



Addressing students' experience of liminal engagement with social justice discourse

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What can instructors do to support students to stay committed to criticality, justice, and equity? What do instructors need to do bring (and keep) students in the work?

- We analyzed fifteen undergraduate student final papers in an RCAH course using a lens of public and hidden transcripts, critical literacies, and critical studies of whiteness.
- **Critical discourse analysis** helps us see the ways that the words students use makes visible how they **(1)** perform their identities and **(2)** understand their relationalities to power.

Findings

Stepping in, stepping back:

*On an individual level, it is also important to note the ways in which **this essay as a whole finds itself situated within an intentional system of oppression as an intellectual work within a public university setting.** Many inherent biases already exist at a university level in direct opposition to the literary theory we have traversed throughout the semester, as **it can be assumed that both the author and audience are in positions of power, in that all of us here are to some degree successes of an inherently biased system.** This is apparent in many ways: the time-blocked semesters and assignment deadlines; in the construction of language throughout this paper; in our tuition payments and student loans; etc. ... The majority of the selected cultural examples within my journal entries were directly targeted towards white audiences. **This lends itself to the notion of positionality once more, and enforces a degree of complacency in a system that this paper has attempted to critique.***

- Adeline

Grappling with abstraction, audience:

*I occasionally feel as though my culture is lost while living in America, struggling to define my identity at times. America has changed through the years; while it is still far from perfect, this generation is capable of standing up for one another when it comes to activism and representation. ... By talking about these topics, **we can increase understanding of the difficulties these groups confront and work to build a society that is more equal and inclusive.** Furthermore, discussions about culture, language, education, and representation can support diversity, respect for difference, and acceptance of various lifestyles. **We may create stronger and dynamic communities by appreciating and recognizing the variety of cultures and experiences present in our society.** A more inclusive and courteous society, where everyone feels appreciated and accepted for who they are and what they have to offer, may be created through being able to understand and value the culture around oneself. **Promoting the growth of empathy and understanding in myself and others for those who may come from various ethnic or religious origins and who make up our global society.***

- Rosanna

Implications

Students papers offer glimpses into their perceptions of, and responsibilities within, the power structures they navigate.

Instructors can,

- Expand how they engage culturally multidimensionally with students
- Center positionalities and lived experiences
- Make more critical or resistance praxes visible and possible
- Use critical reflection spaces to grapple and practice the skill of (dis)engaging dominant ideologies' framing of engagements with language(s) and culture(s)