



UCLA TFT Faculty Workshop and Lunch
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Climate and Title IX

Session 2

Best Practices for Teaching in a Creative Environment

Facilitator: Miranda Banks, Ph. D.

Associate Professor, Visual & Media Arts, Emerson College
Equity Diversity & Inclusion in Teaching Media (EDIT)

THE EDIT 10

BEST PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE TEACHING IN MEDIA PRODUCTION

www.editmedia.org



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This document was created by media faculty for media faculty based on research conducted on U.S. higher education media production classrooms. We call our faculty-led initiative EDIT Media (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Teaching Media) and the EDIT 10 was developed collaboratively with faculty, students, and alumni of production programs. EDIT Media's impetus in developing this document began in department meetings, at conferences, and in student conversations about recurring problems in production classes: frustration with gender, racial, economic, and other imbalances in the classroom; students' desire to see a wider array of mediamakers, actors, and characters in examples presented in class; and shared concerns across campuses and at festivals over stereotypical characters, gratuitous violence, and clichéd narratives in student work.

EDIT Media's methodology in developing these practices included researching scholarship on media production practices, media literacy, and inclusive pedagogy; in-person focus groups with faculty and students across the country representing a variety of institutions and experiences; and anonymous national surveys of faculty and students in media production programs.

Change is needed if faculty are to fairly and equitably engage all of the students in our classrooms. Of 149 media faculty surveyed about inclusive teaching practices in media production higher education programs, 90.5% stated that more was needed from programs to ensure that all students feel equally valued and fully participate.* (More specifically, 24% said some improvement is needed, 42% said there was "lots of room to improve," 22.1% said "quite a lot" of improvement is still needed, and 1.3% stated that programs were very poor at inclusion.)

Students concur. In our survey of 152 students, 26% answered "yes" when asked whether they had ever felt excluded from or uncomfortable with a project or discussion in their production classes because of their identity.** Of those "yes" responses, the most often-cited causes for a feeling of marginalization were that "Film/TV examples shown or discussed in class rarely portrayed people like me" (17%), "Other students in the class said insensitive things about my identity" (16%), or "I felt intimidated because of my skill level with equipment or software" (13%).

In this research, we repeatedly heard stories of both faculty and students replicating the same kinds of biases in front of and behind the camera that are plaguing the American media industries. As instructors, we are in a position not only to support our students in producing richer and more diverse creative work, but to launch them into careers as leaders creating more inclusive workplaces. Graduates entering these fields can make transformative change. To get there, students on this career path need the best education possible – an education based on best practices.

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EDIT Media (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Teaching Media) is an initiative developed out of the Gender Caucus and Diversity and Inclusion Caucus of the University Film and Video Association. We are a consortium of media faculty from around the U.S. teaching at institutions ranging from community colleges to small private institutions to large public universities. We are dedicated to researching, developing, and educating about best practices in inclusive teaching in our field.

They are not intended to provide solutions, but rather to provide a framework for teaching media in a way that addresses the needs of a diverse and ever-evolving student body. The practices are holistic and interdependent—one practice does not exist as an answer in and of itself, but is in conversation with all other practices. This is a living document that will change and grow. We hope the EDIT 5 will encourage rich conversations between faculty, administrators, staff, and students about how best our programs can succeed.

Visit the EDIT Media website for further explanation of the EDIT 10 and for teaching resources, data, and articles to help guide faculty on how to implement each of these Best Practices in the classroom.

THE EDIT 10: BEST PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE TEACHING IN MEDIA PRODUCTION

1. SCREEN WIDELY

Screen examples in class from a diverse array of mediamakers, with casts, characters, and aesthetics that include a range of representation. Give attention to diversity in terms of gender, race, age, LGBTQ status, ability, class, geography, and/or religious affiliation in your choices for your everyday demonstration of techniques and concepts. Expand the canon beyond the obvious auteurs.

2. CULTIVATE YOUR CREW

Encourage collaboration and cooperation over auteurism and competition. Build a strong community within your classrooms by modeling professional and cooperative behavior in the classroom. Establish explicit expectations of mutual respect and equitable collaboration both in the classroom and on location. Openly discuss inclusion as a policy on your syllabus and a practice in your class. Think carefully about forming teams for class projects, including rotating students through roles throughout the semester. Assign teams rather than let students choose their collaborators. Ensure that shy and less confident students have opportunities for leadership and technical roles and that more dominant and confident students learn how to listen, support, and assist their quieter peers.

3. BLEND THEORY & PRACTICE

Part of the process of learning how to produce a media work involves developing self-awareness of each creative choice – why it's important to the final product, what meaning it conveys, how an audience might receive it (and a consideration of who that audience is). Asking students to place their choices in a theoretical and historical context inspires deeper reflection on how their works fit into the larger world of media. Blending these approaches can also help to bridge the divide that students often see between their production and critical studies courses.

4. CONCEPT BEFORE CRAFT

Keep a balance between developing storytelling skills and focusing on technical training. Without balanced attention to creative expression, trite or harmful content can go unaddressed in favor of development of technical ability. Creating a strong connection between craft and content opens up a space for the class to discuss representation and how technical execution shapes that representation.

5. CHARACTER MATTERS

All stories, and many other forms of expression, are about characters' identities: their personalities, emotional states, flaws, and backstories, but also their age, place of origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, class, etc. Because developing characters is integral to the process of most mediamaking, questions of representation are critical to developing rich, authentic characters. Suggest students break away from stale and harmful stereotypes and instead draw from personal stories before attempting to craft characters different from themselves. If students tell stories of characters who are less familiar to them, provide resources and techniques for crafting characters' language, experiences, and identity to build depth, responsibility, and thoughtfulness into the story development process.

6. ALL HANDS ON DECK

Active, cooperative, and experiential learning enables students to get hands-on experience with a skill or concept in a low-stakes setting that emphasizes problem-solving and communication skills. Provide regular opportunities for all students to gain practical experience in an environment where they can ask questions, solve problems collaboratively and independently, and succeed in applying what they've learned. Enable students who might otherwise simply observe to participate in learning as fully as more confident students. Prepare assignments with attention to accommodating the physical, economic, or scheduling challenges facing working and low-income students, students who have family commitments, or students with disabilities. Consider the diversity of access to resources among students as you evaluate their work.

7. FLY SOLO

Provide opportunities for solo and self-sufficient work in addition to group projects. Independent work not only provides all students the space to develop their skills, but creates accountability for students' learning, so that each student becomes responsible for their own growth and contributions, family commitments, or students with disabilities. Consider the diversity of access to resources among students as you evaluate their work.

8. CREATIVITY THROUGH CONSTRAINTS

Evidence shows that placing constraints on student projects has strong pedagogical value in promoting creativity and critical problem-solving, especially for introductory students. Creating boundaries on student work discourages problematic content while students are still developing theoretical and conceptual skills. Constraints need not be a list of banned items; instead, they can be a way of directing student work to encourage deeper engagement with specific skills. Such constraints can include limiting the length of projects, allowing only specific equipment to be used, focusing on conceptual approaches like a theme, or emphasizing stylistic approaches like the use of color. In introductory classes, pedagogical research shows that less is more.

9. KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

No individual instructor can accommodate the needs of all students. Instead, reach out to campus, community, and industry resources to connect your students to support systems, funding, and learning opportunities—inclusion or disability offices, student organizations or clubs, and internship coordinators, etc. Staff at these offices can also provide support in offering advice on best teaching practices for specific student populations and in locating additional resources. Invite guest speakers to fill in gaps in your own knowledge or experience, to contribute to critiques, or to model the diversity of people who can take on particular production roles.

LEAD AUTHORS

Jennifer Proctor, M.F.A.

University of Michigan-Dearborn

Miranda Banks, Ph.D.

Emerson College

* Proctor, Jennifer. "Inclusive Teaching in Media Production - Student Survey" Survey. Qualtrics (Provo, UT), 2017. (Publication forthcoming)

** Proctor, Jennifer. "Inclusive Teaching in Media Production - Instructor Survey." Survey. Qualtrics (Provo, UT), 2017. (Publication forthcoming)

10. PUT ON YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK FIRST

Take time to explore your own thoughts, experiences, and points of view on topics outlined in these practices. While implementing the EDIT 10 can feel organic, you may find yourself engaged in difficult conversations about how best to create and collaborate across difference and how to address problems in representation. Carve out time for your own individual introspection and preparation. Research the issues that impact specific marginalized communities, especially those most represented on your campus. Acknowledge your own role as an authority figure with your students to explicitly promote an understanding of, and challenge to, the power dynamics that can play a role in shared learning in the classroom. Be prepared to advocate for students of marginalized identities who might otherwise be left to defend themselves on their own, and be willing to listen, make mistakes, and grow.

FURTHER READING & SUPPORT:

STUDENT 7: The Student 7 is a companion document to these Best Practices for sharing with students designed to be used in conjunction with a discussion on collaboration and inclusive learning.

EDIT 5: The EDIT 5 is a document created by media faculty for media program chairs and administrators as list of recommended practices to foster inclusive media production programs that support all faculty, staff, and students.

Like the EDIT 10, both of these lists build not only on a literature review of academic research on issues of inclusion for faculty in higher education, but also on focus groups and surveys with current media production faculty and students.

Visit the EDIT Media website for teaching resources including syllabi, assignments, classroom activities, video clips, and articles.



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THE STUDENT 7 A GUIDE TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR MEDIA PRODUCTION EDUCATION

Your time as a student in production is short, and the amount you have to learn before you graduate can be overwhelming. You not only have to learn a host of different kinds of equipment and software, you're working to develop skills in storytelling, visual aesthetics, and sound design, along with theory and history, all while trying to discover your own style. And that doesn't even include general ed classes.

And you're busy. You're probably involved in student organizations and have a job or internship outside of school to boot.

So how do you make the most of time you have in your media production program? This guide is here to help.

The following practices are based on research and input from faculty and students in media production programs across the U.S. They are designed to encourage the building of skills and knowledge that will make you versatile, creative in solving problems, and a strong member of a team, whether you're a leader or part of the crew.

Research shows that we learn best when all members of a class have the opportunity to participate equitably, so these practices also promote inclusion, collaboration, and respect for diverse approaches and backgrounds. Media production, regardless of where it takes place, involves diverse, international audiences with a broad range of backgrounds, perspectives, and identities who want - and expect - to see themselves onscreen. It also involves working with diverse crews and collaborators who bring a variety of life experiences and skills to the table. Learning how to respectfully and responsibly tell stories, express yourself creatively, and collaborate with others with these considerations in mind will help make you a more versatile and sophisticated media producer.

Taken together, these practices can help make your learning experience that much better by developing skills and traits that are not only sought by employers, but that will help take your media production work to the next level.

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THE STUDENT 7

1. WATCH THE WORLD

Get outside your comfort zone and watch media that reflect points of view you've never imagined. To broaden your cinematic horizons, watch work from other countries, earlier eras, and a variety of genres. Traditional and mainstream media help create stereotypes about race, gender, class, and other aspects of identity. They also reflect only a limited set of possibilities of what media can do. Watching broadly can help break the mold and introduce you to entirely new ways that people have expressed themselves creatively in image and sound. So watch well and screen widely.

2. CHART NEW TERRITORY

Whether you're making a documentary, a fiction piece or something else altogether, the characters you create and the stories you tell MATTER. The way you represent people, places, and stories affects the way your audience thinks about them. Be true and authentic to your content. Don't just reproduce the same ideas and plots and character types we've seen a million times. Immerse yourself in learning about lives and perspectives different from your own and create a new way of looking at the world.

3. SET SQUAD GOALS

A strong crew is key to a strong project. Strength comes from working together as an inclusive team. Communicate. Collaborate. Listen with an open mind. Stretch yourself. Share power. Show respect. Support your teammates in their learning process. Take notice of who's doing what on set and in the classroom and why. Reflect on your own actions. Think about how stereotypes & assumptions about others might be affecting group dynamics, and work to change that.

4. GEEK OUT IN EVERY WAY

We all love access to great equipment, but a film or video is only as good as its concept, no matter how high its technical quality. Delve into understanding narrative structure, character development, and cinematic language to push your ideas further. Use what you're learning about history, form, and theory to inform your work. The more you know about what's come before, the more effectively you can make fresh, original work that connects with today's audiences.

5. KNOW THE RULES... THEN BREAK THEM

Whether it's the conventions of film grammar or the parameters imposed by an assignment, make sure you understand the rules before you break them. Creative and technical constraints are tools instructors use to spark your imagination and get you problem-solving in new and innovative ways. Start small and hone your vision and your craft before jumping into big productions. But, don't be afraid to dream big. Keep up with news in the media industries, and think about who's making the rules in those fields and who those rules leave out. After all, once you've mastered the rules, you can change them.

6. CREATE DANGEROUSLY

Expressing yourself in front of an audience isn't easy, especially when you're still learning. But this is the time to take risks and laugh in the face of failure. Explore your curiosity. Ask questions. Try new things. Challenge what's come before. Embrace mistakes and missteps as opportunities to get better. Be bold. Whether working with a crew or by yourself, keep experimenting..

7. LOOK BOTH WAYS

Take time to explore your own thoughts, experiences and perspectives on these guidelines. Practice self-reflection. Question your own assumptions. But look outward, too. More and more, audiences are looking for and expecting diverse, inclusive media. Do some research on trends in media production and consumption, and dig into all the resources out there about issues of diversity and equity in the media industries. Where do you see room for improvement? Where do you fit in?

LEAD AUTHORS

Kyja Kristjansson-Nelson
Minnesota State University Moorhead

Augusta Palmer, St. Francis College

Jennifer Proctor
University of Michigan-Dearborn

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