

Oppression

Oppression is a pervasive system of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousnesses. This term encapsulates the fusion of institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that shade most aspects of life in society.

Privilege

Privilege denotes exclusive advantages or benefits afforded to certain people based on their group identity or status. These benefits are largely unearned and the identities are often invisible to the people utilizing them.¹

Microaggression

Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative... slights and insults.”² These are often subtle. So the recipient feels badly, but it can be difficult to explain exactly why, especially to someone who isn’t sympathetic to issues of bias.

¹ Adams, Bell, Griffin eds. (2011). *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*.

² Sue (2007). “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life
Implications for Clinical Practice.” *American Psychologist*: May-June 2007.

Toward Socially Conscious Teaching: Suggested Best Practices

1. Recognize and be able to articulate our own participation in an oppressive system. How do we collude? How have we been hurt?
2. Recognize engagement happens at a cognitive and affective level. (For students AND for faculty)
3. Be prepared to manage emotions triggered in students.
4. Be able and willing to resolve differences and work toward a common goal.
5. "Unsettle students" by challenging the mainstream discourse/what is "known."
6. Create opportunities for collaborative learning projects.
7. Explicitly acknowledge this work can be emotionally daunting and support the students in their processes.
8. Use standpoint theory in order to help to recognize complicity, collusion and marginalization.
9. Create opportunities to develop agency and be empowered as an ally.
10. Recognize those moments when process should trump content and follow through.
11. Create opportunities to envision an antiracist community.
12. Raise the expectation that we need all voices at the table and be an ally to those that are not.
13. Negotiate with students early on, to collectively create a respectful environment by choosing ground rules together, co-creating our ideal learning community.
14. Encourage learners to speak from their own experience.
15. Lots of opportunity for modeling and practicing appropriate dialogue.
16. No tolerance for undermining/verbally attacking one another.