Interrogating the Hidden Curriculum: First Steps for Designing Inclusive and Accessible Courses

An important part of the experience of many graduate students is the teaching of undergraduate classes. Graduate students are often asked to follow the syllabi of others, and the later opportunity to construct one's own course may present initial difficulties. What message does one's syllabus send, and how can the construction of the syllabus impact students in the way one intends? As we'll discuss, the goals that we explicitly state on our syllabi are important to help students understand what we would like them to learn in a given course. However, when engaging in inclusive course design, it's important to also interrogate the implicit goals, the hidden curriculum, that we may promote unintentionally through our syllabi and our teaching.

This workshop, geared toward graduate students but open to all, will help participants both reflect on theoretical models of course design and implement practical strategies for creating inclusive and accessible learning environments. Although the workshop will be led by a presenter, different modules will encourage collaborative engagement among all participants, so that most of the time allotted will be devoted to addressing the particular issues and suggestions of the participants themselves.

We will begin with a brief reflection exercise that will ask participants to choose a particular course they have taught or would like to teach and to spend a few minutes thinking about the goals of that course. After sharing their goals with a partner, participants will engage in a group discussion of the ways we structure courses to reach our explicitly stated goals.

For the second part of the workshop, the workshop leader will give a brief presentation that will illustrate the concept of the hidden curriculum, drawing upon the works of critical pedagogy theorists like Paulo Freire and bell hooks, among others, to consider what unspoken lessons we may be passing on to our students about who belongs in the Classics classroom. As

educators in the field of Classics, with its history of exclusivity and gatekeeping, we must be particularly careful to examine our own biases, intentions, and implicit objectives to ensure an inclusive learning environment for all students. After presenting the concept of the hidden curriculum, the workshop leader will discuss a few practical examples for applying this theoretical model to the classroom; for example, we will consider how to explain what office hours are to students unfamiliar with this type of academic commonplace, as well as considering what the implications may be if we don't make this implicit expectation more explicit.

After this brief presentation, participants will have the opportunity to divide into working groups based on their particular interests or issues. The topics for different groups will include: how to incorporate inclusive language in syllabi, how to teach inclusively when you are not in charge of the course's design (i.e., as a TA/GSI), how to promote inclusivity in the language classroom, among others. The time allocated for this activity will be divided into halves to allow participants to split time between groups if they wish. Each group will be provided with a set of discussion questions, but will be encouraged to diverge from the set questions to shape the discussion around their individual issues, questions, and strategies.

Finally, we will spend a few minutes debriefing as a group, encouraging participants to share what they are most excited to implement in their courses in the future. We will also share some further resources for developing inclusive syllabi and promoting inclusion within the classroom.

The workshop will demonstrate a range of possibilities for approaches to inclusivity in the Classics classroom, giving participants theoretical and practical tools that they can integrate with their own teaching.