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Intercultural Awareness and Engagement

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## Handout for Foundations for Intercultural Awareness and Engagement

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## **Foundations for Intercultural Awareness and Engagement**

This course is designed as an introduction to concepts and principles for intercultural awareness and engagement as it relates to faculty members in Christian colleges and universities.

Our primary motivation for engaging in concepts and principles of diversity and intercultural competence in the classroom is rooted in our faith commitment and value as taught to us in scripture. The Body of Christ by design is diverse (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Acts 2:5-11; Revelation 5:9-10). Concepts such as acknowledging ethnic diversity, intentional crossing of cultures, and developing continued understanding of one another across human differences form the foundations of why we address intercultural competence.

Another motivation is facing the challenge of changing demographics in the U.S. and its impact on higher education. Damon Williams (2013) addresses this reality:

The browning of America is occurring faster than many anticipated. Previous demographic studies projected that the overall population would become minority White by 2042, and that the youth population would reach this state by 2023 (Frey, 2011a). Yet the twin engines of immigration and birth rates have led to greater than expected growth among minority populations. (p. 39).

As student demographics continue to diversify, so do the dynamics of our classrooms in regards to diversity of cultures and learning styles. This presents opportunities for faculty to engage the diversity their students bring into the classroom and to practice engaging with an intercultural community on a daily basis. As students are headed for a diverse society upon graduation, developing awareness and skills for intercultural competence is thus crucial.

This course consists of two parts with two sections within each. Part one, Foundations of Intercultural Awareness, consists of: 1) faculty profiles; 2) basic concepts of intercultural pedagogy. Part two, Foundations of Intercultural Engagement, consists of: 1) student profiles; 2) examples of teaching methods and course content. Each section consists of lessons followed by reflection questions.

Please understand, this course is designed as an introduction to concepts and principles necessary to build further understanding. It is meant to inform our practice as educators. It is not meant as an itemized checklist for intercultural competence. We submit that to effectively engage with a diversity of cultures necessitates that we assume the posture of a lifelong learner. It is also our hope that through this course, you will be stimulated to further explore the vast world of educating diverse learners.

We invite you to engage this course with an open heart and mind in hopes that it will benefit you as you connect with students daily from “every nation, from all tribes, peoples, and languages” (Revelation 7:9). God bless you.

### **Part 1: Foundations for Intercultural Awareness**

Part 1 of this course consists of four sections: 1) Faculty profiles; 2) Biblical Foundations; 3) Cultural Intelligence and 4) Cultural Humility.

## Faculty profiles

In this first section you will meet the faculty who teach this course. Each faculty member will share their background as it relates to their cultural and ethnic identity development. The purpose of this section is to, first of all, become acquainted with the faculty you will be learning from, and secondly to provide a model for reflection on self-awareness. As faculty, we bring all of who we are into our classrooms. Our upbringing and social identities form our frame of reference from which we teach (culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.). Building self-awareness on a continual basis is thus crucial for developing intercultural sensitivity and engagement in the classroom.

Lesson 1: Meet the faculty - Section A  
(Christina Lee Kim, Walter Augustine, Matt Williams, Lorena Vidaurre)

Lesson 2: Meet the faculty - Section B  
(Allen Yeh, Behzad Varamini, Andy Draycott)

Reflection Question/s: Reflect on which aspects of the faculty narratives stood out to you. Identify the various ethnic, cultural, regional, and socio-economic positions. Which do you identify with, which were different from you?

In his narrative, Dr. Allen Yeh described the concept of liminality (lesson 2). Reflect on the various faculty member's narratives, select three and ponder how the concept of liminality has been a factor in their intercultural growth and development. How does/might liminality look like in your life?

- Complete the assignment *Exploring Cultural Identity* (see appendix).

## Biblical foundations

Lessons 3 and 4 challenges us to consider how our commitment to intercultural competence is rooted in biblical commands as well as examples throughout scripture.

Lesson 3: Biblical foundations - A Case Study on Jews and Samaritans  
(Matt Williams, Christina Lee Kim)

Lesson 4: Biblical foundations - Koinonia in the Academy  
(Walter Augustine)

Reflection Question: In lesson 4, Dr. Walter Augustine introduced the concept of *koinonia* as the way the early church lived out their multicultural witness. As Dr. Augustine has mentioned, *koinonia* is where terms such as communion, community or commonwealth are derived. At its root, *koinonia* is about sharing and participation together in community. Those who practice *koinonia* thus contribute their assets to the benefit of the whole. As you reflect on the concept of *koinonia*, think of two ways in which you might be able to apply this concept to your teaching practice. How might *koinonia* be present in your classroom interactions, assignments and teaching? Where might *koinonia* be missing or absent?

As you reflect back on lessons 3 and 4, what topics or principles were new to you regarding biblical principles relating to intercultural competence?

## **Cultural Intelligence**

In this section we will cover basic concepts that form a foundation for why we develop intercultural awareness in our teaching practice. Lessons 5, 6, and 7 focus on aspects of cultural intelligence as it relates to teaching in higher education.

### Lesson 5: Cultural intelligence

Reflection Question/s: As Dr. Allen Yeh has outlined the differences between high-context and low-context cultures, think about how you identify in relation to this construct. Think about what a normal day looks like for you, does the daily operations you engage in reflect more with low-context or high-context cultures? How would you self-identify? Does your daily thought process and ways of communicating reflect more low or high context culture? Can you identify how this is manifested in your teaching?

### Lesson 6: Cultural intelligence in the classroom

Reflection Question/s: In this lesson, Dr. Allen Yeh has submitted to us that the future of higher education will consist more of students who function in high context cultures. Take some time to reflect on how your classroom might be a place where high context learners thrive daily. What are some practical steps you might take to move in this direction in regards to your teaching?

### Lesson 7: Cultural intelligence in the workplace

Reflection Question: Although changing demographics reflect an increase of high context learners, it is also likely that you will have a blend of low and high context learners in your classroom in the coming years. Take some time and reflect on how low context learners would thrive in your classroom, and do the same for high context learners. Write out some of your thoughts on how your teaching methods and interactions with students might connect and empower both low and high context learners.

## **Cultural Humility**

### Lesson 8: Cultural Humility

Reflection Question: As you have heard some basic principles that constitute cultural humility, write down the major points you regard as valuable to your teaching practice. As you construct a list of items, think of various ways you might model and demonstrate cultural humility to your students (i.e. sharing your narrative in your class, comments you give in grading, personal interactions, etc.). Begin your brainstorm process by writing three ideas of how to model cultural humility here.

### Lesson 9: Practicing Cultural Humility in the Classroom

Reflection Question: In this lesson, Dr. Christina Lee Kim discussed that defensiveness is not always bad, in fact, it can be a source of learning. Think back to a time when defensiveness arose in a class setting. How might the practice of cultural humility turn a situation like this into an opportunity to enhance learning? How might you handle a student who is defensive in a class session? How does cultural humility apply to you as an instructor in a situation like this?

As you have heard Dr. Christian Lee Kim discuss *Classroom Content Providing Opportunities to Learn Cultural Humility* and the practical ways she utilizes these principles in her classes, what are some practical ways you might implement these points in your classes?

## **Part 2: Foundations for Intercultural Engagement**

Part 2 consists of two sections: 1) Student profiles and 2) Examples of teaching method and course content.

### **Student profiles: Learning from who we teach**

This section focuses on student profiles, or “who we teach.” The students featured in this section come from a variety of ethnicities, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. At the time of filming, the student participants were currently enrolled as under-graduates from a variety of majors.

Lesson 10: Meet the students: Cultural background and demographics

Reflection Question: As the students share their narratives, various social identities are mentioned (ethnicity, culture, national origin, socio-economic status, etc.). As you reflect back on the student narratives, what is one item you can identify that you are not as familiar with? How might you proceed to learn more about this item you have identified? Who might be some colleagues that you could approach to learn from?

Lesson 11: Why is diversity important to us

Reflection Question: As you have heard the students articulate why diversity is important to them, take a few moments to identify 3 major topics that reflect what is meaningful to the students. How might you begin to integrate these values into your teaching practice? What lessons can you take away as the students described positive examples from their faculty?

Lesson 12: How we learn: The role of culture in the learning process

Reflection Question: In this lesson, students describe how they thrive in the classroom which is reflective of the cultures they were raised in. Think back to the various examples the students shared and make a list of the principles and methods they referenced. What lessons can you take away from this list? Reflect and write down other methods that you might utilize where students from both collective and individualistic cultures can thrive in your classes.

Reflection Question: As you have heard the students articulate their cultural backgrounds and how they learn best, take some time to reflect back on the content covered in part 1 (particularly lessons 5-9). As you review the list of principles and methods from the prior reflection question, what connections can you make on how students learn to the principles covered in part 1?

### **Examples of teaching method and course content**

In this section you will hear several faculty members share with you their thoughts and methods of connecting with students from a diversity of cultural backgrounds. Please keep in mind that

intercultural pedagogy and methods to foster inclusive classrooms requires continual learning and practice and thus cannot be condensed into a few lessons. Rather, these sessions are meant to stimulate you to further explore and learn.

#### Lesson 13: Connecting with your class from the start (Behzad Varamini)

In this lesson, Dr. Behzad Varamini shares with us how he uses his life narrative to connect with his classes at the start of each semester. Take some time and ponder how you might connect with your classes using your cultural heritage as Dr. Varamini does. What aspects of your narrative could make a connection with your students from backgrounds different than yours?

#### Lesson 14: Cultivating an inclusive learning environment (Lorena Vidaurre)

In this lesson, Dr. Lorena Vidaurre has shared some of the practices she utilizes in facilitating an interculturally engaging class. Take a few minutes to ponder how you might implement some of these practices in your classes.

As Dr. Behzad Varamini and Dr. Lorena Vidaurre have shared their thoughts on how to create an inclusive and connected environment in their classes, take a few moments to identify what items stood out to you. As you ponder how you might facilitate an inclusive learning environment, what thoughts might you add to serve a classroom that is inclusive of students from diverse cultures and learning styles?

#### Lesson 15: The value of intercultural perspectives in the classroom (Walter Augustine)

#### Lesson 16: Cultivating diverse perspectives through reading assignments (Andy Draycott)

#### Lesson 17: Cultivating diverse perspectives in your discipline (Behzad Varamini)

As you have heard Dr. Behzad Varamini, Dr. Walter Augustine and Dr. Andy Draycott discuss the value of incorporating diverse perspectives, how might you apply this same practice in your teaching?

Take some time to reflect on how perspectives from a variety of cultures could enhance your teaching. How might incorporating diverse worldviews bring a more holistic process? How might diverse perspectives enhance critical thinking for yourself and your students?

What are three items you would like to explore more as a result of going through this course?

What are three practices you will commit to as a result of going through this course?

#### Sources

Williams, D. A. (2013). *Strategic diversity leadership: Activating change and transformation in higher education*. Sterling, VA. Stylus.

## Appendix

### Assignment: Exploring Cultural Identity

(to be done after *Faculty Profiles* lesson in part 1)

Take a few minutes to reflect on each of the following questions:

**Ethnicity.** How do you identify as a person of ethnicity? Write down what you know of your family's ethnic lineage and how you currently relate to the ethnicities you are able to identify within your family.

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**Culture.** How do you define your cultural identity? What are the practices you engage in daily that reveal your culture and the culture you function in. Are there family traditions that you regularly participate in? Can you identify the cultures around you on a daily basis that differ from the culture(s) you are most comfortable with?

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**Socioeconomic status.** Think back to your upbringing, the neighborhood you grew up in, the schools you attended, and what opportunities you and your family had access to, or didn't have access to. How would you define your family's socioeconomic status (SES)? How much thought have you given to how SES has shaped and continues to influence how you think and function in this world? How has your SES influenced who you are today? How did/has your SES affected your journey to becoming an educator? Is your current SES the same or different from what you grew up in?

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**Faith-tradition and spirituality.** Most who work in Christian colleges/universities would rank their faith as one of their primary identities. How does your faith commitment factor into your relationships with others, particularly with those who are different than yourself in culture, ethnicity and socioeconomic status? Where does diversity and inclusion fit into your spiritual values and life-style? What is your current understanding of how Jesus related to the diverse peoples who lived in Palestine during his lifetime?

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Take a few minutes to reflect on how these items (ethnicity, culture, SES, and spirituality) shapes who you are as a person and faculty member. As you reflect on your practice as an

educator, how does your worldview, or paradigm factor in on how you teach and how you interact with students from diverse backgrounds daily?

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In addition to viewing the content in this course, what are some practical steps you might take to broaden your capacity to relate to students and colleagues from diverse backgrounds? Where do you feel you could grow in awareness, understanding and practice? Who are some colleagues that you might engage to dialogue with on topics of diversity and inclusion?

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