Resources for "Myths We Tell Ourselves: False Dichotomies of Rigor and Access"

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As instructors, we enter our profession with a list of unquestioned, unexamined myths about the nature of our jobs and our students. Some of the most critical lie at the intersection of academic rigor and equity and access. Unexamined presumptions can often place these two in opposition, when both are critical for effective, equitable education. This session will give you hands-on practice in applying the lessons of transparency, the Four Connections, and growth mindsets as you set out on a myth-busting mission to break down this false dichotomy.

The following list contains a few resources on some of the main topic areas we covered in our presentation, including thoughts on syllabus design, growth mindset, classroom technology, and the Four Connections. It also includes an extended description of three helpful resources to continue exploring language equity.

The Four Connections:

Kistner, Natalie A., and Carrie E. Henderson. "The Drop Rate Improvement Program at Odessa College."
  Achieving the Dream, 26 December 2014,
  https://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/13784/the-drop-rate-improvement-program-at-odessa-college.

This case study reviews the history of the development of Odessa College's Drop Rate Improvement Program, in which the Four Connections were first introduced. Though there isn't much information on the connections themselves, you can see more here about their effect on retention at the college.

Growth Mindset:

Dweck, Carol. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.* Ballantine, 2007.

Provides a psychological examination of two different mindsets: the fixed mindset and the growth mindset. She discusses the impact these mindsets have on our skills and behavior which are determining factors in achieving our goals. A significant portion of the book is devoted to exploring the impact both mindsets can have in school settings. Among the insights shared is how something as simple as the words and phrases an instructor chooses can have a powerful impact on students' motivation, effort, and ability to improve.

The Syllabus:

The Syllabus Review Guide for Equity-Minded Practice by the Center for Urban Education.

Center for Urban Education. *Equity minded inquiry series: Syllabus Review.* Rossier
    School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 2018.
    https://www.lbcc.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/syllabus-review-v11.pdf

The Center for Urban Education's syllabus review is an inquiry tool for promoting racial/ethnic equity and equity-minded practice. To achieve this goal, the syllabus review process promotes faculty inquiry into teaching approaches and practices, especially how they affect African American, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islander, and other racially/ ethnically minoritized students; facilitates a self-assessment of these teaching approaches and practices from a racial/ethnic equity lens; and allows faculty to consider changes that result in more equitable teaching approaches and practice.

The Accessible Syllabus

---. Accessible Syllabus, Tulane University. https://www.accessiblesyllabus.com/

This resource pulls together resources for syllabus design (including text and image) and policy that can make one's syllabus more accessible, inclusive, and engaging. As the website notes, "Accessibility is necessary for all learning, and disability studies provides a key lens through which to question our classroom practices and resources. To create more inclusive teaching, instructors must plan for diversity in the classroom and adapt to the immediate needs of students." Includes a great resources page for those who wish to take a deeper dive into scholarship on this topic.

"The DIY Syllabus" Series from Kevin Gannon

This series, written by Dr. Kevin Gannon (director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Grandview University) and published in the Chronicle of Higher Education's *Vitae* series, examines some fundamental questions about the syllabus in an attempt to return it to a student-focused document that facilitates learning.

Gannon, Kevin. "DIY Syllabus: What is a Syllabus Really For, Anyway?" *Chronicle Vitae,* The Chronicle of
    Higher Education, 15 September 2016, https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1545-diy-syllabus-
    what-is-a-
    Syllabus-really-for-anyway.

---. "DIY Syllabus: What Goes into the Syllabus." *Chronicle Vitae*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, 13 October 2016, https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1575-diy-syllabus-what-goes-into-a-syllabus

---. "DIY Syllabus: How to Move beyond the Transactional." *Chronicle Vitae*, The Chronicle of Higher Education, 28 November 2016, https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1624-diy-syllabus-how-to-move-beyond-the-transactional

Classroom Technology:

"The Distracted Classroom" from James M. Lang

James M. Lang, director of the D'Amour Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption College, publishes a series looking at the complexities of technology in the modern classroom at the *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Here are a few from the series:

Lang, James M. "The Distracted Classroom." *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 13 March 2017,* https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Distracted-Classroom/239446.

---. "The Distracted Classroom: Transparency, Autonomy, and Pedagogy." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 30 July 2017, https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Distracted-Classroom-/240797.

---. "The Distracted Classroom: Is It Getting Worse?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 17 April 2017, https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Distracted-Classroom-Is/239785.

---. "The Distracted Classroom: How Can We Convince Students that Easier Doesn't Always Mean Better?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 10 March 2019, https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Can-We-Convince-Students/245821.

Grammar and Language Equity:

Some of the questions we're asking in this presentation are part of a larger, vibrant area of fresh exploration in rhetoric and applied linguistics. There's a larger conversation happening right now about language equity, translingualism, and global Englishes that can't be covered in our limited time, but we'd like you to know about two authors (and three texts) worth your time. The authors and texts here all combine theory and practice—two in particular give many hands-on examples of assignments and approaches in the classroom that can help you to break down old myths about grammar, native English ability, dialect, and academic success.

Suresh Canagarajah

Suresh Canagarajah is a professor of English and Applied Linguistics at Penn State. He's likely one of the most prolific writers and academics working in the field of *translingualism,* which thinks about language as complex, local, contextual, and in constant negotiation, especially for multilingual writers. All of his work is too numerous to mention here, but this text is a good start:

Canagarajah, Suresh. *Translingual Practice: Global English and Cosmopolitan Relations.* Routledge, 2013.

This text is a strong introduction to some of the major ideas of the translingual approach to language and writing. Chapter by chapter, Canagarajah complicates our notion of what language is, explores the further intricacies of defining a language within a global and multilingual framework, and suggests new approaches to thinking about language as an English instructor. Here are some of his crucial ideas:

- Language, at the level of real communication, is in a constant process of negotiation and interpretation. He refers to this local level as the *micro-level* of communication.
- Formal language definition, rules, and instruction exist at the *macro-level*; they exist outside of, and above, real-world interaction.
- Between them is the *meso-level*, where we try to negotiate both real-world meaning (complex, negotiated, changing) and abstract rules (authoritative, codified, inflexible).
- Canagarajah suggests one approach for students and instructors to investigate these complexities in a composition class: instead of enforcing rules and codes of English—shoring up the macro-level with no attention to the complex communication beneath it—we can investigate them critically. We can ask questions about what they are, what they do, why they're here, and whom they benefit.

Vershawn Ashanti Young

V. A. Young is an associate professor at the University of Waterloo and an interdisciplinary scholar whose works looks at education, African-American English, masculinity, race, and representation. He's best known for the concept of **code-meshing**, in which writers actively combine their different voices together instead of suppressing one in favor of a more socially-acceptable other.

Young, Vershawn Ashanti. *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy.* Teachers College Press, 2014.

This book lays out arguments for Young's code-meshing approach while also arguing against the traditional approach of code-switching (teaching the rules of academic American English not as a critique of home dialect, but as a different style to be taken on away from the home). Young argues first that students who are taught that their home voices are unwelcome in the larger world will resist the call for them to silence these voices; instead, he says, we should welcome students to experiment with integrating their voices, playing with power and language as we stay honest and clear about the systems of power and privilege around them.

Young, Vershawn Ashanti and Aya Y. Martinez. *Code-Meshing as World English: Pedagogy, Policy, Performance*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2011.

This anthology includes real-world, real-classroom examples of instructors using the techniques of code-meshing and language investigation in their classes. It starts with in-depth discussion of code-meshing, starting with some of the ideas later elaborated in *Other People's English*, but combined with other voices. The final chapters are from the instructors themselves, and they include an insightful mix of subjects and student populations. In each, the instructors show how translingual and code-meshing approaches can help students feel greater ownership of their language while preparing them for the complexities of the world after our classrooms.