Creating Inclusivity

An Approach to Sensitive Subjects in the Classroom

by Jay Summer

Creating Inclusivity Presentation Overview

- What is "inclusivity?"
- Why Should I Care About Diversity & Inclusion?
- Diversity & Inclusion at USF
- How Can I Make My Classroom More Inclusive?
- Introductions: Names & Pronouns
- Diversity & Inclusion Syllabus Statements
- Managing Discussions of Sensitive Subjects
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- Diversity & Inclusion Statement Resources

What is "inclusivity?"

in·clu·siv·i·ty

the practice or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of minority groups.

Why Should I Care About Diversity and Inclusion?

- The USF student body is diverse, so diversity and inclusion are needed to effectively teach the students we have
- Diverse and inclusive materials prepare students for a diverse workplace
- Putting in effort toward diversity and inclusion can have positive effects that extend beyond the classroom and into society at large
- USF has explicit goals related to diversity and inclusion

Diversity & Inclusion at USF

USF Tampa Campus 2018-2019 Student Diversity Data

- Race/Ethnicity
  - 52.7% White
  - 20.8% Hispanic
  - 10.7% African-American
  - 7.7% Asian
  - 3.9% Two or more races
- Gender: 45.6% male, 55.4% female
- International Students make up 11% of enrolled students

Source: USF System Facts 2018-2019:
https://www.usf.edu/ods/documents/system-facts/usf-system-facts-2018-19.pdf

Diversity & Inclusion at USF

From the USF Diversity Statement (bolding added):

The University of South Florida **endeavors to make academic excellence inclusive by sustaining a community of free inquiry in which people of diverse race, ethnicity, veteran status, marital status, socio-economic level, national origin, religious belief, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, class, political ideology, gender identity and expression participate in, contribute to, and benefit equally, from the academic community**.

A diverse campus environment, in which differences are respected and appreciated, promotes more effective teaching, produces greater learning outcomes, and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and pluralistic society.

Diversity & Inclusion at USF

A USF Diversity & Inclusion Objective:

"To advocate for infusion of diversity concepts in the general education curriculum including multiple perspectives, and teaching strategies that prepare students for success in a diverse, and global workplace."

How Can I Make My Classroom More Inclusive?

- Get to know your students, and allow them to get to know each other
- Call students the names they prefer and pronounce those names correctly
- Incorporate pronouns into class introductions
- Include a Diversity and Inclusion Statement in your syllabus
- Assign diverse course materials and incorporate diverse perspectives and authors throughout the semester, not as part of a single unit
- Use a variety of examples and references, not just those reinforcing the dominant culture

How Can I Make My Classroom More Inclusive?

- Be transparent about course goals and learning objectives, and directly tie them to diversity and inclusion-related materials
- Use materials that are accessible and adhere to universal design
- Avoid using jargon and idioms that might be less familiar to ELL students
- Directly address relevant sensitive subjects rather than ignore them
- Give students advance notice of sensitive materials or discussions
- Establish "ground rules" for discussion about sensitive subjects
- Solicit student feedback about the course and be open to receiving it

Introductions

"[M]utilating someone's name is a tiny act of bigotry. Whether you intend to or not, what you're communicating is this: Your name is different. Foreign. Weird. It's not worth my time to get it right."

-Jennifer Gonzalez

Introductions: The Importance of Names

- "How We Pronounce Student Names, and Why it Matters" by Jennifer Gonzalez
  - https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/gift-of-pronunciation/
- "Teachers' Strategies for Pronouncing and Remembering Students' Names Correctly" by Gail Cornwall
  - https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/52183/teachers-strategies-for-pronouncing-and-remembering-students-names-correctly
- PronounceNames.com
  - https://www.pronouncenames.com/
- My Name, My Identity Campaign
  - https://www.mynamemyidentity.org/campaign/about

Introductions: Pronoun Go-Around Quick Tips

- Share a short explanation for integrating pronouns into class introductions
  - "We're sharing our pronouns because we engage in a lot of discussion in this course, and we don't want use the wrong pronouns for anyone and accidentally hurt or offend them"
  - "I think it's important for us to share our pronouns so everyone here feels welcome, and so you are familiar with the practice in case you encounter it later in the workplace"
- Explain what pronouns are, so students aren't confused and are less likely to question the pronoun go-around
  - "Third-person pronouns are words used to help people refer to other people. Most people use she/her, he/him, or they/their pronouns, but there are also other options."
- Model how to share pronouns by introducing yourself first
  - "My name is Jay and I use she/her pronouns."
- Don't force anyone to share their pronouns; If someone omits pronouns during their introduction, don't remind them or draw attention to them

Introductions: Pronoun Go-Around Quick Tips

- Avoid using the phrase "preferred pronouns," since many people do not view their personal pronouns as a choice or preference
- Although gender and pronouns are often related, recognize that the purpose of the Pronoun Go-Around is only to identify what pronouns to use for others in conversation, not to identify anyone's gender identity
- You don't know how everyone in the room conceives of gender, so avoid directly linking particular pronouns with a particular gender, for example, by saying, "Women use she/her pronouns." To continue that example, someone of non-binary gender might use she/her pronouns.
- While they/their pronouns are accepted gender neutral pronouns when used in the abstract, note that not all people who use them as personal pronouns consider themselves to be "gender neutral," so be careful with phrasing

Introductions: Pronouns-Related Resources

- MyPronouns.Org: Resources on Personal Pronouns
  - https://www.mypronouns.org/
- The USF Safe Zone Education series put on by the Office of Multicultural Affairs offers four free courses related to LGBTQ+ diversity
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/multicultural-affairs/programs/safe-zone.aspx
- "Pronoun Round Etiquette" by West Anderson
  - https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/pronoun-round-etiquette/
- "We Still Need Pronoun Go-Rounds" by Dean Spade
  - http://www.deanspade.net/2018/12/01/we-still-need-pronoun-go-rounds/

"Including a diversity statement on your syllabus can set the tone for your classroom environment. It shows students that you value and respect difference in intellectual exchange, and are aware of current campus conversations surrounding diversity."

-Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation

Diversity & Inclusion Syllabus Statement Resources

- Creating an Inclusive Syllabus: University of Kansas
  - https://cte.ku.edu/creating-inclusive-syllabus
- Diversity & Inclusion Syllabus Statements: Brown University
  - https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/statements
- Diversity Statements: Yale University
  - https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/DiversityStatements
- Diversity Statement on a Syllabus: Carnegie Mellon University
  - https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/syllabus/checklist/diversitystatement.html

"If instructors cannot be brave in entering into difficult conversations...our students will likely not be either."

Discussing Sensitive Subjects in the Classroom

- Do not avoid sensitive subjects that might come up related to class materials
- Either provide or develop discussion guidelines or "ground rules"
- Clearly outline the purpose of the discussion so students understand your intention and the value of what might feel difficult
- Consider sharing disclaimers or statements that might put students at ease
  - "We are not trying to change anyone's political affiliation in this discussion"
- Ease into discussion by focusing on material rather than students' own personal experiences at the start
- Do not act as if any individual student is representative of a particular group

Discussing Sensitive Subjects in the Classroom

- Ask focused questions and redirect if students get too far off topic
- Prepare for how you will handle students breaking the "rules"
- Prepare for how you will handle moments when emotions run high or unproductive discussion occurs
- Prepare to gently but quickly address any stereotyping or attacks
- Prepare to handle your own emotional responses that may arise

Think of the **worst** discussions about sensitive subjects you've led or participated in. What went wrong?

Think of the **best** discussions about sensitive subjects you've led or participated in. What made them work?

What "ground rules" could help foster civility and productive discussion of sensitive subjects?

On your notecard, write either the most difficult-to-handle thing you've had a student say in a sensitive discussion, or what you *fear* a student might say.

Inclusive Classroom Resources

- Building Inclusive Classrooms: Cornell University
  - https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/building-inclusive-classrooms
- Classroom Climate: Carnegie Mellon University
  - https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/classroomclimate/
- Controversial Subjects in the Classroom: Teaching Tolerance
  - https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/controversial-subjects-in-the-classroom
- Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics: U of Michigan
  - http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines
- Sensitive Topics in the Classroom: Berkley University
  - https://teaching.berkeley.edu/sensitive-topics-classroom

USF Resources

- Diversity & Inclusion Statement:
  - https://www.usf.edu/diversity/diversity-inclusion/index.aspx
- Florida Equity Reports (pdf):
  - https://www.usf.edu/diversity/equal-opportunity/educational-equity-and-equal-educational-opportunity.aspx
- USF System Facts
  - https://www.usf.edu/ods/data-and-reports/system-facts.aspx
- USF Tampa Campus Unisex Restroom List (pdf):
  - https://www.usf.edu/diversity/documents/usf_tampa_unisex_restroom_locations.pdf
- USF Office of Veteran Success
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/veterans/

USF Resources

- Office of Multicultural Affairs Safe Zone Training
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/multicultural-affairs/programs/safe-zone.aspx
- Office of Multicultural Affairs UndocuALLY Training
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/multicultural-affairs/programs/undocually.aspx
- Student Disabilities Services (SDS)
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-disabilities-services/
- SDS Accessibility Tips for Instructors
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-disabilities-services/resources/accessibility-tips.aspx
- Canvas Accessibility Tips
  - https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-disabilities-services/resources/canvas-accessibility-tips.aspx

Diversity & Inclusion Statement Resources

More academic jobs are requiring Diversity & Inclusion statements as part of the application process. Here are resources to guide you as you write a statement:

- "The Effective Diversity Statement" by Tanya Golash-Boza
  - https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/06/10/how-write-effective-diversity-statement-essay
- "Demystifying the Diversity Statement" by Victoria Reyes
  - https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/01/25/how-write-effective-diversity-statement-job-candidate-opinion
- "Developing and Writing a Diversity Statement" by Sara Beck
  - https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/developing-and-writing-a-diversity-statement/