

Are My Politics Showing: Teaching Multiple Perspectives

"Feminist education - the feminist classroom - is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgement of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university."

From: bell hooks (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* p.51.

Has your identity/politics been the source of conflict in the classroom?

Teaching Scenarios from Women and Gender Studies:

WMS 360: Sex and Culture- Dr. Barbara LeSavoy

How might you approach politically charged topics such as Reproductive Freedoms in the classroom?

How do you invite in various perspectives/counter arguments? Student quote: "I know you said we should challenge your point of view, but I don't always feel safe doing so."

WMS 487: Black Women's Marriage and Sexuality- Ayana Weekley

"Do African American students feel more comfortable when they have an African American teacher in front of them?" (student question for the class)

How is your identity (race, gender, sexuality) written on the body?

WMS 101: Introduction to Women Studies- Amber Humphrey

How can you use your identity constructively in the classroom?

Questions:

1. Are there stereotypes that get tagged to your knowledge area? Are there theoretical disciplines that are less vulnerable to dimensions of identity – less embodied and/or politically charged? But are there are still identity challenges in these more traditional spaces of knowledge?
2. When you try and balance and stay away from the political, can it paralyze you in the classroom? Women's Studies is political -- but how do you listen to, validate, and affirm all perspectives, even those that run counter to the belief system of the instructor and the knowledge that informs the discipline?

3. How do you take a bad idea – white male supremacy-- and use it as a teachable moment?
4. How do you invite students into a place that is not their identity? What are some teaching strategies to effectively integrate vs. alienate an opposing voice?
5. What do you disclose about your identity? What do you try to conceal?

Suggested Resources

Cohee, G, Daumer, E, & Kemp, Theresa. (1998). *The feminist teacher anthology*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Culley, M. & Portuges, C (Eds). (1985). *Gendered subjects: The dynamics of feminist teaching*. Boston: Routledge.

Dube, Kate. "What Feminism Means to Today's Undergraduates." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 July, 2004: 18-19.

Enns, C. Z & Sinacore, A. L. (Eds.). (2005). *Teaching and social justice: Integrating multicultural and feminist theories in the classroom*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

Harding, S. (Ed.) (2004). *The feminist standpoint reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. New York: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1998). *Talking back: Thinking feminist thinking black*. Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margins to center*. Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (2000) *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Macdonald, A.A. & Sanchez-Casal, S. (2002). *Twenty-first-century classrooms: Pedagogies of identity and difference*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Maher, F.A. & Thompson Tetreault, M.K. (2001). *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race and Privilege*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Markowitz, L (2005). Unmasked moral dichotomies: Can feminist pedagogy overcome student resistance? *Gender and Education*, (17) 1, pp. 39-55.

Ropers-Huilman, B. (1998). *Feminist teaching in theory and practice: Situating power and knowledge in poststructural classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College press.