

## The Antiracist Curriculum Development Initiative in the College of Arts and Sciences

Universities can play a vital dual role in combatting racism as centers for research as well as key formative institutions in the lives of the next generation of engaged citizens and policymakers. Many faculty have asked how to do this better. Our students, too, have asked us for more courses that take an antiracist perspective. Indeed, the times demand it: as an intellectual issue, as an educational issue, and as a moral issue.

### Purpose of this Document

Our students' connections to one another and to our institution can be nourished and strengthened by their classroom experiences but can also be diminished and weakened. This document is intended to give faculty motivation, strategies, and resources to do the challenging work of making their pedagogy and praxis more inclusive and move toward antiracist ideals. For all faculty, this work involves self-reflection, humility, and a willingness to teach our students differently from how we were taught. The College proposes to lighten the workload involved in further developing our teaching by sharing the work.

This initiative seeks an **increase in the number of CAS courses that take an antiracist perspective** in content and pedagogy. We already have many, a signal contribution to the university produced by the hard work of so many dedicated College faculty whose efforts we recognize and respect. While we unconditionally support faculty autonomy over their teaching and the principle of academic freedom, as a collective, we can do more to apply academic rigor to investigating structures of systemic racism and white supremacy in society and in our academic disciplines. As a College, we are committed to further progress in this area, and are making available resources to help with antiracist curriculum development at several levels. We welcome your suggestions for other tools.

1. **Support for antiracist curriculum development.** We will support faculty who would like to develop (or further develop) an antiracist perspective in course content, readings, and/or pedagogy, either in creating new courses or revising existing ones. We will provide:
  - a. Discipline-specific **guidance on best practices** for your consideration.
  - b. The opportunity to get **mentoring from CAS faculty** with experience in this area. Contact Núria Vilanova, [vilanova@american.edu](mailto:vilanova@american.edu) – also if you would like to be a resource person!
  - c. The opportunity to **workshop syllabi** for those who wish. Contact Núria.
  - d. **Antiracist Curriculum Development Grants.** Beginning now through AY21-22, we will provide up to \$1,500 per project to support collaborative work by two or more CAS faculty on antiracist curriculum development projects such as building department- or program-wide bibliographies or subject guides, development of a course to be taught (sequentially) by more than one faculty member, or other collaborative contributions to this initiative. Funds may be used for RA wages, books, subscriptions, honoraria to outside experts, etc. (not for stipends). Subject to availability of funds. More information and an application form will be posted soon on the [CAS DEI Website](#).
  - e. **Expert workshops on antiracism and pedagogy** from Visceral Change at the University of Arizona: a [foundational workshop](#) on Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Antiracism, open to all faculty, on February 24, 3-5pm, and, for faculty who have attended the first workshop or already have some proficiency on issues of race and racism, a [workshop on Antiracist Pedagogy](#), March 3, 1-3pm. Recordings will be available for those who aren't able to attend live.

- f. **Facilitated conversations:** Many departments would like to discuss how an antiracist perspective in course design and pedagogy can be applied to their disciplines. We will offer faculty experts to facilitate conversations at a department level aimed not at discussing personal beliefs or behavior but concrete takeaways on how an antiracist perspective can be manifested in STEM fields, the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities.
  - g. Faculty experts to **advise chairs and directors:** Many program directors would like to develop (or further develop) an antiracist perspective in their majors, minors, and graduate programs. We will offer faculty experts to work with PDs to assess their curriculum and identify opportunities for expansion.
2. **Designation.** Students request that we identify courses that take an antiracist perspective. AU CORE courses that engage directly with issues of race and racism are currently marked with a DIV designation. Non-CORE courses are not. Establishing a designation for non-CORE courses is under discussion to be implemented next year.
  3. **DEI reporting.** We will soon receive guidance from the Provost and Faculty Senate encouraging faculty to report DEI activities in scholarship, teaching, and service for purposes of merit, reappointment, promotion, and tenure. Antiracist curricular development and pedagogy are examples of what could be reported in these areas.

These measures will help the College assess what we have done, what we are doing, and what we can do more of to advance the goals of combatting racism and decolonizing the curriculum, offering courses that are up-to-date and engaged with vital issues of our time in ways that will help the university play a positive role in society.

As a College we are committed to antiracist work in manifold ways. Beyond curriculum development, we have developed antiracist performance goals for staff supervisors, antiracist professional development opportunities during paid work hours for non-supervisory staff, a project on the legacy of enslavement and settler colonialism in AU's history, extensive staff support for the Antiracist Research and Policy Center, target of opportunity hire requests, promotion and tenure guidelines revision, and antiracist/DEI training workshops for the CAS community. Many of these grew out of your suggestions, which are always welcome!

Below are key terms often used in this work, followed by ideas of what antiracism looks like in the social science classroom, humanities classroom, STEM classroom, and arts classroom.

### **What is race? A social construct**

Race is a biological fallacy but racism is a social reality. Rather than defining race as a physical state, critical scholarship understands the concept as part of the socio-colonial imaginary, deployed for particular social, political, and economic ends. Anti-blackness is a core component of constructing racial difference. Normative whiteness is an often-unnamed construct that contributes to structures of privilege through law and culture. Race and racism are interconnected with other identity formations such as class, gender, sexuality, physical ability, and ethnicity that sustain structural inequalities even as formal legal racism has eased.

### **What is antiracist pedagogy?**

Antiracist pedagogy challenges systems that perpetuate racism and categorical exclusion. This can involve:

- discussing political, historical, and economic contexts of one’s discipline and its conventions
- critical examination of the persistence and impact of racism and racist policies
- diversifying course readings and materials to include historically marginalized authors and authors with an antiracist perspective
- creating an inclusive classroom environment addressing diverse learning styles
- critiquing the “hidden curriculum” of lessons that are absorbed through the experience of school: that meritocracy is impartial, that failure is merely the student’s fault, etc.
- openness to other epistemologies, traditions, cultures, and languages to reduce Eurocentrism’s narrowing of the human experience and knowledge development
- self-reflection and professional development by faculty
- campus and societal engagement as part of the learning experience

### **What is critical race theory?**

Critical race theory, which emerged from the legal field and has spread to other disciplines, is an interpretive mode that helps recognize the origins and lasting effects of systemic racism and its utility in maintaining white dominance. As Kimberlé Crenshaw puts it, critical race theory is “a way of seeing how the fiction of race has been transformed into concrete racial inequities.” It also examines how other intersecting identity categories such as gender, sexuality, class, and ability affect power relations in society. Applying an antiracist lens in different disciplines to a vast array of complex problems can contribute not only to more inclusive teaching but to new insights that allow solutions to social challenges, from housing segregation to disparate health outcomes, from cultural exclusion and political violence to criminal justice reform.

### **A key new resource at AU: The Antiracist Praxis Subject Guide**

Members of Writing Studies and the University Library on the Information Literacy Committee have teamed up to produce a fascinating [Antiracist Praxis Subject Guide](#). We recommend especially “Racial Justice in Research – Decolonizing Research Methodologies” and “White Supremacy in Scholarly Communications”; “Racial Justice in Education – Decolonization of the Syllabus” and “Antiracist Pedagogy and Praxis,” but you may simply wish to browse.

### **CTRL Support**

We also encourage you to seek out [training at CTRL](#) about approaches to evaluation that are consistent with antiracist teaching practices.

### **For further reading**

- [Antiracist Pedagogy Resource](#). Annotated list of key books and articles.
- [Racial Justice, Racial Equity, and Anti-Racism Reading List](#) Harvard University
- [“Antiracist Pedagogy: Definition, Theory, and Professional Development.”](#)
- [“Effective Teaching is Anti-Racist Teaching”](#) Brown University
- [“Anti-Racist Pedagogy: From Faculty’s Self-Reflection to Organizing in and beyond the Classroom.”](#)
- [“Barriers and Strategies by White Faculty Who Incorporate Antiracist Pedagogy”](#)

What follows are pages devoted to how antiracist pedagogy is used in each of the different discipline clusters in CAS. These are intended not as definitive guides but conversation starters! Alternative views are welcome and discussion is encouraged.

This is a work in progress. Please send additions or changes to [vilanova@american.edu](mailto:vilanova@american.edu). Your ideas, questions and insights are crucial for our and our students’ success!

## Antiracism in the Social Science Classroom

This section provides suggestions and resources for social science-oriented antiracist teaching strategies. Content in this section focuses on broad themes that are relevant to many social sciences disciplines. Approaches outlined here reflect efforts toward meeting antiracist pedagogical and curricular criteria such as

- Creating an inclusive classroom environment
- Teaching of material outside of the context of one's personal biases or familiarity
- Developing an understanding of how oppression and under-representation operate intersectionally rather than according to individual/singular axes of race/class/sexuality/ability/gender
- Fostering campus and societal engagement as part of the learning experience
- Modeling horizontal relationships of mutual respect by listening and learning from students and enabling them to contribute to the shaping of assignments
- Not mistaking teaching as the exercise of power

### The Social Sciences and Studies of Inequality

Teaching and research on inequality is central to many social science fields, including the intersection of oppressions based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, immigration status, and ability. Scholars whose research focuses on inequality might assume that our research skills automatically translate into effective teaching about injustice and equitable teaching practices. These assumptions can cause unintended barriers to the necessary, ongoing process of evaluation and re-evaluation of teaching material and practices.

We encourage faculty with different degrees of skill and familiarity with antiracist pedagogy to confer with one another about their respective approaches and teaching material. This is especially the case for faculty teaching different sections of the same class within a department. Some level of commitment to consistent teaching practices and content is an important part of addressing structural inequalities in the context of teaching and learning. Measures can be developed to evaluate learning within a single class and across sections.

Based on general characteristics of social science classes and the topics covered, we suggest covering these core themes/ideas in lectures, readings and other assignments:

**1) Histories of methodological practices** - A key aspect of antiracist pedagogy in the social sciences involves presenting how research methods and popular theories have changed over time. Social science studies began as colonial enterprises, promoting studies of culture that aligned with hierarchies justifying the observation, subjugation and displacement of people considered to be at a lower stage of cultural and biological evolution. We encourage professors to address how research approaches were tied to the prevailing social, political and economic ideals at the time they were developed. This includes addressing how later changes in methods over time coincide with social, political and economic shifts. Historical context provides a foundation for introducing students to canonical works in a given discipline in ways that do not foster uncritical acceptance of problematic material/ideas.

**2) Teaching and research on intersecting/interlocking oppressions** – The social sciences lend themselves to research and teaching about how forms of oppression intersect with one another. Therefore, intersectionality is a core conceptual framework in the social sciences that takes many forms. While the term is formally attributed to critical legal studies, recognizing the complexity of

identities and interlocking oppressions are core parts of scholar-activist movements led by queer Black women such as the Combahee River Collective. Similarly, recent proposals to broaden the scope of intersectional studies of oppression are also being spearheaded by Black and BIPOC women. Therefore, we encourage professors to use intersectionality as an opportunity to demonstrate the broad significance of BIPOC scholarship to methodological and theoretical developments in the social sciences.

**3) BIPOC Representation** – Related to item 2, we encourage professors to go beyond the inclusion of BIPOC scholars in lectures, readings, and other assignments for the sake of presence. BIPOC scholarship should be presented in a way that demonstrates how it is central to intellectual production in a given discipline. Making sure that BIPOC scholarship is integrated into the syllabus, rather than covering it in a special section or sections, is key.

**4) Platforms and assignments that support peer evaluation and engagement** – Being skilled in antiracist pedagogy does not automatically mean familiarity with platforms for peer assessment and engagement, which enhance equitable teaching practices. New social annotation platforms such as *Perusall* support greater student engagement with texts and one another. Many of the new platforms support greater inclusion of students with different learning styles and levels of comfort speaking in class. Therefore, these platforms are central to antiracist and more equitable teaching practices.

**5) Adopting an asset-based or growth mindset.** Instead of getting frustrated with what your students do not know (a deficit-based mindset), figure out what they do know and connect that to your content. Research shows that if you build your content on what students already know, learning is improved.

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### **Resources particular to the Social Sciences**

- [Decolonizing Primatology reading list](#)
- [Archaeology of Racism syllabus](#)
- [Standing Rock syllabus](#)
- [Islamophobia is Racism syllabus](#)
- [Sociologists for Justice. Ferguson Syllabus](#)
- [Baltimore syllabus](#)
- [Tula syllabus](#)
- [Black Lives Matter Syllabus Project](#)
- [A 12-Step Program for Decolonizing the University](#). Archived Webinar.
- [Decolonizing Anthropology series](#)

## Antiracism in the Humanities Classroom

This section is intended for those in the humanities who would like to incorporate antiracist strategies into their teaching. This document is also useful for those who have already started building an antiracist classroom but would like some additional resources.

### Relevance for the Humanities:

In the humanities, our use of critical methodologies and analyses, historical research, and investigations into the most important aspects of social life make our classrooms well situated for discussions about race, racialization, racial privilege, and antiracism. Our centering of texts in our work provides many opportunities for antiracist teaching. The humanities classroom has also--both historically and currently—been a site where racism is reproduced.

Incorporating antiracist strategies into our courses and teaching practice can ensure that the course is an inclusive and welcoming space for all students, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) learners. It also helps equip all students with the tools they need to resist and dismantle racism as they encounter it in their daily lives, and to come to terms with and make use of the privilege they may carry—just as we recognize that instructors’ own identities may bring special insight or challenges.

### Opportunities for Antiracist Curriculum in the Humanities

Teaching subjects in the humanities can encompass a number of challenges, but there are also many spaces where antiracist curriculum may take center stage. The humanities are particularly well placed to do the kind of critical reflection antiracism encourages and requires. Four principles can help build an antiracist pedagogical practice:

- 1) Include authors and materials that challenge (neo)colonial histories and epistemologies.
- 2) Pay attention (and encourage students to pay attention) to the power relations that shape both the inner structure of the text, as well as its context (particularly in terms of gender, sexuality, and race and ethnicity).
- 3) Highlight the importance of close and critical reading as a tool for understanding the aesthetic, ethical, and political implications of cultural works, including contemporary works.
- 4) Establish (and help your students establish) connections between the texts analyzed, their context and present-day conditions. A key antiracist pedagogical skill is understanding how, as Faulkner put it, “the past is never dead. It’s not even past.” That is to say, we interrogate the present even as we analyze texts from the past.
- 5) Adopt an asset-based or growth mindset. Instead of getting frustrated with what your students do not know (a deficit-based mindset), figure out what they do know and connect that to your content. Research shows that if you build your content on what students already know, learning is improved. We also encourage that you reexamine current readings, activities, and assignments for courses in the humanities. Here are some of the areas to consider:

The Canon: If you are teaching canonical texts and authors, consider *how* you teach those texts. This is not a return to “the canon wars.” Consider discussing which texts are deemed “classic” and “universal” and why. The emergence of the canon paralleled the age of empire, how is this significant?

Many canonical texts include, and even validate, racism, sexism, homophobia on other forms of oppression. Students may be inclined to say “that’s how it was at the time.” Maybe you want to consider engaging fully with the complexity of the text and the context, helping students understand that deep contradictions, particularly when it comes to power structures, are always present, and

provide students with tools to identify, engage with, and learn from those contradictions and tensions.

**Voice:** Including diverse perspectives from a variety of authors and narrators. Think about which perspective(s) are represented by the materials you have selected.

However, if possible, avoid the “race class” model. Having one class on “women’s poetry” or “Black literature” while the rest of the curriculum remains “white, male and straight” inadvertently reinforces the idea that ethnoracial, gender, and sexual minorities and women are what Sara Ahmed would call “conditional guests” of the academy, not an integral part of it. Therefore, try to include female, non-white, and other authors from historically marginalized backgrounds throughout the curriculum. Colleagues are a good source of suggestions, as well as the resources below. Also, consider whether the course assignments encourage students to engage with the voices or perspectives that are at the margins of the text.

**Representation:** Old and new texts may represent individuals and groups using stereotypes, mischaracterizations, or cultural appropriation. Rather than removing problematic texts from one’s syllabus, providing students with the tools to be able to identify and discuss this common phenomenon can equip them to read critically long after the class has ended. To reflect on what is represented and how it is represented is a skill that will be of enduring value to the students.

**Difficult texts:** When introducing students to concepts, themes, and narratives that challenge traditional views and discourses and/or are difficult to parse, it helps to provide some insight and context to help them to navigate the information. Some texts can be intimidating if encountered “cold” without introductory framing to make them more accessible to all students rather than only those who have experience with such texts. Complex or abstract language in theoretical texts should be rendered clearer with the instructor’s guidance. Faculty may benefit from recent work on [nonstandard codes of English](#) and moving from code-switching to “[code-meshing](#).”

**The Archive:** Metaphorically speaking, the archive—preserved, published, and widely available texts and images—has only recently and unevenly begun to represent marginalized communities. This was not accidental but by design, and has not ended, as preservation, publication, and exhibition have historically been closely linked to dominant systems of power. Discussing this with students may help provide them with the necessary perspective on whose voices have been valued and why. Oral traditions and oral history, community-based knowledge production, and the increasing availability of digital and digitized sources may help address this deficit.

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### **Resources particular to the Humanities:**

- [Resources for Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Scholarship in English Literature](#)
- [Antiracist Pedagogies in Literary Studies](#)
- African American Intellectual History Society [Charleston syllabus](#)
- Morris-Reich, Amos & Rupnow, Dirk, eds. [Ideas of ‘Race’ in the History of the Humanities](#)
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. [Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples](#).
- Mignolo and Walsh, [On Decoloniality](#).
- Wade, Peter, et al. [Cultures of Anti-Racism in Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

## Antiracism in the STEM Classroom

If science and racism have been linked in history, antiracism is relevant to science classrooms. All academic and scholarly disciplines can make positive, antiracist changes to how courses are structured and taught. STEM fields may seem disconnected because of their commitment to objectivity, empirical thought, the scientific method, and disciplinary culture that claims that peer review and iterative experimentation result in irrefutable facts until proven wrong, yet implicit bias and lack of diversity [hinder scientific achievement](#) and produce unintended consequences. There are many ways that STEM faculty can take steps to be more antiracist and inclusive in their classrooms to improve outcomes for all students pursuing STEM degrees. The traditional format of natural science courses was honed over decades of teaching a homogeneous student body but may not support the diversity of students in our classes. Strategies for improvement include broadening the choices of assessments, adapting course policies, adding evidence-based pedagogical strategies like active learning and inquiry-based thinking, adopting an asset-based model of student as well as expanding content and assigned readings to include voices of historically marginalized scientists. By starting with small steps to create a more inclusive STEM classroom, one may also create more satisfaction, joy, and discovery for oneself and one's students.

### Some Unique Challenges and Erroneous Claims in STEM

1. How do you create a rigorous course that invites students to work hard and learn versus a course that weeds out students? *Through relationships, assessment design, and other techniques described below.*
2. Claim: STEM fields are free of bias. *But disciplines have histories, and teaching is social and cultural. Individuals' social capital in the scientific community influences which topics are approved and funded, how terms are defined, and what published research winds up in textbooks.*
3. Claim: STEM fields are meritocratic, so we can't be biased. *Meritocracy assumes equal starting conditions and objective criteria but is judged by people embedded in cultures.*
4. Claim: My teaching and research methods select the best people. If I change them, then the quality of our graduates will decline. *Just as companies now understand the opportunity costs of excluding demographic groups, disciplinary [innovation is constrained](#) by systematic exclusion of talent, including the "lost Einsteins."*
5. Do our STEM students really want to have DEI discussion in their classes? *Some asked for it. Others will benefit from it.*

The following sections help reflect on these challenges.

### How some STEM Faculty integrate antiracism into their classrooms.

#### ***Recognize and discuss inequities made in the name of science. You might consider:***

- a. Choosing examples and metaphors that reflect the diverse cultures of your students – use all pronoun types, include non-European names in case studies, and avoid stereotypical images of scientists.
- b. Discussing and dissecting instances in which science failed to be objective or ethical. Some examples include the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, the Guatemala Syphilis Study, the Willowbrook Studies, Nazi medical experiments, the use of Henrietta Lacks's cell line without her consent, the Stanford Prison Experiment, racial bias in facial recognition software or search algorithms, biases in medical diagnoses and pain assessment in BIPOC and women, gender/racial disparities in clinical trials, differential cancer and Covid-19 mortality rates, the



sequencing of a white male genome as the normative genome, disparate effects of climate change on marginalized populations, the eugenic origins of statistical population analyses, and a general failure to share the benefits of scientific discoveries with the populations being studied. More information can be found in recent histories of racist [pseudoscience](#) and [medical racism](#).

c. Acknowledge the inherent bias in selection of what has been studied in the past: what species, spaces, and human communities are favored; who is admitted to clinical trials; in which countries environmental sensors are located, etc. Consider the “streetlight effect” this may produce (like the drunk searching for his keys under the lamppost, where it is easier to see) that can have a reinforcing effect in what is studied—and funded—in the present.

d. Recognizing that there is an added cognitive load on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and Latinx students, especially in the STEM fields. As [Killpack and Melón](#) put it, “Teachers and students in the United States have an awareness of both positive and negative stereotypes related to race and academic expectations in STEM fields. A phenomenon called ‘stereotype threat’ occurs when an individual is performing a difficult task on which members of their group are thought stereotypically to do poorly. Stereotype threat can lead underrepresented students to feel additional mental and emotional pressure to succeed, which increases cognitive load, depletes working memory, and induces physiological stress... Stereotype threat has been shown to negatively impact students’ grades and test scores, and their emotional well-being, sense of belonging, and motivation to persist in an academic field.” Below are ideas for mitigating that cognitive load.

***Use pedagogical strategies that address systemic inequities in the classroom.*** In STEM fields, and especially in introductory courses, faculty are compelled to cover enormous amounts of material during a single semester and often rely on lecturing to do so. While this strategy works for some students, research shows that incorporating of active learning can increase grades, reduce failure rates, and enhance science identity. You might consider:

a. Incorporating at least one active learning exercise in every class or once a week. Active learning is any approach in which students participate in learning or engage with course material through discussions, demonstrations or case studies. Active learning activities can be short, as many faculty learned when redesigning their courses for online teaching during the pandemic. Five-minute think, pair, share exercises are easy to incorporate into lectures. Alternatively, entire lectures can be replaced with case studies. Active learning encourages students to review material throughout the semester, which is particularly useful for students working to develop regular study habits. As you implement active learning exercises, provide adequate time to complete these activities during class. You can also offer detailed instructions to students about their tasks and what the outcomes of the activity will be. Link these activities to your graded assessments. In some cases, it may be necessary or beneficial to explain why you are departing from the traditional lecture format to increase participation. Finally, make sure that active learning is not merely additive to students’ workload.

b. When creating classroom activities, lectures and assessments, carefully reflect on the specific words you use to explain concepts and how and when you learned these concepts. Discuss with your students your expectations for

correct spelling and recall of scientific terms. Ask yourself if your assessments are evaluating students' knowledge of the content versus students' knowledge of vocabulary and seek to create assessments that measure and reward understanding rather than memorization. Ask yourself whether your assessments require cultural knowledge that not all your students have (for example, an SAT question calculating probabilities with a deck of cards that assumes knowledge of the frequency of each type of card.)

- c. Adopting an asset-based or growth mindset. Instead of getting frustrated with what your students do not know (a deficit-based mindset), figure out what they do know and connect that to your content. Research shows that if you build your content on what students already know, learning is improved.

***Discuss the person behind the scientific genius.*** A unique challenge to introducing antiracism into STEM curriculum is that fundamental concepts and experiments form the "canon" of our field(s). When integrating antiracist practices into the STEM classroom, we do not suggest these fundamentals be excluded, but they can be put into historical and sociocultural context. For example:

- a. What are the implications of presenting the scientists whose work forms the canon as heroes? They had lived experiences and views that may illuminate the history of science and how accepted beliefs change over time.
- b. Consider adding the voices of a diversity of scientists, such as through guest lectures or podcasts, even for short clips. A greater diversity of scientists speaking in your class may lessen the stereotype of what a scientist looks like. [www.storycollider.org](http://www.storycollider.org) offers useful podcasts.
- c. Talk about how individuals take part in "knowledge creation" in STEM fields. How is scientific information shared inside and outside the academy? Why is English the dominant language in STEM publications? What journals are the most prestigious and why? Talk about whether these practices exclude anyone, and how that may have contributed to scientific inequities of the type described above. How can we revise those practices to expand participation?

***Talk about the scientific method as a way that influences how we understand the world – not the only way.*** The scientific method is a systematic approach to generating new knowledge through observation, experimentation and empirical methodology. Some faculty may even wish to go further and:

- a. Introduce the scientific method as a way of knowing, acknowledging the existence of other ways, such as rationalization, ethical reasoning, or [intuition](#). (The OED defines intuition as "the ability to understand or know something immediately, without conscious reasoning," and [neuroscientists](#) are exploring how intuition functions as an informed judgment in the context of discovery.)
- b. Ask whether our scientific innovations and contributions draw mainly from the Enlightenment and Eurocentric traditions. How are other traditions, cultural and historical, included and represented? What are the effects?
- c. Include examples of science and scientists outside of the European and American traditions. Focus on teams of scientists versus individuals. Note when "discoveries" were based on well-established traditional knowledge in communities Europeans encountered.

- d. Assign readings from scientists outside the academy - include naturalist journals, original experimental notes, blog posts, or other original texts outside of the traditional peer-reviewed primary literature, to be assessed critically.
- e. Discuss theories that were largely believed to be true until a paradigm shift occurred, including how scientists with new results that contradict the existing literature often face ridicule and are prevented from publishing by gatekeepers.

Faculty in math, physics, and computer science may wonder whether any of this applies to their fields. All fields have histories—do students know our numerals are Indo-Arabic?—and antiracist pedagogy that makes classroom culture more collaborative and more inclusive can work well in any field. When statistics problems are linked to real-world problems, or computer science courses note “[algorithmic bias](#),” students learn to approach these disciplines critically. See the resources below for more ideas—and consider joining a conversation in your department on these questions to find an approach that works with your teaching philosophy and commitments.

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### **Resources particular to STEM:**

- [Racial Bias in Scientific Fields](#). Harvard University
- [Building an Anti-Racist Math Curriculum](#)
- [Antiracism Resources in Computing](#). U-Mass Amherst
- [Addressing Racism in Research Methods and Statistics](#). Jane Palmer
- [10 Common Criticisms of Anti-Racism Action in STEM](#)
- [Is Lecturing Racist?](#) By two biology professors, *Inside Higher Ed*.
- [Active Learning Practices in STEM](#)
- [Black Scientists Matter](#). *Science*.
- [The Racial Politics of STEM Education in the United States](#).
- [Decolonising Science Reading List](#). Chandra Prescot-Weinstein
- [Decolonizing STEM: An Annotated Bibliography](#). Jonathan L. Earle
- [“Decolonizing Science and Science Education in a Postcolonial Space.”](#) Laila N. Boisselle

## Antiracism in the Arts Classroom

The Arts provide a unique place within the educational system precisely because practice and interpretation come down to a very personal level. In an academic way, the Arts are challenging and rigorous because they are not just about memorizing an idea but about processing the idea through *the individual*. Through implicit bias of historical and current ways of learning, the Arts can function as a mode where racism is reproduced and maintained. We can ensure our learning spaces are aligned with antiracist pedagogy methods to respond and react with the flexibility to bring together theory and practice to combat racial injustice through craft.

Incorporating antiracist teaching strategies into our courses and teaching practice is essential for ensuring that the course is an inclusive and welcoming space for all students, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) learners. It also helps equip all students with the tools they need to resist and dismantle racism as they encounter it in their daily lives, and to come to terms with and make use of the privilege they may carry. We recognize that, particularly for the Arts, instructors' own identities may bring special challenges and significance that we process through our work.

### Topics for Arts Faculty to Consider as they Integrate Antiracism into their Classroom

The following suggestions come from conversations with fellow AU Arts faculty for how you might approach rethinking classroom practice.

- **Start with self-reflection and examination.** Our training and experiences typically reflect traditions, canons and strategies that are entrenched in Western, white perspectives and spaces: the conservatory, the museum, Broadway, etc. Evaluating the systems that perpetuate the discipline is a great step to thinking about adjustments to your teaching strategy. Consider joining smaller, more focused professional organizations that directly support the work of arts practitioners of color more than larger, national professional organizations do. Recognize that the Arts is a place for exploration of collective, diverse perspectives and responses -- and is *also* the process of the individual.
- **Silences speak loudly.** Reconsider course titles that claim universality but turn out to present the Western tradition. Consider how that tradition can be presented critically and expanded upon, decentering normative whiteness, critiquing the "white gaze."
- **Consider the body.** The artist's primary tool is the physical body. It is of the utmost importance to allow students to affirm/celebrate their bodies in the process of creation and presentation. It is important to acknowledge and allow the bodies of BIPOC artists to be integral in defining the space. This would extend to acknowledging the history of those bodies in reality and in representation and in choosing examples, productions and course material.
- **Consider the structure of the classroom experience.** Be aware of the diversity of materials/presentations/strategies of crafting a work of art -- and then, when it comes to critique, recognize that inherent bias might affect both peer and instructor critique. Consider letting different perspectives take center stage: what examples/models are you presenting, and what perspectives do they reflect? Value and recognize community-oriented projects/performances at the curricular level, as important work may be happening outside the traditional spaces. BIPOC guest speakers diversify the perspectives of everything in your classroom. (But don't forget to pay them too: guest speaking is work and should be compensated when possible.)

- **Think beyond the degree experience.** All the arts are changing rapidly: if our students are going to work professionally in the arts and we are preparing them for now, are we preparing them for the evolving arts scene 5-10 years from now? This idea extends to recruitment strategies: recognize that some of the most promising students might have applications that won't match "traditional" expectations (for example, those applications that are incomplete). The field itself needs educating as well, where employers might need help interpreting applications for internships and job prospects from diverse applicants.

*Want to workshop syllabi, confer with colleagues, get advice from a faculty member? Contact [vilanova@american.edu](mailto:vilanova@american.edu).*

### **Resources particular to the Arts:**

- [Diversity in Visual Arts Education](#), National Art Education Association
- ["I'm So Offended"](#): Curriculum Flashpoints and Critical Arts Education, by Amanda Kraehe et al.
- [We See You, White American Theater Accountability Report](#) "demands" pp. 24ff
- [Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education](#)
- [Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Resources](#), Massachusetts Arts Education Association
- [Decolonizing the Dance Curriculum in Higher Education](#), by Nyama McCarthy-Brown
- [A Music Theory Curriculum for the 99%](#), by Trevor de Clerq
- [Cultural Diversity Curriculum Design: An Art Therapist's Perspective](#), by Cheryl Doby-Copeland
- ["Reconstructing Practice: Toward an Anti-Racist Arts and Design Field."](#) Art Center College of Design
- [California College of the Arts, Decolonial School](#)
- [Equality and Diversity in the Arts](#). University of the Arts in London.

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