



Culturally Responsive Teaching

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

An Open Educational Resources Publication by College of the
Canyons

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Version 1

2020

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PART I – CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

A. WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT



Think About It... Questions for Consideration

Consider the following questions:

1. What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and why is it important?
2. What does it mean to be culturally competent?

A **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy** is often referred to as **Culturally Responsive Teaching** or operating with **Equity-Minded** practices in the classroom. This involves putting students first in the consideration of course development in implementation. It also means operating in a student-focused classroom, being keenly aware of the student demographic, along with the processes of sharing course materials. **Culturally Relevant Pedagogies** incorporate a critical lens to understanding the cultural contexts and realities from which our students come. It involves a constant self-reflection on unconscious and conscious biases as well as shifting trends in student cultures and trends. The **Equity-Minded** practitioner has the ability to adapt their knowledge to the specific context in which they are practicing, always with student success in mind.

Student success means that as **Equity-Minded Practitioners** we are aware that our students do not have a single, monolithic background or story, do not possess the same kinds or levels of knowledge, and do not learn in similar ways as everyone else in the class. The “one size fits all” approach to college teaching has long been shown to have little effect on capturing the minds, attentions, and abilities of a diverse student population. Without these practices and conscious awareness of diverse views, experiences, and backgrounds, we fail to capture the unlimited potentials that each of our students possess. The limitations of using only one pedagogical approach to teaching, yields a repeating and revolving door of student success only realized by a select few in the student population, leaving behind diverse voices and experiences, funds of knowledge and golden opportunities for the whole class learning and growing from one another’s experiences and educational processes. Teaching from a **Culturally Responsive** model ensures greater opportunities for closing equity gaps while seeing our students reach their full potential and seeing our students enjoy an educational experience that speaks to their stories.

Here are a few things that Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and this handbook are NOT:

- **A prescription of exactly how to teach your course.** Each of your students is unique, and each class has its own personality and needs. This is not a “how to” manual in the same way you would repair a computer or other electronic device; nor is it a recipe for how to teach perfectly, without error or room for growth. It is not a cookbook, nor is it a list of short-cuts for successful teaching.
- **A workbook that is complete and not missing other current equity-related research, findings, and models for equitable practices.** There is a plethora of pedagogical materials on this topic and it is likely the flow of research will continue as demographic trends shift along with cultural waves. Likewise, the materials found here for College of the Canyons are only as current as noted on each table or illustration. Given multiple changes in campus and classroom demographics, new data will surely continue to emerge accordingly. This will definitely inform the *how* of Culturally Relevant practices in days to come.
- **An additive to course material to make the class a “diversity course.”** Equitable practices in the classroom are featured at the center of the campus and class mission, not as an add-on or honorable mention of minoritized groups. It is not a matter of *infusing* your course with equity materials, but rather making equity the focus of the class organization and experience for students.



Figure 1.1: A contemporary STEM classroom.¹

Equality and **equity** are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. Equality means treating everyone the same; whereas, equity refers to addressing gaps so that students can be successful. Equity may be seen as ‘leveling the playing field’ so that students CAN be equal in their success even when they start from unequal positions.

¹ [Image](#) by NASA/JPL-Caltech is in the public domain.

B. WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS AND WHO ARE WE AT COC?

Knowing Your Classroom Population

You might be asking yourself something like the following question:

“What does it matter who is in my class? This doesn’t change the course content. After all, $2 + 2 = 4$, regardless of who is in the seat. Right?”

Well... it does matter! And we have plenty of evidence to show that student success is symbiotically related to equitable practices in the classroom.



Figure 1.2 A small cohort²



Pin It!

There are two entities that the culturally minded practitioner should have knowledge of in order to be successful in the practice:

1. One’s class
2. One’s self

² [Image](#) by [Binod.gr](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Here is a snapshot of our student population, along with our work group representations at COC:

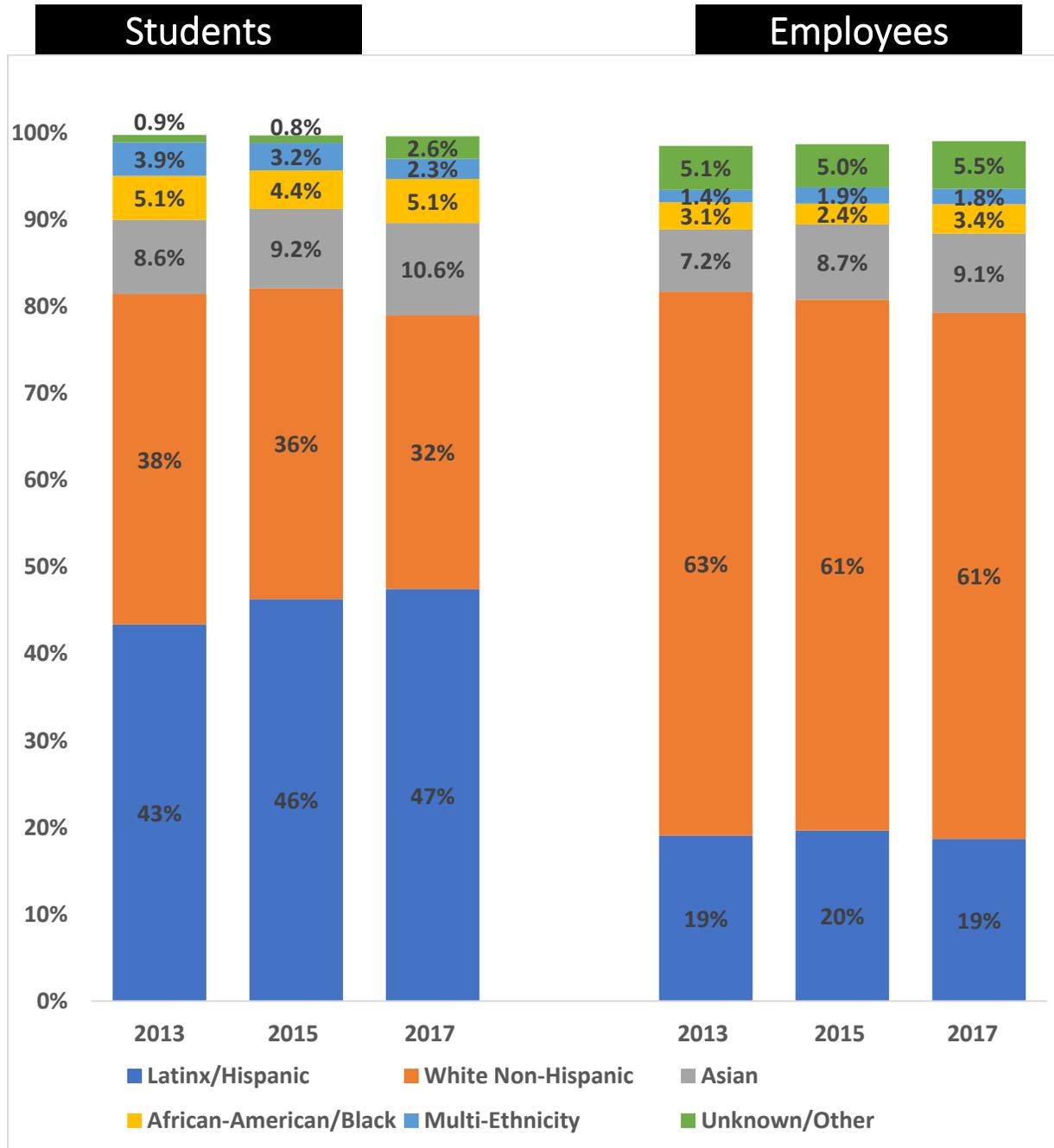


Figure 1.3: RACE/ETHNICITY of COC students in comparison to employees over 4 years.³

It matters who is in the classroom. Just as systems of inequalities exist in every institution in society, manifestations of inequalities show up every day in higher education. If we simply look at the numbers reflecting student success, we see clear markers based on social class, race,

³ Data prepared for College of the Canyons' Adverse Impact for Equal Employment Opportunity Plan 2018

gender, **with the possibility of other aspects of group membership.** We also have ample research showing that a concerted regard for the multiplicity of identities in the classroom yields a larger pool of successes when compared to something like a color-blind approach to the classroom.

Students come to the classroom with different backgrounds, experiences, communication styles, cultural notions and biases, and along with a multitude of ways of being in the world. And so do college professors!

We come to the classrooms with our different backgrounds, experiences, communication styles, cultural notions and biases, along with a multitude of ways of being in the world.



Figure 1.4: Lecturer at the board⁴

Knowing Yourself

The Culturally-Responsive practitioner is aware of their own backgrounds, experiences, communication styles, cultural notions, and biases, along with their ways of being in the world. Possessing this awareness allows for:

1. **Critical self-awareness** and reflection on how the creation and implementation of a course may impact student success; and
2. **Self-examination of and ongoing reflection** of best practices in the classroom with a growing knowledge and self-awareness. Here, one understands and challenges implicit and explicit biases.

⁴ [Image](#) on [pxhere](#) is in the public domain.



Quotable

Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

As a matter of fact, as it turns out, recognizing that we “know nothing” leads to the notion that we have room to learn and grow. It kind of takes the heat off having to be right all the time and have control over every outcome. That’s a lot of pressure to uphold a front like that. Saying “I really don’t know anything” leaves an open slate for acquiring knowledge, then knowing! A little bit of humility about knowing everything about teaching, about being in the classroom can go a long way toward creating a student-oriented classroom. And it can make the teaching experience much more rewarding for everyone, including the practitioner.

C. YOU DON’T KNOW ANYTHING (AND NEITHER DO I)

Mark Manson, in his chapter titled “You’re Wrong About Everything (But So Am I),” talks about the value of being uncertain and that “the more you embrace being uncertain and not knowing, the more comfortable with not knowing and what you don’t know.” In fact, “uncertainty is the root of all progress and all growth,” meaning that the less we know, the more we can grow!⁵

These statements bear pedagogical wisdom, recognizing the value of a reflective process in teaching is just as important as the praxis of education. If we presume to know everything about teaching or about our students, we are unable to grow with the morphing populations and trends in culture and society. The more we are willing to learn, the more we can be open to the needs and communication styles of our students.

⁵ Mark Manson, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* (New York: Harper One, 2016), 134–35.

D. COMMUNICATION STYLES AND WHY *WHO* IS TEACHING MATTERS

Understanding Communication Styles and Cultural Differences

Comparisons of cultural value systems are not meant to stereotype individuals or culture; rather, they are meant to provide generalizations, observations about a group of people, from which we can discuss cultural difference and potential areas for miscommunication.

Recognizing cultural definitions of our students and the unique ways they are able to learn, this helps us to organize our classes and deliver material in a fashion that creates and fosters the greatest opportunities for learning.

Aspects of culture as bridges to learning:

- Age and gender
- Education and cultural background
- Social status and economic position
- Temperament
- Health and beauty
- Popularity
- Political beliefs
- Ethnicity, values, motives
- Aspirations
- Assumptions
- Rules and regulations
- Standards and priorities

Mindful teaching involves metacognition on the part of the practitioner. Thinking about how we are thinking makes for a more vigorous and participatory classroom. Students come to the classroom as funds of knowledge.

The idea of students as *Funds of Knowledge* speaks to the central focus of equity-minded teaching. Students *are* our Funds of Knowledge and the reason why we are even here in the first place. The student-focused curricula and campus provides for a vibrancy of students' voices where all are benefactors. Involving students in building the structure of the course invites experiences, wisdom, and skills that each student brings to the class.

Our students at COC come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, sexualities and genders, social statuses, and philosophical orientations.

Table 1: 2018–19 Annual Student Demographics and Special Populations

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Native American/Alaskan	84	0.4%
African American	1,062	4.9%
Asian American	1,318	6.0%
Latino/a	9,536	43.6%
White	5,892	26.9%
Unknown	317	1.4%
Other-Non White	132	0.6%
Filipino	993	4.5%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	46	0.2%
Two or more races	2,510	12%
Total Enrollment*	21,890	n/a

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	11,751	53.7%
Male	10,012	45.7%
Unknown	127	0.6%
Total Enrollment*	21,890	n/a

Age	Number	Percent
19 or less	6,837	31.2%
20 to 24	7,978	36.4%
25 to 29	2,797	12.8%
30 to 34	1,348	6.2%
35 to 39	853	3.9%
40 to 49	1,109	5.1%
50 or above	967	4.4%
Total Enrollment*	21,890	n/a

Programs & Services	Number	Percent
Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSPS)	1,231	
Extended Opportunities Programs & Services (EOPS) Students	520	
Veterans Students	493	
Foster Youth Students	66	
Total Enrollment*	21,890	n/a

*Active enrollment in either Fall or Spring terms. Excludes ISAs and Winter/Summer Enrollments

COC is an HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution), a term coined by the Federal Government when designing funding formulae for Title V monies. An HSI must have at least 25% of its population

be Hispanics in order to bear this moniker. COC Latinx population dials in at 46%, the largest racial/ethnic population here. Certainly, in order to be equity-minded and regard our Funds of Knowledge, this should inform all aspects of operation from syllabus creation to programming, to hiring of faculty and staff. As we have seen from research, students perform more successfully when they are represented by familiar faces and sensibilities in the office and in the classroom.

Likewise, we are just as fortunate to have a student population comprised of a variety of ages as the average age of a COC graduating student is 25 years old. We have military veterans sitting in our classes, lgb folk, trans* folk, returning students, middle college high school students, and students that are currently unhoused or without sufficient food sources. Finally, we have diverse religions and philosophies represented among our student body at COC.

These demographics provide golden opportunities to inform the classroom discussion, not only validating students' experiences by offering them agency in the classroom, but also benefits the whole as those in the room learn from one another. The students bring their experiences to the material and give life and meaning of the content through their own lens. We are fortunate to be in an environment such as the academy in order to learn from people who we might not otherwise run into.



Think About It...

Students in classrooms come from diverse backgrounds and histories that shape their learning experiences.

Recognizing that NO two stories are the same enables us to recognize each person's uniqueness.



Pin It! The Danger of a Single Story

Listening to different voices in the class makes for a better learning experience for all. In her [Ted Talk titled “The Danger of a Single Story”](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story) (https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story), [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#) addresses the problem of hearing from only one dominant group in the classroom.



Figure 1.5: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie⁶

Various learning styles may include...

- Visual learners
- Tribal learners/cooperative learners
- Solo learners
- Writers
- Artists
- Leader learners

⁶ [Image](#) by [Chris Boland](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

PART II – CREATING A CLASSROOM THAT IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE



Think About It... Questions for Consideration

Consider the following questions:

1. What does my classroom environment look like?
2. What kinds of cultural representations are featured in the classroom decor?
3. How is the classroom configured in terms of seating?

Classroom arrangements and the “vibe” the instructor sets for the class have a direct impact on learning opportunities. Moving from the position of “the Sage on Stage” to fostering interpersonal environments where cooperative learning can take place gives students agency over their own learning while opening doors for a variety of learning styles.



Figure 2.1: An engaging learning environment⁷

⁷ [Image](#) by Lindy Zubairy is licensed under [CC BY-ND 2.0](#)

A. CREATING EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Creating equity in the classroom is manifested in several ways. Like baking a cake or creating an art piece, there are several elements that feature ways to evoke an equity-driven classroom.

1. **Interpersonal Relationships** – Which students do you pay attention to on a regular basis, according to race/ethnicity? Or, which groups do you generally encourage or celebrate with? Which students do you know/address by name?
2. **Curriculum** – Are your courses designed to represent your classrooms’ racial/ethnic identities? Do you provide avenues for students to incorporate their backgrounds and lived experiences into assignments and classroom discussions?
3. **Values and Beliefs** – How do your values and beliefs play a role in shaping the classroom? Do these values and beliefs have unintended implications for minoritized groups in the class?
4. **Rules and Policies** – Do your rules and policies create a classroom that is welcoming and caring? How might your class rules disproportionately affect minoritized groups?
5. **Classroom Facilitation** – Does your facilitation include hands-on activities and insure equitable participation?



Figure 2.2: Raised hands⁸

⁸ [Image](#) by Karen Arnold is in the public domain.



Pin It! Supporting Minoritized Groups

Here are some ways you can support minoritized groups in classroom facilitation:

1. Arranging the classroom so that students are “creating” knowledge, rather than being passive receptacles for lecture information.
2. Structuring class discussions so that all students’ voices are heard.
3. Ensuring that no students, especially minoritized students, are excluded in discussions, group work, and activities.
4. Positioning yourself as “co-creator” of knowledge in the classroom rather than the “expert” or “sage on the stage.”
5. Asking students for continual feedback on what they think of course content and the pedagogical processes.



Figure 2.3: Independent Learning⁹

The STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR RELATIONSHIP reflects EQUITY in

- whom you regularly engage or speak with;
- the students you praise or validate;
- the students you reach out to for support;
- the language you use that is welcoming rather than scolding; and
- your conveyance to students that you have high expectations for their success.

⁹ [Image](#) on [Pikist](#) is in the public domain.



Figure 2.4: A collaborative learning environment¹⁰



Think About It... Questions for Reflection

Reflect on the following questions:

1. How might my teaching style advantage some students and not others?
2. What might I be able to do to provide opportunities for students of various backgrounds to process course information and content?
3. Am I being inclusive of groups that may be historically disadvantaged in my course content and delivery?

VALUES and BELIEFS that are EQUITABLE

- reflect on the capabilities of your Black, Latinx, Native American, Asian, and other minoritized students;
- stress the importance of the instructor's role in student success, rather than focusing on a deficit model for explaining equity gaps;
- recognize biases, stereotypes, and subtle forms of discrimination; and
- reflect the ability to self-reflect on teaching style as well as receive critical feedback from students on classroom processes.

RULES and POLICIES that PROMOTE EQUITY in the CLASSROOM

- do not disproportionately impact some minoritized groups over others;
- are evaluated for cultural norms, values, beliefs and whether they disrupt equity; and
- reflect an overall intent of equity and student success in the classroom.

¹⁰ [Image](#) on [pxhere](#) is in the public domain.

Typical Biases

Conscious or Explicit Bias

Attitudes or beliefs we have about a person or group usually rise because of a perceived threat; used most likely to justify unfair treatment; is usually deliberate and/or conscious; and is systematic and organizational.

Unconscious or Implicit Bias

This occurs when one holds social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside of their conscious awareness. Our brains are triggered, making quick judgments. It can happen more often when you are multi-tasking or working under pressure.

- **Affinity bias:** Occurs when you unconsciously prefer people who share qualities with you or someone you like. We all want to be around people we relate to.
- **Attribution bias:** Takes place when you perceive your actions, successes or failures are based on our own accomplishments, skills or personality; and we are likely to blame others for our failures.
- **Conformity bias:** Happens when your views are easily swayed by others. This occurs when we seek acceptance from others, holding opinions and views that our community accepts.
- **Gender bias:** This occurs when a person prefers 'one' gender over the other. This usually stems from deep-seated beliefs about gender roles and stereotypes. It also neglects variations in gender and the reality of multiple genders.
- **Halo effect:** This occurs when we focus on one particularly great feature about a person, viewing everything about them as positive.
- **Horn effect:** This occurs when one focuses on a perceived negative feature about a person.

B. WHAT ABOUT MY STEM CLASSES? ISN'T THIS JUST FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES CLASSES?



Figure 2.5: Biology Lab¹¹

What Is the Issue?



Quotable

Equity should be prioritized as a central component in all educational improvement efforts. All students can and should learn complex science. However, achieving equity and social justice in science education is an ongoing challenge. Students from non-dominant communities often face "opportunity gaps" in their educational experience. [Inclusive approaches to science instruction](#) can reposition youth as meaningful participants in science learning and recognize their science-related assets and those of their communities.

—Philip Bell and Megan Bang

Attending to Equity

- Notice sensemaking repertoires. Consider [students' diverse sensemaking](#) as connecting to science practices.

¹¹ [Image](#) on [Pikist](#) is in the public domain.

- Support sensemaking. Support students to use their sensemaking repertoires and [experiences](#) as critical tools in engaging with science practices.
- Engage diverse sense-making. Students' scientific practices and knowledge are always developing and their community histories, values, and practices contribute to scientific understanding and problem solving.¹²

Recommended Actions You Can Take

- Review [these case studies of instructional approaches](#) and read about how to support equity in [the NRC Framework](#) and [NGSS](#).
- [Design learning experiences to grow out of the lives of learners.](#) Broaden "what counts" as science and engineering your teaching. [The "scientific method" view of science is mistaken. Youth often engage in sense-making in out-of-school time in ways that relate to science. Communities routinely develop systematic knowledge about the natural world in relation to their interests and values.](#)
- Collaborate with educators and community members who share an interest in implementing specific equity strategies in science.¹³



Figure 2.6: Lab Tech¹⁴

¹² Bang, Brown, Calabrese Barton, Rosebery & Warren, Toward more equitable learning in science, In *Helping students make sense of the world using next generation science and engineering practices*, NSTA

¹³ [Overview: How Can We Promote Equity in Science Education?](#) by [UW Institute for Science + Math Education](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

¹⁴ [Image](#) by [elliepeek](#) on pixabay.

C. FOSTERING EMPATHY IN THE CLASSROOM



Pin It! The Power of Outrospection

According to philosopher and author Roman Krznaric, we can truly drive social change by stepping outside ourselves. Consider the RSA animation titled [“The Power of Outrospection: Fostering Empathy in the Classroom”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG46lwVfSu8) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG46lwVfSu8>).



Think About It... Questions for Consideration

Consider the following questions:

1. What is empathy?
2. Why does empathy matter?
3. How can one expand one’s empathic potential?

Here are some ways that empathy shows up...

- Taking perspective
- Understanding someone else’s worldview
- Stepping into someone else’s shoes
- Nurturing curiosity
- Sensitive listening
- Making dialogue
- Developing strategies for positive social change
- Building bridges across time and cultures
- Discovering other peoples’ lives and making connections



Figure 2.7: Empathy in the Classroom¹⁵

¹⁵ Image by [City of Seattle Community Tech](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

The discipline of sociology leans toward an empathy lens as the construct of the “sociological imagination,” coined by C. Wright Mills. In his classic treatise *The Sociological Imagination*, he proposes that possessing such an *imagination* or *mind* means two things:

1. Understanding how biography and history intersect to understand fully how opportunities are shaped; and
2. Having the ability to take different perspectives; that is, stand in someone else’s shoes.

Mills understood that possessing a *sociological imagination* meant having a broader understanding of society and culture, while fostering a deeper explanation for why people experience their particular social situations.

How can I make my course culturally responsive?

Story-telling is a powerful and effective way of including students in the learning process, along with developing empathy in the classroom. When students have the opportunity to share their experiences, this brings to life the classroom and encourages students to take agency over their own education. It also is a way to regard students for their uniqueness and the value that they bring to the classroom.



Pin It! Learning Out Loud

Here is a short video on how story-telling fosters empathy. When we tell stories, it makes learning memorable and transformative.

Take a look at the YouTube video titled [“Learning Out Loud, OLC Innovate 2017”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39UCaI_UkXQ) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39UCaI_UkXQ), in which speaker Michelle Pacansky-Brock discusses online teaching and the practice of humanizing students in online contexts.

D. IS MY SYLLABUS EQUITABLE AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE?



Think About It... Questions for Consideration

Consider the following questions:

1. Am I connecting core ideas to students' lives?
2. How is the course material relevant to students' interests?
3. What can students take from the course to feel regarded and empowered?

Language, images, and content of syllabi are aspects of communication that can reach students and make the class a welcoming environment. A **learning-centered** syllabus makes a great first impression on your students by communicating your teaching philosophy, setting a student-centered tone, and conveying information about expectations. In addition, it informs students of available student support services, both online and on-campus, provides advice for managing stress and one's mental health, gives tips for studying and test preparation, and incorporates high-impact pedagogical practices.

High-impact pedagogical practices (HIPs) often engage students in direct experiences that extend beyond the classroom and occur over a period of time, which can result in gains in learning and personal development outcomes (Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). The "magic" of HIPs can be attributed to the ways in which students both apply what they have learned and how they reflect on or make meaning of their learning and development, which often contributes to metacognitive gains (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010).

Kuh (2008) identified six student behaviors that HIPs induce:

1. Investing time and effort;
2. Interacting with faculty and peers;
3. Experiencing diversity;
4. Responding to more frequent feedback;
5. Reflecting and integrating learning;
6. Discovering relevance of real-world learning in real-world applications (p. 14-17).¹⁶

¹⁶ Foote, S. (n.d.). Getting HIP: Understanding the How and Why of High-Impact Educational Practices. Retrieved from <https://cetl.kennesaw.edu/getting-hip-understanding-how-and-why-high-impact-educational-practices>



Quotable

More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. Every one of the qualities I have described here—listening, reading, talking, writing, puzzle solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people’s eyes, leading, working in a community—is finally about connecting.

—William Cronon¹⁷

Exercise: Syllabus Self-Evaluation

Equitable Syllabus Self-Check

Locate your syllabus. As you examine it, place yourself in the seat of a student and mentally respond to the following questions:

1. How do you feel about the culture of the class?
2. Do you feel welcomed and included?
3. What are your perceptions of the instructor’s teaching style?
4. Would you feel comfortable approaching the instructor and asking for assistance?
5. How might you experience the syllabus if you were:
 - a. A first-generation student?
 - b. An African American/Black student?
 - c. A Latinx student?
 - d. An LGBTQ+ student?
 - e. A financially insecure student?
 - f. A student whose native language is not English?
 - g. A student with limited access to a laptop/computer, but unlimited access to a smartphone?

After evaluating your own syllabus, take a look below to see suggested details to include in an Equitable Syllabus.

The Pin It! Box below provides a link to a sample of things to include in an Equitable Syllabus.



Pin It! Diversity & Inclusion Syllabus Checklist

USC’s Center for Excellence in Teaching provides a comprehensive list of items associated with an inclusive syllabus. Check it out here!

http://cet.usc.edu/cet/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/diversity_inclusion_syllabus_checklist.docx

¹⁷ William Cronon, “Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Education,” *Liberal Education* 85, no. 1 (1999): 12.



Pin It! What Students Care About

Take a look at the video [“A Vision of Students Today”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o>) for a powerful look at how students experience the classroom environment.



Figure 2.8: Taking schoolwork outdoors¹⁸

¹⁸ [Image](#) by ITSD3D3 is in the public domain.

PART III – TRAINING THE TRAINER: HOW TO BE THE BEST PROFESSOR AROUND

A. CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

“Culture is central to learning. It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information, but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures.

Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.¹⁹

Some of the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are:

- Positive perspectives on parents and families
- Communication of high expectations
- Learning within the context of culture
- Student-centered instruction
- Culturally mediated instruction
- Reshaping the curriculum
- Teacher as facilitator²⁰

Does your curriculum...

- Enable students to connect to their lived experiences?
- Represent diverse identities, rather than simply a White, middle-class identity?
- Evoke students' interests and engagement with material with which they can relate?
- Tap into a variety of learning styles rather than a traditional monologue-type lecture?

¹⁹ Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing Co.

²⁰ The Education Alliance. (n.d.). *Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching*. Retrieved from <https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/strategies-0/culturally-responsive-teaching-0>



Pin It! What the Best College Teachers Do

Read and consider the following highlight of “What the Best College Teachers Do,” by Ken Bains.

Though he acknowledges nationwide trends toward grade inflation, he invokes a 1990 study that suggests students are most driven by "high demands" and prefer "plentiful opportunities to revise and improve their work before it receives a grade." Likewise, the book argues that, even in the cutthroat climate of today's competitive colleges, students thrive best in cooperative classrooms. The best teachers, Bain argues, understand and exceed such expectations, and use them to create "natural critical learning environments." Easy-to-follow headings such as "Start with the Students Rather Than the Discipline" help readers learn to create such environments, too.



Figure 3.1: Today's students. ²¹

²¹ [Image](#) by Deidre Ortiz, AEDC/PA is in the public domain.

B. BARRIERS TO PRODUCTIVE LEARNING AND SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

What are Unconscious Biases?



Quotable

Unconscious bias (or implicit bias) is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair.²²

Here are some examples of Unconscious Biases:

- Giving a task to a Generation Y-er because you assumed they'd be more tech-savvy than someone older or with children
- Assuming that the doctor you are about to see is male and the nurse is female
- Reviewing a CV with a listed hobby such as “horseback riding” and assuming the candidate would be more qualified than other candidates
- Asking someone where they are “really” from

Notice that unconscious biases can surface in the classroom, in the workplace, and in hiring practices.

What are Microaggressions and How Do They Impede Culturally Relevant Practices?

Racial Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the targeted group.”²³ Microaggressions are often spoken unconsciously, and as these exchanges are so pervasive in everyday interactions, we often ignore them as being innocent and/or benign.²⁴ However, microaggressions are detrimental to people of color and other minoritized groups as they negatively impact the psychic and social energies of the learner, re-creating inequalities.²⁵

²² “Unconscious Bias”. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/diversity/unconscious-bias/>.

²³ Malik Aqueel Raheem and Kimberly A. Hart, “Counseling Individuals of African Descent,” *Counseling Today*, March 5, 2019, <https://ct.counseling.org/2019/03/counseling-individuals-of-african-descent/>.

²⁴ Derald Wing Sue et al., “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice,” *American Psychologist* 62, no. 4 (May–June 2007): 271–86, <https://www.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>.

²⁵ Anderson J. Franklin, *From Brotherhood to Manhood: How Black Men Rescue Their Relationships and Dreams from the Invisibility Syndrome* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2004); and Derald Wing Sue, “Whiteness and Ethnocentric Monoculturalism: Making the ‘Invisible’ Visible,” *American Psychologist* 59, no. 8 (2004): 759–69.



Pin It! Microaggressions: More Than Just Race

Derald Wing Sue Wing discusses how microaggressions refer to more than just race in his *Psychology Today* article [“Microaggressions: More Than Just Race”](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race) (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>).



Pin It! How Microaggressions Are Like Mosquito Bites

You might question whether microaggressions are a “big deal” or not. To understand the impact of microaggressions, consider the video [“How Microaggressions are Like Mosquito Bites”](https://youtu.be/hDd3bzA7450) (<https://youtu.be/hDd3bzA7450>).

Some examples of microaggressions in the classroom would be the following:

- Not regarding the name or gender with which a student chooses to identify
- Asking a student to represent the whole community to which they belong, such as saying, “tell us what your group thinks about A or B.”
- Announcing to a class, “Wow, there are so many brown people here; where are the white people?”
- Saying to colleagues, “My students this semester are the worst-prepared ever; they’re all a bunch of crack heads.”
- Making jokes about a group with regard to race, gender, sexuality, religion, national identity or immigration status.
- Making disrespectful or dismissive comments toward a student, based on race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, national identity, or immigration status.
- Creating an atmosphere/environment where a student feels uncomfortable with regard to any or all aspects of their social identity.

Below are some real examples from our students at COC:

Professors must avoid using particular words that offend someone under any circumstances. To be honest, I am still disappointed in a [professor] because even though [they] knew I was an international student from Japan, [they] started talking about "Japs" as a joke during lecture.

—Exit Survey 2016

Christian students get made fun of in ways that would never happen for students of other faiths. Conservative students feel isolated as their values are regularly mocked in class & across both campuses.

—Guided Pathways Student Survey 2018

You know with the Trump election, the whole Hispanic thing and what not, so there was a couple people that were just like “well you’re not entitled to anything because you’re Hispanic”... so it’s like you know just because you believe a certain way does not mean you should push it onto someone else or make anyone else feel any less because everyone is entitled to their opinion... Sometimes it’s better to just not touch the topic.

—New Student Focus Group 2016

[I went to a different college for a course because I] felt more comfortable in a speech class with more Hispanics

—Completion Exit Survey 2016

Interrupting Microaggressions

While everyone feels the brunt of an occasional insult or rude comment, research shows that it is people of color and other underrepresented or marginalized groups who are often targeted by recurring, sometimes relentless micro-attacks and micro-invalidations that chip away at self-confidence and feelings of belonging.

Sometimes those who are delivering microaggressions to others are not aware of the impact of their words. However, not all people who deliver microaggressions are well-intentioned, and many microaggressors are not at all as innocent as they may seem or claim to be.²⁶



Pin It! Interrupting Microaggressions

The following link provides examples of different types of microaggressions and ways in which to challenge them: [“Tool: Interrupting Mlicroaggressions”](https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Interru ptHO_2014_11_182v5.pdf) (https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Interru ptHO_2014_11_182v5.pdf).

²⁶ [Content](#) from Interrupting Microaggressions is by the [Iowa State University Library](#) and is licensed under [CC BY](#)

C. HOW TO BREAK BARRIERS

Strategies for Improving Course Pedagogies

What about the practitioner? Does it matter who teaches the class.

Yes, it does.

For example, data obtained from a broad sample of community colleges examined whether or not academic performance depends on whether students are the same race or ethnicity as their instructors. Findings show that performance gaps fall, dropout rates fall, and grade performances increase when students are taught by an underrepresented minority. Findings also indicate that these interactions also affect long-term outcomes, such as course selection, retention, and degree completion.

The lion's share of research shows a correlation between student success and representations of instructors in the classroom. When students see someone who looks like them, someone they can relate to, they are more likely to be engaged, interested, and feel welcome on a number of cultural and experiential levels. Students who *see themselves* in their instructors and other leadership of the academic community are more likely to succeed in those environments.²⁷

Likewise, studies rooted in cognitive development and social psychology reveal that classroom diversity had a positive effect on racial and cultural engagement for groups. This not only benefits historically minoritized groups; those belonging to historically dominant groups also benefit from learning in diverse environments.²⁸

Who We Are and the Need for Growth

Currently...

- Students of color have grown exponentially while the number of faculty of color hired has remained stagnant.
- Students are less likely to drop out when taught by faculty of color.
- Institutions are designed perfectly to get the results we get.
- We all come with implicit and explicit biases.
- None of us are as culturally fluent as we want to be.
- Research indicates that *all* students benefit from learning in a diverse environment.

If we can look at how we show up and the impact we have, we can make a difference.

²⁷ Fairlie, et al. (2014). A Community College Instructor Like Me: Race and Ethnicity Interactions in the Classroom. NBER Working Paper No. 17381.

²⁸ Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(3).

Current Opportunities at College of the Canyons

Events and Education

You may have noticed a plethora of films being offered for FLEX credit that address things like sexual assault on campus, how to identify microaggressions, or simply celebrating the diversity of peoples. Our **Director of Diversity and Inclusion**, Flavio Medina-Martin, may be contacted at flavio.medina-martin@canyons.edu, or by phone: 661.362.3559, should you have interest in becoming involved in these activities.

Workshops and Trainings

The **Office of Professional Development** offers a variety of workshops and trainings related to equity, diversity on campus, how to create a welcoming classroom, and many other reflective workshops on honing strategies for the classroom. Audio-visual formats are available for some workshops and trainings. You may go to the [Frontline website](http://login.frontlineeducation.com) (login.frontlineeducation.com) to enroll in these classes and workshops to learn more about the Professional Development offerings at COC. The Director of Professional Development, Leslie Carr, can be reached at leslie.carr@canyons.edu for additional questions regarding workshops or fresh ideas.

Committees

Institutional Excellence and Inclusive Excellence - (IE)2. This body of representatives is comprised of members from all branches of College of the Canyons: Staff, faculty, administrators, and students addressing a variety of equity-related efforts on campus. Contact Daylene Meuschke at daylene.meuschke@canyons.edu for involvement in this vital committee.

Equity-Minded Practitioners is a committee within (IE)2, dedicated to exchanging ideas and strategies for equitable practices in the classroom, in public space on campus, and in recognizing different kinds of privileges one may possess. This committee welcomes involvement from all areas of campus. Preeta Saxena may be reached at preeta.saxena@canyons.edu should you be interested in participating in this group.

Cultural Diversity Advancement Team. Also representing a cross-section of College of the Canyons, Diane Fiero chairs this committee focusing on creating ways to advance diversity in the public space of the campus. You may contact her if you have interest in this committee, at diane.fiero@canyons.edu.

The Office of Student Development proactively seeks to identify institutional gaps and provide opportunities for student involvement and support through over 90 ASG clubs, multiple alliances, and programs that address issues related to gender and sexual identities, race and ethnic identities, as well as other groups promoting social justice and student empowerment. Kelly Dapp can be contacted at kelly.dapp@canyons.edu if you would like to support these booming student-driven efforts.

Guided Pathways at College of the Canyons

Central to student success and bridging equity gaps is our **Guided Pathways** program at COC. Schemas offering students clear paths to success enables students to see their educational goals in a straightforward and streamlined format. Analyzing data of student retention and success has helped shape the unfolding of Pathways at COC. Paul Wickline may be reached at paul.wickline@canyons.edu for more information on being involved in this group.

Based on our vision of how Pathways at COC is outlined, you can easily look here at the [Guided Pathways for California Community Colleges](#) resource document (<https://www3.canyons.edu/offices/pio/mondayreport/090318/Resources/Pathways-Background.pdf>) to learn about the strategies for improving student success. Contact Paul Wickline at paul.wickline@canyons.edu if you are interested in involving yourself in the organizing efforts.

Classes

Currently the Center for Teaching and Learning (CETL) at College of the Canyons offers a variety of face-to-face, online, and hybrid classes that address equity in the classroom. You can go the [CETL webpage](#) (<http://www.canyons.edu/administration/cetl/index.php>) to enroll in the Culturally Responsive Teaching course, taught by Robert Wonser and Katie Coleman. This course offers participants the opportunity to read and discuss with colleagues, strategies for identifying ways to craft an equitable classroom and course syllabus. This is a hands-on class and a great way to foster collegiality and support, while learning how to make our classes the best possible experience for students.

CONCLUSION // POST-SCRIPT

This handbook is a work in progress and should continue to be one as long as our student population grows and morphs along with culture and society. The details in here will continue to be relevant and evolve into new and innovative language and thought that will certainly emerge through the creativity of our students. Should we be wise enough to listen to them and upcoming generations, we can continue to grow and learn with the best of minds. Should we accept the challenge to be lifelong students ourselves, we then afford ourselves the opportunity to continue to learn and expand our own knowledge, thereby offering the same to the students we serve.

PART IV – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Cultural Barriers: Those elements that can block progress in **communications**, work completion, and connecting with people, to name a few. Two of the most common **cultural barriers** are language and religion.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A student-centered approach to **teaching** in which the students' unique **cultural** strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student's **cultural** place in the world.

Cultural Relativism: The idea that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning

Diversity: Can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. The dimensions of **diversity** include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Equality: The state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.

Equity in Education: Equity in education requires putting systems in place to ensure that every student has an equal chance for success. That requires understanding the unique challenges and barriers faced by individual students or by populations of students and providing additional supports to help them overcome those barriers. While this in itself may not ensure equal *outcomes*, we all should strive to ensure that every child has equal *opportunity* for success.

Equity-Minded Practices: The term “Equity-Mindedness” refers to the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. These practitioners are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students, and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education.

Funds of Knowledge: The skills, abilities, ideas, practices, and ways of knowing accumulated and internalized from everyday life.

Inclusion: The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

Microaggression: A term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups.

Monoculturalism: The policy or process of supporting, advocating, or allowing the expression of the culture of a single social or ethnic group.

Protected Groups: A protected group member is an individual who falls within a group that is qualified for protection under equal employment laws. Federal law protects employees from discrimination or harassment based on sex, race, age, disability, color, creed, national origin, or religion.

Social Justice Training: Provides “insights into our work in every context—financial, career services, leadership and more. Only by recognizing that every aspect of our leadership affects social justice on our campuses we can enact social change in our tradition-laden institutions and ensure a sustainable future for our increasingly diverse student populations and the larger society.”²⁹ (insighttodiversity.com)

Unconscious Bias or Implicit Bias: Often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair.

²⁹ Ajay Nair and Corlisse Thomas, “A Social Justice Approach to Building Community in Higher Education Today,” *INSIGHT Into Diversity*, January 2, 2018, <https://www.insightintodiversity.com/a-social-justice-approach-to-building-community-in-higher-education-today/>.

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C. ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCE LIST FOR COC

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