



Teaching Sensitive Topics

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Content

Setting the scene for the class

Teaching sensitive topics

Creating a safe space

Dealing with conflict

Looking after the lecturer

Setting the scene for class

- Sensitive content matter can present risks for students and teaching staff.
- Research has found that that the way students respond to sensitive content, diffusing conflict and confronting biased, offensive remarks are important when teaching these topics.
- Pedagogical thought is that a thorough evaluation of the lecturer's thoughts on the topic is required to ensure the lecture is as unbiased as possible.

Teaching sensitive topics

- The starting point for designing a learning environment for teaching sensitive material is to minimise harm.
- Students need to be warned in advance about any sensitive topic that is to be taught.
- Students should be aware that a safe classroom will be in existence.

Creating a safe space

- Remind students at the start of the class the subject may be upsetting.
- Set ground rules for discussion
- Ensure course materials are carefully selected
- Respond positively to students
- Redirect remarks if need be

Dealing with conflict

- There is likely to be a spectrum of student response to sensitive content.
- If discussion does become emotionally charged, the lecturer should encourage respectful, balanced responses and demonstrate clear boundaries.
- Acknowledge difficult feelings can surface when discussing sensitive topics as this normalises responses.
- Any conflict in class can generally be resolved by pointing out to the student how their behaviour disrupts the teaching/learning process and encouraging the student to empathise with others.

Looking after the lecturer

- Inclusive and supportive education can happen naturally in every classroom if the lecturer has the right ‘mindset’ about the differences learners present and how their life experiences might affect their learning.
- Often, lecturers get so caught up in making sure that the students are supported, that they forget to ensure they themselves are supported.
- Look after yourself – its important!