Bringing a Global Perspective to Diversity and Inclusion

Resources and Suggestions
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Tips for engaging issues regarding diversity and inequality from a global perspective, especially a critical one, in courses you are teaching or would like to teach.

Suggestions for teaching:

Effective ways of engaging issues regarding diversity and inequality from a (critical) global perspective vary enormously according to factors such as the subject matter of the course, the specific mix of students in the course, and personal teaching styles. I therefore focus here on moves that have helped me in the hope that using, reworking, and/or critiquing them will help you.

(1) General considerations

(a) Recognize differences between international and global approaches; consider merits of latter; choose between them

(b) Use approach throughout course – not just a section or occasional class to supplement U.S. or western focus

(c) Relate diversity and inclusion to structural inequalities; relate race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality to class dynamics

(d) Help students identify, examine their assumptions (e.g. national and imperial imaginaries)

(e) Teach the debates --- about diversity, inequalities, globalization, and relations among them

(2) Particular techniques – if using a global perspective

(a) Focus on specific “objects” or issues that
  • directly relevant to students’ lives or interests
  • can only be understood by reference to transnational, global, or globalizing processes
  • ideally link countries students from and/or students’ varied class trajectories
• create space for international students and/or students from poorer backgrounds to bring their knowledge and perspectives to the discussion
  • e.g.
    • many commodities students buy
    • novels, films, plays that address these processes (in present or past) or can be seen in new ways by exploring them
    • places where these processes intersect
    • controversial issues that may seem local but enmeshed in transnational processes — e.g. struggles over access to food, housing, water

(b) Use examples that help students learn how to zoom out and back in again — at a given moment and over time — e.g. between
  • top they’re wearing
  • commodity chain for clothes sold in U.S. today
  • changes in chain since the 1970s (e.g. who assembles clothes, where, under what conditions)
  • broader shift to neoliberal capitalism
  • reactions to these changes, including growing challenges, often organized transnationally

(c) Use examples that encourage attention to multiple perspectives — associated with
  • varied positions along political spectrum
  • varied parts of the world — e.g. via writings, visual works by scholars, activists outside U.S./global north
  • varied positions in interrelated hierarchies of class, race, gender, sexuality
    • not just via self-authored writings and visual works (which subordinated people often unable to produce or distribute easily)
    • also via sources such as ethnographic texts and videos that at least let us hear from them in mediated form

(B) Background readings — just a few suggestions among a host of possibilities

(1) Contemporary globalization and the neoliberal project

(2) Diversity and inclusion: constructive critiques of dominant approaches