studies? First, students of Asian or part-Asian descent often come from one of eight major nationality groups here in the U.S., and occasionally one of the fifteen or so smaller populations now spread across America. Second, although generationally speaking, students are often 1st, "1.5," or 2nd, among Chinese and Japanese Americans, some may be 3rd, 4th, or even 5th. Third, the combinations of students' linguistic, religious, and cultural orientations are frequently quite complex, since they reflect multiple permutations of Asian, American, and Asian American roots and commitments.

In this context, the challenges of teaching Asian American studies courses include:

1. how to teach effectively and engagingly;
2. how to assess and respond to the educational needs of all students, especially given the fact that their command of basic academic skills may be quite varied;
3. how to represent, effectively, the wide range of experiences of students in terms of curriculum (especially because many faculty may be familiar with one of the Asian American groups, in particular, but have very limited knowledge about the others); and,
4. how to empower students intellectually and personally, especially in a society that often misunderstands and thus misrepresents people of Asian or part Asian descent.

Many different experiences helped me come to grips with these issues. As I was finishing my Ph.D. in 1980 at U.C. Berkeley, for example, I was fortunate to serve as a teaching assistant for a number of outstanding teachers. Over the years, I have also received excellent tips, suggestions, and curriculum ideas from colleagues, both in my department and those I have met at workshops and conferences. When possible, I've also attended classes given by "master teachers" on the various campuses at which I've worked. Additionally, I have found that reading about teaching has been a tremendous inspiration, especially since the literature on pedagogy has proliferated during the 1980s and 1990s. Along with garnering all these resources, I have struggled on my own to develop and improve my courses, always being mindful of the elements of diversity. These struggles are at the core of my development as a teacher.

I found the following bibliographic items especially useful in my quest to improve my teaching, as well as to understand how my students best learn. I trust that the resources I introduce below will be of genuine use to my colleagues—that is, anyone who teaches college courses as part of their professional duties—and enable them to carry out additional research that will ultimately sharpen their work in the classroom.

To begin with, I have frequently consulted basic resources that deal with the fundamentals of teaching. Two of my favorites are:

- Barbara G. Davis. 1993. *Tools for Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass). A well-thought out overview, Davis's book is an especially useful guide to a host of practical and technical issues related to teaching effectively. Each chapter is followed by a short list of carefully selected citations for further reading.
- Leo M. Lambert, et al., eds. 1996. *University Teaching: A Guide for Graduate Students* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press). This is a book that faculty can cite or assign to graduate students who expect to become, or who are already working as, teaching assistants. Its up-to-date contents make it a useful resource for beginning professors as well.

For those who seek insight into how students of Asian descent—especially the new Asian immigrants—perceive and feel about their educational experiences, two sensitive and insightful studies offer useful introductions.

Both also detail how and why a "student-centered approach," which revolves around group sharing and cooperative group activities, provides an effective basis on which to build a supportive curriculum.

- Wendy Walker-Moffat. 1995. *The Other Side of the Asian American Success Story* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass). Although many appear to believe that students of Asian descent have few pressing educational problems, Walker-Moffat draws from a case study of Hmong-Americans to argue otherwise.
- Danling Fu. 1995. *My Trouble is My English: Asian Students and the American Dream* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann). This is an insightful qualitative account, focusing on the educational trajectories of four children from a refugee family that arrived in the United States after fleeing Laos in the 1980s. Dr. Fu details the challenges they face, and provides concrete suggestions for how educators might construct a more salubrious learning environment for such students.

The issue of how one can effectively represent diverse populations and communities in humanities and social sciences courses is a highly complex topic. I have often had the most interesting and effective input from my students. The entry cited below by Kenneth A. Bruffee has proven to be a key resource which has helped me to understand how and why student-oriented discussions, panels, and papers can be used as an integral part of my courses. Although written with the composition instructor in mind, Bruffee's book addresses the importance of students themselves as an often overlooked but invaluable resource. This holds true particularly in classrooms with diverse participants. In addition, I have found video documentaries to be of great utility in representing the historical and contemporary experiences of Asians in America, although I continue to believe that instructors should take an active pedagogical approach by teaching the elements of critical visual thinking as the basis for presenting and discussing audio-visual programs.

- Kenneth A. Bruffee. 1993. *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press). Bruffee's thoughtful critique of the linkage between authority, foundationalism, and knowledge, gives new

meaning and relevance to collaborative learning techniques in university-level courses.

- Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, and Malcolm Collier. 1995. "Embracing Diversity: Teaching An Introductory Asian American Studies Course," in *Reviewing Asian America: Locating Diversity*, Wendy L. Ng, ed. (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press). Hirabayashi and Collier discuss, in detail, how they have utilized a non-foundational, collaborative, learning methodology (Kenneth A. Bruffee's), to respond to issues of diversity and representation in their introductory Asian American studies courses. Here we also emphasize the vital importance of assignments that aid students of Asian descent in developing their written and oral communications skills, positively, and in a supportive group context.
- Elizabeth Ellsworth, and Mariamne Whatley, eds. 1990. *The Ideology of Images in Educational Media: Hidden Curriculum in the Classroom* (New York: Teachers College). This is one of the few collections that examines pedagogical dimensions of teaching with video and film. The authors' discussion of "hidden curriculum" is especially intriguing, since it challenges professors to consider more carefully the manifest and latent freight of educational videos.

For classrooms in which there are students of diverse backgrounds, the following bibliographic items are in order. Current educational research on the learning needs of students of Asian, and other non-European, ancestries is a key resource that is growing apace.

- Don T. Nakanishi, and Tina Y. Nishida, eds. 1995. *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Students* (New York: Routledge). This is an excellent anthology that presents some of the best available research about the educational achievements and needs of students of Asian descent in America's classrooms.
- James A. Banks, and Cherry A. Banks, eds. 1995. *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (New York: Macmillan). The entries in this encyclopedic volume are wide-ranging and include substantive, ethnic-specific, and research-oriented, overviews. The bibliographies following each article indicate the growth

and sophistication of the literature at many levels.

A challenge that I now face, and that I am actively trying to deal with, is how I can most effectively teach about the experiences of other people of color to students of Asian descent. This is all the more difficult since they, like students from mainstream backgrounds, may also have to deconstruct stereotypes and biases about other minority groups before they are able to develop more accurate perceptions. Fortunately, there are a wide number of texts available that explore philosophical and pedagogical dimensions of developing a multicultural curriculum. I cite two contributions from the recent literature because of their utility in this regard.

- Marilyn Lutzker. 1995. *Multiculturalism in the College Curriculum: A Handbook of Strategies and Resources for Faculty* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). This is a stimulating text that offers a host of practical suggestions and curriculum resources. Of special interest, in my view, are the chapters which propose the integration of student projects into the curriculum, which can then be used to generate student reactions and interactions. Lutzker includes a discussion suggesting how professors can best "troubleshoot" classroom discussions that start getting out of hand.
  - Ellen G. Friedman, et al., eds. 1996. *Creating An Inclusive College Curriculum: A Teaching Sourcebook from the New Jersey Project* (New York: Teachers College Press). This book is quite complementary to the Lutzker volume, and gives an even wider set of examples that illustrate how the study of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality can be made integral to the general goals of a university education.
- Finally, a realistic concern is always how students are going to react to innovation in the classroom. Sometimes, the changes and demands that are incurred in addressing the kinds of issues I have highlighted here can confuse or even threaten students. What strategies and resources are available that might help to lessen the risks of innovative teaching methods? Here, I list two, among many, thought-provoking contributions.
- Patricia Meyer Spacks, ed. 1996. *Advocacy in the Classroom: Problems and Possibilities* (New York: St. Martin's Press). This is a wide-ranging collection, whose authors explore the pros and cons of advocacy as a

tool to encourage engagement and critical thinking. Risks are frankly discussed, and strategies for dealing with risk are put forth. Those who are in favor of direct advocacy as a pedagogical technique aspire to encourage the formation of new perspectives on the use of authority, as well as a "new ethics" which encompasses both rights and responsibilities.

- Peter Seldin. 1991. *Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion Tenure Decisions* (New York:

Anker Publishing). This short monograph is a must for all teachers who plan to utilize innovative curriculum methods. The basic idea Seldin proposes is that professors should put together a teaching portfolio that includes items such as philosophy of curriculum design, drafts of syllabi, copies of handouts, assignments, examinations, as well as samples of student exams, papers, and letters. Such a portfolio is much more indicative of teaching skills and achievements than the responses on "Faculty / Course Questionnaires."

All of these books (except for Seldin, 1991) are in the Norlin Library. I hope that you will find them as useful and inspiring as I have.

## Lane Ryo Hirabayashi

### Biography

Lane R. Hirabayashi is professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies. He has been at the University of Colorado, Boulder, for seven years. In 1996 he was invited to hold UCLA's "Endowed Chair in Japanese and Asian American Studies" for two quarters. Lane's latest publications include an anthology, *Teaching Asian America: Diversity & the Problem of Community* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), and a forthcoming book, *Fieldwork in an American Concentration Camp: Tamie Tsuchiyama at Poston, Arizona* (University of Arizona Press, 1999). He would also like to thank Marilyn C. Alquizola for her comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

He can be reached at:

Department of Ethnic Studies  
Campus Box 339  
University of Colorado at Boulder  
Boulder, CO 80309-0339  
(303) 492-0419  
Lane.Hirabayashi@Colorado.EDU