

# Principles for Anti-Racist Community-Engaged Pedagogy



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This statement was developed by faculty from four Massachusetts public universities as part of a project, “Building on the Cultural Wealth of Minoritized Students: Anti-racist Community-Engaged Programming, Pedagogies, and Practices,” funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education<sup>1</sup>.

Drawing on the literature on anti-racist and community-engaged pedagogy and on input from students of color and community partners at each of the four campuses, this statement is designed to serve as a resource for community-engaged faculty adopting anti-racist pedagogy and practices.

## Four Guiding Definitions

1. **Anti-racist pedagogy** is a “paradigm located within critical theory utilized to explain and counteract the persistence and impact of racism using praxis as its focus to promote social justice for the creation of a democratic society in every respect” (Blakeney, 2011, pp. 119). It is a pedagogical approach that reveals the structural inequalities within U.S. society, while fostering students’ critical analysis skills, as well as their critical self-reflection.
2. **Critical Service-Learning Pedagogy** fosters a critical consciousness, allowing students to combine action and reflection in classroom and community to examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their service placements and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming those problems. (Mitchell, 2008)
3. **Critically-Engaged Civic Learning (CECL)** is an equity-based framework that views all constituent stakeholders as invested partners in co-design, implementation, and evaluation of CECL initiatives, and is founded on redistributed power and authority to promote civic learning and social change. This approach places the needs of students on an equitable power axis alongside the needs of all other invested stakeholders. (Vincent et al., 2021)
4. **Anti-racist community-engaged pedagogy (ARCEP)** seeks to counteract the persistence and impact of racism on our campuses and in our community engagement through critical reflection on individual and systemic/structural racism (including institutional and governmental policies); intentional course design that may include anti-racist learning goals, course content, policies and assessment; and the creation of a compassionate, reflective classroom that critically challenges racism when it happens, acknowledges the cultural wealth of students of color, and meets students where they are.

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## Four Guiding Principles

### **Counteracting the Persistence and Impact of Racism on our Campuses and in our Community Engagement:**

#### ***Reframing our Institutional and Pedagogic Practices***

- recognizes that the burden of anti-racist training can no longer rest alone on the shoulders of students and educators of color; white faculty and the institution at large must commit time and focus to developing anti-racist practices and structures in their practice.
- fosters collaboration with communities that is driven by and responsive to needs identified by community partners rather than overdetermined by perspectives on what needs to be done or how it should be done that emerge from the university.
- rejects working “on” a community to instead work “with” a community, positioning community partners as equal partners in the intellectual project, including identifying research questions or problems to be solved, designing methods to analyze these questions or problems, and creating solutions.
- repudiates ideologies of “white saviorism” or “charity” that position minoritized communities as in need of “saving” or “rescuing” by faculty and students within universities and prepares white students to enter and engage with communities without these mindsets.
- decenters whiteness by challenging its construction and through highlighting the wealth of knowledge communities of color possess about their own communities.

### **Critical Reflection on Individual and Systemic/Structural Racism:**

#### ***Understanding positionality, bias and historic roots of systemic racism.***

- is guided by regular training of faculty and students to identify and respond effectively to microaggressions.
- raises student and faculty critical consciousness about white supremacy and racism before and during community engagement, through reflective practices about power and privilege—questioning bias and false histories/narratives that justify/legitimize the status quo—in order to build critical understanding of oppression and political efficacy to challenge power and enact systemic change.
- critically considers the forms racism and white privilege take in Higher Education, its impact on knowledge production, and how normative epistemologies affect how we perceive and know the world.
- engages in dialogue with community partners to understand their own histories and issues to better support their work and build their capacity to access campus knowledge resources.
- recognizes, reflects on, and works towards addressing challenges that minoritized students face on campus alongside working on issues they care about within communities.
- acknowledges intersectionality is important to students’ and faculty’s understanding of racial inequity, while maintaining a primary focus on anti-racist goals.

## **Intentional Learning/Course Design:**

### ***Developing Anti-Racist learning goals, course content, policies and assessment.***

- develops specific anti-racist strategies to diversify course content (readings, discussions, assignments) that de-centers whiteness, integrates perspectives that have traditionally been marginalized, and emphasizes intersectional ways in which community-based knowledge production is recognized and valued.
- works with community partners to build an understanding of the community in terms of its assets, spoken languages and highlights the cultural wealth and empowered potential of communities of color.
- equips students with a robust understanding of communities with which they will work, including a trauma-informed perspective, through sources that privilege and value the multilingual voices from the community.
- involves students and/or community partners in the creation of the syllabus and provides opportunities for community/student voice and agency (leadership development, community/student directed projects in the classroom and community).
- develops diverse forms of assessment that best enable students to demonstrate their mastery of course objectives and provides instructors constructive feedback about the effectiveness of their anti-racist teaching practices.

## **Compassionate/Reflective Classroom:**

### ***Create a sense of belonging in the classroom by acknowledging student contributions and meeting students where they are.***

- promotes the well-being of students, centers the intersections of their identities, and empowers the communities in which they live and/or serve.
- provides spaces to respond to microaggressions and difficult conversations in ways that facilitate learning and accountability, as well as providing opportunities for repair and healing.
- recognizes the community-based work that minoritized students already undertake but is not recognized, such as serving as translators for family and friends and helping family and friends navigate bureaucratic challenges with governmental apparatuses.
- features collaborative learning that builds on the cultural wealth of minoritized students and creates space for their knowledge and expertise to be applied to solving problems in our communities, without looking to them as “informants” who are expected to speak on behalf of a minoritized community.
- decenters higher education and centers the community as an open and reciprocal learning environment.

**Key Resources:** [The Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning](#), Yale University; [Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Action: First Steps](#). Columbia University CTL; [Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning: Effective Teaching is Antiracist Teaching](#), Brown University; [Becoming an Anti-Racist Educator](#), Wheaton College; [Vanderbilt University: Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice](#). Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching; [Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom](#), Race Ethnicity and Education, 21:4, 540-554 (2018), Kyoko Kishimoto; [Teaching Race, Racism, and Racial Justice: Pedagogical Principles and Classroom Strategies for Course Instructors](#) (2019), M. Brielle Harbin, Ph.D. United States Naval Academy Amie Thurber, Ph.D. Portland State University Joe Bandy, Ph.D. Vanderbilt University; [The Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool: A First Step in Doing Social Justice Pedagogy](#) (2019), Sherria D. Taylor, San Francisco State University; “Critically-Engaged Civic Learning: A Comprehensive Restructuring of Service-Learning Approaches” (2021) Cindy Vincent, Sara Moore, Cynthia Lynch, Jacob Lefker, Robert Awkward; [Critical Service Learning as a Tool for Identity Exploration](#) By: David M. Donahue and Tania D. Mitchell [Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning: Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models](#), Tania Mitchell ; [Service-Learning as a Pedagogy of Whiteness](#) Tania Mitchell, David Donahue, and Courtney Young-Law