Pedagogical Strategies
Antiracism and inclusion in the classroom

This document is organized around particular pedagogical schools of thought. They overlap considerably, but each one has a somewhat distinct mission in mind, some of which may lend themselves more easily to the particulars of your classroom than others.

Do also consult the wonderful guide from UCLA’s Center for the Advancement of Teaching, “A Short Guide to Inclusive Strategies for Remote Learning.” Some of their suggestions are repeated in the technology tips document in our course here, but it’s worth noting the document again in this context as well.

Differentiated Teaching

Differentiated teaching is aimed at developing a pedagogical approach that addresses the learning needs of each student, as they are bound to differ from person to person. There is a very large set of practices that fall into this approach, but some of the most relevant to your time as a TA are listed below. These are mainly drawn from Granite State College’s online chapter on differentiated instruction, the Iris Center’s unit on differentiated instruction, and the Utah Board of Education’s special report on best practices around differentiated instruction.

- Many researchers and practitioners suggest that it is important to not set low standards, and then “teach up” the advanced students. The underlying idea here is that it can actually reinforce structural inequalities. They recommend setting high standards instead, and helping students reach those standards in your teaching. (This is usually called scaffolding in the literature.)
- To increase the chance that everyone in the room will have a good opportunity to learn, you can use a variety of activities in your sections to help drive the point home in different ways.
- It can be useful to help students recognize that people do have different strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning.
- Micro-assignments can be used to keep track of where your students are at in their learning. The idea here is just that it’s easier to adjust your teaching if you know what is working and what isn’t.
  - One common way to do this is by connecting it to the participation/attendance grade, if there is one in the course you are teaching. You can “count” their attendance by whether they turn in a piece of paper at the end of section that answers really basic questions about the topics you covered in section that day.
  - Note that reviewing all of this takes a bunch of extra time as a teacher. You may not always (or even often) have this luxury.
You might find it helpful to take advantage of inquiry-based learning. This means having students move through the learning process by letting them do the discovery process themselves.

- You won’t have control over assignments, so this will usually mean crafting some interesting illustrations or class discussions, and focusing on asking incisive questions instead of giving out answers when you are doing this.

- This shifts your job as a TA a little bit, as you become even more of a facilitator than a teacher.

Using group work can help prompt students with new experiences and perspectives. This works best in diverse groups.

Another way to do this is to ask students to prepare parts of the lesson themselves, each week. You can, for instance, rotate through the class in groups over the quarter.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy is focused on re-framing the differences between students as assets rather than deficits for a person’s preparation for your class. There is a lot of information out there, from the Institute for Education Science’s reports on the issue, to Brown University’s great introductory material, and the writing from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. As with many other practical teaching issues, the Cult of Pedagogy blog and podcast delivers on culturally responsive pedagogy as well. Basic strategies include:

- Getting to know your students! This is hard in the large classes as UCLA, and with the time constraints that come with being a graduate student and a teaching assistant at the same time. But there are some simple things you can do to help this along:
  - You can use your first day to survey/interview students to learn about them. This can easily be integrated into ice-breakers or little activities designed to help you learn their names (i.e. write your name on a card, and tell me something about yourself)
  - On that note, learning their names also helps, as it goes a long way to making the students more comfortable with you.

- Choosing a diverse set of examples to take advantage of the different experiences people bring with them into the classroom, and the way different processes, structures, and events are salient to some people but not others.

- Some people find it helpful to make the work of finding good examples a collaborative effort by asking the students to come up with meaningful points of comparison themselves. Note that this can be a double-edged sword if you are trying to convey a very specific point, since student examples may not always be a perfect fit for what you need to help them learn.

- It always helps to contextualize what you are teaching in terms of why it should matter to them, in terms of where we are today, how we got here, and so on.
Antiracist Pedagogy

As the name suggests, antiracist pedagogy directs itself at actively changing or eliminating social structures so that power and resources are distributed more equally. For an excellent reading list, as well as the main sources for the list below, see the living document [here](#).

- One important step is learning about and acknowledging the social position you inhabit in the classroom. It’s hard to get anywhere with antiracism before identifying the effect you have on the classroom yourself—whatever effect that may be.
- It can be very helpful to find ways to give voice to under-represented or marginalized actors as part of presenting research.
  - This is really aimed at undermining the notion that scientists are the “knowers” and participants are the passive objects of research
- In many classes it may be useful to use the classroom to pose problems and prompt critical thinking and dialogue, rather than simply to deposit knowledge into your students
- Many teachers also recommend using culturally responsive teaching techniques as a way of magnifying perspectives that may have otherwise been overlooked in the classroom