Transforming a Large Enrollment Introduction to Psychology Course

to be More Inclusive

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This handout is designed to provide tips for expanding the diversity of content for a course and creating an inclusive environment in a large lecture classroom. Please feel free to contact the author for more information.

Diversity: The variability of the professionals and content covered within a course

1. Increase the diversity of the people and topics that you cover in your course.

Take a close look at the professionals in your discipline whose research and/or ideas you cover in your class. Do these professionals adequately represent the diversity of professionals in your field? Do they represent the diversity of students in your classroom? Do you show pictures of diverse professionals from your field in your presentations?

Reach out to colleagues via listservs or social media to crowd source names of professionals who are of backgrounds that are currently underrepresented in your course and research the lives and work of these professionals. The internet offers easy access to this information and some sites are designed specifically to highlight the work of marginalized voices in a field.

For example: Psychology's Feminist Voices (https://www.feministvoices.com/) presents information on female psychologists who have contributed to the field. Pitt's annual Women in Medicine and Science Forum (http://myrssfeeds.pitt.edu/announcements/2018/03/23/2018-women-in-medicine-and-science-forum-nov-27-28/) highlights the accomplishments of women at the university.

2. Raise awareness of the implicit effects of stereotypes.

The Implicit Associations Task (IAT) is designed to measure the unconscious associations that we make between groups of people and attributes.

You can find several examples of the IAT that can be completed online (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/). This task can be easily replicated in the classroom by having students stomp their left or right foot as opposed to clicking keys on a keyboard. Students could also be asked to complete the IAT online outside of class time and have discussions in class or assignments framed around what the student learned from this experience. You can find example assignments developed by a faculty member at the University of Virginia here: http://www.actionteaching.org/award/project-implicit.

Inclusivity: The extent to which students feel included in the classroom environment

1. Gender and gender identity

For a large enrollment course it is difficult to learn every student's name and preferred pronouns; however, you can ask the students their names when they respond to a question of volunteer for an activity and then refer to them by their name rather than making assumptions about their preferred pronouns.

The Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (GSWS) program has created a comprehensive guide to creating a gender inclusive classroom (http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432), as well as a suggested syllabus statement on sexual misconduct, required reporting, and Title IX (http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/node/1640).

2. Students with disabilities

Many disabilities are invisible and for a large enrollment course, you may not even know the visual and auditory abilities of your students. It is best to create materials that are accessible to students of all abilities. Use a microphone in large lecture classrooms, make sure that all videos include closed captioning, and describe images with important content on PowerPoint slides, such as graphs and tables, using alt-text (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKPmZTTqxJk).

You can also include a link to Pitt's Students for Disability Advocacy group (https://sites.google.com/view/pitt-sda/home) and Disability Resources and Services (https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/) on your syllabus

3. Non-native English speakers

Keep your language in class and on exams as simple as possible.

Before each exam, give students permission to ask questions about words they do not know (that are not vocabulary they should know from class, of course!)

Avoid the use of American colloquialisms, or examples from American culture. Or, if you use these, make sure that you explain what they mean.

For example: I use the Jaws theme song for an example of classical conditioning. I now give a brief description of the Jaws movie before explaining this example.

4. Low-income and first generation students

Put a copy of your text book or any reading materials required for the course on 2-hour reserve at Hillman Library (https://www.library.pitt.edu/putting-articles-books-reserve).

Include a link to Student Support Services (https://www.asundergrad.pitt.edu/connected-community/student-support-services) on your syllabus.

You can also introduce students to your discipline-specific student organization, either by including information on this group on the syllabus or inviting a student representative from the organization to give a brief presentation to the class.