



Designing for Diversity: Diversifying Course Content

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Learning Goals for the Conversation

- Participants will be able to:
 - Discuss key elements to equitable and inclusive representation so that courses can be reimagined and redesigned.
 - Recognize the importance of equitable and inclusive course learning materials in order to critically evaluate course content.
 - Examine course content sources in order to evaluate their representation, inclusiveness, and equity.



DIVERSITY

of people,
perspectives



EQUITY

in policy, practice
& position



INCLUSION

via power, voice &
organizational culture



JUSTICE

with equal rights &
equitable
opportunities





Background

Learners benefit from seeing identities represented in course content:

“For [learners] who are developing their sense of identity, purpose, and competence, some of [the messages conveyed in course content] can be translated into messages about their own power, identity, and agency and can influence engagement and persistence in the field.”

~ Ambrose et al. 2010



Background

- Learners benefit from seeing identities represented in course content:

...to empower diverse learners, curriculum content “must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside of school.”

~ Geneva Gay (2010)

The background of the slide features a dense, overlapping pattern of stylized human silhouettes in various colors (teal, orange, light blue, white, grey). The silhouettes are shown in profile, facing different directions, creating a sense of a diverse crowd. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Background

Learners benefit from seeing identities represented in course content:

“What knowledge is included in the curriculum, who selects it and why are important questions when it comes to designing inclusive curricula...what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of complex power struggles among identifiable class, race, gender and religious groups.”

~ Hockings (2010)

Background

Learners benefit from seeing identities represented in course content:

Inclusive instructors express the importance “...the importance of demonstrating to [learners], irrespective of background, that they belong in the classroom – promoting belonging. They also focus on the necessity of allowing for meaningful engagement and success across a range of skill levels – promoting equity.”

~ Addy, et al. (2021)

Backward Course Design

- *Framework for designing/redesigning a course so learners meet measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes*
- *Identify course outcomes first, then work backward*
- *For inclusive design:*
 - *Include diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in course learning objectives*
 - *Determine evidence to show when objectives are met*
 - *Outline learning activities that target learning objectives*
 - *Curate instructional materials to inform learners*



Inclusive Instructional Design

- *Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*
- *Accessibility of course content and learning activities*
- *Set expectations and resources for success*
- *Use the syllabus to outline inclusive pedagogy*

Why Are Course Materials Important?

- *Foster a sense of social belonging*
 - *Critical for learner engagement*
- *Membership in a broader community of scholarship and practice*
 - *Disciplinary diversity and inclusion*
- *Centers the margins in content and experience*
 - *The traditional cannon is not the only story*

Explicitly Centralizing Climates

*In explicitly centralizing climates, “marginalized perspectives are not only validated when [learners] spontaneously bring them up, but they are **intentionally and overtly integrated in the content**. The climate here is characterized by obvious and planned attempts to include a variety of perspectives.”*

Ambrose, et al (2010)

Marginalized ↔ Centralized

Explicitly Centralizing Climates

- *What scholars make up the cannon? What are their social identities?*
- *How has the cannon evolved over time?*
- *What perspectives am I prioritizing? What perspectives are missing?*
- *How can diversity change or enrich the subject matter I am already researching or teaching?*

Ambrose, et al (2010)

Strategies for Selecting Course Content

- **Select content that engages a diversity of ideas and perspectives**
 - *Consider whether certain perspectives are systematically underrepresented or absent.*
 - *Aim for an inclusive curriculum so that learners can view ideas and concepts from a variety of perspectives.*
 - *Critically evaluate the presentation of material & encourage learners to do the same.*
 - *Pronoun use*
 - *Coded jargon*
 - *Representation in photographs and text examples*

Addy (2021); Ambrose, et al (2010); Lee et al. (2012)

Strategies for Selecting Course Content

- **Select content by authors of diverse backgrounds**
 - *Work to include materials written, created, or researched by authors of diverse backgrounds.*
 - *Aim for diversity in representation: you may send a message to learners that there is not any scholarship produced by women and people of color, or perhaps worse, that you do not value it.*
 - *Discuss contributions made to the field by historically underrepresented groups and explain why these efforts are significant.*
 - *Validate learners seeking representation*
 - *Provide examples in scholarship and practice*

Addy (2021); Ambrose, et al (2010); Landsman and Lewis (2011); Lee et al. (2012)

Strategies for Selecting Course Content

- ***Use multiple and diverse examples that do not marginalize learners***
 - *Plan to use examples that speak across gender, work across cultures, and are relatable to people from various socioeconomic statuses, ages, and religions.*
 - *Or – discuss the limitations of examples as exclusive or how findings are not applicable to all social groups.*
 - *Do not assume that all learners will recognize the cultural, literary, or historical references you use.*
 - *Draw on resources, materials, humor, and anecdotes that are relevant to the subject, and sensitive to the social and cultural diversity of your learners.*

Addy (2021); Ambrose, et al (2010); Hockings (2010)



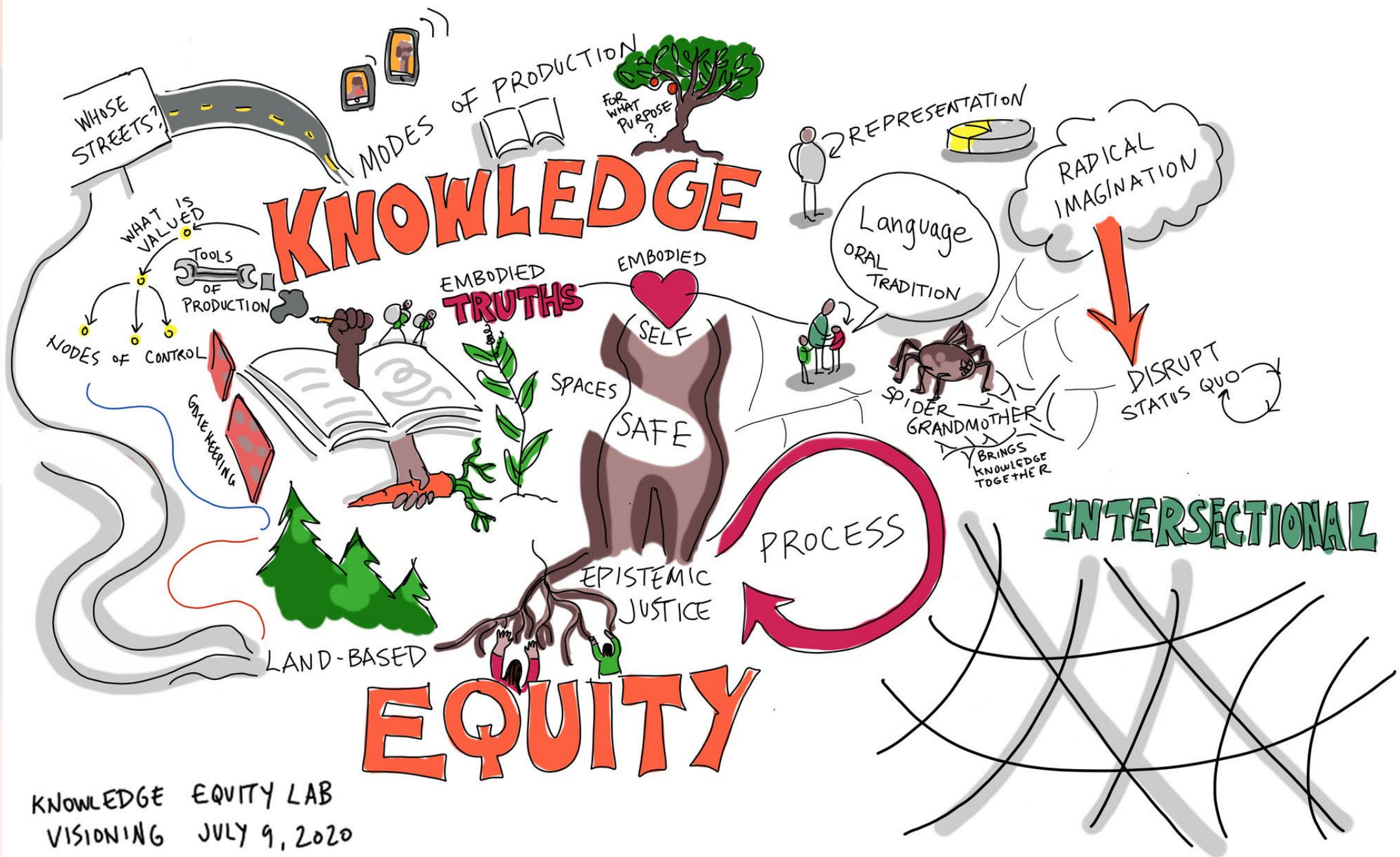
Intentionality

bell hooks:

“Professors who embrace the challenge of self-actualization will be better able to create pedagogical practices that engage [learners], providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply.”

Henry Giroux:

“Animated by a sense of critique and possibility, critical pedagogy at its best attempts to provoke [learners] to deliberate, resist, and cultivate a range of capacities that enable them to move beyond the world they already know without insisting on a fixed set of meanings.”



Resources

- Stockton University: [Decolonizing the Curriculum Resources](#)
- Columbia University: [Selecting Diverse Course Content](#)
- Poynter Institute for Media Studies: [A Syllabus Worth of Difference](#)
- Tulane University: [Accessible Syllabus](#)
- American Philosophical Association's [Diversifying the Syllabus](#)
- Emily DeRuy (Atlantic Monthly): ["The Complicated Process of Adding Diversity to the College Syllabus."](#)
- Colleen Flaherty (Inside Higher Ed): [Diversifying Course Materials: A How-To-Guide](#)
- Lori Wysong (Medium): [What Would it Mean to Decolonize the Curriculum?](#)

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