

# *Diversity in the Classroom*

## *A Resource for Faculty and Teaching Assistants*

### *User's Manual*

*Draft 4 - 8/2010*

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# *Introduction*

- *Objectives*

Our goal in producing this DVD and manual is to provide workshop materials that will assist faculty and teaching assistants in developing best teaching practices for diverse classrooms. We trust it will be helpful in producing classroom experiences in which every student feels welcomed and empowered, and each teacher feels that s/he can establish and maintain an open classroom experience. The larger goal is to develop a more inclusive campus community, one that provides a socially and academically comfortable environment for all students, faculty and staff.

In creating this project, we endorse the enrichment that a culturally diverse student and faculty presence brings to the classroom and institutions of higher learning. As faculty and teaching assistants, our students ultimately benefit if we are teachers who recognize that there is a great deal of diversity in the classroom, and who affirm and validate that diversity with sensitivity and understanding.

While such diversity can prove to be an invaluable resource within the classroom it can also lead to confrontations over misunderstandings and unchallenged stereotypes. Each of the eight scenarios in *Diversity in the Classroom* is illustrative of real problems and challenges that arise in teaching environments enrolling students of diverse backgrounds and identities. As we understand our student body today, all classrooms should be treated as diverse. Differences in age, gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, language background, and (dis)ability status, among others, can all be considered in this process. The scenarios presented in *Diversity in the Classroom* focus on race and ethnicity often intertwined with gender.

- *Pedagogy and Diversity*

The ethnographic research that grounds this project reveals that problematic classroom situations often place the heavy load of representation squarely on the shoulders of students, creating a situation where the positive value of diversity becomes a burden to be assumed by the student, rather than the institution. This is clearly detrimental to the student's development and soon contributes to feelings of alienation and a withdrawal from active participation. In today's classrooms we also know that, with regard to racializing practices, racism is less often overt and more often a broad spectrum of subtle practices such as various forms of isolation, hypervisibility, and lack of a critical mass

that together create a very chilly climate for scholars and students of color. The scenarios presented here seek to reflect this subtlety. Our goal is to help faculty and TA's increase their ability to recognize racializing and other discriminating incidents in the classroom and improve their skills for effective intervention and response. We encourage you to utilize the selected resources offered at the end of this manual to deepen your understanding of these processes and thereby empower both yourself and your students.

- *History of the Project*

In 2008, in the absence of resources on the UIUC campus for assisting instructors develop best teaching practices for diverse classrooms, the Department of Anthropology proposed that background research be carried out to provide workshop materials for faculty and teaching assistant workshops on teaching in diverse classrooms. We proposed to convert the results of this research into performable scripts that could be enacted, recorded and compiled into a DVD suitable for such workshops. These materials would contribute to programs for units throughout LAS and perhaps across campus and would be illustrative of problems that arise in teaching environments enrolling students of diverse backgrounds and identities.

We felt that anthropology was a particularly appropriate discipline in which to pursue this initial gathering of resources for enhancing teaching in diverse classrooms. The discipline spans the humanities, social sciences, and biological sciences, and includes a range of class types such as lecture-discussion, large lecture, seminar, internships, reading classes, research collaborations and laboratories. The Anthropology student body is diverse and classes attract students widely from across campus. In addition, anthropology is centrally concerned with social relations and is thus positioned intellectually to grapple with the challenges facing the University in the process of transforming campus climate.

We also agreed that graduate students were the ideal researchers for this project. As both teachers and students, they have current experience from different vantage points in classrooms where diversity related issues arise. Funding for *two* students was important to the success of the project as this allowed for dialogue pertinent to the acquisition and prioritizing of reading materials, documenting problematic classroom situations and creating the scenarios. We believe that dialogue is essential as a method in any diversity oriented project. We also felt that anthropology graduate students were particularly appropriate for this project as they had been part of an ongoing departmental discussion on topics of diversity in the academy for the past several years, were already engaged with relevant reading material for this project, had identified national scholars with relevant expertise who could be approached for assistance, and had experience with critical race theory and ethnographic method, both of which proved useful in their information gathering.

A brief history of the Department of Anthropology's commitment to this project is relevant here to demonstrate the long term, ongoing, and unflagging efforts that led to the development of this project. In 2004, in response to the report by the Chancellor's Committee on Latina/o Issues titled *Latinas/os at the University of Illinois: A History of Neglect and Strategies for Improvement, 1992-2002*, the Department of Anthropology developed an *Action Plan* in which we articulated specific directions for building on a departmental commitment to interlinked goals of recruiting and retaining a diverse departmental scholarly community of faculty and students, developing our departmental curriculum and our teaching practices in ways that affirm and expand the inclusive and broad scope of our discipline, and building interdisciplinary bridges across our campus that promote and extend these aims throughout the University of Illinois. Since then our department heads and associate heads along with other faculty have been examining the specific challenges and needs we have as a department at the University of Illinois in working towards meeting the goals of the Action Plan, including issues of classroom environment. As stated in the Action Plan, "the steady diversification of our graduate student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and sexuality requires us to evaluate and transform our teaching strategies as well as curricular offerings to create a departmental culture of debate, argumentation, and respectful disagreement.... We commit as a department to creating classroom environments that make all students feel included and valued and that can be spaces of open and honest discussion and debate based on mutual respect" <http://www.anthro.illinois.edu/diversity/anthactplan.pdf>.

With funding support from the *Provost's Initiative on Teaching Advancement* (PITA) and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences *Teaching Academy* (LASTA), graduate researchers Anthony Jerry and Monica Santos in close consultation with Professor Brenda Farnell, embarked upon the proposed ethnographic research within our department community in Fall 2008. They documented their observations and carried out a number of informal ethnographic interviews with students and faculty in the department about incidents and events that posed challenges and problems relating to an inclusive classroom climate. They transcribed these interviews, identified and summarized scenarios that might lend themselves to re-enactment, and submitted reports to faculty members Brenda Farnell and Janet Keller.

The ethnographic materials collected were rich and complex, providing sufficient basis for identifying examples of challenging classroom occurrences. A particular consideration at this stage, in line with IRB requirements for the protection and anonymity of research subjects, was to script the scenarios in such a manner that any actual incident and real persons involved could not be identified, while also maintaining accurate content based on the facts of specific classroom problems that had emerged from the research. Each scenario also had to be suitable for re-enactment and filming for inclusion in the DVD and provide useful stimuli for discussions of productive teaching strategies. These challenges were turned into the project's main strength – the scripted scenarios were reframed and sufficiently developed to capture events that are realistic in their complexity, with each once containing multiple themes for discussion.

The participation of *Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre* group, students and faculty, was essential to the success of the next phase of the project. Professor Lisa Fay and her students and colleagues undertook to help us develop dramatic scripts inspired by the interviews for enacting diversity-in-the-classroom vignettes. The *Inner Voices* team reframed the ethnographic summaries and gave them a dynamic, dialogic structure. Additional anthropology department members collaborated in critically reviewing the initial scripts and in revising them during the process of production. The *Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre* team engaged in productive brainstorming with us as we sought the clearest presentation and greatest impact for the vignettes.

In addition to script writing, the *Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre* team, under Prof. Fay's direction, enacted the vignettes. To augment the members of *Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre* we cast a few roles with members of the Department of Anthropology. Prof. Fay constructively directed the entire performance with the assistance of Monica Santos, Anthony Jerry and Prof. Keller from anthropology. The rehearsal and performance process lasted about two weeks during which the actors and directors worked tirelessly, often for full 8-hour sessions. Perceptive and adept at her dramaturgical craft, Prof. Fay's insights and directives were outstanding. She encouraged student commentary and engagement effectively, listening to the students and then incorporating their suggestions as we worked. We are most grateful for the inspirational guidance provided by *Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre* as well as their collaboration in script writing and fine performances.

Local videographer Bill Yauch then recorded each classroom vignette, producing some very fine, professional camera work. The raw footage was subsequently edited and we had an initial cut of the DVD early in the summer of 2009 that was circulated among project members for comments. A second edited DVD containing eight vignettes was then cut, and again circulated.

Prof. Farnell and Monica Santos then developed supporting materials: a selective bibliography of useful articles and websites on classroom diversity (see pages 43-9), and this facilitative manual, which includes insights from the conversations that emerged during the taping of the vignettes.

The DVD and manual are now available for circulation throughout campus as a resource for teaching in diverse classrooms. It is ready to be reviewed and tested with experts in LAS, EOA, and *Inclusive Illinois* and by faculty and teaching assistants across campus as stimuli for discussion in faculty/teaching assistant workshops and reading groups .

Subsequent to the test viewings scheduled for Fall 2010, we will collect responses and proceed to a final editing of the facilitative manual and DVD in Spring 2011. We look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

- *Suggestions for Use*

This DVD is our attempt to share our experiences in a way that can highlight some of the missteps that educators can take within the classroom. While some of the scenes depicted may seem contrived, we assure you that all of the interactions have actually taken place in one form or another on our campus, and probably continue to take place in classrooms across the nation.

Our objectives for the video should not prevent you from exploring other ways of seeing and utilizing the different scenes. This manual offers a guide for viewing and discussion, but also encourages alternative interpretations. We have designed an interactive on-screen menu that will allow you to choose in which ways this DVD will best serve your needs. For example,

- As a workshop facilitator, you may choose to run the entire DVD from beginning to end, without interruption ahead of time. This option would allow you to preview all of the vignettes, perhaps taking notes throughout. You could choose to focus on viewing one or more scenes that address the salient points that have arisen within your workshop.
- You may also choose to run the DVD from beginning to end within a workshop, pausing to include some key points at the beginning of each vignette and utilizing the discussion points that we have developed at the close of every vignette. This will allow you to pause the video between vignettes and discuss any issues that arise during the viewing.
- You might also choose to view the list of discussion points from one or more vignettes before screening the video material. This option will facilitate group discussion both before and after watching the vignette(s).

We agree with Friedrich “The purpose of case study discussion is not to solve the problems of racism, sexism, or other forms of discrimination in an hour, but to create an open forum in which all points of view are respected. It is not necessary for the group to find the most politically correct answer, the most compassionate answer, or the most pragmatic answer to the questions raised by the case.” (See *Additional Resources*).

However you choose to utilize this resource, we hope that you find the material within as enlightening and helpful as we have, and that this video brings you one step closer to taking advantage of the multiple perspectives that a diverse environment can bring to our institutions of higher learning. *Enjoy the Journey.*

Brenda Farnell  
Janet Keller  
Anthony Jerry

**Abstract (suitable to post on the web).**

**Project title: Development of Workshop Materials for Best Teaching Practices Associated with ‘Diversity in the Classroom’**

In the absence of adequate resources on campus for assisting instructors in developing best teaching practices for diverse classrooms, the Department of Anthropology carried out background ethnographic research among its students and faculty to provide materials for workshops on teaching in diverse classrooms. With the collaboration of *Inner Voices Social Theater* group, real events and incidents were converted into performable scripts and re-enacted, recorded and compiled into a DVD suitable for such workshops. The DVD contains 8 vignettes, each one illustrative of problems that can arise in teaching environments enrolling students of diverse backgrounds and identities. The DVD is accompanied by a facilitator manual and bibliography of supporting articles and websites. The DVD and facilitation manual are available for circulation throughout campus as resources for teaching in diverse classrooms.



# *Acknowledgements*

## *Institutions*

Diversity Committee, Department of Anthropology  
Department of Anthropology, College of Liberal Arts  
Center for Teaching Excellence  
College of Business  
College of Engineering  
College of Liberal Arts  
Inclusive Illinois  
Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre  
LAS Teaching Academy  
Office of Equal Opportunity and Access  
PITA (Provost's Initiative on Teaching Advancement)  
University Library

## *Working Group (from Anthropology Diversity Committee and Inner Voices Social Issues Theatre)*

Brenda Farnell  
Janet Keller  
Lisa Fay  
JW Morrissette  
Anthony Jerry  
Monica Santos

## *Scriptwriters*

Lisa Fay, Thom Miller and Tezeru Tesome  
With Anthony Jerry, Monica Santos, Catherine Pham, Bryan Fisher, Nicholas Ambrose, Jennifer Yu

## *Videography team*

Bill Yauch, videographer  
Jared Collins, sound and production assistant  
Sam Ambler, sound and production assistant

## *Cast: Scene 1 – Stereotyping*

TA: Monica Santos  
Student 1: Megan McKendry  
Student 2: Ryan Nallen  
Student 3: Catherine Pham

Student 4: Amirrah Abou-Youseff

Student 5: Mark Hendricks

Student 6: Evelyn Gabriel

Extras: Nicholas Ambrose, Nivia Andros, Jamie Ischomer, Rosalia Lugo, Alissa Norby, Brittany Walker, Jennifer Yu

### *Cast: Scene 2 – Word Usage*

Professor: Jeff Glassman

Student 1: Ryan Nallen

Student 2: Laura Robertson

Student 3: Nirali Shah

Student 4: Nivia Andros

Student 5: Nicholas Ambrose

Student 6: Whitney Hayes

Extras: Mark Hendricks, Samantha Smith

### *Cast: Scene 3 – Alienation in the Classroom*

Instructor: Thom Davis

Student 1: Mark Hendricks

Student 2: Tezeru Teshome

Student 3: Nicholas Ambrose

Extras: Nivia Andros, Janel Bailey, Robert Beck, Alison Goebel, Megan McKendry, Laura Robertson, Darrin Weathersby

### *Cast: Scene 4 – Confronting Colorblindness*

Instructor: Alison Goebel

Student 1: Megan McKendry

Student 2: Morgan Martin

Student 3: Evelyn Gabriel

Extras: Nicholas Ambrose, Nivia Andros, Janel Bailey, Robert Beck, Mark Hendricks, Madeline Oklesen, Darrin Weathersby

### *Cast: Scene 5 – The Burden of Racial Representation*

Professor: Janet Dixon Keller

Student 1: Janel Bailey

Student 2: Ryan Nallen

Student 3: Amirrah Abou-Youseff

Student 4: Wendy Finley

Extras: Janel Bailey, Daniel Foreman, Mark Hendricks, Brian Montes, Teresa Ramos, Laura Robertson

### *Cast: Scene 6: Uncritical Use of Terminology*

TA: Durell Callier

Student 1: Bryan Fischer

Student 2: Megan McKendry

Extras: Amirrah Abou-Youseff, Nicholas Ambrose, Nivia Andros, Janel Bailey, Robert Beck, Daniel Foreman, Laura Robertson, Daniel Weathersby

### *Cast: Scene 7 – What are you?*

Instructor: J.W. Morrissette

Student 1: Catherine Pham

Student 2: Jennifer Yu

Extras: Amirrah Abou-Youseff, Nicholas Ambrose, Nivia Andros, Cay Clay, Evelyn Gabriel, Mark Hendricks, Jamie Ischomer, Rosalia Lugo, Ryan Nallen, Alissa Norby

### *Cast: Scene 8 – The “Average” American*

Professor: Thom Miller

Student: Bryan Fischer

Extras: Sam Ambler, Nicholas Ambrose, Nivia Andros, Whitney Hayes, Laura Roberston, Nirali Shah, Samantha Smith

## *Scene 1. Stereotyping*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To illustrate ways in which stereotyping slips into classroom discourse -- from both students and instructors.
- To clarify use of terms such as “race,” “ethnicity” and “nationalism.”
- To illustrate an instructor’s power to act based on erroneous assumptions about identity rather than evidence.
- To think about the possible *consequences* of stereotyping in varied classroom contexts.

### **SCENARIO**

In an undergraduate discussion section of a social science class, the topics of “race” and “ethnicity” are being discussed. One student defines ethnicity as the *innate* commonalities of a group of people, suggesting it is *in the nature of* black Americans “to carry guns and avoid bullets.” The TA interrupts the student to point out that this kind of talk is, in fact, a stereotype. She successfully diffuses what could have been a tense moment in the classroom by responding to the problem directly and immediately, using the comment as a learning opportunity for the class. After class, one student approaches the TA to discuss an upcoming paper on nationalism. The student proposes to do a paper on Chicano nationalism. The TA rejects the proposal assuming that the student, who is perceived by the TA as “Latino,” would already know a lot about that topic given her “ethnicity.”

### **MONOLOGUE**

In the monologue, the student talks to us about the incident and describes why she felt offended by the TA, who mistakenly assumed that she already knows about Chicano nationalism *because of the way she looks*. She discusses her own ethnic origins and the reasons why she wants to do a paper on Chicano nationalism.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- How well does the TA intervene? What other ways might one respond to students who make stereotypical comments?
- Discuss other examples of stereotyping you have encountered in classroom discourse and how they were/were not resolved. Does this matter? If so, why? If not, why not? What are the *consequences* of stereotyping for all parties involved?
- Imagine other possible TA/student combinations by ethnicity and gender that might affect how stereotyping can be addressed successfully (or not.). For example, would anything change if an African-American student had stereotyped

“whites”? Or a male student had stereotyped women in a class where there was only one female student?

- Comments containing racial, gendered and other forms of stereotyping also occur in classes such as the natural sciences or engineering where the focus of classroom discussion is completely unrelated to these topics? Should the instructor intervene? If so, how? If not, why not?
- How can instructors draw their students’ attention to stereotyping in ways that resolve tensions and create a comfortable classroom climate for all students rather than increasing us/them divisions?
- Discuss your understandings of the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity.” Are they interchangeable? When is it appropriate to use each?
- Aside from the TA’s error in assuming that the student is suggesting a project based on her personal experience, there is also an assumption that exploration of a topic that is more personal or familiar is somehow “safe” and of less value. Should there be space(s) for students to express their identity? If so, when and how is it appropriate/inappropriate?
- The TA’s actions towards the student illustrate the use of power in the classroom: in this case she compromises a student’s education by refusing to let her pursue a topic and forcing her into a direction of less interest, cutting off further discussion. The insult of incorrect ethnic classification is thus compounded. Are there likely consequences for this student’s sense of agency and visibility in the classroom and her active participation? Discuss the *educational* consequences of stereotyping incidents.
- What is “Western nationalism”? What is “Chicano nationalism”? Discuss the many senses of these terms. Might the TA’s personal experience as a minority person (and how might she too be mis-identified?) have any bearing on her own views?

***FURTHER RESOURCES:***

Clauss-Ehlers, Caroline S.

2006. Race and Ethnicity. In *Diversity Training for Classroom Teaching: a Manual for Students and Educators*, chapter 5, pp. 51-65

## *Script: Scene 1. Stereotyping*

**Student 1:** ...I mean, because, ethnicity and race and cultures – people in general – are so complex to discuss, it would be impossible to have the right answer let alone satisfy any question you ask us on in 50 minutes. Besides, after this class, we're all gonna go out, about our days unaffected and unmotivated to make a change. We'll just be wondering where our next class is, or what we're gonna eat for lunch or what that text meant.

**Student 2:** Well, uhm, like in lecture yesterday, the, the professor was talking about how all those people of different ethnicities faced hatred and trauma while they lived in America throughout time, and how oppressed they were, and then he tried to make the connection of how that relates to us in the present day. And, I totally felt like what happened to Blacks, and Asians and Latinos is so irrelevant to the time we live in now because, that was like 50 years ago. And now we have a black president, so...you know.

**Student 7:** Yeah...

**Student 2:** Plus, we're like paying homage to them by expressing that they're as equal as whites. And also, we have classes and studies, and months even, dedicated to their heritage.

**Student 3:** I disagree. I think that the mistreatment of Blacks is still present in today's society. I think that the professor wanted us to understand how Whites were the oppressor and they still have tendencies to inflict that on different races today. I think that he wanted us to understand the, the magnitude of the abuse and trauma and hatred they endured is everlasting.

**TA:** Um, you know what I've noticed? We've been using the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably. But remember that this discussion is on ethnicity. But maybe we should clarify these two terms. You know, what they mean? Um, I mean, should they be used interchangeably? Or, is there a difference between the two?

**Student 1:** Well to me, race – right off the bat – is socially constructed. Meaning that people, well, mainly Europeans, I guess, um, took it into their own hands to distinguish one person from another and place them into classes based on their physical features.

**Student 4:** Well I think that race is the color of a person's skin and people who are that shade get, like, lumped together into that category. And, on the other hand, ethnicity is when people are grouped together based on culture, religion, or nationality. Like for example, my race is white but my ethnicity is Arab, you know. And I think that ethnicity tells you more about the background of a person, than race. It...you can read between the lines more. I think it's a more humane way of categorizing people than race.

**Student 5:** I agree. But I think ethnicity is, uh, more...commonality between a group of people.

**TA:** Can you elaborate on that?

**Student 5:** Yeah, uhm, for example...(clears throat)...Black Americans. Their innate commonality allows them to carry guns and avoid bullets. While Latinos, they're, they are able to...

**TA:** Wait, wait, hold on...um, before I let you go on...I mean, everyone is entitled to their opinion, but when you make hasty generalizations like that, which are not only offensive and derogatory but also false, that's stereotyping. Okay? Alright. I mean, you might have gotten that perception of the entire Black population from some form of media – maybe the movies or, or some news program. But what everyone in this classroom has to understand is the impact that the media has on them, ok? And that's usually based on stereotypes. Ok, so ethnicity is...

*(Bell Rings. Students gather belongings)*

Ok, well, I still wanna continue this discussion, so, um, we're gonna pick this up next week. But don't forget that your paper on nationalism is due next week. So just come in during office hours, um, feel free to consult, ok?

**Student 6:** Um, excuse me, Jennifer?

**TA:** Yeah?...Hey, how are you Marisol?

**Student 6:** I'm good. Um, I was wondering if I can write, uh, my paper on Chicano nationalism, instead of Western-European nationalism? Because I hardly know about Chicano...

**TA:** Well, you see, I really don't have a problem with you exploring non-typical areas of research for this paper. I mean, you know that's what the class is about. You know, it's about diversity. I, I want you to challenge yourself, ok? I mean, I don't want you to write something you're, you're familiar with. I mean, it's like someone who, um, sp-, knows how to speak Spanish and taking Spanish-speaking courses just to get an easy A. So, I mean, doing a paper on Chicano nationalism might not be much of a challenge for you, I mean, since you're of that ethnicity already. Um, if you do the paper on Western-European nationalism that would be something good because you're not so familiar with that, and, um, that would be more insightful, and probably even be more rewarding for you.

**Student 6:** Um, I guess. But, I'm pretty sure I know more about Western-European nationalism than Chicano nationalism, so it would be nice if I can just write...

*TA:* Well, I'm sure you do, but, you know, I really want you to be proactive and do the research, and you know, not just remember past holidays and events, ok?

***MONOLOGUE (Student 6)***

Me llama Marcela Santa-Maria Gomez. And that's pretty much all I can say in Spanish. How can she think that I already know about Chicano nationalism just because of how I look? Um, yes, I am of the eth-, of Latino background but I'm not of the Chicano background, which is Mexican descent. I am Colombian. Um, I do know about Colombian very, very well, but, um, I also wanna know more about the Chicano nationalism because I do have friends that are Mexican or some of them even consider themselves Chicanos and I really wanna know what, what it is about. You know, I wanna write a paper, I wanna experience it. I wanna know what it's about, other than mine. And it really bothers me how people are quick to judge, uh, based how you look and automatically say, "Oh, you are of that race." And, they really don't. I think that's just stereotyping to me, and not understanding where I came from. Um, also with the Chicano nationalism, I think it'll be good for me because I'm learning something else other than my own culture.



## *Scene 2. Word Usage*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To understand how social histories inform contemporary word-use
- To consider professorial power in classroom discussions
- To consider intervention in racializing events/discourse in the science classroom/lab or when the topic is *not* race *per se*.

### **SCENARIO**

An Anglo-American guest lecturer attempts to discuss the “n-word” in a seminar. He tells the students that the term is no longer used in the same pejorative sense as it was used in the book *Huckleberry Finn*. He proceeds by focusing on connotations attached to different pronunciations of the word—use of an “er” ending or an “a” ending. The students suggest different possibilities. One student agrees with the lecturer: she feels she can use the word outside of its pejorative sense in the way that many black Americans do today, especially since she is intimately connected to the Black community. Another student objects and feels that regardless of these differences in pronunciation, the word cannot be divorced from its history and the pejorative meanings it carries from the context of slavery and oppression. After the class, the professor has a short conversation with this student, insisting that the meaning of the word has evolved through time. The student stands by her earlier position.

### **MONOLOGUE**

The student talks about how she felt about the class discussion, and why she thinks that the word “n\*\*ger” should not be used so casually.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- The professor, in introducing this sensitive topic for class discussion, seems to assume it can be discussed neutrally or “objectively” in an academic setting as an example of “change in word-use.” Does he side-step issues relating to the emotional investment in, and the social history of, words and their use? In so doing, does he presuppose that academic settings are somehow not part of real life?
- Can sensitive/derogatory terminology be discussed keeping the word itself in brackets or does the enduring emotion and real life impact of such word usage inevitably enter the conversation?
- If the classroom environment is dismissive of real world contingencies affecting students’ lives, what effect might this have on a student’s education?
- Can word-use be divorced from its history in the way the instructor seems to be advocating here? When word meanings change, what responsibilities lie with those who use them now?

- If some members of the Black community use the ‘n-word’, does that automatically permit anyone, especially people who are not of African-American descent (or not a US citizen) to use it? What roles do the speaker’s ethnicity, the people present, the social context, and political and social histories play in this choice?
- Note the progression throughout the scenario from pointing to the n-word in various ways to actually pronouncing it and using it in one or another form. Who pronounces it first? Observe closely the professor’s use of the “n-word” -- how is he *using* it? How is he *saying* it?
- Follow the pronoun usage: A young woman near the beginning indicates she is of mixed descent, yet says she needed to take time to get to know the “Black and Latino community” and become familiar with “them.” How does this pronoun use position her vis-à-vis these communities? How does the professor’s use of “they” and “them” position himself vis-à-vis others?
- White students drop out of the discussion after awhile. Why might this be? Does this make the issue “a black problem”?
- Is this an issue only for classes dealing with race? How might a science teacher (including applied sciences such as engineering, computer science, medicine, agriculture etc.) respond to hearing the n-word or other pejorative terms or negative attitudes relating to race and gender appearing in his/her classroom or lab? How can faculty not teaching *about* race per se, intervene to develop a threat-free environment for students who are negatively marked?
- Is active intervention in word-use in the classroom merely being ‘politically correct’ (PC), or is there a scientific rationale that can be invoked? For example, if scientific method is an attempt to produce knowledge that controls for prejudice (objectivity), does the science educator have a responsibility to control prejudiced talk *in the name of scientific knowledge*, (e.g., erroneous IQ measurements relating to race/ gender) and the presumption of moral and ethical responsibility in one who knows?
- How does this instructor exert his professorial power to position others, and with what consequences? For example;
  - The professor asks, “What do you think of when *I* say...” as if this is unproblematic for students to answer. Is he referring to the fact that he is white? Male? From an older generation? Or what? What do the student responses indicate?
  - After the end of class the professor informs the offended student that “as times progress, people progress, too, you know,” and that “African

- Americans now prefer *Black...*” Are there more problematic assumptions here that perhaps add insult to injury?
- Does his discussion with the student send the message that her “experience” is not as valuable as his “research”?
  - What issues regarding the deep seated histories associated with word usage does the student raise in the Monologue?

## *Script: Scene 2. Word Usage*

**Professor:** Hi. So, um, is everyone here now? It’s a nice, small group. That’s good. Um, I have to confess, I did not wear my watch today, so if someone could just keep track of time and let me know if we’re going too long, ok? I tend to do that. Uh, let me introduce myself. I am, you can call me Paul, but the whole name is Paul Hansman. Dr. Paul Hansman, but I don’t have people call me doctor. Um, let me see what we have here. You were given, I think, a slight introduction to what I’ll be talking to you about. I have a CD, maybe we’ll get time to play that. Um, as it was put to you. I’ll be talking to you, we’ll be discussing actually, something very, uh, controversial and difficult, so I hope you can...um, which is the ‘n’ word. Um, and let me, let me put a caveat to that. You know when you’re discussing in a seminar situation like this something controversial, people might disagree a whole lot. That’s the point. Many voices are to be heard. People should be respectful. Don’t be injurious to people. Don’t be impolite. Don’t be disrespectful. Don’t mistreat anyone. I think you know that. My first question then to open things up for you is...oh, that’s, that’s kind of cute isn’t it (laughter), we’ll just leave that there, ok? Um, question is, um, what meanings evolve differently, do you think, from the use of the ‘n’ word with an ‘e’-‘r’ ending, as opposed to an ‘a’ ending? And there’s an idea of the root. So tell me, um, what do you all think about the changes in meaning over time and, and that, who’s using it, especially popular culture, rap music keep that in mind.

**Student 1:** Uh, well, to answer you’re question about, uh, the meaning... I think, uh, the context does change because when you address someone with, like, the “a” ending, it’s like you’re not superior to them. You know, they’re like your, your comrade or you’re peer. There’s a whole new level of comfort and understanding to-. But when you change it, and you address ‘em with the ‘e’-‘r’ ending, it’s, uh, it’s completely different. It’s like they have some kind of level of superiority over you. I mean that’s what I think of it.

**Student 2:** Yeah, uh, yeah I agree with what he’s saying. Because the neighborhood that I grew up in was very diverse, um, and like everyone called each other ‘nigga’. It was like a common thing. Uh, but me being mixed black and white, I didn’t really feel

comfortable with the word until I familiarized myself with, uh, the black and Latino community, um, and then became more comfortable with them and more comfortable using the word.

**Professor:** Well, and this goes for everyone, let me ask you, would you use that word with other races?

**Student 2:** It depends on how long I've known the particular person. But, um, no, in essence, no.

**Professor:** Uh-um

**Student 2:** I mean, I think it would just be awkward to greet another person or another race as 'nigga'.

**Professor:** Well, let me put this to you. Um, uh, what comes to mind if I were to say 'nigga'?

**Student 2:** A black or Latino person.

**Student 3:** A rapper.

**Student 4:** A gangster.

**Student 5:** My friends.

**Student 6:** Slavery.

**Professor:** Uh, I'm sorry, what was that?

**Student 6:** (clears throat) Slavery. When you said 'nigga', the first thing that came into my mind was slavery. Of the many derogatory names slaves had, 'nigger', 'nigga', and 'Negro' was one of them. And, I don't think its context necessarily changes on the way you pronounce it. Because with or without the 'e'-r', the meaning is still the same. It's negative, oppressing and demeaning. And I'd get just as much offended if a black person called me that than if a white person did.

**Professor:** Don't, don't you think though that, um, the pejorative connotations of the word have changed over time, away from, um, say pejorative uses like in Huck Finn, and that the term 'nigga' now is more closely associated with the culture of urbanized minority youth and especially in their music? Um, that's a far cry from, um, older, older uses, older meanings, that have to do with, um, Uncle Tom, um, minstrel blackface, slavery sort of figures?

**Student 2:** Yeah, I mean, it's not like it's the 17<sup>th</sup> or the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I mean we're in an age where people are pretty much aware of the history of black people, and slavery. And it's not like--

**Student 6:** Oh I highly doubt we live in an age that's been familiarized of the history of slavery in America and black people, except for the Emancipation Proclamation and Civil War. (sigh) I think if people actually knew what blacks had to endure while being ordained 'nigger' or 'nigga'; I think if people were accurately knowledgeable of the whippings, lynchings, rapings and catastrophic everlasting trauma that blacks had to endure, I think that they would feel enough remorse enough not use the 'n' word, as loosely and, and, uncritically as they do now. I mean just think of -

*(Bell rings)*

**Professor:** (in the background) Well, thank you all. That was very good.

**Student:** (in the background) Yeah...

**Professor:** Thank you all. Thank you all very much. It's a spirited conversation. Good getting to know you a little bit.

**Student:** (in the background) Yeah, thank you.

**Professor:** Bye now... Hey, great insight you offered to us today. Thank you very much. That was really good. But I hope you understand though that as times progress, people progress, too, you know. There was a time when, um, African-Americans thought of the term 'black' as an insult, and now African-Americans prefer 'black' to anything else really. And, um, you know there was a time also when they thought the term 'negro' was perfectly fine to use among themselves, and now that's all much different as you know. You, you see where I'm coming from, right?

**Student 6:** Yeah, you're saying that as time progresses, so do people. But, I don't think that blacks are progressing when they address each other as 'nigga'. Nor do I think it was a progress when they called each other 'Negro'.

**Professor:** Uh-um, uh-um I see.

### **MONOLOGUE (Student 6)**

I can't believe that conversation in class yesterday. Whenever someone doesn't want to offend you...they offend you. I get so frustrated when people seem to forget, or even

deny, the past, the history. When people only seem, seem to forget about the pains and struggle, and only seem to concentrate on the glory and triumphs.

I once went to this exhibit. They had all types of African slavery artifacts ranging from tribal cloths to stories, to chains, to cotton picked down South. I remember reading a story about a baby who was whipped to death because his body rejected food he was offered during the passage to the New World. After he died, his body was thrown overboard. Even though the date and exact ship he was on might have been fixed, the way he was treated couldn't have been. With only half the amount of captives surviving each passage over, something like that was bound to happen. And I, I remember gasping as I read the story and feeling my eyes tingle as tears trickled down. If people knew where and why the terms 'nigger', 'nigga', and 'Negro' originated from, I think every time someone said it, they'd feel guilty. Wrong. Ashamed.

## *Scene 3. Alienation in the Classroom*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To understand student alienation in light of professorial authority and power in the classroom
- To understand timing and pedagogical strategies that make the classroom a safe space for students to openly discuss their views, or not
- To consider the roles of writing and discussion in facilitating participation
- To consider when to distinguish individual from collective identities

### **SCENARIO**

Within a social science seminar, the students are beginning a discussion about an assigned reading by a prominent minority intellectual who has written about colonial oppression. During an initial exchange, a white student brings forth a well-known argument about ‘white-guilt’ and the historical oppression of minorities. A minority student responds, expresses her frustration with the level of discussion and suggesting that the other students in the class do not have sufficient knowledge to give the essay the critical attention that it deserves. She is also tired of finding herself being positioned once again as a “student of color” or representative of a particular ethnic group in her classes. These comments generate an eager response from her classmates who clearly want to engage the issues and express their points of view, but the professor responds by stopping the discussion. Instead, he asks the students to write down their thoughts in an essay about the assigned article.

### **MONOLOGUE 1**

The student expresses his dissatisfaction with the way the professor handled the classroom situation. He feels that his opinions were wrongly perceived, and that he has been positioned as representing his “race” rather than himself.

### **MONOLOGUE 2**

The student explains the reasons why she felt frustrated during the class discussion. She expected that a university classroom would provide a venue for more informed discussions about racial issues.

### **MONOLOGUE 3**

The student expresses his disappointment at being denied the opportunity to be part of a meaningful discussion on the issues.

### ***DISCUSSION POINTS***

- When student 2 comments, “That’s ridiculous, that’s not even what the article is bringing up,” the professor shuts down the possibility of more discussion. What was he concerned about? How might the professor have handled the comments by student 1 and 2 differently?
- What role does the professor’s *timing* in assigning the essay play in leaving the students feeling cut-off and alienated? Is there another way he could have used the writing assignment while at the same time honoring the student’s interest in a discussion?
- Is student 3’s education being curtailed because he doesn’t have access to continuing student dialogue, even though he may be unlikely to speak himself? Should professors always encourage/invite/persuade people who don’t like to talk?
- Does the professor’s strategy here constitute censorship?
- If a professor asserts his/her authority in a classroom exchange with a student, is it an abuse of power?
- How can an instructor respect different interpretations offered by students without compromising professional responsibility for being a critical and skeptical authority?
- In his monologue, Student 1 complains “...that’s my [personal] perspective, not necessarily a ‘white’ perspective.” When is it appropriate or inappropriate to talk in terms of collective or individual identities?



## *Script: Scene 3. Alienation in the Classroom*

**Professor:** Ok, good. So what does everybody else think about that?

**Student 1:** I don't think it's a big deal.

**Student 2:** What?

**Student 1:** Now -- that deal of 'now'. That was over two hundred years ago.

**Student 2:** Oh, is it. We're still living out the repercussions. I mean that's what the whole article was about.

**Student 1:** I'm not saying that. I'm saying it doesn't do any good for me to apologize to a dead person, or for a dead person for that matter.

**Student 2:** That's ridiculous, that's not even what the article is bringing up. It's bringing up invisibility, legends, and the continued use of particular laws in order to...forget it. *(to Instructor)* I don't think some people in this classroom can handle this discussion. And this happens a lot. For people of color like me, I don't think it's fair for students of color to experience this. Like who exactly is getting what out of this discussion?

**Professor:** Okay. *(Hands shoot up)* Okay. Put your hands down. While I think heated discussion can be a positive thing I am going to take into account Tezeru's concerns. I propose that each of you, and I mean each of you, re-consider the article, re-read it, and write a short, concise, well thought out essay, no more than two pages. Make sure to say exactly what it is you want to say. They will be due Monday.

**Student 1:** That's it? No more discussion?

**Student 3:** Really?

**Student 1:** That assumes a lot based on us and what Tezeru said.

**Professor:** I am trying this out for this class. After I read the essays, I'll reconsider my decision. Let's move on then. *(Clears throat)* Regionally, if we look at the timber industry, if we look at the socio- economic impact of the timber industry in the United States over the last century, we can see strong shifts in both the migratory patterns of families...

***MONOLOGUE (Student 1)***

I just think there needs to be more room for white students to talk about the issues. To talk...not write. It not like we're incapable, or totally insensitive to the issues. I might not know some things but still, isn't that what the classroom is for? It seems that every time anything comes up about race or minorities, the white students always get shut down. And not just by other students but just now, by the professor as well. I know I'm white, I know that. I know I'm speaking from my "perspective." But that's my perspective, not necessarily a "white" perspective. She wasn't even listening to what I was saying. She was hearing more in my words than what I was saying. Forget it. This sucks.

***MONOLOGUE (Student 2)***

I'm just tired of feeling like I'm in some remedial race matters course for dummies. When I came to college, I thought people would be a whole lot more together on certain issues. But they're not. And sometimes, no, most of the time, I just don't wanna have to listen to it again. It gets really hard to listen to, especially when you know they can't hear themselves speak. I mean, I'm a pretty patient person, but at some point it goes beyond tiring and becomes really painful to hear. It goes beyond just being offensive. I don't know. It just gets tiring. That's why I said what I said.

***MONOLOGUE (Student 3)***

The professor should have let the conversation go on. I mean, why bring it up if you can't handle the heat? Instead, it's like, he treats it as if it's censorship. I mean, I know I don't speak a lot in class. And, and, for that reason, I might never speak in class. But, you know I think the classroom is a space where you *should* present information like that, and you *should* be able to talk. Isn't that what class is for?

## *Scene 4. Confronting Colorblindness*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To consider the emergence of racially biased spaces
- To understand the importance of listening to discourse content
- To consider how to facilitate further exchange rather than abandoning discussion

### **SCENARIO**

The class is picking up a previous discussion that relates to an assigned reading about a “colorblind approach” to race and racism in the US. Some students share the sentiment that while “colorblindness” might be a worthy goal, US society does not yet fully embrace it. A white, female student relates a personal experience: while in a security line at the airport her African-American boyfriend was selected to be searched. She says that this was the first time she realized that her boyfriend was, in fact, “black.” A black student reacts skeptically to her story by commenting on her naiveté. The white, female TA intervenes in the exchange, taking the side of the white student. She effectively cuts off further discussion by moving quickly on to the next topic without allowing any further responses.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- What in the TA’s discourse might lead student 3 to perceive this classroom as a racially biased space?
- Is the white student attempting to position herself positively as ‘colorblind’? Why does this backfire with some students of color in the class?
- How might the TA have responded differently so as to facilitate greater understanding on the part of both students? For example, if the TA had listened more carefully to the black student’s challenge she might have asked the white student to expand on what she meant when she said “I knew he was black, I just didn’t know what that meant.” Subsequently, the TA could have asked the black student to expand upon what “realizing someone is black” might involve beyond the obvious - skin color. This tactic could have facilitated a shared concern between the two students that might engage the rest of the class in thinking about exactly what is involved in the wider issues associated with achieving colorblindness.
- Are heated discussions that involve personal feelings necessarily negative and hostile? Is disagreement necessarily “animosity,” as the TA assumes? What

classroom conditions can instructors establish or avoid that will enable discussions to be lively and challenging, but productive?

## *Script: Scene 4. Confronting Colorblindness*

**TA:** Ok, before we start talking about yesterday's, ah, lecture, I wanna go back to what we were talking about last week in discussion. So everybody, you wanna pull out your notes? Remember we were talking about the "color blind approach?" Joan, I think you were the last person, uh, we left off with?

**Student 1 (Joan) :** Uhm, well, I, well, with the reading from last week I agree with the author when he said that, uh, through the, um, racial integration institutions and communities, that America is beginning to practice the "color blindness approach" And, also, I do, I also believe that, I also agree with most people when they say that America is, um, becoming a more racial friendly place, but I do believe that people fail to realize that, uh, the country still, is still in fear of, um, race because of the history it entails. And that, um, when race is brought up, everyone tenses and they bite their tongue.

**Student 2 (Elizabeth) :** I, I remember this one time, my boyfriend and I were going to see his family in Philadelphia. And we were in the airport security line, and it was full of white men and women, and he was "randomly" selected, uh, for a search. And, they basically strip-searched him. And it was really, really humiliating. I tried to say something in his defense, but they told me that it was procedure, and that's what they had to do, and I felt really defenseless. And I could see the hurt and resentment in his eyes. I mean, we've been dating for two years and up until that point, I don't think I ever realized that he was "black." I mean I guess I agree with the colorblind approach because I never really noticed the color of my boyfriend's skin, but the fact that we like the same movies, or the same music, the same food. And the fact that he's black just never really came to mind. I think that's why the airport situation was so hard to deal with.

**Student 3:** I just find it so hard to believe that it took you two years to realize your boyfriend was black.

**Student 2:** No, that's not what I mean to say. I knew he was black, I just didn't know what that meant.

**Student 3:** Well you must be oblivious to the world then. I mean, not only is he black, but he's a guy, in an airport not wearing a janitor's uniform. What, do you think there's affirmative action for mall security and airport security? I mean, I'm all for diversity and unification of the races and ethnicities but I don't think that's ever gonna be possible.

**Student 2:** (*protesting throughout Student 3's comment*) I don't...No, that's not what I'm trying...

**TA:** Ok, ok, ok, ok. I can understand your animosity here, but I think we need to respect each other in this classroom and each other's insights, especially when those insights are personal. So, um, I think Elizabeth (Student #2) here is actually making some really good points and I think she's repeating what you're saying, that America still has little work, ways to go, before, um, you know, we look beyond people's skins and the colors they are. Uh, maybe if you were listening a little more closely, you wouldn't be dismissing what she has to say so outta hand. Ok, good. Well, I think...

## ***Scene 5. The Burden of Racial Representation***

### ***OBJECTIVES***

- To understand the racializing effect of asking students questions that require them to represent their racial/ethnic group or community rather than themselves as individuals
- To become aware of language prejudice as a variant of attitudes towards racial and class difference in the US

### ***SCENARIO***

The topic for discussion in this language and culture class is the different functions (i.e. uses of) of language. The professor notes that English, because of its use in cross-cultural and international communication, now exists in multiple forms. One student comments that language can also exclude individuals, saying that she takes offense when people talk in a language other than English in her presence. She and another student express negative attitudes toward language variation in the US that support “English Only” legislation. In the course of the discussion, the professor asks students if the African-American English variant sometimes called “Ebonics” can be considered a different language? She turns to an African-American student for a response.

### ***MONOLOGUE***

The student responds to being singled out to speak about Ebonics.

### ***DISCUSSION POINTS***

- The professor calls on an African-American student to speak about Ebonics assuming that *because she is Black* she would have something to say on the subject, and probably uses an African-American dialect. How does this action by the professor stereotype the student and reinforce racial lines within the classroom?
- The student feels she is being called upon to represent all black Americans. How can an instructor encourage participation from minority students without positioning students in this way?
- Is “English Only” a form of language prejudice? What kinds of stereotypes adhere to non-Standard English speakers?
- The students talk as if they are members of families in which there are no grandparents, great-grandparents or other relatives who speak languages other than English. How might the instructor help the students discover the values of multilingualism by asking questions about their own multilingual family backgrounds?

- Does the expressed preference for a monolingual English-speaking nation intersect with attitudes towards race?

## *Script: Scene 5. The Burden of Racial Representation*

**Professor:** So now what's happening is English has become the dominant language even though we do have traces of Native American Languages, and Spanish and French, especially in the names of cities and geographical landmarks. And what's happening even more is that English is being used for cross-cultural communication, for international communication. So people are starting to talk about Englishes, like, a multiplicity of English. I just think that's fantastic. And we do still have smaller communities bound by a common language, but... these tend to follow a temporal pattern with immigration, toward the loss of that primary binding language with subsequent generations, whereby the functionality of that primary binding language, well, it loses its—

**Student 1:** What?

**Professor:** Ok, I guess I'm trying to get at, language has a function. So, what was the purpose or what was the function of language in your house when you were growing up?

**Student 1:** To get yelled at.

**Professor:** To get yelled at. Well, ok, that's teaching and it's passing along values. (Student 2 raises hand) Yeah?

**Student 2:** Uh, I just remember my mom yellin' at the backdoor, "dinner time!" (chuckles)

**Professor:** Okay, so that's serving to communicate a different kind of information. In order to...what?

**Student 2:** In order to get us to eat. (chuckles)

**Professor:** Well, right, but she's trying to get you together in the same time and the same place, so you can see how on a larger scale, this would work to bind a community. So language is serving a purpose. It has a function. (Student 3 raises hand) Yeah?

**Student #3:** Ok, so I hate it when, like, I go like to a bakery or something and they speak in a different language. Like they speak to me in English, but then to themselves in...I don't even know what... it's like a secret code. I mean if you're gonna be here, you

should speak English, and if you're not gonna speak English, you should just go back to where you came from. Didn't they pass a law like that in California?

**Professor:** Well there've been lots of attempts to pass "English Only" legislation. And actually, the most recent attempts have been at the federal level and they've been turned back. So it's not just California. But what do you all think about this kinda legislation?

**Student 3:** Well I think it makes sense. I mean, maybe that's why there's so much discrimination and stuff. Maybe if we all spoke the same language, it would go away.

**Student 4:** Yeah, like you said, English is the dominant language, so if you don't speak it, what does that say about you? I mean maybe you should go back to where you came from. Not to be rude or anything, but maybe you'd be happier.

**Student 2:** Well, uh, what about what you said earlier like the idea of multiple Englishes or something like that. Isn't that kind of the same thing? You know, I mean I think it is. So...

**Professor:** Well, like Ebonics. Well, like speaking two kinds of Englishes. So maybe you're speakin' standard English in the workplace, and then you go home, and you speak in Ebonics. What do you guys think about that? I mean is that bilingualism? What function is Ebonics serving?

**Student 3:** Well, I think it's serving just to keep me out. Just like in the bakery. I mean if you're going to be here, speak English-English.

**Professor:** Hmm. Now I wonder, maybe you Lisa would have something to add to this?

**MONOLOGUE (Student 1)**

I don't know what to say. I had to learn White culture my whole life. Do I represent everything Black?



## ***Scene 6. Uncritical Use of Traditional Terminology***

### ***OBJECTIVES***

- To be aware of the unintended consequences of uncritical language use
- To consider relationships between natural sciences and the power of language
- What role does academic discipline play in creating a positive classroom environment for under-represented students?

### ***SCENARIO***

In a science classroom, the TA is discussing the culinary and medicinal value of plants native to the Americas that were taken back to Europe. He uses the terms “New World” and “Old World.” A Native American student objects and questions the TA’s use of the term “New World.” Another student joins in. The TA dismisses the student’s inquiry to bring the discussion back to the culinary and medicinal value of the plants.

### ***MONOLOGUE 1 (student)***

The student talks about the power of language and how the TA does not realize the impact of the words that are used in class.

### ***MONOLOGUE 2 (TA)***

The TA defends his position, saying that political correctness is not relevant in a “real” science classroom.

### ***DISCUSSION POINTS***

- Can discourse in the natural sciences be divorced from the social histories attached to word choices?
- What is the responsibility of a natural science instructor in this case, if any?
- Is there any *scientific* rationale for continuing to use the traditional terms “New World” and “Old World” ?
- How might the science instructor have engaged the students on the issue of a problematic vocabulary term?

- Is attention to word choice in this context being ‘politically correct’ as the TA claims?
- What do accusations of political correctness assume about the use and abuse of changing our language? [see readings from both side of the political spectrum?].
- How might the TA have responded differently? Are there ways to address the students’ concerns without losing sight of the learning goals of the class?
- If classroom discourse is dismissive of real world contingencies affecting students’ lives, what effect might this have on a student’s education?
- What is a student entitled to expect from an instructor if offended and raising a concern?
- Notice the use of “they” in the Ta’s monologue –what does this reveal?

## *Script: Scene 6. Uncritical Use of Traditional Terminology*

**TA:** So they discovered these plants in the New World. At that time two distinct things were happening. One, plants here were being used as substitutes for herbs and other staples traditionally used in the Old World, specifically Europe. And two, these new plants were being valued as new commodities to be brought back from the New World, to the Old. The unprecedented use of these plants for their medicinal purposes as well as their culinary value are oftentimes underestimated, especially in this present day and age. Several of these...Yes, question, Jake?

**Student 1:** Um... “New World”?

**TA:** Yes, you know New World vs. Old World.

**Student 1:** So, the plants were discovered in the “New World”?

**TA:** Yes.

**Student 1:** (Sighs) Yeah. No. I, I get what you’re trying to say. It just that, I mean, I don’t, I don’t... I don’t mean to be offensive or anything. It just, well I don’t know if you also want me to get the deeper, the deeper meanin’. I mean, what you said, am I supposed to buy into that?

**TA:** Oh, I see.

**Student 2:** Yeah, I, I mean what’s up with that? I thought we got all over that “Christopher Columbus discovered America stuff...”

**TA:** I’d really like for us to keep focused on the culinary value and particularly the medicinal purposes of these plants discovered in America.

**Student 2:** Found in America...land of the free for the taking.

**TA:** It’s important for us to be able to separate the differences between a plant’s medicinal purposes and the social dynamics that arise in relation to that.

***MONOLOGUE (Student 1)***

People always do that. Somehow, that always seems to be the bottom line, a swift means of justifying any action. Makin' arbitrary separation between what people want and the impact of their want on others. Ho-, how they view the world and where that gets them. The language, that allows for so much to happen...gives people permission to treat each other in all kinds of ways. Allows them to take things and justify that. Or render something meaningless or trivial, just so they can feel okay. And I kn-, the thing is, I know he can see that, but he just, he thinks it's unimportant, and, to the discussion, and that they're just words. Just words. And if you really wanted us to focus on the medicinal values, I think he should find the words to let us see that focus.

***MONOLOGUE (TA)***

I just want them to get the course material. I mean, that's what this class is about. It is not about the bigger social political picture. Save that for political science, this is a real science class. And I'm not going to walk around here being politically correct just so everyone can feel happy. Besides, he knew what I meant. And he knows I don't mean to be offensive. So why not just let me teach. It's a disservice to everyone when they just insert their comments just to show how progressive they are or how victimized they are. It takes time away from everyone.

## *Scene 7. What Are You?*

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To increase awareness of the complexity of American ethnic identities
- To develop classroom strategies that avoid isolating minority students as “objects.”

### **SCENARIO**

The professor is discussing speech patterns in the Japanese language. He approaches a student whom he perceives to be Japanese to provide some insights. However, the student turns out to be Japanese-American and only speaks English. The professor apologizes to this student, and proceeds to another student whom he perceives to be Chinese. This student identifies herself as Korean. The professor then asks her about the Korean language.

### **MONOLOGUE (student 1)**

The student asserts her identity as an American.

### **MONOLOGUE (student 2)**

The student describes her personal struggles when she is asked about her ethnicity.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- How might the instructor have gained information about the student’s language skills and ethnic identities without asking them directly about their “nationality” or making erroneous assumptions about their ethnicity based on their appearance?
- The professor says, “I’m sorry.” How might the students interpret that, and what effects might this have on their future participation in the class?
- In his attempt to bring the Asian-American students into the discussion, the professor sets them apart from the rest of the class, making everyone, including the “Asian” students, acutely aware of their own difference. How can instructors encourage participation by these students without falling into this trap?
- What do the student monologues reveal that could be instructive to this professor?
- What do the student monologues reveal that could be instructive to other students?
- Can instructors choose to avoid the issues surrounding a diverse classroom if their *subject matter* does not deal with race/ethnicity/gender?

## *Script: Scene 7. What Are You?*

**Instructor:** Today we want to further discuss the Japanese language. We were talking about stressed syllables and I found an interesting statement on *Wikipedia* -- Uh, let me know if you agree or disagree -- saying that “In Japanese, a stressed syllable is merely pronounced at a higher pitch” is wrong. Japanese pitch accents are manifested as steep ‘drops’ in pitch.” Who agrees or disagrees? You, what are you?

**Student 1:** Excuse me?

**Instructor:** What nationality are you? You’re not Chinese, are you?

**Student 1:** Japanese.

**Instructor:** Ah, I thought so. Uh, can you tell us about the use of pitch in your language?

**Student 1:** I’m from Chicago. I don’t speak Japanese or Chinese, just English.

**Instructor:** Oh, hm, sorry...Um, uh, what about you? What are you? You’re not Chinese, are you?

**Student 2:** I’m Korean.

**Instructor:** Oh, can you offer us any insight into the use of pitch in your native language?

**Student 2:** Um...

### ***MONOLOGUE (Student 1)***

I’m not Chinese, not Korean, I’m not Oriental, I’m Japanese, Japanese-American. I’m American, and just as American as the next person who has rounder eyes and a fairer complexion. I was born and raised in Chicago, so if you ask me where I’m from, I’ll say just that. And if you ask me my nationality, you might be confused if I don’t say Japanese, but I don’t feel like explaining the difference between ethnicities and nationalities or how I’m no different from you even though you think I could never be the same...as you.

### ***MONOLOGUE (Student 2)***

When people ask me where I'm from I have a lot of conflicting thoughts in my head, 'coz I have so many responses I can give them. Um, um, so when I tell people that I'm from Korea, which I do sometimes to just shorten the conversation and make it simple, they always comment and question me about how perfect my English is. And that kind of makes me feel uncomfortable, and I feel like they're being ignorant although it's not always that way. They just haven't heard my story. So, um, and when I tell people that I'm from Michigan, it's...it's the same way. I, I feel like I oversimplify my identity and, I just, um, cut off, cut out all the other parts of my identity which, um... I relate myself to Korean culture, and, uh, my parents are Korean, so, so I feel like I'm cutting that part out which, um, causes a huge dissonance in my attitude and behavior and what I say. I don't want to give people misconceptions about my background but it's really difficult to tell my story when, um, people have assumptions that I'm Chinese or you're, I'm totally Korean, or I'm totally American. I, I'm not one or the other. Um, I fe-, I feel like if people would acknowledge, and, um, know beforehand that I can be many different things, and I don't need one response and if they would give me time and, um, I guess, just the space to tell my story, I would be willing to.

## ***Scene 8. The “Average” American***

### ***OBJECTIVES***

- To consider student responses, silences and silencing in the classroom
- To distinguish racial classification from ethnic identity
- To consider alternative ways of engaging students in discussion

### ***SCENARIO***

In an undergraduate class, the professor singles out one student as an example of a person with typical Caucasian racial features. The student reacts to the professor’s comment about his racial appearance, saying that while his father is Caucasian, he identifies himself as a Mexican. The professor, however, insists that one’s ethnicity is not something that one chooses to be.

### ***MONOLOGUE (student)***

The student explains why he does not identify as Caucasian, and how his seemingly Caucasian features are a result of the Spanish colonial legacy. He also talks about his Mexican upbringing.

### ***DISCUSSION POINTS***

- The professor is talking about a *racial classification*; the student is talking about his *ethnic identity* – what is the difference and why is this distinction important? [See also scene 1]
- The typical student is more likely to suffer in silence than challenge a professor like this. How does the student’s monologue provide insights that help us understand such silences?
- Why might students feel *silenced* by this professor?
- How can we involve students in discussions about race and ethnicity without positioning them, or labeling them, or expecting them to represent their race/ethnic group?



## *Script: Scene 8. The “Average” American*

**Professor:** A lot of international students actually tell me how surprised they are that the average American is not this blonde-haired, blue-eyed person that the media has depicted for them. That in actuality, Bryan, for example, is a lot closer to the average Caucasian.

**Student:** Excuse me?

**Professor:** Oh I was just showing the class that you are actually closer to the average Caucasian than the stereotypical blonde-haired, blue-eyed person that they have imagined.

**Student:** No, no, I, I heard you. I just...I'm not Caucasian.

**Professor:** Oh, ah, I'm sorry, you just seemed...too light. You're last name's Fischer, so you're father's Caucasian, right?

**Student:** Yeah, my dad's Caucasian, but that doesn't mean that I am. I mean, he's Baptist, and I've been a Catholic all my life.

**Professor:** Well, those are two very different things.

**Student:** Are they? According to who? Because where I come from, there isn't much of a difference.

**Professor:** Well, you can't just decide you're going to be a different ethnicity by believing that it's true.

**Student:** Yeah, but you're wrong about me. See, I did have the choice because I was a mix. I, I could choose to be Mexican, Caucasian, or both. And I *am* a Mexican, not half of a one, but a full-fledged Mexican. I was raised in her streets. And I spoke her words first.

**Professor:** Yes, but you can't ignore—

***MONOLOGUE (Student)***

Escuchame, no soy uno de ustedes. Tengo tu nombre, pero nunca puedes entender el orgullo de ser de la raza. You will never be able to comprehend how even though I'm only "half" Mexican, I'm closer to the race than those alleged "full blooded" Mexicans, who can't even speak the language. You say I don't look Mexican? That my skin is too light? Well, you forget that being a Mexican is having a mix between the descendants of Spain and the natives that lived in our lands centuries ago. So being light-skinned just means that I got more Spaniard blood in me.

But my pride isn't only what I was born with, it's what I was born into. I, I was raised Mexican. Tortillas on the table, red rice and beans with every meal, Catholic church every Sunday. So when you look at me and you say that you see the average Caucasian, I get confused as to what that means. Because I don't know a damn thing about being Caucasian. I didn't celebrate Halloween until I was a junior in high school. For me it was, "Dia de los Muertos" that I had to celebrate every year. And Easter? Huntin' and paintin' eggs? Never did it. I would go to church every Easter and pray for several hours and praise that our Lord Jesus Christ came back from the dead. So don't tell me what I am. Ask me.

# *Additional Resources*

## *University Web Resources*

### **Brown University**

2002 *The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education*.  
[http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/diversity\\_kit/](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/diversity_kit/)

The manual is for those in the field of teaching in general, specifically addressing issues relating to diversity in the classroom

### **Central Washington University**

*Diversity Training Initiative*. Central Washington University  
[http://www.cwu.edu/~cwu\\_diversity/dti/reception\\_center.html](http://www.cwu.edu/~cwu_diversity/dti/reception_center.html)

Relevant links in the website are:

- “Now Showing” – a list of popular films that address general issues of diversity
- “Library” – has different links to fiction books, non-fiction books and periodicals that tackle diversity
- “Faculty Club” – provides more links to resources on teaching diverse classrooms and inclusive curricula, online bibliographies, and other institutions that deal with diversity in the educational institution

### **Harvard University**

*Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning*. Harvard University.  
<http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

This teaching and learning center has a good section featuring tip-sheets on several different aspects of diversity in the classroom. See  
<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k1985&pageid=icb.page29721>

Addresses the following areas:

- Class in the Classroom
- Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom
- Teaching in Racially Diverse College Classrooms (Tips for Teachers)
- Women and Men in the Classroom: Inequality and Its Remedies
- Women in the Classroom (Tips for Teachers)

### **University of California Berkeley**

*Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*. University of California Berkeley  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at UC Berkeley.  
<http://diversity.berkeley.edu/supporting/>

Provides separate resources for different aspects of diversity such as gender, disability, race and ethnicity. It also describes different programs and resources for undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and university staff.

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

*Student Affairs Counseling Center Outreach and Consultation*

[http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/?page\\_id=6](http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/?page_id=6)

*Diversity*. Office of the Provost

<http://www.provost.illinois.edu/programs/diversity/index.html>,

The “resource” link lists institutions within and outside the University of Illinois which address diversity issues/concerns.

## ***Books, Articles and Web Resources Addressing a Diverse Learning Environment***

**Bruch, P.L., with R.R. Jehangir, D.B. Lundell, J.L. Higbee, K.L.Miksch**

2005 Communicating Across Differences: Toward a Multicultural Approach to Institutional Transformation. *Innovative Higher Education* 29(3): 195-208.

The authors talk about the need for both personal and professional commitment and institutional commitment to change one's attitudes and actions.

**Clauss-Ehlers, Caroline S.**

2006 *Diversity Training for Classroom Teaching: A Manual for Students and Educators*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media, Inc.

Section 2, "Dimensions of Difference: Culture, Socioeconomic Status, Race, Ethnicity, Language and parental Partnership," and Section 3, "Dimensions of Difference: Gender" specifically focus on the diverse classroom

**Davis, Barbara Gross**

1993 Diversity and Complexity in the Classroom: Considerations of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender. *In Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass  
<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/diversity.html>

2009 [1993] *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

The second part of the book, "Responding to a Changing Student Body" addresses diversity directly, with chapters such as:

- Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom
- Students with Disabilities
- Re-entry and Transfer Students
- Teaching Academically Diverse Students

**Friedrich, Katherine**

ND. *How to Facilitate a Case Study Exercise*. <http://www.cirtl.net/node/2635>

**Ladson-Billings, Gloria**

2001 *Crossing over to Canaan: the Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

**Light, Richard J.**

2001 *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*. Cambridge, Mass.:

Harvard University Press.

**Maira, Sunaina, and Elisabeth Soep**

2005 *Youthscapes: the Popular, the National, the Global*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

**Nathan, Rebekah**

2005 *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

**Peters-Davis, Norah, and Jeffrey J. Shultz**

2005 *Challenges of Multicultural Education: Teaching and Taking Diversity Courses*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

**Ross, K.A.**

1999 Can Diversity and Community Coexist in Higher Education? The Case of Heritage College. *American Behavioral Scientist* 42: 1024-1040.

This article details one college's community-building initiative, including incorporation of a school's vision and strategic plan

**Sellers, Sherrill, with Jean Roberts, Levi Giovanetto, Katherine Friedrich, and Caroline Hammargren**

*Reaching All Students: A Resource for Teaching in Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics*.

<http://www.cirtl.net/files/ReachingAllStudentsResourceBook.pdf>

The section "Addressing Students' Needs" discusses the importance of knowing the students' backgrounds to facilitate learning and communication. There are also short sections for instructors who are non-native English speakers. "Societal Attitudes and Science Anxiety," reminds instructors to consider how their language and the examples that they use in class have a bearing on the performance of underrepresented students.

**Simon, BK**

*Culture in the Classroom Video and Instructional Materials*.

[http://www.communication.ilstu.edu/bksimon/movies/culture\\_guide.pdf](http://www.communication.ilstu.edu/bksimon/movies/culture_guide.pdf)

**Streichler, Rosalind**

2005 *Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook*. 7th edition.

<http://www.ctd.ucsd.edu/resources/tahandbook.pdf>

For teaching in diverse classrooms see pp. 53-55.

## *On Race and Ethnicity in the Classroom*

### **Ladson-Billings, Gloria**

1994 *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

2003 *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on Social Studies: The Profession, Policies, and Curriculum*. Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Pub.

### **Lesage, Julia**

2002 *Making a Difference: University Students of Color Speak Out*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman Littlefield Publishers.

### **Pollock, Mica**

2004 *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### **Reddy, Maureen T., and Bonnie TuSmith**

2002 *Race in the College Classroom: Pedagogy and Politics*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

### **Delpit, L.**

1988 The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children. *Harvard Educational Review* 58(3): 280-298.

Author discusses race and education in the United States and her belief that much needed dialogue about these important issues is 'silenced'.

### **Hurtado, S., with J. Milem, A. Clayton-Pedersen, W. Allen**

1998. Enhancing Campus Climates for Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Educational Policy and Practice. *The Review of Higher Education* 21(3): 279-302.

([http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/review\\_of\\_higher\\_education/v021/21.3hurtado.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/review_of_higher_education/v021/21.3hurtado.html))

The authors discuss the policy and practice surrounding institutional campus climate, and psychological and behavioral dimensions of climate and their implications on student development.

### **Terenzini, P.T., with A.F. Cabrera, C.L. Colbeck, S.A. Bjorklund, J.M. Parente**

2001 Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Classroom: Does It Promote Student Learning? *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(5): 509-531.

This study examines the development of academic and intellectual skills by influencing structural diversity in the classroom.

## *Race/ Gender/Power and Privilege*

**Adams, M. with W.J. Blumenfeld, R. Castaneda, H.W. Hackman, M.L. Peters, X. Zuniga (eds.)**

2000 *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Antisemitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism and Classism*. New York: Routledge.

Includes divergent views and personal narratives on all these areas.

**Johnson, A.G.**

2006 *Privilege, Power and Difference*. 2nd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

A sociologist who studies social inequality examines issues surrounding power and privilege in our society; includes how to recognize power differences in society and practical recommendations for how to combat privilege. See also <http://www.agjohnson.us>.

**Elliott, Candia, R. Jerry Adams and Suganya Sockalingam,**

1998. Ten Myths that Prevent Collaboration Across Cultures. In *Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration*. <http://www.awesomeibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit-myths.html>

**McIntosh, Peggy**

1988 *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*.

<http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf>

A reflection identifying how, on a daily basis, white privilege is evident.

**Earlham College Students and P. McIntosh**

Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack II. Sexual Orientation. Daily Effects of Straight Privilege.

[www.cs.earlham.edu/~hyrax/personal/files/student\\_res/straightprivilege.pdf](http://www.cs.earlham.edu/~hyrax/personal/files/student_res/straightprivilege.pdf)

Straight-identified students at Earlham College base this list of straight privileges on the above article by McIntosh.



## ***For International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)***

**Althen, G.**

2003 *American Ways*. 2nd ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

**Sarkisian, E.**

1997 *Teaching American Students*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Harvard.

### **Vanderbilt Center for Teaching**

*Resources for International Faculty and TAs*. Vanderbilt Center for Teaching.

[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/teaching\\_resources/specific\\_audiences/international.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/teaching_resources/specific_audiences/international.htm)

Provides links to university resources that can help international faculty and TAs navigate through American university culture. See especially, <http://ucat.osu.edu/read/teaching/toc.html>

Section II, “Who Students Are” discusses different aspects of classroom diversity; Section III, entitled “International” focuses on the cultural and language adjustments that international faculty and TAs might encounter when teaching in an American university classroom.

### **York University**

*International Teaching Assistant Handbook*.

<http://www.yorku.ca/yorkint/intlstud/new/ita.pdf>

Useful section on teaching in English for international teaching assistants.