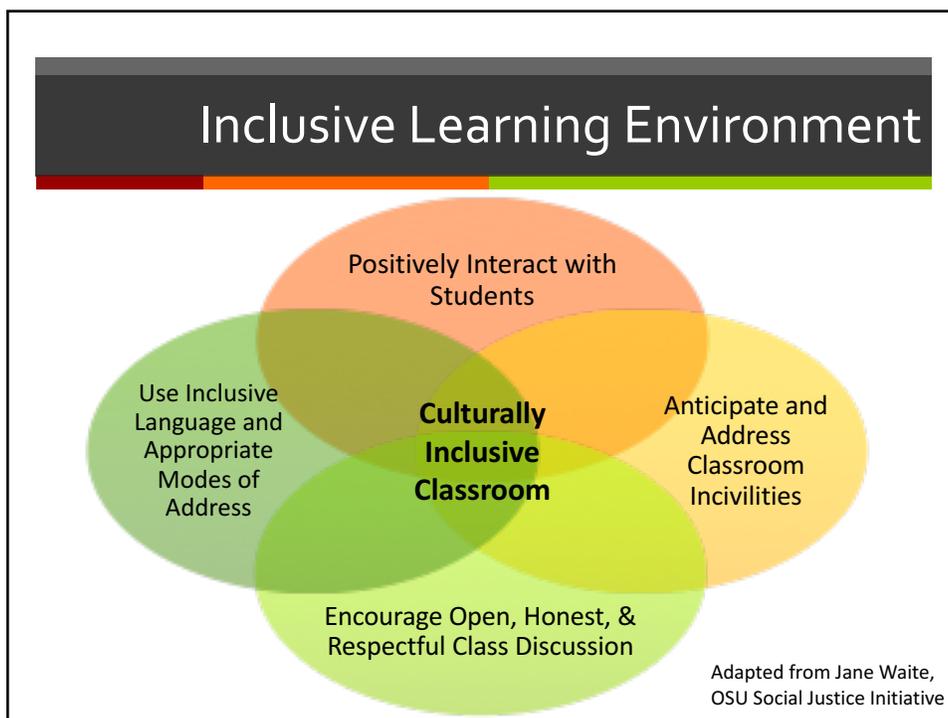


Media Savvy:
Teaching with
Current (and Real)
News

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Taking Time for Teaching Seminar
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Using Media in Economics Instruction

- Research found that economics as a discipline had been slow to adopt innovative approaches to teaching (William Becker and Michael Watts, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006)
- Using media in introductory courses makes economics more relevant to students, increases class attendance, and raises examination scores. (Girardi, 2008; and Raehsler, 2009)
- Economics is well positioned to use current events because the principles are in action in current events all the time!

https://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/media/using_media_enh.html

Advantages and Challenges

- Connect theories with real world events and policies
 - Maintain student interest in the theories and concepts
 - Illustrate abstract concepts
 - Hone analytical skills by applying course theories and concepts
 - “present the subject of economics in an aesthetically pleasing way, thus offering an alternative to mathematical elegance” (Girardi, 2008)
- Engage different learning styles
 - “multimedia gives ...‘maximum opportunities for students to draw on their own distinctive blend of intelligences, thereby. . .giving them new venues for demonstrating their understandings’” (Lage, Platt, & Treglia (2000), quoting Veenema and Gardner (1996))

<https://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/media/why.html>

Advantages and Challenges

- High production quality; complex ideas in a short time.
 - Podcasts, YouTube and other video, news articles...
- Cognitive and affective experiences: provoke discussion, assessment of one's own knowledge and values
 - Opinions welcome, opportunity to practice discussing alternative perspectives
- Culturally relevant or divergent experiences can be brought into materials.
 - Experiences beyond their own, especially if the media is sharply different from their local environment.

<https://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/media/why.html>

Advantages and Challenges

- Surprise and serendipity!
 - Collecting material and connecting to topics takes time, particularly to keep the topics current.
 - Prune away old items as you find new topics.
- Constraints in topics covered and the depth of coverage.
 - May not have all info needed for quantitative or other analysis.
 - Can also ask what other info you should look for.
- Requires and fosters practice at facilitating discussions.
 - Need to stay focused on class theme and reduce time typically spent lecturing.

https://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/teaching_news/how.html

Pedagogical Use of Current Events

- **Introduction of concept:** Prepare a set of framing questions to get students to begin to think about the concept, its importance, and its applications.
- **Explore/develop of concept:** Read/listen/watch after students have become familiar with abstract concepts to determine which (if any) apply and how.
 - Great for group work, share-pair, short in-class writing, discussion, etc.
 - Ask students to bring in an example from current news.
- **Review of concept:** Concepts covered in depth earlier in the course can be revisited later with media as multiple or layered concepts are illustrated.
- **Assessment of concept:** Applying abstract concepts to real events is a transferrable skill. Use short news clip or article as a basis for homework or exam questions to apply concepts to new media that uses different language and contexts than ones with which they learned the skill.

News Literacy

- **Gut check:** Did the headline make you feel a strong emotion? What is the writer's goal? Does it make sense based on what you know about the issue?
 - Demonstrate the difference between a news piece and an opinion piece.
- **Fact check:** Are any familiar news outlets publishing this story? Can you verify some basic facts? What do independent, nonpartisan fact checking sites like Snopes, PolitiFact or Factcheck.org have to say?
 - Which outlets to these students trust or not trust, and why?
 - News organizations have fact checkers and don't just re-package existing content.
- **Investigate:** Check the About page: Who runs the site? Do the stories have bylines? Is the URL legitimate? Is it full of ads?
- **Triangulate:** Does the image match the story? Do other outlets from different perspectives report the same information?
- **Unplug:** When you read a story in print, you consume it more carefully, and you lose the ability to share it instantly.

Fake News Tipsheet. Kim Lisagor Bisheff, multimedia journalism at Cal Poly State University

Examples?

- AEC 388: Agricultural Law
 - Capital Press or GT v. Washington Post
 - Obama administration “texting while driving”
 - Current event assignment
- AEC 253: Env Law, Econ and Policy & AEC 432/532 Environmental Law
 - Multiple podcasts: RadioLab, Freakonomics, BBC Witness, Planet Money, More Perfect
 - YouTube videos: Montreal Protocol, Santa Barbara Oil Spill, Rachel Carson documentary clip
 - Current news events as appropriate: Bring in the newspaper!

Selected Citations

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