

## Teaching Critical/Cultural Courses Online

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Online teaching presents opportunities and challenges in teaching critical/cultural classes. This brief guide presents practices, considerations, and links to resources as a launching-off point, should you choose to go deeper.

### **Create a supportive online community for the course. Set the tone and structure your class to include culturally responsive materials.**

**\*This starts with the basics.** Include a syllabus statement on the importance of respecting perspectives, ground rules to protect against racist, sexist, or any otherwise disrespectful or hurtful comments. Promote the necessity of respecting the preferred pronouns of others. Include links to student conduct code.

**\*Include a syllabus statement** that alerts the course of potentially sensitive course content.

**\*Send a welcome message to students and repeat the importance of maintaining a respectful online environment and tone.** Explain good “netiquette.”

<https://teachonline.asu.edu/2016/04/teaching-good-netiquette/>

<http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

**\*Respect privacy and understand the problems with recording online sessions,** especially with sensitive content. Students should be informed if sessions are recorded. Oral participation, student images (through video or Zoom profile picture), and audio should be optional if the course is recorded. What people say in class should stay in the class.

**\*Check your own citationality,** assigned materials, and readings to be sure you are not promoting predominately White cisgender scholars.

**\*Consider the structure and materials of your online course.** It is often productive to separate the course into units, with the first focusing on specific concepts (e.g. intersectionality, representation, and stereotyping) and the second focusing more on contexts (e.g. race and blindcasting). While there is overlap, this allows you to push students to discuss issues after learning the nuts and bolts of theories as opposed to students offering polarizing opinions without theoretical framing.

**\*Encourage reflexivity and accountability** for their statements.

**\*Do not tokenize students** in digital environments or expect a student to speak on behalf of an entire race, nationality, gender, etc.

**\*Consider a statement to protect course materials on sensitive topics** and in general.

Example statement from McGill:

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without the explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

**\*Include a similar statement and many reminders to protect student identity.**

Their images, names, and opinions should not ever be screenshot or saved problematically by other students.

**\*Discussions. Be extra vigilant about discussion prompts, ground rules, and rubrics.**

Canvas' discussion section is a hotbed for students' opinions and must be designed, used, and moderated strategically in order to prevent a host of issues including potentially harmful student comments. Do not ignore harmful student comments and address them immediately.

**\*Discussions management**

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/strategies-managing-online-discussions/>

<http://edtech.ucdavis.edu/teaching/discussions/>

<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-14887-75187841194>

[https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10460-canvas-instructor-guide-table-of-contents#jive\\_content\\_id\\_Discussions](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10460-canvas-instructor-guide-table-of-contents#jive_content_id_Discussions)

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/inspiring-minds/you-shouldnt-be-the-only-one-talking-in-your-digital-classroom?itemFindingMethod=Editorial>

**\*Creating discussion prompts**

<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/discussion-prompts/>

<https://ctle.utah.edu/resources/question.php>

[https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/resources/challenging\\_situations/Using%20Discussion%20Questions%20Effectively.pdf](https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/resources/challenging_situations/Using%20Discussion%20Questions%20Effectively.pdf)

**\*Creating discussion rubrics**

<https://topr.online.ucf.edu/discussion-rubrics/?fbclid=IwAR3dGyT0cfrB1VtJd8suQfTeevB3s-FdSE6v4fbD2-QMupbVIgWB4vHeOoY>

**\*Consider an online “neighborhood watch” approach**

Encourage students to communicate any potentially harmful content or misinformation in the posts of classmates. Address and remove harmful content. Report to appropriate entities (See this later section: Caring for students and yourself. Know where to report issues and what resources are available to those experiencing difficulties).

**\*An instructor can delete problematic posts**

This choice is available through the 3-dot menu option in the upper right of posts in the discussion feed.

**\*Other resources**

<https://keep-teaching.duke.edu/strategies/building-an-engaged-online-community/>

<https://equity.ucla.edu/know/>

<https://ctle.utah.edu/resources/Inclusive%20Classroom.php>

**Be aware of and predict hot-button issues likely to come up in class.**

Seek resources and effective strategies on addressing race, ethnicity, and nationality (and other categories) during COVID-19.

**\*Addressing the increase in anti-Chinese sentiment**

*Resources to Learn about and Address Coronavirus Racism*

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-DLnAY5r-f4DRLZgndR\\_Bu47nqHVtAOKem5QRmbz7bg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-DLnAY5r-f4DRLZgndR_Bu47nqHVtAOKem5QRmbz7bg/edit)

<https://www.vox.com/2020/2/7/21126758/coronavirus-xenophobia-racism-china-asians>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/05/coronavirus-reawakens-old-racist-tropes-against-chinese-people/>

<https://time.com/5775716/xenophobia-racism-stereotypes-coronavirus/>

<https://www.colorado.edu/asmagazine/2020/04/08/anti-asian-racism-and-covid-19>

**\*Addressing the increase in misinformation**

If students repeat misinformation in the classroom there are useful strategies couched in some empathy that you can use to engage more critically thinking around sources of data, legitimacy etc.

*E.g. If Someone Shares the 'Plandemic' Video, How Should You Respond?*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/05/plandemic-video-what-to-say-conspiracy/611464/>

**\*Affirming Black Lives without inducing trauma**

[https://www.tolerance.org/the-moment/may-8-2020-affirming-black-lives-without-inducing-](https://www.tolerance.org/the-moment/may-8-2020-affirming-black-lives-without-inducing-trauma?fbclid=IwAR2GPdi2HGdgykSmpFet0lg4VHHbnJBb1ywNu1APwrJmPTPizlqFR_TaQc4)

[trauma?fbclid=IwAR2GPdi2HGdgykSmpFet0lg4VHHbnJBb1ywNu1APwrJmPTPizlqFR\\_TaQc4](https://www.tolerance.org/the-moment/may-8-2020-affirming-black-lives-without-inducing-trauma?fbclid=IwAR2GPdi2HGdgykSmpFet0lg4VHHbnJBb1ywNu1APwrJmPTPizlqFR_TaQc4)

<https://www.naacp.org/campaigns/we-are-done-dying/>

**\*Addressing the increase in prejudices and felt emotions in marginalized communities affected by COVID**

E.g. Pandemics can bring about postcolonial stress disorder for many Indigenous students and minority communities are disproportionately affected.

<https://curiosities.sheridancollege.ca/supporting-indigenous-students-at-a-distance-during-the-pandemic/>

**\*Addressing the upcoming November election and polarizing politics**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/21/learning/election-2020-11-ways-to-engage-students-from-now-until-november.html>

**\*Management of difficulties** (Also see this later section: Caring for students and yourself. Know where to report issues and what resources are available to those experiencing difficulties)

[https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/challenging\\_situations.php](https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/challenging_situations.php)

<https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/navigating-difficult-moments>

<https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/10-ways-to-talk-to-students-about-sensitive-issues-in-the-news/>

<http://crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/managing-controversy-in-the-online-classroom/>

## **Be aware of the technical aspects of online teaching that invite problems.**

### **\*Zoombombing**

*'Zoombombing' Attacks Disrupt Classes*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/03/26/zoombombers-disrupt-online-classes-racist-pornographic-content>

*How to Avoid Zoombombing*

<https://edtech.ucsf.edu/how-avoid-zoom-bombing>

*Tips for Zoom Settings*

Create a waiting room, use “lock the meeting function”

Consider ‘muting all’ participating during sections and using the ‘raise hand function’

Consider muting all of these settings: screen sharing for non-hosts, autosaving chats, file transfer, ‘join before host,’ annotations, and ‘allow removed participants to rejoin’

### **\*Issues with anonymity and trolling and other forms of online harassment**

<https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/defining-online-harassment-a-glossary-of-terms/>

### **\*Students articulating concepts out loud on sensitive topics with roommates**

Students may be working at home and are surrounded by others who may take offense at topics being discussed out loud by the student, or the student may reveal something about themselves that housemates might find offensive. Consider not requiring that students articulate concepts out loud on sensitive topics, but rather through written discussions, assignments, and emails to the instructor. You can also encourage students to wear headphones to prevent others from overhearing.

### **\*Screenshots and recording**

Remind students not to screenshot or record on their own devices as it can advertently or inadvertently capture student information and present privacy and IP problems.

**\*Access and divides**

It is important to be flexible and understanding about the various inequities in access to computers and reliable WI-FI needed to participate in online settings. Laptops are often available for checkout through university libraries.

<https://lib.utah.edu/services/knowledge-commons/checkout-equipment.php>

**Course Materials. Draw inspiration from pre-tested successful CRT activities and lesson plans, rather than always reinvent the wheel. Adapt to the appropriate level.**

**\*Resources to address coronavirus racism**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tv7-dMbpTPAWloaRnJxeD05pBrYpi0KfFfoPsqzxhoc/edit>  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aEFof34KR4V5odYY75gx5ilTTrLrmxU-/view>

**\*Resources that include free critical race media literacy content and lessons**

*UCLA*

<https://guides.library.ucla.edu/educ466>

*Center for Media Literacy*

<http://www.medialit.org>

*UNESCO's Center for Media Literacy*

<https://iite.unesco.org/pics/publications/en/files/3214705.pdf>

*Media Literacy Clearinghouse*

<https://frankwbaker.com/mlc/>

*Vision Maker Media*

<https://www.visionmakermedia.org/>

*PBS*

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lesson-plan/>  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily-videos/lesson-plan-covington-catholic-incident-through-a-media-literacy-lens/>

*Teaching Intersectionality*

<https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/tmq/issue/view/102>

**Caring for students and yourself. Know where to report issues and what resources are available to those experiencing difficulties.**

These are contacts at one university for an example.

Report student disruption to Student Conduct & Community Standards in the Office of the Dean of Students: online, by email: deanofstudents@utah.edu, or by calling 801-581-7066 to speak with a conduct staff person.

<https://safeu.utah.edu/how-do-i-report/>

University of Utah Bias Incident Reporting: RespectU@Utah.edu

University Counseling Center  
801-581-6826  
201 S 1460 E, Rm 426  
Student Services Building  
The University of Utah  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

For after-hours emergencies, contact the  
24/7 Crisis Line: 801-587-3000

<https://counselingcenter.utah.edu/self-help/coping-covid-19.php>

<https://mindfulnesscenter.utah.edu/practice-mindfulness.php>

<https://deanofstudents.utah.edu/bit/students-in-distress.php>

*Pedagogy of care*

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/pedagogy/article/17/1/9/20496/PushbackA->

*Critique of care*

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/critical-times/article/2/1/13/139235/Critique-as->

*Support*

<https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/self-care/>

**Recognize that there is always room to improve your approaches to teaching race, gender, and other critical/cultural topics.**

*Teaching Race Pedagogy and Practices*

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-race/>

*Five Keys to Challenging Implicit Bias*

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/keys-to-challenging-implicit-bias-shane-safir>

<https://instr.iastate.libguides.com/c.php?g=799527&p=7093246>

*Race and Gender Bias in Online Courses*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/08/study-finds-evidence-racial-and-gender-bias-online-education>

*Inclusive Teaching*

<https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/>

*Disarming Racial Microaggressions*

[https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/resources/classroom\\_environment/Disarming%20Racial%20Microaggressions.pdf](https://ctle.utah.edu/inclusiveteaching/resources/classroom_environment/Disarming%20Racial%20Microaggressions.pdf)

## **Academic sources on culturally responsive teaching online and controversial topics in the classroom**

Gurin, P., Nagda, B. R. A., & Zúñiga, X. (2013). *Dialogue across difference: Practice, theory, and research on intergroup dialogue*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hand, M., & Levinson, R. (2012). Discussing controversial issues in the classroom. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(6), 614-629.

Heitner, K. L., & Jennings, M. (2016). Culturally responsive teaching knowledge and practices of online faculty. *Online Learning*, 20(4), 54-78.

McLoughlin, C., & Oliver, R. (2000). Designing learning environments for cultural inclusivity: A case study of indigenous online learning at tertiary level. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 16(1).

Tsukada, H., & Perreault, A. (2016). Complicating how classroom climate works: Advancing the framework. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, 9(2), 1-18.

Woodley, X. (2018). Authentic dialogue in online classrooms. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 22(4). Retrieved from <http://www.rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/5898-how-to.pdf>

Woodley, X., Hernandez, C., Parra, J., & Negash, B. (2017). Celebrating difference: Best practices in culturally responsive teaching online. *TechTrends*, 61(5), 470-478.

<https://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CreatingaPositiveClassroomClimateWeb-2.pdf> (useful but has some problems)

## **Practical articles and other**

- <http://campusguides.lib.utah.edu/diversityandinclusion/home>
- <http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>
- <http://crlt.umich.edu/research-basis-inclusive-teaching>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Teaching-about-Racism-College-Classroom/dp/194919924X>
- <https://elearnmag.acm.org/archive.cfm?aid=3274756>
- <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/managing-controversy-in-the-online-classroom/>
- <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/lib/utah/detail.action?docID=4659728>

- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CI1cDPDa8\\_q7wprcOaajO0-i0XCjGbxr-2uZCyXEn7Y/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CI1cDPDa8_q7wprcOaajO0-i0XCjGbxr-2uZCyXEn7Y/edit)
- <https://sites.dartmouth.edu/teachremote/remote-teaching-good-practices/>
- <https://www.facultyfocus.com/topic/articles/online-education/> (some very good short articles)
- <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/read/blog/>
- <http://designingforlearning.info/writing/ten-best-practices-for-teaching-online/>
- <https://teachremotely.harvard.edu/best-practices>