

Building Community in the Diverse Classroom: Engaging Students and Promoting Equity

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Why Can't They Be like Us? - Student complains that: "those weird, primitive Hmong people talk funny, wear weird clothes, smell funny, eat really weird food, and do not learn English."

Mascots: Student asks: "why do people get upset when students perform a tomahawk chop or cheer 'scalp them' at games?"

Work not Play - A student complains that: "the Hmong woman in our class project can never make outside of class meetings because she has too many responsibilities and won't join us in a bar to discuss the project because she thinks a bar is not respectable."

Music - A student complains that: "Why should we study White composers like Beethoven, I like Hip Hop. That is real music ___ and it reflects our culture."

Research Project - Student proposes " Why the Klu Klux Klan Is a Positive Force in American History," as a class project; or "Why We Need a Wall Built."

Mathematics Is in our Genes: Student chides Hmong student in statistics class, "Why are you getting a low grade? Everyone knows that Asians are really good at math."

All Blacks Are Jocks: Student asks another student: "Why aren't you on the basketball team? I thought all Blacks played basketball?"

Truth: "I am glad that this is a research methods class. It's good to be away from all of those diversity issues we have to talk about in our other sociology classes. At least we can deal with facts and have to worry about race, gender, gay, and all the other problems."

Affirmative Action - "The University gives scholarships, easier admission, tutors, grades, and gets jobs for Blacks, Hmong, and Mexicans. It is not fair to us Whites!"

Balance - Student misses class, examination, or does not turn in a class project to attend a Pow-Wow. What do you do as the instructor?

Setup - Student asks you to define the word "Niggardly" after using it correctly and intentionally. How do you handle it?

Smoke Screens - An American Indian student wants to burn sage for religious reasons in his dorm room. The University has a no smoking policy on campus.