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He served as the editor of TRAILS, the American Sociological Association’s Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology. His research in the scholarship of teaching and learning includes best practices for using podcasts as teaching tools and interventions to better engage the cultural capital of first-generation college students and increase their success and retention. He holds a doctorate and master’s degree in sociology from the University of Wisconsin and a bachelor’s degree in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
Where Do Good Teaching Ideas Come From?

This module is by Gregory T. Kordsmeier, Indiana University Southeast, and Stephanie Medley-Rath, Indiana University Kokomo

Welcome to the Teaching Sociology Playbook, a practical guide to creating and sharing teaching resources. We developed this project to take sociology instructors from the kernel of a great teaching idea, through the development and ultimate sharing of that idea in the hope of creating a robust teaching community. In our experience, most college instructors have many good ideas for improving student learning in a class they teach. Yet transforming that good idea into a full-fledged activity or assignment can prove challenging. For instance, how can you be sure there are sufficient instructions? Or that your students are learning what you want them to learn? This guide is here to help.

We also believe that instructors do not need to create all their teaching materials—many other gifted teachers have developed resources that you can use and adapt to your classrooms. Knowing where to find these resources can serve two purposes. First, it gives you access to a wealth of knowledge that other instructors have developed. Second, it provides a list of places to share your work with a larger audience. We hope that you will contribute to and use these shared repositories so that we can work to further develop a canon of sociological teaching resources and community around outstanding teaching.

In this module, we explain the origins and inspiration for our good ideas for teaching. Our intent is that if you are having trouble thinking of innovative ideas or need inspiration to improve your existing ideas, our experience will be helpful to you. Good ideas can come from many different places. Sometimes they come with field-tested, evidence-based approaches published in peer-reviewed journals, like Teaching Sociology. Other times they are reactions to things in your classroom or institution. And sometimes inspiration comes from life outside of academia. In any case, we thought it would be helpful to catalog just a few places that can inspire you. The first three listed are practical matters whose consideration might lead to your next excellent teaching innovation, while the following four highlight potential sources of inspiration.

Carla B. Howery came up with the clever slogan of “good ideas for teaching” or GIFTS.
Potential Sources of Inspiration

1. Meeting the Course Learning Objectives

The first place that good ideas for teaching often come from is by looking at the learning objectives you have set for the course. While future modules of the Teaching Sociology Playbook will go into the specifics of writing good learning objectives and developing strong syllabi, it is logical to ensure that your activities and assessments reflect the goals you have set for the course. One time to do this is when you set up the course itself. You may see a hole in your syllabus where you have not introduced, planned practice, or established an assessment of a learning objective. You may also find that when you assess your students, they are not achieving the course learning objectives. Greg found that while students could describe individual theorists and their theories well in his Social Theory course, they had difficulty distinguishing larger schools of theoretical thought. As a result, he restructured his class time to add more opportunities for students to review these concepts. For example, at the end of each unit, he spent twenty minutes reviewing the significant tenets of each theoretical school and had students reflect on how well the individual theories they studied fit those tenets.

2. The Cultural or Institutional Context

We develop good ideas for teaching by considering our strengths and limitations in whatever cultural or institutional context we find ourselves in. There are several details about the setting that matter, as outlined in Table 1.
Table 1. Questions to consider for the instructional context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual Factors</th>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context</td>
<td>Do you teach at a religious institution? Is your institution in a high-risk environment? Is your location at a greater likelihood of experiencing disruptions related to pandemics, violence, or extreme weather? Do you need to be prepared to quickly pivot instruction from one modality to another?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Where does the course fit in the sociology, general education, or other program curricula? Do you get to select your text, or is there a standard text used across sections?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands on instructor time</td>
<td>How many distinct preps do you have? How many students will you teach in total during the term? Do you have any new preps? What are the research and service expectations of your position? Are you also responsible for advising students? What responsibilities do you have outside of your job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>Is the course small (fewer than 20), medium (21–50), large (50–200), or mega (200 or more)? Do you have high school students enrolled in your course, and, if so, what proportion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional support for instruction</td>
<td>Will you have graders or teaching assistants? Does your institution have a writing center, library assistance, testing center, or tutors? Do you have a center for teaching and learning or access to instructional designers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>How long is the semester or quarter? Is the course in an accelerated format? How long are in-person class meetings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Is the course an introductory, intermediate, upper-level, graduate, or honors course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Is the course in-person, online, or hybrid? Do you typically teach the course in multiple modalities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research expectations</td>
<td>Can you connect your research agenda to your teaching responsibilities? How does your institution “count” publications that are in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) or peer-reviewed instructional materials (e.g., TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student characteristics</td>
<td>Are your students also working or caregivers? Are your students returning students or recent high school graduates? Are your students prepared to ask for clarification on instruction, grades, or extensions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student preparedness</td>
<td>Are students overprepared, underprepared, or appropriately prepared? Are your students majors, minors, in related disciplines, or not? How often do you need assigned and graded work?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Download a customizable version of this table at https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/the_teaching_sociology_playbook_questions_to_consider_table.pdf
Sometimes, changes in the cultural context can force a change in teaching. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Greg transformed his face-to-face Social Theory course into an online course. As a part of that transformation, he took the exams he had been using as assessments and converted them into open-book exams and gave students a week to complete them. The positive response from students, who reported much lower anxiety, convinced Greg to keep exams in that format, even when taking the course back to a face-to-face modality.

3. Talking Over a Teaching Challenge With Colleagues

Sometimes the idea of how to teach something comes from trying to solve a teaching problem collaboratively. One technique that Greg developed in graduate school came out of just such a situation: the shirt weenie. As they describe in their note in *Teaching Sociology*, Greg and his coauthor (Shane) found themselves in a situation where they shared a teaching assistant office when Shane was teaching an introductory social psychology class:

During the week when discussion centered on Goffmanian social psychology, both of us collaborated on how to teach the power of face-work and tact in everyday social interaction. We felt it best to develop some sort of demonstration that would cause students to experience the effects of tact on their own behavior, since others have shown the value of experiential learning in teaching . . . Thus, we tried to think of a social faux pas that did not align with the “face” of a college instructor (or most social actors, for that matter). We also needed a faux pas noticeable to all of the students in the class. (Sharp & Kordsmeier, 2008, p. 360)

In other words, Greg and Shane were going back and forth about the best ways to help students understand Goffman when one of them hit on the idea: that it would be funny if they could embarrass themselves in a way that demonstrated the theory to their students. They volleyed ideas back and forth until they
produced the idea of purposely embarrassing themselves by sticking their shirt tail out of the zipper of their pants to see if anyone would call them out. Then, they would start a discussion of embarrassment, face, and tact. Greg still uses this demonstration in his social psychology and theory courses.

4. TRAILS! *Teaching Sociology*! Social Media!

Sociology has a long history of supporting the sharing of good teaching ideas. *Teaching Sociology* and TRAILS are two great resources. Unfortunately, both are behind a paywall, which means you must be a member of the American Sociological Association or pay for access to these resources. Your institution’s library should have access to *Teaching Sociology*. You can also contact the author of a resource for a copy. Most authors are happy to share their resources if you do not otherwise have access. Further, social media can be a place to find new ideas from leaders in teaching. For instance, Greg adopted an idea shared by Alanna Gillis (@alannagillis3 on Twitter) about a way to automate extensions for late work to make them more equitable (see Figure 1). Keep in mind, however, that contextual factors that matter rarely make it into social media posts. In the Making Your Teaching Public module, Stephanie discusses these and other venues for sharing and publishing your ideas.
Figure 1. Example of a tweet thread that Greg used as a model for managing extensions.

Source: Gillis, A. [@alannagillis3]. (2022, March 24). Problem summary: students could benefit from extensions, need flexibility, need structure, profs are burned out, and we have to worry [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/alannagillis3/status/1507120900822417410
5. K–12 Instruction

Stephanie gets ideas from her K–12 daughter’s schooling. Her daughter is in high school, but her daughter's school has used iPads and Google products since she was in first grade. This broad access to technology in K–12 means that college faculty are close to having students who have used iPads or laptops for most or all of their education. Therefore, we should learn how K–12 settings use iPads, Google products, or whatever technology schools that feed into your college rely on. For example, Stephanie's daughter has done several group projects using Google products, and now Stephanie has students work collaboratively using Google products.

The experience of being a parent of a school-aged child has also helped Stephanie understand what not to do. For example, she better realizes how important it is for students to have clear written instructions, organized materials, and rubrics that reflect written instruction. She now uses Google Docs for assignment instructions, which allows her to add comments in response to student questions about the instructions as they occur. Instead of only providing that clarification orally or in a single email conversation with one student, she records it in the instructions. This practice of social annotation also makes it easy to edit the instructions the next time you use an assignment.

Stephanie also created an activity based on her work as a Girl Scout troop leader. She created an out-of-class assignment for Introduction to Sociology following the format used for Girl Scout badges (i.e., five steps that become progressively more advanced about a topic or issue). The assignment tasked students with creating a badge program about something covered in the course. Many students picked topics related to health inequality, such as physical fitness or nutrition. Unfortunately, many students then created a badge focused on individual solutions without considering the role of inequality. These topic choices were also partially a result of student backgrounds in her courses (i.e., many nursing and health care students). Stephanie wanted students to focus more on the significant concerns of sociology, such as inequality. Due to COVID-19, Stephanie dropped the assignment.
altogether because it needed improvement and she wanted to lessen the load on students during the pandemic. The Girl Scout badge assignment has potential but just needs more work.

6. Inspiring Media

An idea may come as a result of consuming a piece of media that sparks a connection to something you teach, and you want to expose your students to that media. Greg enjoyed the podcast *Sawbones* for its informative and irreverent take on medical history. He was often struck by the sociological content of the show, even when the authors did not identify it explicitly as sociological. Still, the show’s host did an excellent job of helping to draw out how class shaped the use of lobotomy or how gender norms shaped the disease of hysteria. Greg incorporated the podcast into a short application paper for his Sociology of Health and Medicine class. Students had to use the episode to explain the social construction of health and illness. Other media, from television show clips to documentaries, from newspaper op-eds to webcomics, can spark a connection and be used to illustrate points, spur discussions, or build assignments. There is a wealth of resources inspired by media in both TRAILS and *Teaching Sociology*. For instance, there are activities based on *The Hunger Games* (Oslawski-Lopez, 2022), *Reservation Dogs* (Scaptura, 2022), and the game Werewolf (Baxter & Connor, 2021).

7. Discouraging Academic Dishonesty

You might develop an activity or assignment to discourage plagiarism. Students often report that the pressure from high-stakes assessments drives them to plagiarize materials or otherwise engage in academic dishonesty (Golman et al., 2022). One reason to develop new ways of assessing students may be to decrease the impact of a single form of assessment, which can reduce the pressure to cheat. Greg has made changes to a couple of his courses and has felt it successfully discouraged academic dishonesty as a result.
For instance, when designing his Medical Sociology course, Greg created a series of shorter papers that had students apply concepts from the course to a new context rather than having them complete a single term paper for the course. Shorter papers got students writing while lessening the chance that any single writing assignment would make or break a student's grade.

Greg's final paper for Social Theory has students apply two theorists' perspectives to a contemporary social issue and then compare those explanations of the case in question (see Kordsmeier & Macdonald, 2015). By changing the social issue every time he teaches the course, students have neither a library of previous papers they can share nor a set of publicly available examples of essays that they can buy or otherwise appropriate. This assignment was inspired by Macdonald's description of her final paper and was initially adapted because Greg wanted a cumulative project. It was only later that he discovered that it promoted academic honesty as well.

**Reflective Cases**

Now that you have a good grasp of many potential sources of good ideas for teaching, we will describe in-depth reflections on our process of identifying and refining these ideas.

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**Out-of-Class Assignment**

**Seeing Sociology**

Stephanie developed the Seeing Sociology assignment to address several practical problems related to contextual factors.

First, the assignment dealt with limited instructional support. For example, Stephanie did not have graders or teaching assistants, so everything that she assigned, she graded. A visual-based
assignment promised to take less time to grade than a text-heavy assignment. Stephanie also had to consider the other demands on instructor time. She developed the assignment at a community college where she taught five courses every semester: two online and three in-person.

Further, she usually had three unique preps each semester (in addition to in-person and online sections of Introduction to Sociology). Her courses usually enrolled about 30 students. Each semester, she was responsible for the instruction of approximately 150 students, and she also advised 30–40 students. She had no research expectations, and service requirements were low (e.g., being a member of one campus committee).

When Greg and Stephanie first met, they talked about their teaching challenges. Greg shared that he was overwhelmed by the amount of grading he had to do after changing institutions. Greg went from one section of Introductory Sociology a semester (with approximately 25 students) to two sections a semester (with 40 students each). This increased enrollment made it challenging to keep up with grading and provide effective feedback on the four-page papers he typically assigned at multiple points throughout the semester. Stephanie shared the assignment with Greg because she had developed it to address this very challenge.

Second, Seeing Sociology addressed the unique context of online learning (i.e., modality). In online courses, students often do more graded written work through the discussion forum (in contrast, discussion question responses are more likely to be ungraded for in-person courses). If students were already doing some graded writing, more writing seemed unnecessary. Therefore, Seeing Sociology took the place of nondiscussion-based writing assignments but still challenged students to activate and use their sociological imagination by connecting course material and the real world, thus meeting the course’s learning objectives.

Third, Seeing Sociology addressed issues related to student preparedness and other student characteristics. Stephanie created the assignment around 2011 and was responsive to the shifts that were taking place in the broader culture around visual-based
forms of communication and access to smartphone technology. When Stephanie began using the assignment, visual-based social media was still new. For example, Instagram and Pinterest started in 2010, and Snapchat came out in 2011. In 2012, 45 percent of Americans owned a smartphone, which increased to 56 percent in 2013 (Fox & Rainie, 2014). In other words, more students were getting smartphones or knew someone who had a smartphone. The smartphone was essential because cameras were now more accessible to students. She also knew that many of her students were part of the have-nots in the digital divide (see Gonzales et al., 2020). Therefore, she had a couple of spare digital cameras to lend out but never needed to lend them to students. Today, most students are very familiar with visual-based social media, and nearly all students have a smartphone. Therefore, students are technologically prepared for the assignment. Still, because most have grown up using social media, they are now challenged to use the conventions of social media and visuals in a new way.

Fourth, Seeing Sociology fit in the sociology curriculum because it had the potential to help students with their observational skills and could be used to introduce students to the subfield of visual sociology. Stephanie has only used the assignment in Introduction to Sociology. Still, it could be adapted to intermediate or upper-level courses and, more explicitly, target the development of observational data collection and analysis.

Over the years, the assignment underwent significant revisions. Stephanie published the initial instructions for this activity on TRAILS in 2013 and an updated version in 2017 (Medley-Rath, 2013; 2017; see also Medley-Rath, 2019). The 2017 version changed the assignment to a group assignment and included a method for sharing students’ work with the whole class. Stephanie shifted from an individual to a group assignment due to varying levels of student preparedness. Students in groups could correct students who misunderstood the assignment early.

Greg began using the assignment with the instructions Stephanie had published on TRAILS. He has since adapted the assignment to better fit his context. For instance, he found that sharing student work from previous classes is useful for students to get an idea
of how the project works. Stephanie designed the assignment as a term-long project. Greg experimented with doing it only for the second two units of his class, with mixed results. Students seem to benefit from repetition and starting earlier in the semester. He also ran into the problem every semester of the “poetic caption.” While Greg wants students to be creative in how they express themselves, too often it became a trite expression like “The nature of life is change” over an image of graduation or “Under the skin, we are all the same” over a picture of arms of different skin tones. He revised the assignment to avoid these kinds of submissions in the future. He finds that having students use the list of sociological terms they get on their exam study guides helps reduce (but not eliminate) these types of submissions by pushing students back into active sociological thinking.

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**In-Class Activity**

**Objects From Everyday Life: A Can of Coca-Cola**

Stephanie started using Objects From Everyday Life: A Can of Coca-Cola (Medley-Rath, 2015) as an in-class activity in Introduction to Sociology early in her career. The framework for the activity was not her original idea. The original idea came from Peter Kaufman, who published this activity in *Teaching Sociology* in 1997. Stephanie learned about the activity from a classmate during her Teaching Sociology Seminar as a graduate student.

Stephanie has used this activity in Introduction to Sociology classes with enrollments ranging from about 15 to upward of 90 students. However, the activity could be successfully used in larger sections too. She has also used a condensed version of the activity with eighth-grade and high school students on campus visit days.

Kaufman’s (1997) activity centered on a pair of Air Jordans as a cultural artifact. Stephanie was familiar with the shoes but never owned a pair or had much interest in them. She was not sure
of her students’ familiarity, but suspected it was mixed: Most students were likely familiar with the shoes, but few were likely to be extensively familiar with them. The assignment needed a cultural artifact that had more widespread appeal and was inescapable. At the time, she was living in Atlanta, Georgia, where Coca-Cola is headquartered, and thought more students would have a greater familiarity with Coca-Cola. Using Coca-Cola also had the convenience factor, reducing *demands on instructor time*. Stephanie could easily purchase a can of Coke for the activity or keep a can in her office at the ready.

Kaufman’s (1997) version included several questions to pose for students. Over the years, Stephanie looked up and answered those questions so that she could provide more in-depth content to her students. She created follow-up questions so that she could more fully answer the questions about Coca-Cola (especially when students were unable or unwilling to share). She also made a PowerPoint with images to illustrate ideas based on the questions.

Students find the activity memorable (it shows up on her student evaluations of teaching). However, over the past couple of years, students have been less able to answer the questions because they are less familiar with the product. She no longer lives in the land of Coca-Cola, but today, all students drink less soda because they are drinking more bottled water, flavored coffee beverages, and energy drinks. Soda machines are no longer a staple of their K–12 schooling as they were for Stephanie (when it was possible to purchase a soda two to three times during the school day!). Stephanie recognizes that the assignment is due for another significant overhaul using a different cultural artifact because students are less *prepared* to engage with this item. Possible cultural artifacts include smartphones, cars, social media (i.e., how to share information), Amazon.com (i.e., how to shop for things), or Google.com (i.e., how to search for information). Ideal objects have been around long enough to change over time, are used globally, and are part of our everyday lives. The problem with using social media, Amazon.com, or Google.com, is that they are not objects as envisioned by the original assignment. Objects
From Everyday Life is a good activity but needs a new cultural object and discussion questions to handle digital objects.

Additionally, the activity was developed entirely for in-person instruction and needs to be adapted for online modalities. The activity could likely be adjusted using polling or social annotation software, online discussion forums, or other programs like VoiceThread. Stephanie has access to many software solutions through her institution, which makes an adaption possible. Still, demands on her time have made creating an interactive online version of the activity difficult.

Overview of Coming Modules

Over the next few months, we will have several modules by leaders in teaching and learning in sociology that will walk you through multiple considerations as you develop your germ of an idea into a published resource. Subsequent modules will help you with considerations from various points of the process. Andrea Hunt writes on the special considerations when developing in-class assignments. Stephanie Medley-Rath offers her insights on how to get your resources in front of other people, from the nitty-gritty of dealing with copyright and Institutional Review Boards to finding the right venue for sharing your work. Diane Pike and Alana Gillis provide details on how to present your teaching accomplishments in job applications and promotion and award dossiers. Kathleen Lowney describes scholarly teaching.

Be sure to join us as we help you go from great ideas to polished resources and take the next steps to share those resources and foster a teaching-based community.
Next Steps

Where are you stuck? What resources do you have to get unstuck? For example, if you have access to TRAILS, then you could search for innovative ideas to get you started. If you want to incorporate media but are overwhelmed by the possibilities, then browse the film and podcast reviews in *Teaching Sociology*. If your challenge is specific to your institutional context, then identify a colleague to discuss the issue. Do not limit yourself to colleagues within your discipline.

Resources

Meeting the Course Learning Objectives


The Cultural or Institutional Context


Talking Over a Teaching Challenge With Colleagues

- Teaching With a Sociological Lens Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/teachingsoc/
- American Sociological Association’s Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology: https://teachingandlearningsociology.wordpress.com

TRAILS! *Teaching Sociology!* Social Media!

- TRAILS: https://trails.asanet.org
- *Teaching Sociology*: https://www.asanet.org/publications/journals/teaching-sociology/

K–12 Instruction

- Cult of Pedagogy: https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/
Inspiring Media

- Teaching Sociology film and podcast reviews
- Teaching Sociology podcast webinar: https://elizabethtown-my.sharepoint.com/:v:g/personal/kozimor-kim_etown_edu/ES3Es5oGkw9GpMSx9Yhjzy0Bt9-FVyo17_c1LfavuLONuw?e=uYRLft

Discouraging Academic Dishonesty


Other

- Your institution’s center for teaching and learning

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Gillis, A. [@alannagillis3]. (2022, March 24). Problem summary: students could benefit from extensions, need flexibility, need structure, profs are burned out, and we have to worry [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/alannagillis3/status/1507120900822417410


May Takeuchi is a professor of sociology at the University of North Alabama. Her areas of expertise include social psychology, group process, and teaching and learning of quantitative methods. She has more than twenty years of teaching experience and has been serving as an editorial board member for TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology. She is also an author of many teaching resources published in TRAILS, including The Great American Fast Foods Statistics series, which uses a down-to-earth approach with a hint of humor and realistic examples to teach quantitative analysis.

Alexander Takeuchi, PhD, University of North Alabama

Alex Takeuchi is a professor of sociology and university ombudsman at the University of North Alabama. His areas of expertise include social psychology, crime and deviance, and theory. He has a three-decade-long experience teaching various sociology courses. He has developed many teaching and learning resources and assignments for introductory sociology and theory, some of which are published in TRAILS.
Introduction

When sharing your teaching ideas and resources in the teaching and learning (T&L) community, what information would you want to include? Obviously, an abstract that concisely describes your shared resource would be a must. A well-written abstract helps other instructors looking for innovative and effective T&L resources that can be adopted in their courses.

Besides the abstract, another critical component that describes the resource in terms of its intended purpose and consequences is the learning outcome. A learning outcome is a detailed description of how data regarding the effectiveness of the T&L resource are collected to provide evidence that students have achieved the learning objectives (Mansour, 2022). In short, it is where you describe what “ends” your T&L resource is supposed to produce. According to Mansour (2022), learning outcomes can consist of two elements: learning goal/objective and assessment. In this module, we will focus on the assessment component of learning outcomes. Specifically, we will discuss topics such as: 1) what we mean by assessment; 2) what we mean by constructive alignment among learning objectives, assessment, and pedagogical instruments such as the T&L activities that you intend to share in the T&L community; and 3) how to write well-aligned assessments and avoid common pitfalls.

A. What Is Assessment?

Formally defined, assessment is the measurement of how a student’s knowledge, attitudes, and skills have increased or otherwise improved due to the academic experience provided by the instructor, a pedagogical instrument used in the class, or both (Mansour, 2022). Therefore, your T&L resource assessment should state how you will know whether students have achieved the specific learning objectives. Assessment can take various forms, ranging from something as simple as collecting student responses
in class discussions to something as elaborate as major capstone projects. Regardless of its form, your assessment should always address the critical question: How will students demonstrate the acquired knowledge, ability, or attitude?

Here are some examples of learning objectives and assessments from the resources published in TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology:

Example 1 (Kordsmeier, 2016):

- Learning objective: “Students will demonstrate understanding of concepts related to the social construction of health and illness.”
- Assessment: “In a 4–6-page paper, students are assessed on the understanding of concepts related to the social construction of health and illness that they display through their use of terms and ideas from the course. (See attached rubric item 3).”

Example 2 (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2019):

- Learning objective: “To learn how to examine the difference between two unrelated groups and between two related groups by comparing the means obtained from the two groups, using examples of real-life social situations.”
- Assessment: “How well students understand the nature of the problems and can formulate appropriate null hypotheses in Questions A3a, B3a, B3d, and C1 on the assignment sheet.”

Example 3 (Linneman, 2020):

- Learning objective: “Students will be able to apply the ethical principles of professionalism, equity, academics, confidentiality, and honesty to examples of situations with ethical implications they might face as sociology teachers.”
- Assessment: “At the conclusion of the activity, in a 1-minute paper assessment technique, or in a reflection paper, provide students with novel situations, and ask them how they would address them ethically in light of the PEACH principles.”
These examples of learning objectives and assessments from TRAILS show how students’ attainment of new knowledge or skills will be displayed in tangible forms, which are observable and thus measurable. As you can see, well-constructed assessments should also serve as “indicators” of the effectiveness of your T&L resource.

**B. What Do We Mean by Alignment?**

As discussed in the Introduction, assessment is an essential component of learning outcomes and does not exist independently of other critical components. Therefore, it must be congruent with the instructor’s T&L design components.

### 1. The T&L Design

According to Chatterjee and Corral (2017), *instructional alignment* means how well the learning objectives, assessment, and instructional methods are working together to support the consistent educational outcome. To see a figure that shows how these three components are closely aligned, see Figure 1.

**Figure 1. How to Write Well-Defined Learning Objectives**

- **Learning objectives:** A description of what students need to know or should be able to do upon completion of the T & L activity.
- **Instructional methods:** Activities and/or experience that will help students achieve the learning objectives.
- **Assessment:** A specified task that allows students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning objectives.
When the three components are closely aligned to reinforce one another, it is called *constructive alignment* (Biggs, 2003). Ideally, your T&L resource is designed in such a way as to help students develop the knowledge and skills specified in the learning objectives; and a well-aligned assessment of the resource should measure the accomplishment of the learning objectives.

If assessments effectively reflect what the instructor can look for as evidence that the learning objectives have been achieved, they will also help other instructors understand the pedagogical contributions of the resource as well as its utility and adaptability to their classes. Then, the resource is more likely to be shared in the T&L community as part of the cumulative knowledge on effective pedagogy in sociology. In that sense, T&L resources with well-aligned learning objectives and assessments will enhance the quality of T&L experiences for both the instructors and their students and make greater contributions to sociology education.

### 2. Alignment for Measurement Quality

In research, a measurement must accurately reflect the concept it intends to measure to ensure its validity. Similarly, assessment in T&L must also accurately reflect the learning objective it intends to assess. Indeed, assessment validity is a critical dimension of quality measurement, of which alignment is foundational.

For instance, the learning objective may be for students “to be able to differentiate” the three major sociological perspectives (i.e., structural-functional, conflict, and symbolic interaction). Here, simply giving the students multiple-choice questions on the mere definition of each perspective would not adequately meet the
learning objective “to differentiate.” Moreover, just giving multiple-choice questions on definitions can undermine assessment validity, even if such an assessment may still yield consistent results. Therefore, the appropriateness of the assessment instrument (e.g., type of question, such as multiple-choice versus short essay) and its contents (e.g., question on definition versus question on application or comparison) for specific learning objectives or their symmetry is very important.

Of course, it is also essential that a valid assessment yields consistent results across time periods (e.g., academic terms/semesters), groups (e.g., sections of the same course), and individual students to ensure its reliability. Assessment reliability is not as closely linked to the alignment of learning objectives and assessments as assessment validity. However, assessment reliability is still an important dimension of assessment quality closely related to alignment that instructors and authors of T&L resources need to keep in mind.

3. Logical Structure of Components

Figure 2. Assessment As Operationalization Of Learning Objectives.

T & L Activity (Treatment) ➔ Learning Objectives (Expected Effects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment (Observed Effects)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The issue of alignment can also be explained by using the analogy of the experimental method. In Figure 2, T&L Activity is much like
the Experimental Treatment intended to have effects on the dependent variable. In this analogy, the treatment results are the desired outcome in students’ mastery of the course materials, as stated in the Learning Objectives. Assessment, on the other hand, is much like the operationalization of the dependent variable stated in the Learning Objectives. As such, assessment must specify how exactly you will observe and measure the extent to which the learning objectives have been achieved.

In aligning Learning Objectives, Assessment, and T&L Activity, it is imperative to pay attention to the logical temporal order of the three components and develop a proper assessment of the pedagogical goal (i.e., learning objectives) based on the anticipated consequence of the T&L activity. To assess any change in the dependent variable, the assessment factor needs to follow (i.e., occur after) the T&L activity but not lead (i.e., occur before) it in time order. As simple as it seems, the logical temporal order of the components is a common source of confusion when developing an assessment (see Section E later in this module).

C. What Should Be Aligned?

1. Aligning the Types of Learning Objectives and the Types of Assessment

Depending on when it is delivered, assessment can be categorized into two types: summative assessment and formative assessment (Sambell et al., 2012).
Summative assessment is given after the T&L activity. This type of assessment provides evidence that students have achieved/gained skills or knowledge specified in the learning objective after the T&L activity. Common examples of summative assessments include exams, assignments, projects, and presentations.

On the other hand, formative assessment is given in the middle of the T&L activity. It is typically implemented through self-tests, understanding checks, peer review, and critique. The purpose of formative assessment is to provide students with feedback while they are still working on the T&L activity.

Summative and formative assessments can be combined to aid students' learning experiences. For instance, in scaffolded assessment (Karla & Vogel, 2021), assessment is broken down into subassessments at different stages of the T&L activity. As such, it allows students to receive feedback multiple times and reflect on them throughout their progress toward completing the assigned task.

Another assessment typology can be made based on the type of tasks students are required to perform. In traditional assessment, students demonstrate their knowledge or skill on conventional tests, quizzes, or other assignments. In contrast, in authentic assessment, students would perform more applied tasks to demonstrate their acquired skills and knowledge (Sambell et al., 2012). Examples of such tasks include case studies, simulations, consulting, internships, and service learning that provides opportunities to practice, consult resources, get feedback, and refine their performance.

The assessment type must match the learning objectives specified in the T&L activity. For example, suppose the learning objective of your T&L resource is to promote students' smooth progression toward acquiring skills to perform a defined task. In that case, a formative assessment is required, so their progress during the process can be properly monitored and appropriate feedback can be provided. Also, the assessment type should be authentic assessment because the desired outcome is students' performance on a defined task. If the learning objective is
students’ acquisition of knowledge, summative and traditional assessments are appropriate because the purpose of assessment is to evaluate rather than to provide feedback, and the desired outcome is the acquisition of knowledge rather than the application of knowledge.

2. Aligning the Types of Learning Objectives and the Types of Tasks that Students Perform in Assessments

Suppose students are required to perform an assessment task different from the one specified in the learning objective. In that case, the assessment cannot measure whether the students have achieved the learning objective. For example, if the learning objective states, “Students will be able to analyze and critique a journal article,” students should be asked to “analyze and critique an article” in the authentic assessment rather than to “summarize an article.”

One way to help ensure the alignment between T&L activities, learning objectives, and corresponding assessments is to look at the verb(s) used in each of the three components. Check whether the verb that describes the learning objective corresponds to the one used in its assessment regarding the type of task students must perform. Here is an example:

- T&L activity: Students practice interview skills by teaming up with a classmate, interviewing each other, and exchanging feedback with each other.
- A learning objective of the activity: Students learn the skills to perform an interview.
- The assessment of the learning objective: Students answer multiple-choice questions on interviewing at the end of the activity.
In this example, the assessment task (i.e., answering multiple-choice questions) does not allow students to demonstrate what is stated in the learning objective (i.e., whether they have acquired interview skills and how well they can perform an interview). To have better alignment, the assessment of the learning objective needs to be modified:

- The assessment of the learning objective: Students exchange a checklist on their interview performance with each other.

It is essential to remember that the type of learning objective and task that students perform in the T&L activity should guide you to an appropriate task in the assessment.

Table 1 summarizes different types of learning objectives with examples of verbs and assessment tasks that are appropriate for each type of learning objective as adopted from the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Learning Objectives and Examples of Verbs</th>
<th>Examples of Appropriate Assessment Tasks</th>
<th>Possible Outcomes of Assessment Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembering</strong> Students will be able to define, describe, identify, list, outline, recall, recognize, report, select, or state.</td>
<td>Objective test items, such as multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, or short-answer questions</td>
<td>Students recall or recognize facts, concepts, or terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong> Students will be able to classify, compare, differentiate, discuss, explain, interpret, or summarize.</td>
<td>Activities such as papers, exams, assignments, problem sets, or class discussions</td>
<td>Students summarize readings, compare &amp; contrast two or more theories/concepts, classify/categorize cases/elements using established criteria, paraphrase documents, identify examples of a concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Learning Objectives and Examples of Verbs</td>
<td>Examples of Appropriate Assessment Tasks</td>
<td>Possible Outcomes of Assessment Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applying</strong>&lt;br&gt;Students will be able to apply, compute, demonstrate, execute, implement, infer, predict, prepare, produce, solve, or use.</td>
<td>Activities such as problem sets, performances, labs, prototyping, or simulations</td>
<td>Students use information or a skill to solve or complete tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyzing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Students will be able to analyze, attribute, classify, compare &amp; contrast, debate, differentiate, examine, explain, integrate, organize, question, relate, survey, or test.</td>
<td>Activities such as case studies, critiques, labs, papers, projects, debates, or concept maps</td>
<td>Students discriminate or select relevant from irrelevant parts, determine how elements function together, or determine bias, values, or underlying intent in presented materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluating</strong>&lt;br&gt;Students will be able to appraise, argue, assess, check, critique, determine, evaluate, judge, justify, recommend, review, support, validate, or weigh.</td>
<td>Activities such as reviews, journals, critiques, case studies, problem sets, or studies</td>
<td>Students test, monitor, judge, or critique readings, performances, arguments, policies, methods, or studies against established criteria or standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating</strong>&lt;br&gt;Students will be able to build, construct, design, develop, formulate, generate, hypothesize, integrate, plan, produce, propose, or synthesize.</td>
<td>Activities such as essays, research projects, performances, or survey designs</td>
<td>Students make, build, design or generate new or original work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What follows are a few examples of alignment of verbs used in learning objectives and assessments, as shown in Table 1:

Example 1:

- Activity: An assignment designed to teach students the three major sociology perspectives.
• Learning objective: Students will be able to discuss the unique feature of each major sociological perspective.

• Assessment: How well students can compare the three major sociological perspectives in their written responses.

Example 2:

• Activity: An exercise designed to teach students a step-by-step procedure for conducting a graphical analysis.

• Learning objective: Students acquire the skills to analyze quantitative data by drawing a graph.

• Assessment: Students sketch a graph using provided data and examine the bivariate association in the question at the exercise’s end.

Example 3:

• Activity: An in-class group activity designed to enable students to create an appropriate household budget for a hypothetical family.

• Learning objective: Students will be able to develop an appropriate household budget considering social needs and constraints.

• Assessment: Students generate a budget spreadsheet that reflects appropriate expense items and allocation of resources as the output of the activity.

Note that all the assessment outputs in the three examples—students’ written responses, graphs, and budget spreadsheets—are tangible and thus are directly measurable.
D. How to Develop Effective Assessments

Step 1: Determine how attainment can be demonstrated.

The construction of an effective assessment starts with specific learning objectives to be achieved. Once you determine your desired outcomes (i.e., learning objectives), determine how students would effectively demonstrate their knowledge and abilities (i.e., assessment). Identify the specific knowledge and skills that students are expected to gain through or by the end of the T&L activity and the desired level of attainment of such knowledge and skills.

Step 2: Define how the performance (or the demonstration of outcomes) should look.

The next step is considering the necessary performance or demonstration of the outcomes and how they can be observed and measured. Here, you need to determine acceptable evidence of learning and choose appropriate assessment tasks that will enable students to demonstrate it, receive feedback on their learning progress, or both.

Step 3: Write a specific, measurable, and well-aligned assessment.

To effectively demonstrate what effects/changes the T&L resource is intended to produce through or at the end of the learning activities, the assessment is expected to include (but is not limited to) the following information:

- Performance: What knowledge or skills will students be expected to demonstrate? Specify them using a measurable action verb as introduced in Table 1.
- Degree of attainment: How well or at what level are the knowledge or skills expected to be performed?
• Timing of measurement: When should the performance be measured—during T&L activity or after the activity?

• Method of observation: How will the performance be measured and evaluated?

The three examples of assessment from Section A also provide this information.

Example 1 (Kordsmeier, 2016):

“In a 4-6-page paper, students are assessed on the understanding of concepts related to the social construction of health and illness that they display through their use of terms and ideas from the course. (See attached rubric item 3).”

• **Performance**: Students display their understanding of the concepts related to the social construction of health and illness through their use of terms and ideas from the course.

• **Degree of attainment**: Rubric is provided.¹

• **Timing of measurement**: At the conclusion of the activity.

• **Method of observation**: A 4–6-page paper.

Example 2 (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2019):

Assessment: “How well students understand the nature of the problems and can formulate appropriate null hypotheses in Questions A3a, B3a, B3d, and C1 on the assignment sheet.”

• **Performance**: Students formulate appropriate null hypotheses.

• **Degree of attainment**: “How well . . .” (The example answers and common mistakes are provided in the resource to serve as references.)

• **Timing of measurement**: At the completion of the specified questions in the assignment.

• **Method of observation**: Questions A3a, B3a, B3d, and C1.

¹Rubrics are an excellent tool to describe precisely what is expected to be attained. Because rubrics clearly show what outcomes look like, they can be used for grading.
Example 3 (Linneman, 2020):

“At the conclusion of the activity, in a 1-minute paper assessment technique, or in a reflection paper, provide students with novel situations, and ask them how they would address them ethically in light of the PEACH principles.”

- **Performance**: Students address the provided novel situations ethically considering the PEACH principles.

- **Degree of attainment**: “How they would address . . . ethically.”
  (The grading criteria are discussed in the Usage Notes of the resource.)

- **Timing of measurement**: At the conclusion of the activity.

- **Method of observation**: A 1-minute paper assessment technique or a reflection paper.

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E. Common Sources of Confusion

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1. Confusion of Assessment and Tasks (i.e., means to achieve the learning objective)

Example:

- **Learning objective**: Alleviation of students’ anxiety for writing.

- **Assessment**: In-class writing exercise.

- **Problem**: The proposed activity, an in-class writing exercise, is the T&L activity or the means to produce the desired outcome (i.e., alleviation of writing anxiety). The assessment needs to reflect what instructors can look for as evidence that shows
whether students’ anxiety has decreased, and if so, to what extent. Therefore, the assessment should also address the degree to which the outcome has been produced.

- **Example revision to assessment:** After the activity, students are asked to write a short reflection on how the activity helped them feel more comfortable about writing.

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**2. Confusion of Assessment and Instructions (i.e., what instructors say, implement, or both)**

Example:

- **Learning objective:** Students will be able to describe the three major sociological perspectives.

- **Assessment:** Students watch a video about the three major sociological perspectives.

- **Problem:** Watching a video is a procedure or means through which the instructor hopes to produce the desired outcome. Watching a video itself would not provide any information on students’ levels of understanding of the materials as an outcome.

- **Example revision to assessment:** Students write a summary of the three major sociological perspectives as discussed in the video.

Again, learning objectives are what students will be able to do **AFTER** completing the assigned tasks (i.e., T&L activity), and assessments specify how the instructor observes the effects or outcomes. As such, they should not be a mere description of the task or instruction. Instead, learning objectives should really address the intended effects or desired outcomes of the assigned task or instruction.
3. Lack of Specificity

A well-constructed assessment should imply how the presence or absence of the desired outcome is observed and how the data are collected. What follows are several examples of assessments in which “operationalization” is ambiguous and thus is not measurable in tangible forms:

Example 1: “Students’ contribution to the class discussion is observed.”

- **Point for improvement**: Specify how exactly and in what manner the degree, quality, or both of students’ contribution to the class discussion is observed and measured in the assessment.

Example 2: “Students’ in-class participation.”

- **Point for improvement**: Specify how the two states (i.e., “participation” and “lack of participation”) are differentiated and in what manner “participation” is measured.

Example 3: “Students submit a one-minute paper about the activity.”

- **Point for improvement**: Include a clear description of a one-minute paper assignment (providing specific instructions to students), so the alignment between the learning objective and its assessment is clearly shown.

Example 4: “Students respond to a series of questions after completing the activity.”

- **Points for improvement**: a) Describe the questions used in the assessment so the alignment between the learning objective and its assessment is clearly shown, and b) specify the form of output (e.g., a simple hand-raising, a survey, or a quiz), so the exact procedure to evaluate students’ responses are described in the assessment.
F. Final Check List

1. Does the assessment correspond well to the learning objective in a measurable or directly observable form?
2. Is the assessment based on the direct observation of student performance?
3. Does the assessment allow the instructor to evaluate students’ attainment of new knowledge and skills effectively?
4. Are the T&L activity, learning objectives, and assessments in the resource well-aligned?
5. Does the assessment follow, instead of lead, the T&L activity in time order?
6. Is the assessment clearly differentiated from the task(s) and instructions of the T&L activity?
7. Is the assessment clear, specific, and measurable?

References


Celeste Atkins transitioned to the University of Arizona after 9 years as a full-time instructor and 5 years as the department chair at a community college. She is an assistant professor of practice in the Graduate College and director of the Initiative to Maximize Student Development program focused on increasing retention and success for underrepresented graduate students in STEM fields. She has been recognized for her teaching and diversity efforts with the Dr. Maria Teresa Velez Diversity Leadership Scholarship, the Hans O. Mauksch Award for Distinguished Contributions to Undergraduate Sociology, the Pacific Sociological Association Early Career Award for Innovation in Teaching, and the Arizona Women in Higher Education Emerging Leader Award. Her novel approach to teaching introductory classes—the 20 concepts method—was the ninth most downloaded resource in 2019 from TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology, and she has published her intersectional analysis of teaching about privilege as a faculty member from a traditionally marginalized group in chapters in Accessibility and Diversity in the 21st Century University, Gender, Race, and Class in the Lives of Today’s Teachers: Educators at Intersections, and Picture a Professor: Intersectional Teaching Strategies for Interrupting Bias about Faculty and Increasing Student Learning. Many of her teaching resources can be found at her website: https://atkinsc.com/teaching-samples/.
Creating inclusive learning environments starts with reflection because it is only by understanding ourselves and our positionality that we can begin to empathize with others. Therefore, I provide questions to consider helping you define your positionality and identify your biases. This reflection will give you a baseline, which may influence adjustments to your teaching approach. Then I share tips and best practices I have learned and developed in more than a decade of teaching at the college level. Finally, I provide multiple concrete, small, immediate, but impactful changes that can make your classroom more welcoming and engaging for students.

I begin with intersectionality because it “serves as a powerful reminder to pay attention to the margins of all identity-based organizing and analysis” (Harris & Leonardo, 2018, pp. 4–5). An intersectional lens draws attention to how the various social categories by which we are grouped—gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, and so on—interact on multiple levels to affect the life chances and experiences of the individual and create systemic social inequality (Harris & Leonardo, 2018). In sociology, we often focus on the social construction of reality—the idea that what we see as real and the meanings we ascribe are subjective and created through social interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). When we understand that our identities are socially constructed, we realize that “their significance stems not from some ‘natural’ state but from what they have become as the result of social and historical processes” (Andersen & Collins, 2007, p. 62). For those of us who have marginalized identities, Harding teaches that this “social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemological, scientific, and political advantage,” which she cites as one of the advantages to standpoint theory. She further argues, “a standpoint is an achievement, something for
which oppressed groups must struggle” (Harding, 2004, pp. 7–8). As an instructor, I struggled with students, particularly those from the hard sciences, who saw sociological concepts as “opinions” and were looking for a singular “objective” truth. Centering my classes around a foundation of intersectionality infused with standpoint theory helps me get students to realize that many truths are formed through the lens of our social identities and perspectives.

For me, intersectionality was vital to reaching and engaging my students. When I began teaching, students said I was intimidating and talked too much about being big, Black, and a woman. I tried to teach like my nurturing soft-spoken white female colleagues, but students read it as inauthentic. However, when I shifted to an intersectional approach by finding a textbook that centered on intersectionality and building each class around the theme of social construction of reality and intersectionality, things improved. Students started to understand that there were multiple truths and that the way I experienced the world was shaped, in part, by how the world treats me as a big Black woman. I found my stride, using my strengths—a dramatic personality, a snarky sense of humor, and a genuine passion for student success—and by being my authentic self, drawing students to me.

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**Positionality**

Intersectional approaches begin with a reflection. Who are you? How would you describe yourself? What is your positionality? I identify as a cisgender, heterosexual, zaftig, Black woman with a white mother, a former army brat and only child, a feminist, an outspoken LGBTQIA+ ally, a single mother by choice, and a sociologist and educator with a focus on increasing the success of underserved minority students. For example, I use my heterosexual privilege to advocate through my student club, in my classes, and with the administration for my students and colleagues who are sexual minorities. Therefore, students who
are queer, trans*, or transitioning feel safe to be themselves in my classes. As a rare Black female instructor, Black students feel seen in my classes. As a former “army brat,” I can empathize with the military personnel and their family members in my classes. It's vital to identify your positionality and consider how different students might react to it. Then you can employ your teaching strengths to counteract your biases and engage more students.

Please take a moment to answer the questions below. Again, I encourage you to be honest; no one will see this or judge you.

- Who are you?
- What is your positionality? How would you describe yourself?
- Why do you teach?
- Who are your favorite students? Why?
- What students do you dread? Why?
- What students have surprised you? Why?

When I reflected on these things, I was surprised when I realized that some of my favorite students were the ones who challenged me. They helped me grow, and they kept me humble. They weren't always the academically strongest students, but they kept me engaged and made teaching fun. I also realized that when I described the students I dreaded, some of my favorite students also fit those descriptions—a helpful reminder not to judge a book by its cover. It's easy to categorize and to think we have seen it all, but that’s the magic of teaching: Each student is unique, and if we stay open to learning, they teach us as much as we teach them.

Bias

Now that we have reflected on who we are, next, we turn to identifying our biases. It's important to understand that we all have biases. We create and use schemas to process information quickly.
I have a BA and an MA in sociology focusing on race and gender, and I am a diversity expert. However, I have conscious and unconscious biases that I must watch for and proactively guard against.

Let me tell you about one of my favorite students ever. This student was in an introduction to sociology class where I was lecturing about how those with privilege don’t give it away without a fight. I try to use humor, so I say things like “men didn’t say, ‘well we should let the little ladies vote’ no, women had to march and be jailed and do hunger strikes.” “White people didn’t say, ‘those Black folks have worked hard enough, we should free them,’ no, our country fought a whole civil war about it.” Once, when I made this point, a white male student raised his hand. I called on him, and he said, “Well, actually,” in a heavy southern twang. Immediately I’m biased and think, “this white southern man is going to argue with me about slavery.” He described how one important man in history did free the people he had enslaved. This student was a history major, and he was correct—I was generalizing, and some exceptions proved the rule. I acknowledged his point, clarified that I was generalizing, and we went on to have a great semester. This story reminds me to listen to someone before assuming how they are.

As a Black woman in America, it is reasonable that I have a conscious bias about white men with a southern accent. However, I am aware of this bias and can guard against it by reminding myself to let people show me who they truly are before making up my mind about them. What’s harder to address is unconscious bias, our perceptions of the world we assume (wrongly) are universal. For example, I talk about culture lag through the lens of a lesbian couple. When debriefing this example with workshop participants, I say, “I use a lesbian couple because learners will extrapolate from them to a heterosexual couple, but no one would extrapolate to a queer couple if I used heterosexual examples.” After one workshop, one participant respectfully stated that she, as a lesbian, would have thought beyond heterosexuality. It had never dawned on me how heteronormative that statement and my assumptions were! Now, I say something to the effect
of “many folks would not extrapolate . . . “ which is much more inclusive and still makes my original point.

At this point, I invite you to do some online activities to consider your biases. There are multiple activities listed that I find useful, and I encourage you to do as many as you feel appropriate because they are aimed at different identities and aspects of inequality. After you have completed the activities, take some time to write out what you discovered about yourself. How did it make you feel? Be honest; this is for your eyes only.

- Understanding Prejudice (https://secure.understandingprejudice.org/demos/): Where do you draw the line? Can you avoid segregation?
- Project Implicit (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html): Please complete at least the race, transgender, and disability tests.
- Spent (https://playspent.org/): This game focuses on socioeconomic class.

What do you do once you identify your biases? It's important to remember that creating inclusive learning environments is a never-ending process. Social norms, ideologies, and verbiage evolve. Therefore, one must be a lifelong learner. What I have found to be helpful are: 1) be aware of your conscious bias and guard against letting it guide your actions, 2) be kind to yourself when you make mistakes, 3) assume good intent and make teachable moments when others misstep, 4) be open and welcoming to others, even students, correcting you, 5) use active listening, 6) make it about them, and most importantly, 7) don't be a quiet bystander.

Let's unpack those tips a bit more. As I illustrated in the story about my student with the southern accent, it's normal to have some stereotypes or preconceived notions about certain groups. Remind yourself in these situations that this is a new person, and I need to see them as individuals before making decisions about them. Accept that you will mess up, and don't beat yourself up about it. It is natural to become defensive if you feel attacked, and that's not a good space for learning. It is important to assume
good intent. I prefer to address these situations by “calling in.” Calling in means I assume they are not trying to be deliberately harmful. I take the time to gently point out the issue and explain how people may perceive their words as offensive, hurtful, or derogatory. I have found that calling in is key to an inclusive learning environment, particularly when students are empowered to bring my missteps to my attention without fear of reprisal.

To address your biases, I have two important tips. First, when someone takes the time to bring an issue to you, remember that it means you are important enough to them to go through the discomfort of this challenging situation. Take a moment to ground yourself, set your ego aside, and actively listen—not to respond, but to understand. Use the active listening approach of summarizing and clarifying what they've told you. After listening, it’s essential to make your response about THEM. Even though you may feel awful for your mistake, this is about how you've made the person offended feel. I try to remember the 3 As:

- Acknowledge, “I said or did . . . that made you feel . . .”
- Apologize, “I am so sorry that I hurt you/offended you.”
- Action, “I will do my best not to make that mistake in the future.”

Don’t try to justify or prove that you were not trying to be offensive because that puts them in the position of having to comfort you. It’s not about you.

Finally, as the instructor, you are the person with power with students. Therefore, it is incumbent on you to address microaggressions—those subtle, indirect, sometimes unintentional slights against those with marginalized identities—directly, publicly, and immediately, especially if they are against a group you are not a part of. Use your social privilege. You may not want to make a scene or don’t want to embarrass the person, but that person has already offended someone else. If no one addresses it, often that’s justification to continue that behavior. Here are a couple of suggestions:
Ask Pointed Questions

I heard a student say, “that’s so gay,” so I asked them, “What did you mean by that?” “How was that action homosexual?” The student said it wasn’t homosexual. They meant stupid or dumb. I used that as a learning opportunity to illustrate how that translates into being derogatory toward queer individuals.

Questions asked with curiosity and without hostility can help people think through what they’ve said and how it may affect others. It’s an excellent way to address issues without making accusations.

Firmly State That You Find Something Offensive

One of my Latino/a/x students used a racial slur for Mexicans. I stopped them and said, “I’m sorry, but that type of language is not OK. It’s offensive, and I would appreciate it if you didn’t use it.” The student was surprised because I don’t identify as Latino/a/x allowing me to educate them that you don’t have to be part of the targeted group to be offended.

Use Your Privilege

Often when members of the targeted group point out microaggressions and offensive statements, they are attacked and accused of “playing the race card” or “not having a sense of humor.” However, those kinds of accusations cannot be made if a person not part of the targeted group points out the offense.
More importantly, by addressing microaggressions, you prove to be an ally and someone willing to have the difficult conversations necessary for change.

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**Address it Immediately**

The biggest mistake individuals in power—for example, teachers—make is waiting to have a private conversation with the offender. If we wait to address the offense, those offended are left with the impression that we do not care.

None of the exercises or situations described in the first half of this module are easy. I'm telling you now that it will feel uncomfortable, you will struggle for the right words, and you will mess up. It’s ego-deflating to have your students point out that you have made an error or a microaggression, but if they feel comfortable enough to call you in, you are doing the right thing. Creating a genuinely inclusive learning environment is never complete. It requires dedication and reflection, and continuous growth.

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**Small Changes**

Now, let’s turn to the small concrete steps you can take to make a difference. Most of these you can incorporate into your classes tomorrow; however, the first three are best to start at the beginning of the semester.
Create a Safe Learning Environment

The time to start building an inclusive learning environment is before the class begins. It starts with the tone of your syllabus. Is it respectful or dictatorial? On the first day of class, how do you set the tone and expectations? Depending on your teaching style and personal preferences, there are various ways to do so. Some folks like to create group agreements or cowrite the syllabus. I prefer prewritten group agreements, which I ask students to edit or add to. The goal is clarity, ensuring everyone is on the same page about the classroom environment.

I define a safe learning environment as one in which everyone can be heard and treated with respect. A safe learning environment does not mean comfortable because exploring sociological issues is rarely comfortable. Therefore, I prepare students by discussing what a safe learning environment is and what it is not. It does not mean you can say anything you want. We can agree to disagree, but we must treat each other with respect. It’s also understanding that respect means different things to different people and clearly defining what respect means to you. For me, respect means showing up on time and not having side conversations.

Furthermore, for me, a safe learning environment is one in which all students participate, so I discuss with students about stepping up if they are quiet and stepping back if they tend to dominate. Finally, for me, a safe learning environment is one in which the expectations are clear, as are the consequences. Therefore, I have students sign a contract stating that they have read the syllabus and understand their responsibilities in the class. I usually incorporate the contract with the first-day survey in which I gather information on the students to help me plan the course. On the rare occasion when I am forced to deal with a disruptive student, I use the contract to say, this is what you agreed to. The contract lays out our expectations. If you cannot follow this agreement, you cannot be in the class. Although I have rarely needed to, in extreme cases, this was my justification for dropping a disruptive student from the class.
Introductory Activities

Another technique I use to set the tone and create a safe learning environment is by incorporating various introductory activities. These activities allow students to understand that there is a diversity of experiences in the class without “outing” individual students. For example, I try to make introductions engaging and interesting. I ask students to share the usual name, major, and why they are taking this class in their introductions, but then add a creative twist. I might ask students to draw a picture that tells us something about them, create a biopoem, or answer an icebreaker question, such as “If you were a dessert, what dessert would you be and why?” I find exercises like opportunity walks, intersectionality exercises, culture exercises, forced choice activities, and anonymous surveys where we see responses using a “step in step out” activity helpful.

In their feedback, students mention these activities as their favorite part of the class. I offer this one note of caution: You must make every effort to keep students safe. I always do things like state, “If you are heterosexual and choose to be out in this classroom, please . . .” (note: I use HETEROSEXUAL deliberately to disrupt the norm) or during the intersectionality exercise, I will say, “If you wish to remain private in any of these categories, please feel free to lie.” These words reinforce that I want students to feel safe and give them a way to protect their privacy. I provide more detailed instructions on how to conduct these activities safely and inclusively in the Appendix.

Be Your Authentic Self

As an essential part of engaging students and creating a safe learning environment, I have found that being your authentic self is critical. For example, I use PowerPoint slides to keep me on track when lecturing to avoid going off on tangents. I use my personality, energy, passion for sociology, and sense of humor to
engage students. I have seen the same students deeply engaged in classes with wonderful teachers who are quiet and soft-spoken but engaging in their own ways. My history colleague was quietly passionate and told such interesting stories about Arizona history based on just a picture on a slide that students found it captivating. For me, I would have gone on so many tangents without an outline that students would have been lost! So, figure out your style and comfort zone and lean into your strengths as a teacher. There are a million ways to be an effective, inclusive teacher.

As a Black woman, a group that is underrepresented in academia, I have found it essential to be my authentic self to expand students’ (and frankly colleagues’) notions of “professionalism” in academia. I can be expressive when I talk, wear box braids or cornrows, and speak in a way that’s accessible to all yet still be the consummate professional. Academic ideals of professionalism are heteronormative, middle-class, Eurocentric (and often masculine), and did not feel comfortable or authentic to me. The more students see you as a human being—with your style—the more they warm to you. Expressing your culture, faith, or gender identity through your clothing also expands ideas of professionalism. Now that you have set the tone by creating a safe learning environment, incorporating introductory activities, and, most importantly, being your authentic self, let’s turn to steps you can take at any point in the semester to make your classes more inclusive.

### Let Them See Themselves

Academia has been heterosexist, Eurocentric, upper-class, and dominated by men for so long it makes many of us feel as if we are in a different world in which we will never belong. This fact was driven home to me in graduate school in the only graduate course I ever dropped. It was feminist studies, and I couldn’t wait to take
it; however, the name was misleading—it should have been called WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS feminist studies. There was nothing in it about women of color, our experiences were erased entirely, and I felt ostracized. The instructor was not open to my requests for work from Patricia Hill Collins or others. Ultimately, I dropped the class because, clearly, that space was not for me. So, in planning your courses, ask yourself, how diverse are the readings? Do they include readings by and about queer people, people of color, people outside the United States, women, and disabled writers? If so, consider including images or short biographies so students get a sense of that diversity. If not, what articles by scholars from underrepresented backgrounds might you incorporate?

How diverse are the images you use in your lectures? If you use diverse images, are you careful to break stereotypes? For example, when we talk about families, I make several choices to challenge stereotypes about families. I never show Black single-mother households. Instead, I show Black fathers or two-parent Black families because they are often erased and stereotyped as absentee. I use images of elderly queer couples as well as images of gay fathers to portray diversity among queer families. I share stories that my friends have shared with me (and given me permission to use) about their experiences being trans* or bi or Latino/a/x to provide concrete examples of sociological concepts. Finally, in tests and quizzes, I use diverse names—not just Bill and Mary, but Josue and Xi, LaToya and Guadalupe, Fatimah and Mohammed—and not just heterosexual couples, but queer and polyamorous couples as well. These are small things, but they make a huge difference to students.

Another way that I let students see themselves is through sharing cultural knowledge. For example, until very recently, many students in the United States had never heard of Juneteenth. However, students in my introductory classes learned about Juneteenth as an illustration of nonmaterial culture. I also used Cinco de Mayo to educate that the holiday is not about Mexican independence and the quote “the Real McCoy” to discuss Black inventors. A fun activity I did in my human sexuality class to break the ice and get students used to talking openly about sexual topics
was the naming game. I would draw (with minimal talent) male and female genitalia and female breasts on the board. Students would team up to create a list of as many slang terms for the items on the board as possible in 3 minutes. This activity was a fun way to incorporate the students’ home cultures and learn new slang, as the terms for genitalia vary greatly based on age, race, region, nationality, etc.

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Use Humor

These examples also speak to another approach that I find helpful, using humor—memes, GIFs, and “dad jokes” are your friends! Not only do they keep students engaged and entertained, but it also helps them to retain the information. Previous students love to tell me, “Prof. Atkins, I was debunking something in my other class, and no, I wasn’t falling off a bunk bed.” It’s a corny “dad joke” that I say every year, but it sticks in their minds. Remember that it is crucial to be transparent about that approach if you are using humor. In the early days, I tell students that I use humor to make classes more fun and to make discussing difficult topics easier. I ask them to let me know if anything feels disrespectful or over the top because that is not my intention. I also repeat that message when I am using humor for particularly charged topics.

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Make it Relevant and Give Them Autonomy

My final tip is a two-fold approach. Make your classes more inclusive by making the concepts relevant to the lives of your students and giving students some autonomy. We are lucky as sociologists because our material is relevant to everyone; we just
have to teach students how to find the connections. One way to do this is by connecting concepts to the community and social issues around you. Another way is by making slight changes to how you assign papers. For example, I revised a writing assignment from asking students to define white privilege and show how it works in the world to writing a letter to someone who hasn't had the benefit of a sociology class and explain it to them. The difference in the quality of the final papers was astounding (see more examples on my website [https://atkinsc.com/teaching-samples/]).

Finally, give students the autonomy to do assignments on topics that interest them. There are many ways to do this. One way I incorporate autonomy is through low-stakes discussion posts. I ask students to take one concept from the chapter, define it in their own words, and give a concrete example of how it works. These choices offer students the chance to apply what they are learning to their lives while illustrating their understanding of the concept. I also have signature assignment videos where students must pick from an extensive list I have created of lesser-known individuals, court cases, and events from minority groups based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and disability. The caveat is that students must choose a minority group they do not belong to and create a 3-minute video presentation. As an added incentive, I offer extra credit for creativity, and some of the presentations are amazing. When students have the autonomy to choose relevant, interesting, and meaningful topics, they will perform better and are more likely to retain what they learned.

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**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the key to creating inclusive learning environments is multifaceted. It's critical to begin with a self-study. What is your positionality, and how might that affect your teaching and students' perceptions of you? What biases are you bringing into
the classroom, and how can you proactively work against those biases? How can you use your unique strengths and talent to create your teaching style?

Once you've completed your self-study, review this module to identify your next steps for creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. Remember that part of inclusivity is the opportunity for students to make mistakes and to identify your missteps. If that happens, remember the 3 As—acknowledge, apologize, and follow up with action. It is vital to address microaggressions immediately. Some possibilities are to ask a pointed follow-up question, firmly state that you found it offensive and unacceptable, and use your privilege. I have provided a wide range of examples and activities for creating more inclusive learning environments. Some of these ideas might work well for you, and others might not be your cup of tea. Please feel free to use, tweak, or ignore these suggestions in your journey to creating a more genuinely inclusive learning environment.

References


Anonymous Class Survey & Step In/Step Out Instructions – Atkins 2022

I use this activity to illustrate the diversity of experiences in the classroom without outing anyone. It is very important to make the surveys as anonymous as possible. Therefore, in a small class, I look for anything that might unintentionally out someone – for example if there are only one or two Latino/a/x students or only one older student. I then tell them not to answer those questions on the form – (ex: race or age).

I also make sure that everyone fills out the survey in pencil (I hand them out in small classes) and I put directions on the board that they are to mark a checkmark in the box - not an x, not a circle, not fill in the whole box – just a check. I also draw it on the board: square with small check inside – YES, square with oversized check – no, square with x mark – no, square colored in – no.

Once I have stressed the importance of anonymity and gone over the instructions TWICE I tell students to take the survey if they don’t know what something means it probably doesn’t apply to them, otherwise to be as honest as possible and to use their own definitions for terms. I also take the survey however, sometimes I am honest, and sometimes I am not (and I check the last question). When students are done, I have them place the survey on a table away from everyone – including me so no one will see a glimpse of what they answered. I stick mine in the middle of the stack as I gather all of the papers.

I take the students outside or to a large space and we form a circle. I pass the surveys telling students not to indicate if they get their own by accident. I then explain the step in/step out
activity. Students receive an anonymous survey, and they are representing that person, not themselves. I go through key areas of the survey and if the answer is checked students step into the circle, if it is not, they stand still. This is a visual and visceral way of showing things like how many students are close to someone who is undocumented, or have ever been part of an unplanned pregnancy, or are close to someone in prison or jail.

At opportune times, I use these to set expectations. For example, when I ask about unplanned pregnancy and several people step in, I will say something to the effect of, “so remember when we are discussing reproductive rights, that people in this class have been affected by this issue.” Or when we are talking about immigration, “remember that people in this class have undocumented people that they care about, it’s not faceless immigrants, it’s people that matter to your peers in this class.”
Think of a subculture you belong to. Don’t go with the obvious like race or sexual orientation. Think about your hobbies (archery, video gaming, hunting, cosplay) or special groups you belong to.

Write down your subculture:

_____________________________________________________________________________

Write down a belief of your subculture:

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Do you use special language or terminology? If so, what?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

What are the values of your subculture?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Write down any specialized knowledge your subculture has:

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
What are the morals/specific ways of thinking of your subculture?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

What are the rules/laws/customs/habits of your subculture?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Is there any special dress code for your subculture?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
Example Group Agreements – Atkins 2022

Group Agreements

• Class will begin and end on time
• All electronics turned off or to vibrate
  • No texting, phone calls, or ipods during class time
• Participants will refrain from side conversations
• Participants will seek clarification by asking questions
• Participants will respect confidentiality
• Participants will listen to each other with an open mind

Group Agreements

• Participants will participate to their comfort level
• Participants will share the stage and allow everyone to speak
  • If you speak up a lot – STEP BACK at times
  • If you don’t speak up – STEP UP at times
• Participants will “agree to disagree”
• Participants will treat each other with respect at all times
My Race Class Survey

1. I identify as
   - male [ ]
   - female [ ]
   - transgender [ ]
   - intersexed [ ]

2. I identify as
   - Asian American [ ]
   - African Amer/Black [ ]
   - Caucasian/White [ ]
   - Hispanic/Chicano/Latino [ ]
   - Native Amer/Alaskan Native [ ]
   - Other [ ] Bi/Multiracial [ ]

3. I am
   - under 18 [ ]
   - 18 – 24 [ ]
   - 25 – 34 [ ]
   - 35 – 44 [ ]
   - 45 – 54 [ ]
   - 55 & older [ ]

4. I am
   - never married/single [ ]
   - married [ ]
   - divorced [ ]
   - widowed [ ]
   - cohabitating [ ]

5. I identify as
   - heterosexual/straight [ ]
   - bisexual [ ]
   - homosexual/gay/lesbian [ ]
   - Asexual [ ]
   - other [ ]

6. I identify as a feminist
   - yes [ ]
   - no [ ]

7. I am
   - employed full-time [ ]
   - a full-time homemaker [ ]
   - employed part-time [ ]
   - unemployed [ ]

8. I have ___
   - kids 0 [ ]
   - 1 [ ]
   - 2 [ ]
   - 3 [ ]
   - 4 [ ]
   - 5 [ ]
   - 6 [ ]
   - 7 [ ]
   - 8 or more [ ]
9. My parents are/were
   never married  cohabitating  married  divorced

10. My dad and I
    have never met  barely speak  have a decent relationship
    have a good relationship  have a great relationship

11. My mom and I
    have never met  barely speak  have a decent relationship
    have a good relationship  have a great relationship

12. I was raised by
    both parents  just mom  just dad  other relative
    Foster care

13. I am fluent in more than one language
    yes  no

14. I consider myself culturally competent
    yes  no

15. I would have a problem working/going to school with a Hispanic/Latino person
    yes  no

16. I would have a problem working/going to school with a Black/African American
    yes  no

17. I would have a problem working/going to school with an Asian person
    yes  no

18. I would have a problem working/going to school with a Native American person
    yes  no
19. I would have a problem working/going to school with a Caucasian/White person
   yes ☐ no ☐

20. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married a Hispanic/Latino
   yes ☐ no ☐

21. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married a Black/African Am.
   yes ☐ no ☐

22. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married an Asian person
   yes ☐ no ☐

23. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married a Native American
   yes ☐ no ☐

24. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married a Caucasian/White
   yes ☐ no ☐

25. I would have sex with someone of a different race
   yes ☐ no ☐

26. I would have a relationship with someone of a different race
   yes ☐ no ☐

27. I would marry someone of a different race
   yes ☐ no ☐

28. I would have a problem if my supervisor was Hispanic/Latino
   yes ☐ no ☐

29. I would have a problem if my supervisor was Black/African American
   yes ☐ no ☐

30. I would have a problem if my supervisor was Asian
   yes ☐ no ☐
31. I would have a problem if my supervisor was Native American  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

32. I would have a problem if my supervisor was Caucasian/White  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

33. I would have a problem working/go to school with a Jewish person  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

34. I would have a problem working/go to school with a Muslim person  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

35. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married a Jewish person  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

36. I would have a problem if my parent/sibling/child married a Muslim person  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

37. I would marry someone of a different religion than my own  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

38. I am or someone close to me is an undocumented immigrant  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

39. I believe that racial stereotypes have basis in some fact  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

40. I believe there is a lot to be learned from cultures/perspectives other than my own  
   yes [ ] no [ ]

41. I have  
   a GED [ ] high school diploma [ ]

42. I have lied on this survey  
   yes [ ] no [ ]
My Soc Class Survey

1. I identify as
   - male □
   - female □
   - transgender □
   - intersexed □

2. I identify as
   - Asian American □
   - African Amer/Black □
   - Caucasian/White □
   - Hispanic/Chicano/Latino □
   - Native Amer/Alaskan Native □
   - Other □
   - Bi/Multiracial □

3. I am
   - under 18 □
   - 18 – 24 □
   - 25 – 34 □
   - 35 – 44 □
   - 45 – 54 □
   - 55 & older □

4. I am
   - never married/single □
   - married □
   - divorced □
   - widowed □
   - cohabitating □

5. I identify as
   - heterosexual/straight □
   - bisexual □
   - homosexual/gay/lesbian □
   - Asexual □
   - other □

6. I identify as a feminist
   - yes □
   - no □

7. I am
   - employed full-time □
   - a full-time homemaker □
   - employed part-time □
   - unemployed □

8. I have □
   - kids 0 □
   - 1 □
   - 2 □
   - 3 □
   - 4 □
   - 5 □
   - 6 □
   - 7 □
   - 8 or more □
9. My parents are/were
   - never married
   - cohabitating
   - married
   - divorced

10. My dad and I
    - have never met
    - barely speak
    - have a decent relationship
    - have a good relationship
    - have a great relationship

11. My mom and I
    - have never met
    - barely speak
    - have a decent relationship
    - have a good relationship
    - have a great relationship

12. I was raised by
    - both parents
    - just mom
    - just dad
    - other relative
    - Foster care

13. I have been arrested (for anything)
    - yes
    - no

14. I have been convicted of a
    - misdemeanor
    - a felony
    - never

15. I have been homeless at one point in my life
    - yes
    - no

16. I have gone to a food bank for food
    - yes
    - no

17. I have consumed alcohol
    - yes
    - no

18. I have tried
    - no drugs
    - marijuana
    - crack/cocaine
    - meth
    - Heroin
    - mushrooms
    - LSD/ecstasy
19. I currently use
   drugs never □ once a month □ once a week □
   twice or more a week □

20. I currently drink
   alcohol never □ once a month □ once a week □
   twice or more a week □

21. I am/was or someone close to me is/was an
   alcoholic □ drug abuser □

22. I am/was or someone close to me is/was in
   jail □ in prison □

23. I am/was or someone close to me is/was living with HIV/AIDS
   yes □ no □

24. I had or helped cause an unplanned pregnancy
   yes □ no □

25. I had or my partner had an abortion
   yes □ no □

26. I or my partner had a child that we gave up for adoption
   yes □ no □

27. I was adopted
   yes □ no □

28. One of my parents and/or siblings is gay/homosexual
   yes □ no □

29. I am or someone close to me is transgender
   yes □ no □
30. I am or my spouse is in the military
   yes ☐ no ☐

31. I have had sex against my will
   yes ☐ no ☐

32. I have forced someone to have sex against their will
   yes ☐ no ☐

33. I have had sex outside of a monogamous (committed relationship) without my partner’s consent
   Yes ☐ no ☐

34. I am or someone close to me is an undocumented immigrant
   yes ☐ no ☐

35. I have been in a violent relationship where I was physically assaultive to my partner
   yes ☐ no ☐

36. I have been in a violent relationship where my partner was physically assaultive to me
   yes ☐ no ☐

37. I have a
   GED ☐ high school diploma ☐

38. I have lied on this survey
   yes ☐ no ☐
Assignment: AED 408 Signature Assignment

Points: Worth 1000 points total

- 200 points for the preparation
- 400 points for the VIDEO presentation and references
- 200 points for assessing peers + possible (40 pts extra credit)
- 200 points for reflection

Due Date: 5:00 on the date specified on the course calendar submitted via D2L for each section

Please remember that we do not accept late work for any reason, nor will we award partial credit for unfinished work.

Format: Please prepare a 3-minute VIDEO presentation in any form you prefer. It must be AT LEAST 2.5 mins long and cannot be more than 3.5 minutes long. DO NOT USE VOICETHREAD.

- If you upload something that is not a video, it will be a zero.
- If it is less than 2.5 mins long or more than 3.5 minutes long it will be a zero.
- If it can not be accessed by the instructor, TA or your peers at the deadline, it will be a zero.

Sources/Citations: Please provide a list of the sources in APA format (here is a website that can help) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Learning Objective: To provide you with an opportunity to learn about a different group and life perspective and/or a lesser-known historical event, to provide you the opportunity to apply your understanding of the concepts in this course to your knowledge about the group/event. To
provide you the opportunity to teach others which leads to learning in a deeper way. To provide you the opportunity to interact with your peers in a meaningful way. To provide you the opportunity to learn from your peers. (CLO 1,3,4,7,8,9)

**Grading:** by rubrics provided in D2L

### PART 1 – PREPARATION 200 points

**Important Information:**

- Pick from the list of topics/individuals/events
  - Must focus on a group that you do not identify with
- Or choose your own using the following criteria:
  - Must be historically accurate
  - Must focus on a traditionally marginalized group based on disability, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression
  - Must focus on a group that you do not identify with
  - If you choose a topic not on the list, you must have it approved IN WRITING before the sign up deadline.

**PART 1 Breakdown**

- Choose project (50 points) – Due Week 2
- Provide outline of project (150 points) – Due Week 3
  - MUST BE A WORD DOC – NO HEADING JUST NAME TOP LEFT

### Part 2 - VIDEO PRESENTATION (400 points –300 VIDEO presentation, & 100 reference list)

- Research this topic using appropriate sources and create a reference list in APA format to turn in
• Create a 3-minute VIDEO presentation and upload it to the appropriate DISCUSSION FORUM
  o Teach your peers about the individual/event/topic you chose and why it is important to know.
  o Do not just give basic facts and overviews,
  o **You MUST connect the event or person to CONCEPTS in the course in a meaningful way.**
    ▪ Do not just list concepts – you need to illustrate the connection.
  o This presentation may take any shape you choose, here are some ideas:
    ▪ PowerPoint presentation on VIDEO
    ▪ Video
    ▪ Animation
    ▪ Infographic on VIDEO
    ▪ Psuedo News Report
    ▪ Art project that you video tape and explain
    ▪ Comic Strip that you video tape and explain
    ▪ Your imagination is the limit so be creative!

• Top scoring projects may be uploaded to the UA’s diversity website to increase public knowledge.

**Upload VIDEO presentation to D2L — Due on various weeks**

• MUST UPLOAD IN THE DISCUSSION IN A FORMAT THAT IS ACCESSIBLE BEFORE THE DEADLINE

• DO NOT USE VOICETHREAD

**REMEMBER**

• If you upload something that is not a video, it will be a zero.
• If it is less than 2.5 mins long or more than 3.5 minutes long it will be a zero.

• If it can not be accessed by the instructor, TA or your peers at the deadline, it will be a zero.

PLEASE NOTE: Videos that show creativity, imagination, and innovation in their approach to the signature assignment will receive extra credit points.

**UPLOAD Reference List to Assignment – Due same day as presentation**

- MUST BE A WORD DOC
- NO HEADING JUST NAME TOP LEFT
- REFERENCES Centered as a Title

You will be assigned to Groups based on the Module you have chosen:

- **Group 1** – will present during Module 4 (sex/gender) – their presentation and references page are due on Wed of that Module; their peer assessments are due on Sunday of that Module and their signature assignment reflections are due on Wed of Module 5

- **Group 2** – will present during Module 5 (disability) – their presentation and references page are due on Wed of that Module; their peer assessments are due on Sunday of that Module and their signature assignment reflections are due on Wed of Module 6

- **Group 3** – will present during Module 6 (race) – their presentation and references page are due on Wed of that Module; their peer assessments are due on Sunday of that Module and their signature assignment reflections are due on Wed of Module 7

- **Group 4** – will present during Module 7 (religion) – their presentation and references page are due on Wed of that Module; their peer assessments are due on Sunday of that Module and their signature assignment reflections are due on Wed of Module 8
PART 2 – ASSESSMENT (200 points) Important Information:

Due Date: 5:00 on the SUNDAY specified on the course calendar submitted via D2L

Please remember that we do not accept late work for any reason, nor will we award partial credit for unfinished work.

Length: in the feedback include a MINIMUM of 3 things done WELL and 2 things can that be improved

Format: Fill out the rubric provided in D2L –

• Download, fill out one rubric for each peer presentation,
• save as PEER NAME – Assessment –
• upload to Assignments Under Assessments –
• this may be a WORD DOC OR A PDF

You will be assigned a list of your peers to assess (which will be updated after the presentations have been turned in) and you will be expected to assess each one individually on their projects.

• Using the provided rubric, assess each presentation carefully providing positive feedback as well as constructive critique
• Keep in mind that you will be graded on the quality of your assessment and that your assessment will be added to that of your peers to count as half of your colleagues' grade.

PART 2 – ASSESSMENT EXTRA CREDIT (40 points) Important Information:

• You will be offered an additional 2 of your peers to assess. If you choose to assess them, you will be expected to assess each one individually on their projects.
Using the provided rubric, assess each presentation carefully providing positive feedback as well as constructive critique.

Keep in mind that you will be graded on the quality of your assessment and that your assessment will be added to that of your peers to count as half of your colleagues’ grade.

UPLOAD to Assignments Under Assessments Extra Credit.

PART 3 – Reflection (200 points) Important Information:

**Due Date:** 5:00 on the date specified on the course calendar submitted via D2L

Please remember that we do not accept late work for any reason, nor will we award partial credit for unfinished work.

**Length:** MINIMUM OF 2 FULL PAGES (1-inch margins, 12 point Arial font)

**Format:** MUST BE A WORD DOC OR IT WILL NOT EARN CREDIT

- WORD DOC
- 1 INCH MARGINS,
- DOUBLE-SPACED,
- ARIAL 12 PT FONT,
- NO HEADING, FIRST & LAST NAME ONLY TOP LEFT
- Must go to the bottom of page 2.

**Sources/Citations:** This is about your personal understanding, so you won’t need any outside sources or citations. Please write in your own words.

**Learning Objective:** To allow you to think about your project, synthesize your learning from the projects of your peers and to provide an opportunity for you to think more deeply about and assess your understanding of important concepts in the course.
Writing Prompt:

Please write an academic paper addressing the following question. We are looking for evidence that you have really reflected on the concepts we are covering. We are looking for you to go BEYOND surface answers and basic facts.

PLEASE REMEMBER EACH BULLET POINT SHOULD BE A FULL PARAGRAPH ANSWER.

• What did you choose to do your presentation on and why?
• What did you think about that group before your research?
• What did you learn about that group?
• Has it shifted your understanding or perspectives of that group?
  ○ Why or why not?
• What topics were your assessments on?
• What did you think about those groups before your research?
• What did you learn about those groups/individuals?
• Did this shift your understanding or perspectives on those groups?
  ○ Why or why not?
• Connect your learning in a meaningful way to the sociological concepts focused on in this class. Which one is the best fit and why?
• Do you think this project is a useful project for this type of class?
  ○ Why or why not?
• What would you do to improve this assignment if you were the instructor?
First Day of Class Survey, Contract and Syllabus Acknowledgement Example

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Syllabus Sheet

Student Name ______________________________________________________________

I prefer to be called _____________________ My pronouns are ________________

Phone #_____________________________________________________________________

(by providing my phone number, I give the instructor permission to contact
me at this number)

I chose to enroll in this course because _____________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

I have been in college for _________________________________________________

I have taken ________________________ courses with this instructor in the past.

I have taken the following Soc courses: please circle any you have taken or
none if this is your first Soc class.

101 160 210 212 230

What I am hoping to learn in this course is _________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

One thing instructors do that I really like is ________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
One thing instructors do that I really DISlike is ______________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

I, (print name) _________________________________, have reviewed my SOC 101 syllabus (including course objectives, policies, requirements and schedule) on Moodle, and have read and understand all the enclosed materials, including the course/instructor expectations and deadlines.

I, (print name) _________________________________, understand that as part of this course I must upload a picture to my Moodle profile.

I, (print name) _________________________________, give permission for my instructor to e-mail any grades and materials associated with my student record for this course during this semester to my Moodle email.

Student Signature: __________________________Date: __________________________

Student Statement of Understanding

Soc 101 - Introduction to Sociology

Date ________________
I, _________________________________
(Print first and last name)

Have read the Class Procedure Sheet and the Course Schedule and understand the content of these materials and my responsibility as a student.
I do fully understand and acknowledge the following:

A. I am at least 18 years old and thereby an adult in the State of Arizona.

B. I am choosing to take this course voluntarily and I am not being pressured to take this course.

C. I will not be able to bring visitors to this class (unless arranged with the instructor).

D. This class deals with a variety of material that some may find controversial or disturbing including films, text, lectures, guest speakers, reading, possible field trips, and classroom activities.

E. I agree to respect the dignity of all people in relation to this course, whether or not I personally agree with their opinions or behavior.

F. I agree to treat each person in this class, the instructor, and any guest speakers with respect and civility and understand that if I do not, I will be immediately asked to leave and possibly dropped from the course.

By signing this waiver, I hereby release the Cochise College District, any of its agents, and my instructor from any claim which might accrue as a result of my attendance in this class.

________________________________________
Signature

________________________________________
Printed Parent Name (if under 18) Parent Signature/Date (if under 18)

This form MUST be signed and returned to the instructor to assure your enrollment in this course.
Incorporating the Community Into Sociology Courses Through Community-Engaged Research

Julia Waity
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Julia Waity is a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She received her PhD in sociology from Indiana University Bloomington. Dr. Waity’s research and teaching interests include poverty and inequality generally, with a focus on food insecurity and food access, as well as community-engaged research and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She is on the editorial board of the American Sociological Association’s (ASA) TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology, and has published her scholarship of teaching and learning research in various outlets. Her current research examines college student food insecurity.

Jennifer Vanderminden
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Jennifer Vanderminden is an associate professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She received her PhD in sociology from the University of New Hampshire. Dr. Vanderminden’s research and teaching interests include childhood victimization, disability, data analysis, community-engaged research, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Dr. Vanderminden is also on the editorial board of ASA’s TRAILS and, like Dr. Waity, has published her scholarship of teaching and learning research in various outlets. Her current research examines exposure to violence among children and youth.
Community-engaged research (CER) has an important place in the sociology curriculum. Students engaging with sociological perspectives on social problems in the community allows for an understanding and application of concepts and skills. This experience serves students well in the university setting and beyond. We define CER as research done with the community on an issue of local relevance. The degree of community involvement and partnership varies across projects and even within. Still, we emphasize a shared understanding of the problem and how we can collaborate to understand the issue better and serve the community.

Community-engaged and applied classroom experiences have been a cornerstone of our teaching pedagogy since we began teaching at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW). We have leveraged our dedication to applied learning into grant funding, conference presentations, and teaching-related publications, which have been instrumental in our promotion and tenure process. We hope that sharing our experiences with community-engaged work will encourage others to engage in similar efforts.

UNCW was amid a quality enhancement plan (QEP) centered on applied learning when we arrived in 2013 and 2014. In our first year of teaching, we received funding from the QEP to implement applied learning into our courses. Over the next eight years, we continued to apply for and receive internal funding to enhance our community-engaged pedagogy, culminating in receiving a three-year, $45,000 strategic initiative grant to incorporate CER across our sociology curriculum. We used the grant funds to stipend faculty and graduate students for their time and materials and incentives for participating in surveys used for assessment. We found that it was important to start with smaller projects in individual courses to create a proof of concept as to the effectiveness of our methods before expanding into a larger multicourse project. While the faculty stipends compensated us for the extra time we spent on some of this work, it is possible to do (and we have done) CER without additional funding.
In addition to grant funding, we have presented our scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) research based on our community-engaged projects at many conferences, including the Southern Sociological Society, Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, and the Conference on Applied Learning in Higher Education. We have also published our teaching resources in TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology and our SoTL in several academic journals. We were fortunate to be able to utilize community-engaged applied learning in our classrooms in a way that benefits our students, our department, our community, and our careers.

Working with community partners on research is a high impact practice and can develop students’ critical thinking, active citizenship, and content knowledge through direct experience (Abderhalden et al., 2016; Gnagey, 2020; Love & MacIlroy, 2021). For example, research comparing a traditional research methods course to a community-engaged methods course showed that students in the community-engaged course reported higher research skills and generalized self-efficacy (Mayer et al., 2019).

CER is more work for students than using textbook examples or forgoing the research altogether. However, there are several benefits to students which outweigh the costs. These benefits include getting to know the community and their classmates, personal growth, knowledge and application of research and academic skills, the potential for publications, and being more competitive in the job and graduate school markets. Community engagement is part of our university, college, and department mission, vision, and strategic priorities, and likely that of many other universities as well. If that is the case at your university, you can leverage CER in promotion materials, award applications, and so on.

Greenberg, London, and McKay (2020) report that students who participated in community-engaged undergraduate research demonstrated academic and personal growth, including increased confidence and development of interpersonal skills. Further, CER provides opportunities for student growth by enabling them to consider and confront their positions and privilege and leave
the experience with a greater appreciation of the outside world from working with community partners (Berard & Ravelli, 2021). Students who participated in undergraduate research displayed improved technical, research, communication, and personal initiative skills and marked professional development (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Craney et al., 2011) with increased benefits the longer students were involved in undergraduate research (Bauer & Bennett, 2003). The combined effects of more research skills and connection to the community provide students with better preparation for the job market and graduate school admission. Students can identify their skill set and provide concrete examples of how they applied those skills and adapted when things did not go as planned. Last, students who engage in these projects may have the opportunity to publish with faculty or in an undergraduate journal like the Undergraduate Journal of Service Learning & Community-Based Research (www.ujslcbr.org).

Designing courses in anticipation of challenges that may arise from CER can lessen the students' disappointment (Moser et al., accepted for publication). One way to do this is by incorporating intention and reflection assignments. Incorporating student reflections into community-engaged courses is a best practice (Ananth et al., 2019; Bott-Knutson et al., 2019). Before students begin their community experience and at the conclusion, they should write about what they hope to get out of the experience, the challenges they anticipate encountering, and what they learned in the process. Examples of reflection prompts are: What do you hope to gain from this experience with the project in terms of personal, educational, and/or career goals? How will your learning from this experience impact your future education or career goals? What benefits and challenges did you experience in this project specifically and the course generally? We have included an example handout with these prompts and criteria for evaluation in Appendix A.

Benefits to faculty doing CER include knowing that students are learning and using skills beyond the classroom, establishing community connections, publishing in SoTL journals (including with students), and obtaining teaching grants. The student
benefits also impact faculty by increasing positive feelings about the job they are doing and through student evaluations. Like the students, faculty also report increased connectedness to the community through CER projects (Nkhoma, 2020). Faculty engaged in this work can benefit from combining their teaching and research programs and publishing in teaching-specific journals like *Teaching Sociology* (see Atkinson & Hunt, 2008; Mayer et al. 2019). Another benefit related to publishing is the opportunity to coauthor work with students. Internal and external funding (see the Considerations section for some specific sources) opportunities for both undergraduate research and community-engaged work are often available and can both support the work you are doing and be included on an annual review or tenure application demonstrating your ability to secure funding. Through teaching evaluations, publication opportunities, and grant funding, faculty can demonstrate on tenure and promotion materials the depth and importance of this work, even if it is not traditionally valued at that institution.

It is also essential to discuss the benefits to the community of involving undergraduate students in CER. When doing this work, it is necessary to consider what the community or community partner is getting out of the project and ensure that the plan and outcomes reflect a mutually beneficial partnership. This partnership can be complicated given the often short-term nature of the projects, the need for students to have a graded outcome, and the lack of resources supporting this work. Programs or models incorporating collaboration over several years with the same community partners allow for longer-term projects and ideally enable better outcomes for the community. Other benefits we’ve identified for the community partner include collecting data and research perspectives that they may not have the time, skills, or resources to complete, establishing relationships with students as future volunteers or employees, and strengthening ties with the university.
Finding a Community Partner

Finding a community partner is a crucial first step in doing CER. There are several ways of finding community partners, which we describe in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of finding community partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places/Connections</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University community engagement office</td>
<td>After Hurricane Florence, one of the faculty emailed the director of community engagement and asked if there were nonprofits active on this issue or if they would be interested in partnering. The director had a list on her office’s dry-erase board and pointed to one that would be a good fit. We met later that week and discussed research questions and approaches (see Appendix B).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting local agencies in faculty area of expertise</td>
<td>Given my (Jennifer’s) area of expertise (child victimization), I began contacting local organizations when I moved to Wilmington. When I got in touch with the local guardian ad litem, they were thrilled at collaborating and that students could support their work through research. This relationship started to connect and be in the loop and ended up being an excellent partnership (see Appendix B).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing relationships &amp; public events</td>
<td>Our public sociology research symposium is the culmination of our public sociology capstone class and provides a forum for students to share their research with community partners. We also invited other community organizations and subsequently partnered with one that attended last year on a future project. The continued relationship and invitation to future events created a space to plan for potential collaborations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News/online searching and student interest</td>
<td>After reading a local news article about our city being #2 in the country regarding the opioid crisis, the students were interested in exploring this issue. Given that the topic was student-identified, the students worked to find active partners in the field. We found a local harm reduction coalition that was excited to collaborate. The local hospital was also concerned and shared data on the topic. We found these partners through brainstorming sessions in class and then finding contact information online.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding a partner can happen either before or after identifying a topic. Deciding on how involved the students should be in the research project is essential and will impact the process and outcomes. In some cases, it might be possible to involve students from the project’s conception, helping to craft the topic, determine the community partner, and shape the broad direction of the research project. In most other cases, the faculty/staff or community partner has already taken steps to identify important components of the project and partnership (second and third examples in Table 1) due to faculty expertise, limited time during the semester/academic year, and the challenge of finding and establishing relationships with community partners. We have found that providing students with the opportunity to engage in decision-making related to the project and methodology is beneficial for student buy-in and student learning outcomes. With that, providing opportunities for students to choose between different options or methodologies with constraints also allows faculty to manage the scope and type of work (again, faculty bandwidth needs to be considered). Once you have found a community partner, creating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that includes expectations for both the community partner and your students is important. An MOU will ensure that everyone understands roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Here is an example MOU: https://ctsi.ucla.edu/patients-community/files/view/docs/How_To__Design_a_Community_Academic_Partnered_MOU.pdf.

What Type of Class Would You Do This In, and How Big of a Project Should It Be?

Throughout our careers, we’ve done small and large-scale CER projects with students (examples to follow and detailed in Appendix B). We recommend doing CER at any level
undergraduate course and topic of class. Given the time constraints, we also recommend considering how many courses you incorporate this type of work into and the scope of the projects. We've found that it is more feasible to do this work in several of our courses if the project is consistent across courses being taught concurrently with each doing different components of the larger project.

Partnerships that last for the entire semester or year (i.e., large-scale projects) can benefit community partners and students because it allows for longer-term projects and closer collaboration. Integrating CER into capstone courses is highly beneficial for students because they learn professional skills and are given experiential research opportunities to apply their sociological skills (Conover, 2015; Love & Maillroy, 2021). See Appendix B for tables that describe how this can be done in one semester or over several semesters.

We developed Community-Engaged Research Across the Curriculum (CRAC) in response to several challenges. First, students were not exposed to CER until their senior year. Second, we felt like even a two-semester sequence was not long enough for large CER projects. Third, we wanted to provide course-based research opportunities to underrepresented students who may not be able to forgo a summer job to research with faculty. Fourth, we had a community partner interested in working on a multiyear, large-scale project. In this model, we incorporate CER across the sociology curriculum. At UNCW, we have both a public sociology and a general sociology track. For the public sociology option, the capstone course requires students to conduct a CER project across two sequenced semesters. In the fall semester, students take a required public sociology seminar, and in the spring semester, they take the required public sociology practicum. Seeing the benefits of a longer period for the students to engage in a research project, we wanted to expand this to multiple courses over multiple years to allow us to take on larger projects with many parts that couldn't be completed in our usual shorter time frame. Further, we wanted all sociology students, not just those in the public sociology track, to have an opportunity to engage in CER. By collaborating with the community partner, we created
a multiyear plan for the research project and then decided into which courses we would embed specific components. We created an elective 200-level course on introduction to applied research and then incorporated components of the research project into our research methods, data analysis, and capstone courses (all required for sociology majors). Students taking these courses would be exposed to the required course material while applying the content to the CER project component for that course.

Students complete a small aspect of a larger CER project in each course in the model. For example, in the data analysis course, they analyzed data provided by our community partner to address their research question. Students engaged in virtual community mapping in the applied social research class (detailed assignment published in TRAILS, Waity, Vanderminden, and Resnick, 2023). Since the mapped area was large, the students taking social research methods the following semester continued with this project. They expanded it to use the mapping data in their research proposals. We only included those courses we teach in the model, but we have since expanded to include courses taught by other faculty. The CRAC model exposes students to high impact research involvement with the community in 200-, 300-, and 400-level courses. Several of the courses in the model are required (research methods and data analysis, for example), so some students likely didn't select the courses because of the model but rather because they were required.

If the community partner has limited time, the project’s scope must narrow. There are many ways that students can participate in CER without doing a project from start to finish (small-scale projects). For example, students can use data from a community partner in a data analysis and statistics course (e.g., what are arrest trends over time in your city?). Students can create an infographic using data from a nonprofit (e.g., a fact sheet for guardian ad litem volunteers on rates of victimization in the United States). Students can prepare research proposals based on the community partners’ needs. Or students can conduct a virtual community assessment using online mapping tools. The project output can vary from a tangible product like an infographic,
fact sheet, or report to something more complex like a data set collected in partnership with the community partner.

Considerations When Undertaking This Type of Work

Our department and university are open to this type of work, and the faculty are available to sharing, connecting, and supporting CER. While that isn't the case at all institutions, that is a strength of international (e.g., the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology), national (e.g., the American Sociological Association’s Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology), and regional organizations (e.g., North Central Sociological Association’s Committee for Applied, Clinical, and Other Public Sociology) to connect people doing similar types of research and teaching. Find people (you can start with us!) to network with to share resources, ideas, and connections. Does your institution have a center for teaching and learning? Perhaps that is a space to find support for the work and ways to demonstrate your work through your tenure and promotion materials.

Consider peer, departmental, institutional, and external supports in place when beginning this type of work. What types of publications will be valued at your institution (see Gillis and Pike, and Lowney in this series? Is CER encouraged pretenure? How can you make a case for this type of work in the classroom? It can be challenging if your department, college, or university does not support community-engaged work. There are external grants that you can draw on to support CER, including the American Sociological Association Community Action Research Initiative grant https://www.asanet.org/academic-professional-resources/asa-grants-and-fellowships/community-action-research-initiative-initiative-grants), NC Campus Engagement (https://nccampusengagement.org/grants-and-resources/), and the Sociological Initiatives Foundation (http://www.sifoundation.org/). You can talk to
professors in other departments about making a case for the importance of community-engaged work in the classroom. You can cite the research demonstrating why CER is beneficial to our students (it is a high impact practice) and even allow the students to tell in their own words the impact this has made on them, especially related to career preparation. We find that student voices can be a powerful tool.

While we hope that it is evident to readers how passionate we are about the benefits community-engaged applied learning has, it is very time intensive. Establishing meaningful connections with a community partner takes time. It must be clear to the community partner that you are invested in the relationship and not just interested in it for one class. Students need mentoring through community-engaged work that they likely would not need in other courses where they are more familiar with the content and format. Assignments may need to be redesigned from semester to semester, especially for courses where the focus changes when the community partner changes. For example, we have taught our public and applied sociology course focused on affordable housing, food insecurity, the opioid epidemic, and social determinants of crime. We believe that the benefits of CER, including the additional time invested, outweigh the costs, but they are important to acknowledge before beginning a CER project.

To manage the time commitment for this type of work, we suggest involving additional faculty in your department. With our CRAC model, several faculty members are working with one community partner doing similar assignments in their courses, which helps to lessen the burden. If there are no other faculty to collaborate on the project, consider working with the same community partner across multiple courses you teach. For example, in a research methods course you could create research proposals on topics of interest to the organization, and in a social inequality course you could conduct a needs assessment with the same community partner. See if internal grants available at your university might be able to be used to pay a graduate or undergraduate student to work with you and reduce some of your time investment.
Since you are spending considerable time on these projects, consider how you can get the most impact from them. Submitting one of your innovative community-engaged teaching activities to TRAILS provides you with a concrete artifact demonstrating your teaching effectiveness. When designing class activities, consider how you can use student learning assessment to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the activity. Publishing your SoTL research is a good way to get publications while continuing to devote additional time to community-engaged applied learning.

Both of us incorporated community-engaged applied learning into our courses starting from our first year as assistant professors. We would encourage you to do the same, even without institutional support. The strategies described in this module can help to alleviate the extra time these activities need. If that doesn’t seem feasible, consider incorporating a small project first and slowly build on it as you establish stronger ties in the community.

### Planning and Assessing

Clearly connecting the project activities and outcomes to learning objectives is important for the project’s success, student learning, and for successfully demonstrating teaching excellence. We’ve done this in several ways, including mapping the project outcomes onto department-level student learning outcomes for the program, course-level student learning outcomes, and other learning objectives we feel are critical, such as information literacy. We have an example published in TRAILS of an assignment with connected learning outcomes (Waity, Vanderminden, and Resnick, 2023).

It can be challenging to evaluate and assess student participation in CER projects because of the labor-intensive nature of the project and the variations present in community work. We’ve found that using many small projects that build on one another
supports student success. We break larger projects into smaller tasks, with some evaluated for effort or completion and some evaluated on quality. Using smaller assignments with different grading approaches allows students to be successful and feel their efforts are reflected in their grades. We've also found that transparency (see https://tilthighered.com/), timely feedback, and the ability to adjust if needed are essential for evaluating student progress. We have used assessments, including critical reflections, pre/post-tests, evaluation of written work, and exit surveys to determine whether and to what degree the students are meeting the learning outcomes. We have also incorporated that assessment data into articles. If you think you might use this assessment data outside of your campus (e.g., as a conference presentation or in a peer-reviewed publication), you should consult your institutional review board (IRB).

Challenges to Doing CER in the Classroom

We have laid out several reasons why we think it is important to incorporate community-engaged applied learning into your classroom. We have already mentioned several challenges at the individual (e.g., time commitment) and institutional (e.g., unsupportive institution or colleagues) levels. We think it is important to acknowledge those challenges beyond the university, including at the community and global level (such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted how we worked in the community).

Challenges can occur in the community organization, the broader community, or the nation or world that can disrupt this work. Effectively planning your course can limit the impact of these disruptions (Moser et al., accepted for publication). Leadership at a community partner can change, and it may necessitate a change in the research focus or cause a lack of interest in continuing the partnership. An MOU can be helpful to ensure that projects are completed, but the organization may still shift its priorities.
Community events can occur that may lead to a reframing of the research. One example in our community was a school shooting that shifted the research to focus specifically on violence prevention programs. Other disasters, such as hurricanes or global pandemics, can also impact this work. When our university closed for a month after a hurricane, student research topics shifted to the disparate impacts of the hurricane.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated that our students use no contact methods of data collection, which lowered the response rate of our survey on affordable housing in the community. We found creative ways to pivot activities we planned to do in person to an online environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. One example, which is detailed in the TRAILS assignment, is a community mapping activity that was supposed to involve students walking around and interacting in the community but was shifted online. While students missed the opportunity to be in the community, the mapping experience was still rewarding. Some shifting needed to occur in all the examples described, whether it was of the research question itself or the data collection method, but students could still complete projects with a continued community-engaged component. These benefits and challenges to CER are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. Benefits and Challenges of CER.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of CER With Students</th>
<th>Challenges to CER With Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility during challenging and disrupted times</td>
<td>Events that reframe the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to apply academic skills in “real-world” settings</td>
<td>Time required by faculty, students, and community partners that goes beyond their normal responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to present and publish research with students</td>
<td>Lack of institutional support (e.g., course reassignment, travel funds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential positive impact on the community of this research</td>
<td>Establishing relationships with community partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear connection for students between skills and use beyond the academic setting</td>
<td>Underprepared students, students not interested and/or willing to engage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources

• Undergraduate Journal of Service Learning & Community-Based Research: www.ujslcbr.org

• Example MOU: https://ctsi.ucla.edu/patients-community/files/view/docs/How_To__Design_a_Community_Academic_Partnered_MOU.pdf

• Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology: https://www.aacsnet.net/

• American Sociological Association's Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology: https://sspps.wordpress.com/

• North Central Sociological Association's Committee for Applied, Clinical, and Other Public Sociology: https://www.ncsanet.org/students/soc-resources/appliedsoc/

• American Sociological Association Community Action Research Initiative grant: https://www.asanet.org/academic-professional-resources/asa-grants-and-fellowships/community-action-research-initiative-grants

• NC Campus Engagement: https://nccampusengagement.org/grants-and-resources/

• Sociological Initiatives Foundation: http://www.sifoundation.org/

Acknowledgments

We want to thank the University of North Carolina Wilmington's Office of Applied Learning for the funding that we have received over the years to conduct this type of research. We would also like to thank the Department of Sociology and Criminology for being such a supportive environment for this type of work.


Appendix A. Examples of Intention and Reflection Prompts and Grading Criteria

Intention Prompt Examples from SOC 495 (senior seminar in sociology)

1. What do you hope to learn from this course? What do you know about sociology? (I realize this is a HUGE question . . . this is intended to get you thinking about how you would give an elevator talk on sociology . . . so try it out!) What more do you want to know about sociology? What area are you most interested in learning more about?

2. Have you engaged in an applied learning project before? Do you have any concerns or questions about our course and project/do you anticipate any challenges or difficulties? Do you have any previous experience with community-based research?

3. What do you think of when you think about social determinants of crime? What do you think are some factors that make it more or less likely for crime to occur?

4. What do you anticipate learning from working directly with the police department that is different from what you learned from academic sources? In what ways do you anticipate the data from the community partner will be different than sources you've used in the past? To what degree do you feel like you critically assess content you consume (evaluate the information for source, accuracy, etc.)?
Reflection Prompt Examples from SOC 495 (senior seminar in sociology)

1. What did you learn about sociology that you did not know before you began the course?

2. How did what you learned in class impact what you might want to do as a career?

3. What did you learn about the community of Wilmington? What questions remain unanswered?

4. How did what you learned about in prior classes connect to your project in this class?

5. Did you encounter any issues or challenges while working on the community-based research project with the community partner? Are there any skills you wish you had but didn't while you were participating in this experience?

6. What did you learn from working with the police department that is different from what you learned from academic sources? In what ways did the data from the community partner differ from sources you've used in the past? To what degree do you feel like you critically assess content you consume (evaluate the information for source, accuracy, etc.)?

7. What else do you want to share?

Guidelines for Assignment:

Write what first comes to mind but then also consider going deeper and providing more detail and depth in your answer.

Make sure to answer all parts of each question.
Appendix B. Diagrams of How This Can Happen in One Semester or Over the Course of Several Semesters

Community-engaged example 1: Two semester project adapted to natural disaster with one community partner and students in three groups with different foci

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determine topic: Inequity in hurricane recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Establish community partnerships (CP) (group) and establish needs of CP/community

- Support the Port (local non-profit)
- Better understanding of inequity in response to natural disaster

Identify and focus research question (one per student, example research questions below)

- What are the main challenges to recovery among residents impacted by Hurricane Florence?
- Were there neighborhood differences in amount of time to power restoration? Did higher income spaces have power restored faster?
- Where are the major resource distribution centers located? What is the proximity of distribution centers to low-income areas?

Identifying the most appropriate research design for the topic (by group but each student must be able to test a question using this design)

- Online surveys completed on a tablet at community events
- Existing/administrative data: Records of outages from power company
- Existing data: Geocoding of major distribution centers and census data

Creating a research plan (as group, broad steps below)

- Collaborate with CP to create a survey
- Obtain IRB approval
- Plan for how distribute surveys at community events
- Identify data that is available
- Create specific protocol for accessing data (provided through the state of NC)

Collect (as a group) and analyze data (individually)

- Distribute surveys at community events
- Attach ID numbers to all surveys and enter in SPSS
- Analyze in SPSS
- Obtain data from state of NC
- Clean and code data in SPSS
- Analyze in SPSS
- Visualize data on maps
- Obtain data from county and online access to census data
- Clean and code data in SPSS
- Analyze in SPSS and ArcGIS
- Visualize data on maps

Dissemination: All students wrote a research paper, report (written for the public and available on website), and presented posters at a research symposium (community attended event)
Community-engaged example 2: Single semester project with single community partner. Five groups all using same processes

Determine topic: Child abuse and neglect in the US, NC, and New Hanover County

Establish community partnerships (CP) (group) and establish needs of CP/community

Identify and focus research question (one per student, example research questions below). Students did this in two parts- one was descriptive for the fact sheet the other tested a hypothesis

Guardian Ad Litem
Additional materials (fact sheets) are needed for volunteers to better understand the current scope/context of abuse and neglect in the lives of children.

Identifying the most appropriate research design for the topic (same for whole class but each student must be able to test a question using this design)

Existing/administrative data: (1) US, state, and county level CPS data,
(2) Nationally representative survey on violence in the lives of children and youth

Creating a research plan (as a class, work in group, individual analysis)

Identify data that is available
Create specific protocol for finding, importing, and analyzing data

Collect (as a group) and analyze data (individually)

Obtain data
Clean and code data in SPSS
Analyze in SPSS

Dissemination

All students wrote a fact sheet with PPT and a research paper
The fact sheets were presented to GAL volunteers at a community event and the research papers were presented to the class
Assignments: Low-Stakes, In-Class, and Grading for Completion

Andrea N. Hunt
University of North Alabama

Andrea N. Hunt is an associate professor of sociology and executive director of the Mitchell-West Center for Social Inclusion and Center for Women’s Studies at the University of North Alabama. Andrea has been active in the scholarship of teaching and learning for the past 18 years. Her teaching, research, and community work cover various interrelated topics, including youth and families, trauma, identity development, mentoring, and inclusive practices. She is an area editor for the American Sociological Association’s (ASA) TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology and was a contributing author for ASA’s The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Curriculum, Careers and Online Learning.
Introduction

While choosing course content, you must consider how you will teach it and assess student learning. In-class and completion grade assignments are valuable tools for assessing student learning at various levels and are low stakes for students. A host of benefits include opportunities for students to generate and organize ideas, logically develop points, make connections between course concepts, and elaborate on ideas. In-class and completion grade assignments encourage comprehension and help prepare students for higher-stakes assessments. Low-stakes assignments allow the instructor to see learning gaps, areas needing reinforcement, and skill development, without having a disproportionate impact on a student's overall grade.

Class size does not need to be prohibitive when choosing a technique; these activities are easily adaptable for large and small class sizes. The classroom layout can have an impact especially related to how students work together in collaborative learning groups. For example, students may have an easier or harder time getting into groups depending on the classroom furniture. In online courses, the usability and functions within your learning management system and other online learning technologies can also affect the choice of technique.

There are a variety of teaching techniques that are useful for in-class and completion grade assignments. You can find examples specific to sociology in TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology, the American Sociological Association's Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology newsletter, and *Teaching Sociology*. In-class and completion grade assignments can be a tool for attendance and assessment. There are three primary assessment forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. The two you will most likely use in class are diagnostic and formative.
Diagnostic and Formative Assessment

Diagnostic assessments are used during pre-instruction to determine prior knowledge and skills of students (e.g., pretest). These results give the instructor baseline information on how to teach and an opportunity to provide informal feedback to students before moving into the course material. You can use formative assessments to monitor student progress while learning is happening (e.g., 1-minute reflection papers). They are low stakes and helpful in identifying learning gaps. One way of differentiating between diagnostic and formative assessments is to think about past learning versus what is happening now. You will more likely use a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of a new module or with the introduction of a new unit or concept. In comparison, formative assessments are helpful throughout instruction to gauge student learning or progress.

Metacognition

It is easy to get caught up in new and fun class activities without considering how they are tied to learning objectives and outcomes. When deciding on an in-class and completion grade assignment, you still need to ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish. The revised Bloom’s taxonomy (see Anderson et al., 2001) is a guiding framework for choosing in-class and completion grade assignments that lead to higher-order thinking and metacognition. The revised taxonomy still has the cognitive dimension you may already be familiar with and use when writing learning outcomes—remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The addition of the knowledge dimension ranges from factual and conceptual to procedural and metacognitive. Anderson et al. (2001) map these dimensions onto
each other and show how you can simultaneously address the cognitive and knowledge dimensions as you move toward higher-order thinking and greater metacognition. Iowa State University’s Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (n.d.) has helpful information on the revised taxonomy and a graphic display of how you map both dimensions.

Metacognition refers to the awareness and understanding of one’s thought processes or, more simply, thinking about thinking. McGuire’s (2015) work on teaching students how to learn suggests there are ways to use in-class and completion grade assignments to enhance metacognition by encouraging autonomy, competence, belonging, self-esteem, and involvement. For example, I have students analyze interactive data on global migration patterns from the International Organization for Migration (2022). They move from explaining the data (comprehension) to examining the factors that contribute to global migration (analyzing) to hypothesizing about future patterns (evaluating). Students reflect on their learning by comparing the data with their assumptions, distinguishing the sources of their existing topical knowledge, assessing their learning, and identifying any questions about the material and their understanding of the topic.

The following teaching strategies are some of the most common in-class and grade completion assignments. They encourage students to become teachers and shift learning to a more collaborative process with peers, enhancing higher-order thinking and metacognition. It is worth noting that many of these strategies have some overlap and can be used in conjunction with each other.
Active Learning

Active learning is different from lecture-based instruction. Atkinson and Lowney (2016) note that many teaching strategies are active learning because they go beyond listening to doing. You can Google “active learning,” and there will be numerous results with descriptions, examples, and research. Two popular in-class active learning exercises are Think-Pair-Share and data analysis, which can be used for attendance grades and graded or ungraded formative assessments. These activities provide students with guided opportunities for deeper learning, reflection, and application. Both are good for large and small classes and are structured so students can think through a concept, process, or idea before having a more extensive class discussion.

The basic premise for a Think-Pair-Share is that the instructor provides a prompt, and the students answer and reflect on this individually. You want to consider open-ended prompts, such as “how” and “why” questions, that will encourage deeper thinking and engagement (see Kent State University Center for Teaching and Learning, 2022). For example, if you assign students to read an excerpt from Johnson’s *The Forest and the Trees* (2014), you might ask them to reflect and write about why Johnson suggests that individualistic models for change will not work. You can put the question on a PowerPoint slide and have it on display so that students can look back at the question as they think through their responses. After pondering that question (typically by writing), students would share their thoughts with a classmate sitting near them. You should pay attention to students who have not paired up. You can serve as the partner or have them join another pair to become a triad. Give the students a few minutes to discuss
the prompt with each other. Then, ask volunteers to share their thoughts with the whole class.

Students can also use various data in images, graphs, tables, and other visualizations to explore sociological research questions. There are examples provided in most textbooks that you can use for data analysis. TRAILS is a great place to find examples of data analysis exercises. For instance, Medley-Rath (2013) has students explore images through a content analysis that introduces them to course concepts related to stratification that they will explore later in the semester. There are additional examples through the Pew Research Center on topics relevant to sociology. Students can analyze data individually, use it in a Think-Pair-Share, or as a part of a small group discussion (see the section on Collaborative Learning Groups for examples). The instructor will need to provide students with prompts guiding them through what to do with the data. For example, students can interpret the data and conclude whether the data support a given research question. Lor (2022) has an example of this in TRAILS, where students create a scatterplot to interpret data on college graduation, median income, and location. The activities move students from describing the data to identifying correlations.

Writing to Think

Writing to think exercises are informal, low stakes, and one of the most versatile in-class assignments. Similar to the Think-Pair-Share, the main focus is on writing. However, writing to think exercises may or may not be collaborative, whereas the Think-Pair-Share centers student collaboration and meaningful conversation. Because of its versatility, writing to think can take on many forms. Angelo and Cross’s (1993) seminal work on classroom assessment techniques (CAT) provides numerous examples of writing to think exercises. Minute papers, which can take 2–3 minutes, are one of the most frequently used CATs. You can tie these to a class discussion where students identify the main points, the most important thing learned during the class,
any questions that remain unanswered, or all three (Atkinson & Lowney, 2016). Students can even paraphrase a central context presented in class. For example, you might ask students to describe the sociological imagination in their own words. They can also be used to reflect on class-level or individual learning goals (e.g., a personal assessment of progress) (Messineo, 2018) or to identify areas of confusion (e.g., what is the muddiest point from today?). You can use writing to think exercises as a stand-alone formative assessment or as a part of the scaffolding connected to an overarching learning objective. Scaffolding is a way to chunk course material and can include writing to think activities, such as brainstorming, identifying, and linking significant concepts.

Inquiry-Guided Learning

Inquiry-guided learning is a type of active learning centered on practicing disciplinary skills. Student research is a typical example, but instructors often use it as a form of summative assessment that students do outside class. However, you can use student research in other ways where you might incorporate smaller in-class assignments (e.g., built-in checkpoints or share-outs to the rest of the class regarding progress) to scaffold a larger research project. Students might develop research questions in class, collaborate online, or participate in peer review.

Atkinson and Lowney (2016) describe an inductive activity where students analyze a table on naming patterns in class and answer questions. Students speculate what research question generated the data, the possible significance of the data, the identifiable patterns in the data, and what other information is needed to interpret the data accurately. These same questions can be used to analyze a variety of different data and can extend the data analysis previously discussed in the active learning section. Writing to think exercises can also be more inductive, where students are provided a prompt at the beginning of class where they can reflect and write a response before the lecture or discussion. They can then compare this to how they might answer the same prompt after the class lecture or discussion.
Collaborative Learning Groups

Collaborative assignments and projects are considered a high-impact practice by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (2022). They describe collaborative learning as combining two goals: “learning to work and solve problems in the company of others and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences.” Collaborative learning groups are a great way to increase engagement, peer-to-peer learning, oral communication, and clarification of course concepts. Using collaborative learning goals should reflect your course objectives and outcomes, the material you want to cover, what you hope to accomplish during that class or online module, and the level of learning you would like your students to achieve. There are various ways to use collaborative learning in the classroom or online in informal and more formal ways. For example, students might work in groups to analyze Halloween costumes (Hendley, 2021) or greeting cards (Illten 2015; McWilliams & Barrett, 2013) and have a series of questions to answer.

Another approach may be having preassigned groups work together throughout the semester on questions related to an assigned monograph. For instance, Desmond’s *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016) has an accompanying website with a reading guide (see https://evictedbook.com/) with discussion questions that are appropriate for individual and collaborative learning groups. Students can respond to a question from the reading guide before class and submit it online in the learning management system or bring it to class as a “ticket” to participate in the collaborative learning group. While in the group, students can identify themes and respond to other questions on the assigned readings. The group members can hold different roles, such as the facilitator, notetaker, timekeeper, and reporter (i.e., report to the larger class). I have found it helpful to have groups work on different questions rather than all groups working on the same questions. For example, if you assigned multiple chapters from *Evicted*, some groups might focus on chapter 1...
while others focus on chapters 2 or 3. Dividing responsibility for learning allows for deeper understanding and prevents groups from saying, “our answer was just like the previous group.” Medley-Rath (2019a; 2019b) developed a set of activities and quizzes available in TRAILS for instructors using Evicted.

When using collaborative learning groups, we must use our disciplinary knowledge about social groups to understand intergroup dynamics and explore the different ways to manage group work with students. Oleson (2020) discusses ways to promote inclusive teaching and learning practices using collaborative groups. It would help if you considered how you would form the group, the size of the group, ways to ensure access and equity, and the social identities of group members. It is also helpful for students to have different roles in groups (e.g., scribe, facilitator, monitor, etc.) and to have a procedure for determining which roles students will serve.

Conclusion

There is a wealth of information available on in-class and grade completion assignments. Some of the most common are mentioned in this module and can be used in large and small classes with relative ease and can be adapted for online courses using the tools available in your learning management system. For example, students can complete writing to think and inquiry-guided exercises through the quiz or assignment function. They can work with others on a discussion board or through a group function in the learning management system. These techniques are all considered low stakes, can be graded or ungraded, and are flexible to implement. In-class and grade completion assignments are a great way to break up the course material and provide opportunities for higher-order thinking and metacognition at various points throughout the course.

If seeking additional information, consider the resources at your college or university, especially if you have a center for teaching
and learning. TRAILS, the American Sociological Association's Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology newsletter, and Teaching Sociology all have disciplinary specific examples of in-class and grade completion assignments. Many sociological associations offer teaching sessions at their conferences; this is a great way to learn from others about the success and challenges of implementing new techniques.

### Actionable Items for Considering an In-Class Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where can I try this activity?</th>
<th>What learning objective or outcome can this activity support?</th>
<th>What do I need to do to incorporate this activity?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Learning</td>
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<td>Data visualization exercise</td>
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<td>Minute papers</td>
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<td>Muddiest point</td>
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<td>Collaborative Learning Groups</td>
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<td>Data analysis and interpretation</td>
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<td>Small group book discussions</td>
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What’s A Scholarly Teacher To Do?

Kathleen S. Lowney
Professor Emerita, Valdosta State University

Kathleen S. Lowney retired from Valdosta State University in 2018. She was a professor of sociology and VSU’s founding scholar for the Center for Teaching and Learning. Kathe has been active in the teaching and learning movement for more than two decades. For her last decade of teaching, she taught one section of Introduction to Sociology, with 300 students enrolled per term. She grew to love large sections; these students taught her so much. Her research focused on new religious movements and the social construction of social problems in the media. She is a past editor of Teaching Sociology, the sole pedagogically focused journal published by the American Sociology Association. Her “full-time retirement” lasted three months; then, she launched a professional editing business, primarily for doctoral students and faculty authors.
Introduction

Being a faculty member goes beyond just sharing the discipline you love with your students. You will have to make many decisions throughout your teaching career—you will need to continually learn how your students learn and how to help them maximize their growth. But you may face the challenge of how to be a strong teacher while still fulfilling your institution’s service and publishing requirements.

How do you feel about your teaching—the quality of your teaching, the preparation you do, and how your teaching motivates students to learn? You’ve probably been doing it for a while now. That means that there have been good days and a few not-so-good ones. My guess is that you likely remember the times when it felt like you and your students weren’t communicating well, and their work suffered. You’ve created new courses and tweaked those you inherited.

You want to do more, to modify how you teach so that student learning continues to improve. But how do you do that? I want to encourage you to see your classes as potential sources of data. To begin this scholarly endeavor, you’ll need to engage with the literature about teaching. Let’s do that together and discover how the literature distinguishes the many activities that encompass being a professor.

How Models Account for Teaching Activities

When you begin to think strategically about your teaching and publishing, you might seek out literature that discusses how to weigh professional activities to build a successful career. This literature often offers activity models. While the literature could guide how you approach your career, understand that there are many contradictions between models. Let’s see what some of the
literature suggests. Reading research articles about teaching, the first thing you notice is that many authors differentiate between scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) (e.g., Cross & Steadman, 1996; Felten, 2013; Kern et al., 2015; Martin, 2007; Potter & Kustra, 2011; Richlin, 2001). However, not all authors draw the definitional boundaries between scholarly teaching and SoTL in the same way.

While teaching would seem to be the obvious mission of any institution of higher education, the act of teaching has not always received institutional attention. Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990) catalyzed higher education to examine teaching and the people who teach in a more systematic manner. American sociology, however, had begun this conversation nearly a decade earlier (Mauksch & Howery, 1986). Boyer proposed differentiating between four types of scholarship: 1) the scholarship of discovery (original research which advances knowledge); 2) the scholarship of integration (synthesis of information, either in disciplines or across time); 3) the scholarship of application, engagement, or both (working with those in or outside of the academe and sharing disciplinary expertise); and 4) the scholarship of teaching and learning (systematic study of teaching and learning processes in a public way, using the peer review process). The scholarship of discovery closely parallels the scientific method, including the publication of results. Many research-oriented universities base their promotion and tenure on such scholarship and depend on the grants and other funds it produces. Thus, while Boyer’s (1980) re-envisioning of the mission of higher education incorporated a multiplicity of scholarships, *in practice*, his model often perpetuated the superiority of the scholarship of discovery (i.e., research and publishing).

To rebalance academe, other authors proposed elevating faculty teaching activities. However, while these models discussed teaching behaviors, they did not always agree on how they categorized teaching activities (Almeida, 2010; Martin, 2007). Some wrote about excellence in teaching, while others wrote about *scholarly teaching* (Atkinson & Lowney, 2014; Georgia Institute of Technology Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.; Nelson, 2011).
And by the turn of the century, another term had emerged and, in many ways, eclipsed both other terms—the scholarship of teaching and learning (e.g., Elon University Center for Engaged Learning, n.d.; Richlin, 2001). While some authors used these terms interchangeably, they came to mean different behaviors that faculty could (or should) adopt over time.

Kern et al. (2015) used a model—the Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART)—that initially made sense to me. It groups teaching-related behaviors into two dimensions (see Figure 1). One is the public-private dimension, which focuses on how much information faculty share with peers and academe. The second dimension is the informal-systematic investigation of teaching. These dimensions create four quadrants (Kern et al. 2015, p. 4).

**Figure 1.** Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART).

Let’s begin with the lower left quadrant, *the practice of teaching*. The teaching behaviors here are what nearly every teacher does—create a syllabus, create assessments, grade, teach classes, and participate in faculty meetings about curriculum design (i.e., the major). Sharing of teaching practices is almost always solely for local evaluative purposes and not with colleagues for the betterment of their teaching.

Moving to the right, the next quadrant is *sharing about activities*. The main difference between the *practice of teaching* and *sharing about activities* is that in the latter, faculty seek out avenues to communicate with others about their teaching (see Medley-Rath in this series). However, this sharing tends to be informal (“This is what I tried when X happened in my classes, and it worked for me.”). Little of this sharing, however, is grounded in published works on teaching or student learning.

The upper left quadrant, *scholarly teaching*, requires the teaching activities of faculty members to be grounded in scholarly literature. They should be using evidence-based knowledge gained through reading SoTL literature, as well as attending teaching workshops and conferences as they construct syllabi, create assessments, and so on. While scholarly teachers identify pedagogical problems and use evidence-based solutions, their solutions primarily exist behind their classroom doors.

The upper right quadrant is the *scholarship of teaching and learning*. These activities require faculty to conduct systematic research into their behaviors and those of their students. The results of such research will be submitted to journals which will subject them to the peer review process.

While this four quadrant/two dimensions model makes it seem easy to discern where teaching activities fall, applying it to faculty members’ workflow can be a bit more complicated. Where the boundaries are for each quadrant, however, can be more fluid than the model implies. To see how definitional ambiguities can occur, let’s examine the evolution of one aspect of my teaching career.
I taught a large (300+ students) section of Introduction to Sociology every term. It counted for three of my four-course load (editing a journal some years or leading the Teaching & Learning Center in other years counted as the other course). In the fall, all the students were in their first year, and in the spring, about 90% were. My assessments were three tests, in-class “clicker questions” each day, weekly discussion boards, and an optional final exam. Tests, while important, were only about 25% of the overall grade, but they served as essential assessments of each section of the course. Clicker questions assessed how students were doing with that day’s concepts. Discussion board prompts asked students to go deeper into those key concepts and show their learning. Class grades—the primary way I operationalized student success—were “works-in-progress,” given that for most of my students, this was one of their first college classes. Typically, the first test went very badly; it served as a wake-up call for these new-to-college students. But nearly all test grades were the lowest part of their final grades. That worried me. I needed more information about my students and their learning activities. That desire for information would appear to fall under the practice of teaching quadrant; I wanted to change my teaching based on a statistical analysis of how individual students and the entire class were learning.

I decided to examine the discussion grades because they were the primary “practice” for the tests. Students encountered applied questions based on key concepts where they wrote short narrative answers. I dove into the statistics from the learning management system (LMS). I went back two years, giving me data from about 1,000 students. What I discovered was disconcerting.

I had constructed the discussion board assignments so that students had six days to reply to a prompt; their replies were visible to the entire class. They also had to respond to two students’ posts during that time. We reviewed several sample
posts in class before students completed the discussion questions, and I included these samples in the directions for every discussion prompt.

What did I find? Students earning “A” grades in the class usually posted within the first two days (of six days), while students with the lowest grades tended to post in the last 24 hours. More than half of the students earning an “F” grade in the course posted in the last 12 hours; moreover, their posts tended to quote another student and say something like “I agree.” That response cost them significant discussion points. There was little engagement with concepts by these students, partly due to spending fewer minutes on the LMS than other students. The relationship between grades and discussion questions posting was a teaching and learning problem I needed to face.

That weekend I spent a lot of time in the library, reading what limited scholarship there was on discussion boards and how much time to give students to respond. I came away, however, with no helpful information. Did I shift into scholarly teaching at that point? I’m not sure. I made an appointment with my institution’s instructional technology staff. It was hard for me to make an appointment; I felt shame at needing help. I shared the learning problem I’d identified, and we evaluated if and how the LMS statistics might help me. I was surprised by the absence of research on this aspect of discussion boards, so I had to devise a plan for the next semester with hardly any help. I decided students’ responses would be “private”—only the student and I could see the student’s response to the prompt instead of the whole class seeing it. Thus, the option of basing one’s response on other students’ work (and getting graded on it) was eliminated. (Today’s versions of LMS may give you the option of requiring students to post before seeing responses.)

What happened to test grades after “going private”? Table 1 shows the results for Test 3, which covered the most abstract content—theoretical perspectives, research methods, and basic statistics, and saw some of the largest changes in grades. Table 2 shows the effect going private had on final grades.
The change certainly helped strengthen students’ grades and attendance (as measured by the daily clicker questions). Forcing them to engage more with class content worked! But I felt something was still missing. I strongly believed that students learn from each other, and by making the discussion board private, that collegiality was missing. After a year of having the private discussion board assessments, I dove back into the literature. I found that authors felt student interaction was necessary to create community and enhance student learning and retention of material. I concurred. Therefore, I added another step in the discussion process. The first week of a discussion board was still private. In the second week, I unlocked all the student responses. Each student had to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>% Test 3 Grades Before Going Private</th>
<th>% Test 3 Grades After Going Private</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+110%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>+71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>+88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>−80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The “F” grade category includes approximately 2%–5% of students who stopped attending class but never withdrew, despite frequent outreach. My institution did not allow faculty to withdraw these students administratively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>% Final Grades Before Going Private</th>
<th>% Final Grades After Going Private</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>+29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>+83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>−53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>−65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The change certainly helped strengthen students’ grades and attendance (as measured by the daily clicker questions). Forcing them to engage more with class content worked! But I felt something was still missing. I strongly believed that students learn from each other, and by making the discussion board private, that collegiality was missing. After a year of having the private discussion board assessments, I dove back into the literature. I found that authors felt student interaction was necessary to create community and enhance student learning and retention of material. I concurred.
The two-step discussion board increased student learning of sociological concepts; students learned best by sharing and challenging each other.

Looking at the DART model of teaching activities (Kern et al., 2015), these changes would mostly fall within the practice of teaching quadrant. I perceived a pedagogical problem and set out to resolve it privately. But I also think I exhibited behaviors that could fall within the scholarly teaching quadrant: I read scholarly literature about discussion boards and found what seemed to be the best practice—letting students interact with each other. So that seemed to be “literature-based teaching,” right?

Wasn’t I also exhibiting behavior from the sharing about teaching quadrant? I argue that for many faculty, sharing a teaching concern or issue with anyone professionally linked to one’s institution of higher education can be risky. This risk is especially

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>% Final Grades Before Going Private but No Student-to-Student Responses</th>
<th>% Final Grades After Going Private &amp; Requiring Responses to Other Students</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>+50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>+122%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Final Grades Before and After Making Initial Responses Private and Requiring Responses to Other Students.
true for contingent faculty. Ask any teaching and learning center director—getting faculty to come for the first time is their biggest hurdle. So even taking that first step, admitting to another person that I was struggling with teaching, was huge. And sharing with them did help. I learned much more about the analytics I could gather from the LMS, and those statistics showed me that I needed to do something drastic to help my students to succeed.

As I gathered more data, the instructional technology staff encouraged me to present these findings at a teaching conference hosted by my institution, with attendees drawing from southern states. But was the presentation I gave sharing about teaching (e.g., presentation) or the scholarship of teaching and learning (e.g., literature review, case study)?

Soon after that conference, I was asked to keynote the Irish Sociological Association’s Annual Meeting. They requested a pedagogically focused presentation, and I constructed it around this teaching problem. But where would this address be in the DART model (Kern et al., 2015)? Was the keynote sharing about teaching, or was it in the scholarship of teaching and learning quadrant? It certainly felt further along the public dimension of the model. Afterward, when they asked me to expand on the presentation for publication in the association’s journal (Lowney, 2016), was that an activity that would fall under the scholarship of teaching and learning quadrant (i.e., public, containing a literature review, and based on empirical research)?

The two-dimensional model (systematic-informal and public-private) appears useful in capturing teaching behaviors, but in practice, classifying behaviors based on quadrants is messier than might be predicted. I find that other models (e.g., Almeida, 2010; Columbia University Science of Learning and Research Initiative, n.d.; Georgia Institute of Technology Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.; Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.; Potter & Kustra, 2011; Richlin, 2001) are similarly problematic. What can a faculty member do?
Throughout your career, you will be asked to evaluate your teaching and your students’ learning in writing. While models like DART have blurry boundaries, it will be up to you to make a strong case for the quality of your teaching. Using one of these models could help you to organize your thoughts about your teaching and your scholarship about teaching.

Teaching will be an essential criterion for the yearly renewal of contracts, tenure, and promotions (see Gillis and Pike in this series). Be sure that you obtain the evaluation criteria for these important academic moments in your career. If you don’t receive the criteria, ask and continue to ask until you do. Those documents ultimately are your “road map” for your academic career at that institution and should guide your decision-making about your career. Understand the nuances of your institution’s promotion and tenure document. After reading the document, I suggest you make an appointment with your academic leader (department head/chair and perhaps also a past chair of the promotion and tenure committee) and ask questions, especially about how requirements are operationalized in your department and in decision-making beyond the department. Can others give you “the lay of the land” (e.g., teaching award winners, teaching and learning center staff, etc.)? Follow up with a summary of each meeting and ask for a reply to confirm receipt.

If you are working for multiple institutions, I suggest locating the same documents and data about your teaching for each one in case your contingent position is converted to a full-time position, or you find a job elsewhere. This way you will have data for your job application or new position. Find a way to capture the criteria from each school in a way that speaks to you. I would likely use a spreadsheet, with the criteria as rows and the schools as columns. Another way might be to organize a spreadsheet based on the DART model (Kern et al., 2015). Here are things to consider if you do.
Faculty members must routinely examine their classes' data (including student evaluations). For some, that might happen at midterm and the end of the course; for other faculty, it might be after every major assessment or test. What kind of feedback would be helpful?

1. Teaching Diary. I journaled after every class I taught, which allowed me to reread and find patterns. I've blogged here (https://kathleenslowney.wordpress.com/2019/01/17/the-teaching-diary-first-of-two-posts/) about how to use a diary for venting and “what worked and didn't work” and here (https://kathleenslowney.wordpress.com/2019/02/14/pedagogical-tip-the-teaching-diary-part-2/) for how the diary helped me to realize I needed to shift from “post-class quizzes” to “pre-class quizzes” to increase the number of students who read carefully before class.

2. Start with the grade distribution, particularly the “D” and “F” grades. Did they submit late? Or not at all? Did they seem to misunderstand the requirements? Are there patterns in which students were not successful? What might these patterns tell you about your students? Your assessment? Were there words in the directions that confused many students? If so, could you change those words or better explain them? Then look at the highest grades. What patterns do you see in their work? If you are using a teaching diary, write down all these thoughts so you don’t forget them. If the assessment is an ongoing one (e.g., done every week), change the wording that might be confusing in the directions for the rest of the term. If the assessment is only done once, write a note at the top of your document file so that you won’t forget to make the changes next time you teach the course.

3. Tell your students what they have taught you. They will appreciate that you are thoughtfully considering their grades.
4. If you use an LMS and are not familiar with the data you can gather, talk with the instructional technology staff. Share with them what you want to do, and let them show you what kinds of data are available. Then play around for a few hours and see what patterns you find. What can you infer from those patterns?

5. Do you have a mentor? Even better, a teaching mentor? Send your data to the mentor in advance so they can think about what the data show them. Then talk together. Expect the unexpected; people often look at data and see different things. Take notes on what they see.

6. Consider doing a midterm student reflection on the course or even more frequent types of evaluations (e.g., perhaps after the first test or after a major assessment was due). I used questions like: “What grade did you receive (A–F)?” “What was the hardest part of this assessment and why?” “If you got lost trying to complete this assessment, tell me where and, if you can, why you got lost.” I compiled responses and used them to change parts of the assessments.

7. Be sure, however, that if you ask for students’ opinions and suggestions, you follow through in three ways. First, tell students the overarching results, and second, implement at least one of their suggested changes. If the change doesn't impact them (e.g., change how Test 1 will be structured next term), still tell them about it. Third, thank them for taking the time to give you feedback.

8. Be prepared to discuss your findings on annual evaluations with your department leader. If you have done additional evaluations, as I suggest, include these data in addition to whatever standard students’ opinion of instruction is done at the end of the term.

9. Then look at how other helpful data (e.g., assessment of program-major outcomes, graduation rates, etc.). Do they assist you in placing your data in a broader context?
1. Once you understand the patterns of student success and failure in your classes, spend some time reading scholarly literature about the issues you have identified. Be sure to look beyond your specific discipline; I have found that “sister disciplines” have pedagogical journals that contain great insights I could adapt. Even disciplines far afield from yours (i.e., STEM for this sociologist) offered insights that gave me ideas even if I couldn’t directly use them.

2. Ask if your department has faculty trained to observe your teaching. Some departments require classroom observations, for instance, in the year before applying for promotion or tenure, but others might not. If your department doesn’t have trained observers, consider going to the teaching and learning center (if you have one) and asking to be paired with a faculty observer. But first, be sure that you understand if a faculty observer’s report must be included in your annual evaluation/promotion/tenure materials. Decide what is acceptable to you. If they must be included and you would prefer not to have that happen, then ask a faculty friend you trust to observe one or two classes. Either way, be sure to meet with the observer first and share what the learning outcomes will be. If you are struggling with a particular issue (e.g., class management issues or a content delivery issue such as a difficult concept), let your observer know so that they can watch carefully. Give them a few days to gather their thoughts, then meet. Often, they will fill out a form—if they do, be sure that they give you a copy.

3. Join a teaching circle or learning community (Richlin & Cox, 2004) at your institution’s teaching and learning center if you have the time and your institution offers them. These are confidential spaces to share teaching struggles, test out ideas, and gain confidence. They can also offer suggestions for discussing your teaching on annual evaluations.
Sharing about Teaching

1. How do your institution’s promotion and tenure documents discuss how to share teaching insights? Be sure you understand if or how teaching presentations count. Will only off-campus conferences count? How much do they count compared to publications?

2. Consider how you are balancing teaching with the rest of your career requirements. What about your campus and community service? How much time does that take if your position requires it? What about research and the tasks that go into it (e.g., thinking about your research questions, finding sources, reading the literature, creating hypotheses, deciding on a sampling frame and method, applying to the institutional review board if needed, gathering data, analyzing data, and writing up the results of the project). Are the costs to present—travel time, hotel and other travel costs, time away from campus, classes, and loved ones—a good use of your limited resources?

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

1. You will have to decide how much of your research and publishing agenda will be SoTL manuscripts. I strongly suggest you make this decision only after you understand your institution’s re-employment criteria, promotion to associate and then full professor, and tenure/long-term contract.

2. Work with your department head/chair to understand the consequences of “doing research differently” than the documents envision. Be aware that these decisions about your future and the individuals who will make them (e.g., department committee, department head/chair, college committee, dean, etc.) are supposed to be based on evidence.
Still, some of these individuals and processes might have hidden expectations. A frequent one is that the STEM model of research production is “best,” and anyone who does not “do scholarship” this way is less deserving of rewards such as promotions, tenure, and grant money. I know of schools where publishing SoTL manuscripts or journals do not count toward promotion and tenure. While this is changing, it is not changing fast enough if it happens to you, is it?

3. Most public colleges and universities want faculty to cultivate a non-SoTL publication record and grant awarded history strong enough to withstand promotion and tenure scrutiny, in addition to offering evidence of strong teaching. More recently, many are asking faculty to show evidence of student learning. SoTL scholarship, then, can become useful in the scholarship section—as evidence to bolster one’s research skills—and could significantly assist in the teaching section. It could provide quantitative evidence of your teaching ability and your ability to help students learn your discipline.

4. At most institutions, tenure-track faculty and those on long-term contracts need to show evidence within the practice of teaching, sharing about teaching, and scholarly teaching quadrants to receive a first promotion or renewal of a contract. And for promotion to full professor, one also needs to have significant published research. You will have to discover whether manuscripts that fit in the scholarship of teaching and learning quadrant will count as research publications or only evidence of your teaching success. The answer to that may shape what you research over your career.

Conclusion

While Boyer (1990) called for a revisioning of scholarship, in many ways, the academe is still stuck, worshipping at the altar of the scholarship of discovery. SoTL publications are still being minimized at some institutions as “just about teaching, not
While it is true that higher education—individuals and institutions—has recently focused on strengthening teaching and teachers, college teachers often must fight to have their teaching activities, including SoTL ones, appropriately counted and, more importantly, rewarded. Our disciplines, our students, and our future faculty deserve better.

References


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**Stephanie Medley-Rath** is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Indiana University Kokomo and the editor for TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology. Her areas of expertise include the sociology of autobiography, cognitive sociology, introductory sociology, and the teaching and learning of research methods throughout the undergraduate sociology curriculum. Her research has appeared in *The Qualitative Report, Symbolic Interaction, Teaching & Learning Inquiry,* and *Teaching Sociology,* and she has numerous teaching artifacts published in TRAILS. She is the 2019 recipient of the John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award from the North Central Sociological Association. She is a past chair of the American Sociological Association’s Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology. She holds a doctorate and master’s degree in sociology from Georgia State University and a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
Making your teaching public is an activity that can help you get a job at a teaching-focused institution. Once you have the job, you can use this to support your case for excellence in teaching for promotion, annual review, and awards. It also enables you to become a better teacher because it increases instructional feedback beyond student evaluations of teaching and peer or supervisor observations. By making your instructional materials public, your feedback loop grows.

Sharing and publishing your teaching activities may be valuable for your professional identity, institution, or both. The myriad opportunities to make your teaching public, which include sharing, publishing, and selling your teaching innovations, can make it hard to know where to begin or how to write a coherent narrative about these activities. The Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART) model (see Figure 1) can help you organize your activities and weigh the value of doing an activity that reflects your personal, professional, and institutional values (Kern et al., 2015).

The DART model includes two dimensions (systematic-informal and public-private), resulting in four quadrants. This module focuses on activities that fit into the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and sharing about teaching quadrants because they make your teaching public but range in systematicity (i.e., reliant on data collection and analysis) and formality (i.e., reliant on anecdote and reflection).

1 I use materials, resources, ideas, and innovations interchangeably to refer to assignments, activities, or practices. However, ideas refer to ideas that you have put into practice. Innovations include both original ideas and adaptations that improve an existing resource or adapt the resource to a new environment.

2 An upcoming module by Alana Gillis and Diane Pike tackles how to present your case for teaching excellence.
Considerations Before You Share

Guidelines and Requirements

Be strategic and know your boundaries. Before making your teaching public, review your institutional guidelines for annual review, promotion, and tenure to ensure you are putting your efforts toward those activities that will enable you to keep your job. However, consider your professional goals that may go beyond minimum institutional requirements. Further, identify

any awards you want to receive (and, yes, you often can self-nominate!). Even internal campus teaching awards may have expectations that go above the requirements for promotion. The upcoming module by Alana Gillis and Diane Pike will explain how to use these guidelines.

Citation

Historically, teaching culture has not included the expectation of citing where good teaching ideas come from. Citing your teaching ideas makes you a good academic citizen and allows you to keep track of any borrowed ideas. You cannot make your teaching public if you cannot trace where your borrowed ideas came from. Therefore, you should include citations in your teaching materials where appropriate. Further, if you are using someone else’s innovations, let them know because they can include this information in their dossiers.

Citing your teaching ideas does not have to be tedious. I keep track of where my ideas come from using footnotes that report my sources. I cite others regardless of whether these materials are published. It gets cited if I find it online or have the resource handed to me. If you do not keep track of your sources of teaching ideas and inspiration, you will not be able to develop your materials into publishable resources.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

Copyright rules vary depending on the situation. Your employer likely has some claim to your intellectual property. You should consult your institution’s policy on intellectual property and your librarians about copyright. Journals may require you to sign over your copyright to them while you are licensing your work in
other cases. You need to assess what intellectual property claims you are willing to give up. You may be able to assign Creative Commons licenses to your work.

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**Institutional Review Board**

If your plan to publish on student learning based on your materials, then you need to consult your institutional review board (IRB). Some data collection on students is a normal function of providing instruction (e.g., the percentage of students who passed an exam). However, if you plan to analyze data collected with the intent of sharing it outside your institution or collect or analyze student data beyond the normal scope of instruction (e.g., a survey asking student opinions about an assignment or analyzing normally assigned reflection assignments), then you need to consult your IRB.

Some institutions do not have an IRB. Peer-reviewed journals will expect you to report if you received IRB approval and an explanation if you did not. A statement that your institution does not require IRB approval should suffice if you still follow accepted ethical practices (see American Sociological Association, 2018).

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**The Cloud**

To make it easy to share your materials, I recommend using the cloud (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive). Your employer may provide you with cloud storage. However, if you are contingent faculty, a graduate student, or intend to change institutions, I would use a personal account if you share weblinks. You could create a cloud account just for your instructional resources to help maintain personal and professional boundaries. The advantage of using a
personal account is that you do not have to update links wherever you have posted them.

I maintain a personal website to share resources. I pay for hosting and a website name. My website is outdated because most resources on it are file-based. Once my resources are on the cloud, I can create a link allowing visitors to access the latest version of my materials.

A website helps people who may be interested in working with you find you. A website, however, may be outside of your comfort zone and requires time and effort to maintain. Even with my outdated website, I have been recruited for consulting projects because they could review some of my materials before contacting me.

Your Privacy

Before sharing your innovations on a website, social media, or elsewhere, reflect on your boundaries. You do not have to share anything on the internet to make your teaching public.

Moreover, organized conservative right-wing “watchdog” groups are focused on investigating alleged liberal bias on college campuses. Campus Reform is one such group that “exposes liberal bias and abuse on the nation’s college campuses” (Campus Reform 2023). It is unclear what conduct counts as liberal, abusive, or wrong. A brief review of their recent stories shows concern over trans rights, critical race theory, and other conservative dog whistles.

Turning Point USA maintains the “Professor Watchlist.” The Professor Watchlist includes the names of faculty, their institution, and their alleged transgressions. Evidence includes screenshots of tweets, a complaint from a single student, and other thin evidence. The website lists the phone number of the faculty’s
employer so parents and students can contact the employer about their concerns (i.e., harass the employer into disciplining the faculty member).

These groups promote organized targeted harassment of faculty (see McCarthy & Kamola, 2021). They barrage faculty with threatening emails, voicemails, and direct messages on social media. The American Association of University Professors finds that the targets of Campus Reform are disproportionately from prominent research institutions and are Black faculty (Tiede et al., 2021). Most of the allegations from Campus Reform come from public forums, such as social media posts.

To share your materials online and maintain privacy, you can use a locked Twitter account and keep your YouTube videos unlisted. You may share with more limited audiences (e.g., conference presentations, professional newsletters, TRAILS, or a private social media account) rather than sharing them online with everyone.

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Sharing Your Teaching Materials

Sharing your materials makes your teaching public (see Kern et al., 2015). In the DART model, sharing is mostly informal but can provide the foundation for more systematic work.

Institutionally mandated sharing is not making your teaching public. For example, institutions usually requires instructors to submit their syllabi as part of institutional record keeping (i.e., accreditation, transfer agreements, annual reviews, and promotion). This sharing has a specific purpose and a narrow audience. Further, sharing in the context of mentoring is not making your teaching public because it is private.

Public sharing can range in formality. In this section, I address making your teaching public by sharing through social media, presentations and workshops, conferences, professional
newsletters, online repositories, podcasts, and webinars. You do not need to do any or all these options. Think strategically about what you need professionally and personally.

### Social Media

The most visible social media source for teaching sociology is the Facebook group, Teaching with a Sociological Lens (TSL) (https://www.facebook.com/groups/teachingsoc). TSL is private, so you must request to join. Members share and ask for teaching ideas for sociology. For example, users may post a news article that would be useful for various sociology courses or ask for resources, such as syllabi or reading ideas. The Files tab includes shared files and allows you to link to the original post for more context (and related resources).

There is also a teaching sociology community on Twitter. Use hashtags (#TeachSoc and #SocTwitter) so that others can find your resources. #SocTwitter is for everything sociology (i.e., research, teaching); #TeachSoc lets other Twitter users know that the post is about teaching. If you are new to Twitter (or to using it professionally), I recommend following the list of nearly 2,000 sociologists on Twitter by Philip Cohen (https://twitter.com/i/lists/54978486). You can follow the list instead of individual accounts (or you can do both).

Sharing your resources on social media can demonstrate that you are a good community member and increase your visibility as a scholarly teacher. However, it may not count for anything in your dossier. I recommend taking the innovations you share via social media and determining how you can share them as presentations, publications, or other forms.
Presentations and Workshops

The expectations of your position often include you giving presentations on your research. However, teaching-focused presentations and workshops may not be expected or are valued less. Further, your institution may weigh teaching-focused presentations and workshops differently if they are for an audience of sociologists compared to a more general higher education audience.

At some institutions, giving on-campus teaching presentations may be sufficient for your first promotion or an on-campus award but may be insufficient for your second promotion or external recognition. You can contact your institution’s teaching center to let them know your interest and what you can offer to the campus. Giving teaching presentations or workshops beyond your campus may be expected to demonstrate excellence in teaching.

Conferences

Conferences are a wonderful way to share your instructional resources and meet others interested in teaching excellence. Most state and regional sociology associations have teaching sessions. Submitting to most conferences is straightforward: review the call for papers, prepare and submit an abstract, and, if accepted, prepare and give the presentation or workshop.

Each sociological association organizes teaching sessions differently. For example, the American Sociological Association (ASA) has at least three options for submitting teaching presentations: regular sessions, section sessions, and the Teaching and Learning Symposium.

Regular sessions and section sessions require either extended abstracts (i.e., three to six pages) or a complete paper. Papers accepted into these sessions are usually SoTL manuscripts that will eventually be published in a peer-reviewed journal.
In contrast, the Teaching and Learning Symposium is more applied (i.e., your experience using an activity). Presentations at the symposium may be more appropriate for publication in a professional newsletter or TRAILS.

If your project includes assessment data and an in-depth literature review, I recommend this strategy for submission:

1. Regular session on teaching
2. Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology (STLS) session
3. Other section session or roundtable

If your project is more applied and reflective, I recommend submitting it to the symposium.

**Presentations versus Workshops**

You may give identical presentations in some circumstances. For example, you provide the presentation to an on-campus audience and then give the same presentation at a conference. Or you are invited to offer the same (or similar) talk at another conference or university.

Presentations at most sociology conferences will be 15–20 minutes and include audience questions. Presentations at nonsociology conferences may be longer. I was allotted 40 minutes for my presentation at a community college conference! A presentation of that length must have some interactive elements.

You can present a workshop multiple times, and if you go through the trouble of preparing a workshop, you should plan to give it more than once to justify your time investment. Workshops are of various lengths. In a workshop, there should be multiple interactive elements with the audience because you are more explicitly teaching in a workshop compared to a presentation.

Conferences may have a call for workshops separate from their general call for papers.
Professional Newsletters and Online Repositories

Professional Newsletters

Professional organizations usually have a newsletter, website (or blog), or other means of disseminating information to members. Their publications may reserve space for articles on instruction. Review their newsletters to see if they have recently published articles about teaching. If they have, then reach out to their editor to determine their interest in your ideas. If they have not, you may still contact the editor. It is possible that they just have not had anyone recently publish on the topic.

One venue is the ASA STLS newsletter (https://sites.google.com/view/teachingandlearningmatters/asa-teachinglearning-matters) because most of their articles focus on instruction. In these submissions, instructors share activities, reflections, and so on. The newsletter editors may reject or lightly edit your submission. These submissions do not go through a formal peer-review process.

You can list newsletter publications on your CV. Be sure that they are listed as newsletter publications and not as peer-reviewed publications. Newsletter publications are a good beginning step for formalizing your practice of sharing about teaching.

Online Repository

The International Sociological Association's Thematic Group 09 Sociological Teaching hosts a new open-access repository for materials. Submissions to this repository are not peer-reviewed but can reach sociology instructors worldwide.

Submitting your materials to this repository may be appropriate if you refer to your ideas in presentations or newsletter publications but do not want to publish them formally or manage cloud storage.
Podcasts and Webinars

Alpha Kappa Delta, *Teaching Sociology*, the ASA, and textbook publishers organize webinars. People who lead a webinar for *Teaching Sociology* have had their research published in the journal. People who lead webinars for textbook publishers may be textbook authors or enthusiastic users of one of the publisher’s textbooks. Webinars are more like workshops, given virtually over Zoom or a similar platform. You will have more success sharing on a podcast or webinar after you have published your innovations (beyond a newsletter). If you are interested in giving a webinar, look to see what topics have been covered by the webinar organizers. If you have something unique to contribute that fits their work, reach out to the webinar organizer about your idea. Further, if you are already giving workshops, adapting them into a webinar format is likely a good use of your time.

Podcasts are another option, provided you find a podcast that fits your work. Smaller podcasts may be looking for guests to “invite” themselves. Follow podcasts on social media related to what you do, whether sociology-focused or teaching-focused. I recommend visiting the website of any podcasts of interest and locating any guidelines they have for potential guests or guest hosts before inviting yourself as a guest.

Publishing Your Teaching Materials

According to the DART model, publishing your instructional ideas could fall under SoTL or sharing about teaching (Kern et al., 2015). This section focuses on peer-reviewed publications (i.e., TRAILS and more traditional peer-reviewed journals) and books.
TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology

The ASA supports the Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology or TRAILS. TRAILS submissions go through a two-tiered peer-review process where a member of the editorial board and the TRAILS editor review the resource to ensure quality and alignment with best practices that come out of SoTL. Submissions may receive an accept, revise, or reject.

TRAILS publications move from sharing to adaptable. Authors prepare usage notes that identify learning goals, pitfalls, and the institutional context so that others can readily use the materials. A peer-reviewed journal may be a better fit if you have assessment data demonstrating student learning.

If you share your materials (e.g., presentations, professional newsletters), you could transform them into TRAILS publications. TRAILS organizes workshops at regional sociology conferences and the ASA annual meetings. If you are still on the fence about submitting to TRAILS, I recommend attending one of these workshops to learn more.

TRAILS publications are systematic and public (to members of the ASA). They can qualify as SoTL following the DART model (Kern et al., 2015), but consult your campus requirements before assuming they will count as peer-reviewed publications. Regardless, you can use TRAILS publications as evidence of excellence in teaching.

Peer-Reviewed Journals

Teaching Sociology

*Teaching Sociology* is a peer-reviewed journal from the ASA. *Teaching Sociology* is three types of manuscripts: articles,
notes, and conversations. Sharing your resources in *Teaching Sociology* as an article or a note usually requires data analysis, and conversations are generally by the editor’s invitation. That is, where reflection on your individual experience may be sufficient for a presentation, a newsletter publication, or TRAILS, it is insufficient for *Teaching Sociology*. You will need data demonstrating the effectiveness of the activity or intervention. These data typically involve some measurement of student learning. *Teaching Sociology* articles have more extensive literature reviews, data collection, and analysis than TRAILS publications.

Some of your assignments and activities might be appropriate for both TRAILS and *Teaching Sociology*. You may be able to submit the instructions with usage notes to TRAILS and submit your analysis of assessment data related to the intervention to *Teaching Sociology* (i.e., your systematic evaluation of the activity).

### Pedagogy Sections of Peer-Reviewed Journals

There are at least two peer-reviewed journals that are not teaching-focused but have pedagogy sections. These include *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* and *Humanity & Society*. The submissions are shorter than regular journal articles and include empirical and theoretical papers. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* or *Humanity & Society* may be a good option if your idea is for a course or topic that fits the scope of one of these journals.

### Other Peer-Reviewed Journal Options

The mentioned journals are all within sociology. They are not the only peer-reviewed journals that publish teaching research. Moreover, your institution may value publications on teaching within the discipline differently than those published for a more general audience. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) (https://eric.ed.gov/?journals) maintains a list of peer-reviewed journals about education, teaching, and learning. ERIC is a full-text database that covers education research. Further, ERIC is an ideal database to locate peer-reviewed research for SoTL research. Multiple journals publish research from various disciplines about
specific instructional settings (e.g., community colleges, online education), and more.

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**Books**

Another option is publishing your instructional materials as a book project. Book projects could include a textbook chapter or reading, a chapter in an edited volume focused on teaching, or a book-length project.

At some point, a colleague may invite you to contribute a chapter to an edited textbook or book on teaching. It is easier to say yes to these invitations if they are closely related to your teaching or research. Invited book chapters usually have deadlines that might interfere with your other priorities and are typically uncompensated (or are paid in books).

If you have an idea for a book-length project, there are publishers more focused on sociology and others more focused on higher education that publish books on instruction. Most major publishers in sociology have at least one book on teaching sociology. Options outside of sociology include West Virginia University Press, Magna Publications, Stylus Publishing, and Jossey-Bass.

Publishers will ask you to sign a publishing agreement. Ask the publisher to strike any noncompete clauses for book chapters and be prepared to walk away from the project if they refuse. A noncompete clause in a book contract may be more appropriate and something that you should carefully consider before signing.
Selling Your Teaching Materials

The DART model lists “published curriculum” as an example of sharing about teaching but leaves the item undefined (Kern et al., 2015). Published curricula could include items published in TRAILS, publisher-contracted resources, or other forms. This section focuses on compensated teaching materials.

I have developed textbook ancillaries and worked as a consultant on the curriculum for a university that was not my employer and a curriculum design company. I consider my participation in these activities very carefully because, in most cases, you are selling your right to intellectual property. I have created instructional materials for hire, but I do not sell resources I have already made.

Of particular concern with paid activities is whether your university will count any compensated activities outside your appointment. You need to review your university’s conflict of interest policy and likely report this activity to your employer. Finally, you must set aside money for taxes because taxes will not be taken out at the time of payment. Consult an accountant to determine how best to handle this unexpected income.

Textbook Ancillaries

Suppose you are interested in creating instructor resources (e.g., test bank questions, PowerPoint slides, discussion questions). You can indicate such interest on the forms you complete when reviewing a textbook or let your textbook representative know. In most cases, the publisher contracts you to prepare or revise a set of resources. You are not usually selling items you have already created or used in your classes.

Preparing instructor resources is not well compensated and (in my experience) has tight deadlines. Therefore, this kind of work
may interfere with the more valued work you need to do to achieve promotion. However, the reality is that most universities do not pay faculty during the summer because we are 9-month or 10-month employees. Further, you may have student loan debt or other economic needs that makes this work appealing. Instructor resources are one of the last things prepared for a textbook and, therefore, often have a quick turnaround time (i.e., 4–8 weeks, depending on the project’s scope).

In one case, I prepared ancillaries for a textbook for a course I teach, but it was not my area of research expertise. I had no concerns over preserving my intellectual property rights in this scenario. However, I am more cautious about Introduction to Sociology because one of my career goals is to write a textbook for the course. I have prepared ancillaries for an Introduction to Sociology textbook. Still, my intellectual property concerns were low because the publisher expected me to design PowerPoint and test bank questions based on their textbook. I was not selling my ideas; instead, I was creating resources for that textbook.

Consulting

Eventually, you may be able to do some consulting work related to instruction. Consulting work varies and includes developing curriculum, lessons, and learning outcomes. Some colleges hire experts on a given course as consultants to revise or develop their curriculum. There are also educational companies that do related work. To become a consultant, you must establish a reputation as an expert in sociology instruction.

I have consulted for a different university to develop their curriculum for Introduction to Sociology. I prepared the learning outcomes, topic organization, and assignments. I selected and edited test questions but did not write any from scratch. The university did not contract me to create anything I needed for my courses.
I have also consulted for a curriculum design company, where I created learning outcomes. I felt comfortable doing this work because the product is open-access and available for anyone to use (including me).

Consulting work tends to have tight deadlines and can be time-consuming. For example, in one project, we had weekly team meetings for the duration of the project. In another project, I worked with instructional designers and needed to respond to their queries within a day or two. I decided to work weekends on these projects to participate in both consulting activities. In both cases, the compensation made doing this work over the weekends for 2–3 months worthwhile. I could make this choice because I am post-promotion and did not need to dedicate this time to achieving promotion and my family was supportive (they knew the household would benefit from this extra and unexpected income).

Conclusion

Making your instructional innovations public helps you participate in the sharing culture of teaching. It can also strengthen your case for promotion or an award. There are numerous places one can share their innovations, so you should think strategically about how you want to share, what you want to share, and why you want to share. Table 1 provides an overview of where the different activities considered in the module could fit within the DART model (Kern et al., 2015).
A pathway for making your teaching public may look like this:

1. Setting up a cloud account for your materials
2. Sharing your innovations on social media
3. Presenting your great idea on your campus or at a conference
4. Writing a brief article for the STLS newsletter about your great idea
5. Preparing your resource and submitting it to TRAILS, collecting and analyzing data on your resource for a peer-reviewed journal, or both

Remember, you do not need to do anything or everything in this module to demonstrate excellence in teaching. The purpose is to give you an overview of the possibilities and an organizational model for thinking about them.
Resources to Support Making Your Teaching Public

1. Personal
   a. Reflection on personal and professional boundaries
   b. An accountant

2. Institutional
   a. Guidelines for annual review, promotion, and tenure
   b. Intellectual property or copyright policy
   c. Contacts for the teaching center, library, and IRB
   d. Conflict of interest policy

3. Awards
   a. Criteria and deadlines for any awards you want to apply for

4. Professional
   b. Cloud storage
   c. Get in the habit of including citations in your teaching materials

5. Sharing
   a. Teaching with a Sociological Lens Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/teachingsoc
   b. Twitter hashtags: #TeachSoc and #SocTwitter
   c. Philip N. Cohen’s List of Sociologists on Twitter: https://twitter.com/i/lists/54978486

6. Presentations and Workshops
   a. Conference submission deadlines and requirements
   b. Alpha Kappa Delta’s Teaching and Learning Workshops: https://alphakappadelta.org/teaching-learning-workshops/
c. ASA webinars: https://www.asanet.org/academic-professional-resources/videos-and-webinars

d. The Annex Sociology Podcast: https://socannex.commons.gc.cuny.edu

7. Publications

a. Newsletter of the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology

b. (Teaching/Learning Matters): https://sites.google.com/view/teachingandlearningmatters/asa-teachinglearning-matters

c. TRAILS: https://trails.asanet.org

d. Teaching Sociology: https://journals.sagepub.com/home/tso

e. Sociology of Race and Ethnicity: https://journals.sagepub.com/home/sre

f. Humanity & Society: https://journals.sagepub.com/home/has

g. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC): https://eric.ed.gov/?journals

References


Presenting SoTL Research on the Job Market and across Your Career

Alanna Gillis
St. Lawrence University

Alanna Gillis is an assistant professor of sociology at St. Lawrence University. Alanna's main areas of expertise are race/class/gender inequality in higher education and inclusive teaching practices. Her innovative teaching practices have won department, university, and national awards. Her awards include the American Sociological Association (ASA) Section on Teaching and Learning's Graduate Student Contribution award in 2019 and co-winning the section’s Scholarly Contribution to Teaching award in 2021. She is on the editorial board of ASA's Teaching Sociology. She has open-access versions of many of her teaching resources on her website (http://alannagillisphd.com/teaching/), and she shares many inclusive teaching practices on her Twitter (https://twitter.com/alannagillis3).

Diane Pike
Augsburg University

Diane Pike is a professor of sociology emerita at Augsburg University in Minneapolis. Her areas of focus and professional activity continue in organizational theory, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and faculty development. Lead author of the collaborative ASA report, The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education (2017), Diane also has extensive experience as an ASA program review and consulting member. Diane won the 2012 ASA major award for Distinguished Contributions to Teaching and Learning, and she remains actively involved in ASA TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology, as a reviewer for Teaching Sociology and in the Midwest Sociological Society.
Introduction

You have successfully published something in TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovation Library for Sociology, Teaching Sociology (TS), or another venue for scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). You may also have other scholarly teaching projects and experiences that strengthen your professional portfolio. Congratulations! Now, how can you use that publication and those endeavors to help your career? This module is here to help, offering practical advice about making the most of your SoTL work when applying for jobs, putting together documents for review or promotion, and applying for awards. Or, if you are just beginning in this area of SoTL, this chapter can help identify the types of projects that can build your teaching profile and support your professional practice.

Before examining each of these domains, we first want to address an obvious but essential point: language matters. As sociologists, we know language is both a social construct and that it is critical to use correctly, as determined by your audience. You may have fantastic accomplishments but misusing the terminology that an audience expects may come across as naive at best or purposely overinflating credentials at worst. Diane has decades of institutional review experience and has too often seen scholars (presumably unintentionally) present, as research SoTL work that is simply a shared teaching resource, for example. Typically, committees looked unfavorably on candidates presenting lower-tier accomplishments as more rigorous contributions. Thus, language matters. The problem is that many graduate programs do not have formal SoTL socialization to teach the vocabulary needed by early career scholars (and senior committee members), leaving them open to the inequities of social networks.

Thus, we start by breaking down a few key terms we have sometimes seen used differently than established power groups within sociology define them. We distinguish between good teaching, scholarly teaching, and the scholarship of teaching and learning (see also Lowney in this volume). Of course, institutions may use terms differently, so it is always important to see how any
institution understands its own vocabulary. When applying for a faculty position or going up for tenure, consult that institution’s faculty handbook or campus center for teaching excellence/faculty development to use their language correctly.

Scholarly Teaching

“Scholarly teaching is grounded in critical reflection using systematically and strategically-gathered evidence, related and explained by well-reasoned theory and philosophical understanding, with the goal of maximizing learning through effective teaching.” (Potter & Kustra, 2011, p. 3)

Most definitions of scholarly teaching center on practice. To move beyond “good” teaching (success in the classroom as a result of one’s own reflections and efforts), the instructor intentionally explores the scholarship of teaching research and advice within their discipline, and then actively works to use that research to inform practice in the classroom (see also Medley-Rath in this volume).

Scholarly teaching can be publicly shared although it does not have to be. For instance, writing an article for the American Sociological Association’s (ASA) Teaching and Learning newsletter that reflects on your practice in the classroom with references to a few key research articles is a good example of public scholarly teaching. However, even if you do not share with anyone, if you’re reading and analysis of scholarship informs your teaching practices, you are engaging in scholarly teaching. Thus, the

1The history of these concepts is decades long, often with Boyer’s (1997) framework identified as a starting place for a national conversation about teaching as scholarship, yet the conceptualization remains a varied and somewhat messy/expansive landscape. For an excellent review of the history of and variations on these concepts, see Kern and colleagues’ 2015 piece, “The Role of SoTL in the Academy: Upon the 25th Anniversary of Boyer’s Scholarship Reconsidered.” See also Howard, 2010; Hutchings and Schulman, 1999; McKinney, 2018.
The difference between good teaching and scholarly teaching rests in the deliberate integration of scholarship and critical reflection of your work.

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

SoTL is a broad, cross-disciplinary movement with similar but varied definitions. One anchor reference is Felten's (2013) effort to distinguish scholarship from scholarly teaching: SoTL is “inquiry focused on student learning . . . grounded in both scholarly and local context . . . methodologically sound . . . conducted in partnership with students . . . [and] involves ‘going public’” (pp. 122–123).

Typically, distinctiveness from good or even scholarly teaching relies on making the case that SoTL is based on discipline-appropriate evidence and traditional research criteria. The consistent theme is that it is research-based and publicly shared through a venue that uses an editorial process. For example, the University of Georgia’s Center for Teaching and Learning (n.d.) explains, “The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is the systematic study of teaching and learning; it involves identifying a problem, asking a question, gathering evidence, drawing conclusions based on that evidence, and making those findings public for the benefit of others. It employs the strict rigor and diligence that is applied to disciplinary research.”

Thus, you would use the term SoTL to refer to articles or notes published in TS or other SoTL journals, such as *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* and *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. However, no matter how rigorous your analysis, if it is only posted on your website, it would typically not count. We discuss below other types of projects that may or may not count as SoTL, depending on the institution.
The Important “Other Projects”

In sociology, one of the important venues for teaching and learning is ASA’s TRAILS, a digital library of teaching strategies and activities that are editorially reviewed. TRAILS is a great tool we recommend as an adopter and a publisher. Yet, this is one area where care is needed in presenting such publications to your audience, because it falls somewhere in a gray area between scholarly teaching and scholarship of teaching and learning. As the first editor of TRAILS, Diane worked with Margaret Vitullo (the resource’s founder) to help discern how TRAILS publications should be promoted within a career. While TRAILS entries meet the broadest definitions of SoTL, you typically should place them under the Teaching not the Research section of your materials at most institutions. While these works are more than individuals thinking about what to do better next time when alone in their offices or chatting with colleagues—and they are more than scholarly teaching—they do not reach the bar of scholarship of discovery for many scholars. TRAILS entries, conference papers on teaching, and workshops are really “in-between.” While we deserve credit for this work, typically, one should not list a TRAILS entry as equivalent to a journal article in TS, for example.

To make these distinctions more concrete and to provide one example of how you might organize different types of public sharing, Alanna shares how she organizes her CV in Table 1. Visit her website to see these examples in the context of her complete CV (http://www.alannagillisphd.com/cv).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CV Heading</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-reviewed publications</td>
<td>TS article on participation grading; chapter on teaching Sociology of</td>
<td><em>TS</em> is a peer-reviewed journal, and articles published there (or in any other peer-reviewed journal) should be placed in this research section. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education in <em>Handbook of Teaching and Learning</em></td>
<td><em>Handbook</em> chapter is part of a peer-reviewed edited book and counts as peer-reviewed research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other publications</td>
<td>This <em>Playbook</em> module</td>
<td>This module is editorially reviewed but not peer-reviewed, so it belongs in a separate category of publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowships and awards</td>
<td>University teaching award; ASA teaching award</td>
<td>Any awards related to teaching belong in this section, whether it be for scholarly teaching (my university award) or SoTL (my ASA Section award).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published peer-reviewed teaching</td>
<td>TRAILS class activity on school choice and inequality; TRAILS syllabus</td>
<td>The name I gave this category is not standardized, because there is no consistent way that people demonstrate their TRAILS publications. I chose to put these under the Teaching section of my CV rather than the Research section to comply with the norm of not counting them as research. Thus, they get their own title rather than being grouped with other publications, which are in the Research section of my CV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td>for Sociology of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching trainings</td>
<td>ASA preconference attendee; oral communication training at my university</td>
<td>Putting these types of trainings on your CV can signal engagement in scholarly teaching (i.e., you seek out training and bring it to your classroom).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference presentations &amp;</td>
<td>ASA presentation on hyflex teaching; invited talk at another university</td>
<td>Any SoTL where you discuss teaching practices that you evaluated with appropriate methodological rigor can be placed in the conference presentation and invited talks category of the CV. This is distinguished from giving a talk about a practice you like doing in your classroom in a public forum that is not connected to scholarship (which would belong under Service).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invited talks</td>
<td>about participation grading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
We want to clarify two points in the table above. First, notice that the same publications and experiences may appear in different places on your CV, depending on your involvement. For instance, I discussed the ASA preconference twice: once under teaching training because, as an attendee, I experienced the training benefits, then a second time as a facilitator of a roundtable under service to the profession. Be sure to assess your role to determine where it belongs. Second, just because something does not belong on your CV does not mean it is not valuable. While I do not list social media engagement metrics, emails with fellow sociologists, or website downloads on my CV, I still track these statistics. For instance, when writing my third-year review, I used the emails I received regarding my

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CV Heading</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service to profession</td>
<td>Facilitator of ASA preconference roundtable on teaching modality tips and tricks</td>
<td>These activities are great experiences for sharing my ideas with a broader audience, but they were not based on a particular scholarship project. Thus, they are considered service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to university</td>
<td>Workshop organizer and presenter on supporting first-gen students in the classroom at my university</td>
<td>This workshop is an example of sharing scholarly teaching, as I explained research on barriers first-gen students face and specific actions in my courses. The audience was other faculty members at my university. However, it is not appropriate to consider it a research talk, because there was no editorial review of my content, nor did I evaluate evidence for the teaching techniques I shared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not on my CV</td>
<td>Evidence that I share teaching materials on my website, social media, or email</td>
<td>I have teaching resources available for free on my website that other people use. This sharing is great for teaching communities but does not belong anywhere on my CV.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participation grading system as evidence that it is implemented in universities across the country. Be thoughtful about when and where you include such metrics and for which audiences. It works best when it supports other robust evidence rather than being offered as stand-alone data.

However, the challenge of presenting these things gets even more complicated, acknowledging again that different institutions have different expectations. Just as you should not send the same cover letter for different positions, how you present your SoTL research depends on the audience. Analyze how the organization will view such a publication and then present it yourself accordingly. In the next section, we offer advice to help with this goal.

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**Presenting on the Job Market**

As anyone reading this module likely knows, the academic job market is intensely competitive (Kelsey, 2015). Most people who start sociology PhD programs aspiring for a tenure-track job will never get one (Calarco, 2020). This harsh reality must be kept in mind, because applicants find strategies to help them stand out. One such approach is to publish SoTL materials.

Some strategies for presenting SoTL work (including all three categories identified here) will likely not be the same for all types of faculty positions. In contrast, other strategies are similar for most jobs: Put TRAILS publications under the teaching heading of your CV (subheading of peer-reviewed teaching resources) and list TS (or other teaching journals) articles under peer-reviewed articles alongside other substantive area research articles. Consider referencing TRAILS and TS publications in your teaching statement, cover letter, or in interviews as appropriate—they are evidence of commitment to best practices in your teaching and the discipline. Such professional activity is also evidence of your skill in practice. Without SoTL publications or projects, applicants
typically rely solely on metrics like course evaluations or letters of recommendation from advisers/mentors to demonstrate teaching effectiveness. SoTL publications can enhance such claims.

So, how might the presentation of your work vary across institution types?

### Teaching-Centered Institutions

Teaching-centered universities include community colleges, comprehensive regional universities, and lower-ranked liberal arts colleges. At these universities, while you will likely have some research obligations, the most important aspect of evaluation is teaching. There is typically a high teaching load (many colleges have 4–4 loads, meaning four courses per semester), and you will spend most of your time on teaching. Therefore, your job market materials should reflect the relative importance these institutions place on teaching. For instance, in organizing a CV, you may notice that your graduate school professors put teaching after publications, awards, and conference/invited talks. When applying for teaching-centered university positions, you should not follow that model. While there is no definitive organization of CVs for teaching-centered universities, we recommend putting teaching immediately after publications and awards and before conferences and talks. Historically, candidates were advised that they should put teaching before all research on the CV, but due to the rising research expectations at many institutions, we suggest that it is best to have publications before teaching experience.

In your teaching statement or sometimes your cover letter, provide examples of the types of goals, activities, and assessments used in your courses that link to your SoTL. For instance, one of Alanna’s TS articles and two TRAILS artifacts were about using role-playing activities in the classroom. Thus, her teaching statement discussed using role-playing activities to achieve certain learning objectives (aligned with her argument in the article) and then
described brief examples of the types of activities published in TRAILS. This evidence shows the reader what her teaching is like while also helping them see that Alanna’s teaching ideas have been peer-reviewed. Additionally, if the job requests a teaching portfolio, SoTL publications should be included. However, do not rely on any single publication to demonstrate your range of ideas.

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**High Research, High Teaching Institutions**

These institutions include more highly ranked liberal arts colleges and some R2s; Carnegie Classifications (2021) are fluid. An R2 university is an institution that awards many different doctoral degrees and has at least $5 million in research expenditures and is distinguished from R1 universities (discussed in the next section) by having lower amounts of research output. Elite liberal arts colleges typically have lower teaching loads than teaching-centered universities (often two or three courses per semester) but higher research expectations.

Generally, SoTL research will most likely be valued as evidence of effective teaching, much like it is at teaching-centered universities. However, its perception as research will likely differ. While these institutions are likely to regard SoTL publications in established journals as research, they will want to see that you have additional scholarship and research publication(s). Bluntly put, some readers likely will want to see a “real research” agenda in a different subfield of sociology, such as theory, crime and deviance, stratification, or race.

At the same time, these institutions care deeply about high-quality teaching. Thus, having a SoTL publication can signal to the hiring committee that you are invested in improving your teaching, not just in advancing your research agenda. It helps you show, rather than tell, that you are invested in the same liberal arts values as the institution.
To determine whether a university you are applying to is a high research/teaching university, use the internet to find its faculty handbook and skim the tenure requirements. Look at the CVs or the Google Scholar profiles of current junior faculty. When hiring for a tenure-track job, the committee will assess whether they think you can earn tenure. Thus, analyzing how they discuss teaching and research in tenure requirements will give you a more informed idea about how to present SoTL research in your job application.

**High Research Institutions**

These universities include R1s and some R2s (think Stanford and other programs in the top 50 sociology PhD programs). At these universities, the research expectations for tenure are quite high, often two articles per year, and pedagogy research in and of itself typically will not count for much. Overwhelmingly the tenure requirements are a significant publishing record and being regarded as an expert in your subfield. There is less emphasis on teaching (despite mission statements) and the hiring committee will assess whether you seem on track to meet those expectations in 6 years.

When applying, you may not be required to include a teaching statement or portfolio. It would be most appropriate to mention SoTL publications in the short paragraph or two dedicated to teaching in your cover letter, mentioning that you are prepared to teach high-quality courses, as evidenced by published work and SoTL activities. You could additionally use it to supplement your research agenda. For instance, if you study sociology of race and publish an article about reducing racism in the classroom, you can mobilize that article as contributing to your subfield. Remember that you should focus on discussing your research agenda and trajectory. Teaching information should not appear on your CV until you fully exhaust all research, including publications, awards, conference presentations, and invited talks.
Adjunct Faculty/Teaching Professors/Lecturers

Higher education relies significantly on instructors who fall into this complex but essential category. Some instructors are year-to-year adjuncts teaching anywhere from one to five or six courses (the latter often at multiple institutions). Others have term contracts defined by higher teaching loads and some service expectations but with few or no research expectations typical of tenure-track positions. Sometimes these options are preferable for individuals, but they can also be exploitative (especially adjunct positions) as institutions fail to replace tenure-track positions to address budget challenges.

In applying for these positions, follow the advice for teaching-centered universities. Explain explicitly what your teaching presentations, articles, and published resources do in case the faculty responsible for hiring may be unfamiliar with the type of evidence you present.

Annual Review, Tenure, and Promotion

SoTL publications can also be useful once you are hired (tenure-track or fixed term) by contributing to annual review, third-year review, tenure, and promotion decisions. While each institution has different requirements, there are common expectations.

Most universities require an annual review, a document or report on accomplishments in teaching, research, and service from the past year (these self-assessments are often required of all full-time faculty, visiting or permanent). Your department
chair, dean, or both might (should) read the document, especially annual reviews of early career faculty, to provide feedback and areas for growth. (If they appear not to read them, you might ask for an informal “how do you think I am doing?” meeting. That can minimize surprises later on and show your interest in doing well and staying on.) In tenure-track positions, there is typically a formal mid-probationary review (in years two, three, or four). This review is conducted primarily at the department- or school-level and may also be assessed by a college- or university-level committee. Tenure is usually pursued in year six of a tenure-track position.

When candidates go up for tenure, they put together an extensive portfolio of their teaching, research, and service accomplishments. As noted in the previous sections, the relative importance of teaching versus research varies in different contexts. Tenure decisions are usually multilevel, beginning with one’s department (or school in the case of some small departments), then a tenure and promotions committee of faculty from across the university or college, and then moving to final approval by academic administrators, including the dean, president, and the governing board. If a faculty member does not successfully receive tenure, they are usually given one additional year in the position to look for a new job before termination. Promotion most commonly refers to the transition from assistant professor to associate professor or associate to professor; usually, though not always, promotion to associate happens simultaneously with tenure, though some institutions separate the two. Promotion to professor also normally requires candidates to create a portfolio documenting how they have met the institution’s requirements for that highest rank. Teaching remains a key evaluation criterion at all stages, along with the expected level of research, publication, and professional activity, including leadership and service.

SoTL publications should be used strategically in each evaluation stage, consistent with the institution’s expectations. As discussed previously, an article published in *TS* should be included in the research section if you work at a teaching-centered university. In contrast, it should probably only be included in the teaching section of someone at an R1 university. Again, carefully read your
faculty handbook (or other official university documents that lay out expectations) and reference that handbook’s language and expectations to use the SoTL publication to enhance your review accordingly.

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**Award, Grant, and Fellowship Applications**

Much of the advice offered thus far also applies to award, grant, and fellowship applications: know the institutional context, think about the reader/audience, and pay attention to your professional presentation of self. There are additional considerations as well.

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**Faculty Development**

Across a career, faculty development (versus SoTL) can and should be an ongoing aspect of one’s professional identity. Faculty development includes participation in programs, workshops, continuing education, and professional collaboration to improve instruction. It is rare to find an institution with no center for teaching excellence or at least programming to enhance teaching and learning. Most professional organizations also have such opportunities at annual meetings and webinars.

Demonstrating a pattern of engagement in faculty development opportunities through workshops and grants helps hone one’s skills in teaching and learning (which do evolve—one hopes to improve) and demonstrates a commitment to scholarly teaching. You often learn new things in collaboration with colleagues and can contribute, given your own SoTL work. Faculty development engagement demonstrates that a professor does more than just think alone in one’s office about what to do better next time.
(although necessary, that is not sufficient). And importantly, along with your own SoTL projects, it can position you more strongly for teaching grants and awards.

The stage of a career is important in this context. Early in one’s career, fellowships are more likely to be related to your research agenda. But many campuses with Centers for Teaching and Learning (under various other similar names) offer teaching-related grants and opportunities. One way to continue demonstrating your commitment and growing skills as an instructor is to regularly participate in these activities and apply for faculty development or course development grants. Your previous publications and experiences will make you a stronger candidate for future grants and awards. Over time, if the programming is solid, not only will such participation document your continued arc in maturing as a teacher, but it (should) will give you new skills for your actual practice. Teaching and learning will change throughout a career—especially with changing technology and digital expectations.

Workshops or activities may inspire future ideas that you could develop into a TRAILS publication or a more substantial SoTL journal article (see Kordsmeier & Medley-Rath in this volume). Take advantage of what is offered on campus or within your university system and participate in regional (Midwest Sociological Society, Eastern Sociological Society, Southern Sociological Society, North Central Sociological Association) meetings. ASA is long-standing in its commitment to teaching sociology, so belonging to the Section on Teaching and Learning and involvement in committee work related to teaching within a substantive area are all excellent ideas. Like your research agenda, your teaching “agenda,” scholarly teaching, and scholarship will be an arc over your career. You might build toward leadership positions in the ASA Teaching section, and eventually give workshops and presentations on good teaching and effective learning, which will also change over your career. There are also excellent national organizations, such as The Teaching Professor and POD Network (network of faculty developers and many journals you might
consider reading or publishing in beyond sociology). There are teaching Fulbright fellowships for faculty and many opportunities in-person and virtually—for example, Magna Publications, Educause, and Tomorrow’s Professor. Thus, consider balancing campus or broad faculty development and discipline-specific professional development.

Awards

Teaching awards also can be found at all stages and in all arenas: local, regional, and national. Institutions have campus or division-based teaching awards, some provided by peers and some by students; state university systems have regional systemwide awards and grants (e.g., Indiana University, Minnesota State).

When applying for awards at your institution, remember that the selection committee will be made up of people from many disciplines and perhaps contain no sociologists. Thus, any published scholarly teaching or SoTL research within sociology must be explained so that a nonsociologist can understand its significance. Small language signifiers can be helpful, such as saying, “In my peer-reviewed article in TS, I demonstrated that . . .” which communicates to your audience that TS is a peer-reviewed journal. Most disciplines do not have an equivalent to TRAILS that peer reviews shared teaching materials. Therefore, you need to explain to the audience what these publications are. You might say, “I not only use best practices in my classroom, but I create resources to enable others to do the same. For instance, I published [class activity, syllabus, assessment] in the peer-reviewed TRAILS database, run by the American Sociological Association. The [activity, syllabus, assessment] achieves . . .” Your explanation can help the audience understand how to evaluate the rigor and importance of the contribution.

The ASA Section on Teaching and Learning also gives multiple awards based on career stage. There is a Graduate Student
Contribution award for a single contribution (e.g., article or TRAILS piece) completed while someone was in graduate school. Next is the Scholarly Contribution Teaching Award designated for a single contribution. After that, the section gives the Hans O. Mauksch Distinguished Contribution to Undergraduate Sociology based on a series of contributions made during a person’s career. The major teaching award, given not by the Section on Teaching and Learning but rather by ASA, is the Distinguished Contributions to Teaching and Learning. Whether at the beginning of one’s career or well into it, the key to earning such recognition is a pattern of effort in teaching that is documented beyond one’s private reflections. Often, it is a result of collaboration, involvement, and connection with like-minded sociologists and others who care deeply about teaching and learning and understand that it is not simply “natural talent/personality” that some have, and some do not, but serious engagement in what Burawoy (2005), Collins (2013), and others have identified as our most essential public—our students.

Conclusion

We leave you with three major takeaways.

First, context matters. The organizational setting in which the documents will be read and by whom (at different types of colleges, for award committees, etc.) will shape how the reader interprets them. As a result, as a writer, you must pay attention to what they need to know, not just what you need to say.

Second, planning is key. If you plan out your goals (e.g., get a position at a teaching-centered university, win the Graduate Student Contribution award), you can acquire the experience and record you need to be competitive.

Third, clarity of communication is essential. While some terms, such as SoTL and scholarly teaching, might seem interchangeable,
they do not hold the same meanings. Use this guide, your institution's guidelines and norms, and other resources to verify that your words are used consistently with what your intended audience expects.

Finally, realize what you have to offer now and what you can offer in the future is valuable. Be confident in your accomplishments thus far and know that our work in teaching and learning in sociology is important and advances the discipline. We wish you the best.

References


