

**How to Teach Intersectionality in the College Classroom:  
Privilege, Social Identity, and Ableism**  
Extended Diversity Project: 2017-2018  
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**Abstract**

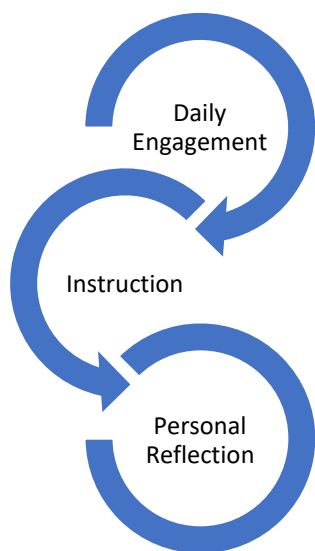
Intersectionality, the *study of how multiple identities intersect and how oppression manifests for those identities*, is increasingly more important in today's climate. One way to promote this social change, is to **provide educators with basic knowledge of civil rights across the changing dynamic of social identities**. Research indicates educators do not have the tools to increase awareness or engage in these concepts, and oftentimes are equally unaware of any personal unconscious bias or privilege; consequently, they are not able to recognize the effect of these social constructs on students and families (Clark, 2010).

Clark, Patty (2010). I don't Think I'm Biased. *Teaching Tolerance*, 37.

Liasidou, Anastasia (2012). Intersectional understandings of disability and implications for a social justice reform agenda in education policy and practice. *Disability & Society*, 28:3 (299-312) DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2012.710012](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.710012)

Students were given a variety of opportunities and formats to reflect upon **how unconscious biases and privileges have shaped their experiences, education, and interactions. White privilege was used as a backdrop for ability privilege.**

A social justice framework included new pedagogical thinking:



Rather than professor-provided connections (*how to think*), instruction and engagement focused on *self-directed student growth*. **Interactive activities were blended with research; a variety of readings, media, and simulations** encouraged students to intersect various social identities with the world of disability.

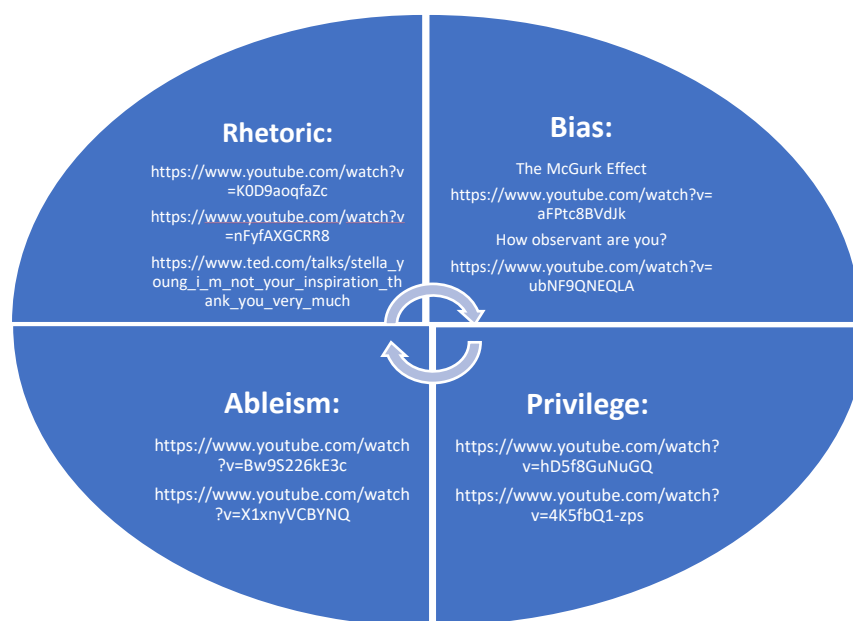
- 1. Daily engagement:** collaborative and personal exercises, interactive media, and varied readings;
- 2. Instruction:** historical societal views of intersectionality and oppression, privilege and bias, and rhetoric;
- 3. Personal reflection:** varied and consistent; individual perspectives alongside civic engagement

**Concluding Statements:**

1. Students connected with **richly inclusive intellectual, educational, and cultural environments**. Class discussions were robust, respectful, and thought-provoking, and opportunities to reflect were taken seriously.
2. Students developed **intersectional understandings** of disability and were able to connect elements of privilege and oppression with their own experiences, and many with other's experiences.
3. Students explored **multiple dynamics that impact student/patient progress and engagement**. The majority of the class was able to recognize that biases occur without conscious thoughts, and that their experiences are not unique in this regard.

## An anti-bias education in the college classroom will....

1. Introduce a variety of social identities through pictures, books/readings, and materials
2. Provide supervised times to explore (include any adaptations/adaptive equipment, and reflection)
3. Help *all* students find ways to learn from each other
4. Plan learning experiences to counter misconceptions
5. Teach students how to help in ways that also support the other student's competency
6. Foster student's awareness and skills as allies



## Supplemental Readings

### **Bias:**

- Gladwell, Malcom (2006). TroubleMakers: What Pitbulls can Teach Us About Profiling. *The New Yorker*.
- Teacher-Leader Contributor from the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (2018). To Achieve Equity in My Classroom, I Had to Check My Own Bias at the Door. *Education Week Teacher*.

### **Privilege:**

- McIntosh, Peggy (1988). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. *The National SEED Project*.

### **Rhetoric:**

- Fattal, Isabel (2017). Reading Racism in Dr. Seuss. *The Atlantic*.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie (2002). The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography. *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*.
- Myers, Chloë & Bersani Jr., Hank (2009). Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Ableism: Prejudice by able-bodied and able-minded people toward people with disabilities. *ReThinking Schools*.
- Ritter, Chris (2014). If White Characters Were Described Like People of Color in Literature. *BuzzFeed*.

### **Ableism:**

- Bialka, Christa (2017). Fortifying the foundation: Tools for addressing disability in the multicultural classroom. *Multicultural Perspectives*.
- Ford, A. Rahman (2009). It's Not Just About Racism, But Ableism: When talking about diversity, the ableism that students with disabilities face should be part of the conversation. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*.
- Storey, K. (2007). Combating ableism in schools. *Preventing School Failure*, 52(1), 56-58.
- Williams & Slabaugh (2016). Calling out ableism just got easier. *HuffPost*.