TOOL: DEVELOPING AND USING REPRESENTATIVE READING LISTS

Office of Equity and Inclusive Communities and Teaching & Learning Commons

Overview

A transformative curriculum that consists of a diverse and inclusive reading list helps to position divergent thinking into the pedagogy. This inspires historically underrepresented or unrepresented learners and promotes an increasingly engaged classroom for everyone (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020; Ambroisa et al., 2021).

Racial inequalities may not be obvious in curricula but are no less harmful to Indigenous and other racialized groups (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). Instances manifest through language habits that perpetuate the dominance of Western thinking during teaching and learning (Ambrosia et al.,2021). These manifestations may be subtle, e.g., "Christopher Columbus discovered North America…," while ignoring the fact that he met Indigenous peoples, who were already living there.

In other ways, Western thinking is presented as the only knowledge or approach to a given situation, and in the process, it marginalizes or erases other equally rich or important ways of knowing. As such, applying a representative reading list that includes diverse voices and approaches, helps to transform learning experiences which will likely lead to higher levels of engagement and more desirable outcomes in the classroom (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). This practice is also aligned with decolonizing education, by not privileging Western thought and knowledge as superior.

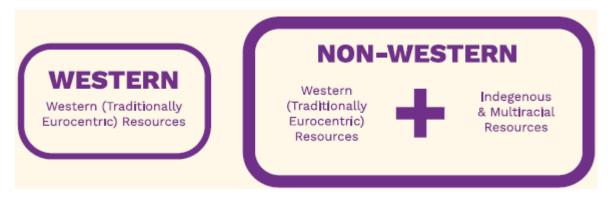Elements of a Western versus a non-Western reading list.

Figure 1 A basic comparison of what a traditional and a non-traditional reading list may typically include

A diverse and inclusive (anti-racist) reading list may look like any of the following:

- Texts that integrate non-canonical perspectives into the content in meaningful ways; or

- All sources for required reading are treated with equal importance

- This means that the readings should not be categorized "either/or," "major/minor," or in any other way that suggests prioritization, hierarchization, or superiority, or referring to work as "traditional" and "non-traditional" as a way of describing the source, content, and/or author

Reflective Pause

Reflect on your current experiences as it relates to this topic.

Consider what you are looking forward to learning more of, or hope to be able to do more of, as you work towards developing anti-racist practices.

Goals

1. Understand the importance of diverse and inclusive reading lists.
2. Understand steps on how to develop a representative reading list in your course.
3. Understand strategies on how to use an anti-racist reading list in your course.

How-to Guide

How to Develop a Representative Reading List

One of the challenges in presenting anti-racist readings in the curriculum is text selection. Consider the following when reviewing appropriate resources for your reading lists:

- **Implicit Bias:** Continuously check your own biases in relation to your selection of literature and academic materials. What are your sources and who has authored them? Have you included non-Eurocentric material?

- **Representation:** Check for representation with regards to race, nationality/country of origin, ethnicity, and other relevant aspects of authors' diverse background including gender, faith, etc. as applicable.Do not organize your list in such a way as to give the appearance of importance or precedence to specific authors; but also ensure that all works, particularly those authored by marginalized and/or people of colour, is intentional and authentic in its purpose for inclusion (i.e., not an "optional" reading or included in order to "check a box"). One way to show neutrality is listing authors by their last names or listing them by the year of publication.

- **Language bias**: Check for general compliance with the most current version of APA (7th edition) or MLA (9th edition) guidelines on inclusive and bias-free language requirements (see Instructor Resources listed below)This also includes verbiage, slang, colloquialisms, and other charged language

- **Racial verification:** Check to see whether course reading lists are dominated by white, male, and Eurocentric authors

- **Readings with expanded worldviews & Deficit-based language:** Select reading content that (books and other learning materials) doesn't use oppressive and deficit-based language, such as "vulnerable", "at-risk", or "distressed" when referring to underrepresented or racialized groups as well as those who have a disability or represent gender minorityInstead think about using stories to talk about the struggles of individual people or places that showcase systemic disparities and clearly communicate the problems that existDevelop opportunities for learners to explore the works of authors from multiracial communities/ backgrounds

- **Critical thinking**: Discourage uncritical acceptance of all views by encouraging students to think critically and challenge material and content using an antiracist and equity lens where possible. Explicitly teaching these skills in-class, online, or asynchronously can help with setting expectations and teaching appropriate skills for discourse and discussion

How to Use Anti-Racist Reading Lists

Constructing an anti-racist reading list may not be enough to broaden the learner's reasoning abilities when viewing the world. To this end, a learning institution is responsible for ensuring that learner awareness about social injustices and inequities is integrated into the curriculum. This may be done by promoting greater understanding, respect, and appreciation for all races and ethnic groups, especially the historically marginalized, and the Indigenous Peoples who were the first to call this land their home. Strategies can be employed to ensure that reading lists are diverse, inclusive, and reflect multiracial perspectives.

Examples may include:

- **Developing assessments with a global mindset**: Create opportunities through assignments and other class-based strategies that require all learners to read beyond the more "traditional" un-inclusive lists and to reference authors from underrepresented groupsLearners may be directed to possible sources that are appropriate for the subject

- **Encourage the use of practical sources to support learning:** Where information on minority or underrepresented and racialized persons are hard to find, encourage learners to consider incorporating "grey" literature, such as, case studies and other learning aids that contribute to more representative learning experiences. This should be viewed as complimentary reading and learning resources that support representation, but will be used in addition to other more "traditional" sources such as journal and other academic works

Narrative Approach

Narratives may be a great tool an instructor can use to help transform thinking and beliefs about a given subject.

- **Knowledge production:** Develop an understanding of how the national narrative of Canada has been created. Use a variety of texts from a variety of sources, and authors of diverse backgrounds and as representative and inclusive of your students, to develop multiple perspectives and encourage learners to explore what was possibly excluded and what assumptions or stereotypes existed in the narrative

- **Immersive experience:** Reflect, share, and discuss with learners how different cultural beliefs and behaviours can create opportunities, and how a lack of (inter)cultural understanding can create barriers. Include lived experiences of learners and others to facilitate co-creation of knowledge and promote immersive learning experiences

- **Way-finding:** Develop tools and strategies learners may use to confront social justice and inequality as a means of finding possible solutions for addressing them

Helping learners develop critical lens:

There are different ways that an instructor may teach learners how to interrogate readings. Suggested techniques to consider include:

- Pre-examine reading lists before submitting assignments

- Determine learner expectations of reading lists and their reaction to diversity in the curriculum

- Explain the importance of finding sources that are based on ethical and rigorous research standards

- Connecting with the Teaching & Learning Commons (T&L Commons) for instructor supports and The Learning Commons (TLC) for student supports

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Reflective Action Point

Reflect on your learning as you approach the end of this tool.

- What changes to your practice do you hope to implement?
- How can this tool support your anti-racist practice?

Instructor Resources

Website: KPU LibGuide: Equity & Inclusive Communities – Includes links to resources that promotes equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives at KPU. Links to film and web resources are included.

  Website: KPU LibGuide: Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression – Includes links to web resources, streaming films, and journals focusing on these two topics.

  Website: APA Style: General Principles for Reducing Bias – Includes general principles and guidelines for writing to reduce bias.

  Website: MLA Style, 9th. edition: Avoiding Bias – Provides guidance for reducing bias language.

  Website: Canadian Government: A Way with Words and Images – Includes appropriate language guidance when referring to people with disabilities.

  Website: Anti-Racism Resources, Supports and Organizations – Emily Carr University of Art and Design

  Website: Office of Equity & Inclusive Communities Resources – Includes a variety of resources and content related to the work of the OEIC department at KPU. Includes the Taskforce on Anti-Racism Final Report and Recommendations.

References

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- Schucan Bird, K., & Pitman, L. (2020). [How diverse is your reading list? Exploring issues of representation and decolonisation in the UK](#). *Higher Education,* 79, 903–920. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00446-9

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- Western vs Non-Western

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