

Resource Guide

Strategies for Anti-Racist Classrooms

If we accept that systemic racism permeates our culture—and higher education as an extension of that culture—we likely agree that, as educators, we have a responsibility to disrupt that system. Figuring out how to do that in a classroom, however, is another issue. [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) offers this advice for creating anti-racist classrooms: “Prepare yourself, open a conversation with your students, acknowledge what you don’t know, and be willing to listen and learn.” This perspective emphasizes the need for prior reflection, humility, and continued learning. What does this look like in practice? Of course, all classrooms have their own dynamics, but these steps may offer some helpful points of entry.

- **Reflect**—consider what your own biases are, what your fears are, and reflect on where they may be coming from. Sandy Gambill points to some resources for identifying your own implicit biases in this [Notebook post](#). For intensive reflection and research, take the [21 day challenge](#), which provides reading, prompts for reflection, and steps toward action for those who want to dismantle their own involvement in racist systems. Author Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. warns, “Though many people want to jump to action sooner instead of later, action without a vigorous self-education and self-reflection practice can unexpectedly reproduce the very power and privilege dynamics we seek to interrupt in this work.”
- **Assess** your [syllabus](#) and course materials for racial disparity. To what extent are people of color represented in your reading and lecture material? Whose views and experience are privileged? In what ways has racial discrimination shaped the field of research? How do your content and course objectives push back against that structure?
- **Accept** discomfort and awkwardness and the [possibility of being called out](#). As educators, we train to become experts in our fields, and the feeling of not being the expert may cause anxiety and discomfort. However, having the willingness to enter uncomfortable territory and to admit what we do not know has the potential to model for students a crucial posture in learning and in connecting with people with diverging views.
- **Acknowledge** awareness of racial disparity and invite students to be in conversation with you throughout your course, to bring up any covert or overt racism. Show that you are aware of the issues, are seeking to educate yourself, and are eager to be educated. Create “[Ground Rules](#)” for discussion to model civil discourse.
- **Reveal** to students that there [is no such thing as a colorblind classroom](#). Just because we’re not saying anything racist does not mean that systemic racism is not at play. Not calling awareness to the reality of racism does not make it any less real. Silence only

gives it power to flourish beneath the surface. “The “colorblind” approach takes away from the experiences of people of color, because when people refuse to see color, they are looking through the lens of the default in America: whiteness.”

(<https://rossieronline.usc.edu/youth-and-racism/racism-in-the-classroom>)

- **Recognize** that [whiteness](#) comes with “unearned and often unseen or unrecognized advantages” and expect white student to feel uncomfortable with this notion.
- **Cultivate** an awareness that working to overcome racism is a lifelong commitment.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at ctl@slu.edu.