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Social Justice begins with me: The making of "Seeking Social Justice Podcast" for an undergraduate-level interdisciplinary class

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Cover Page Footnote

The author would like to thank the co-editors, reviewers, and the editorial board at the Feminist Pedagogy. I also want to thank our colleagues, staff, and students, who inspire me to creatively and critically examine my teaching practices to facilitate a more engaging, just, and inclusive classroom environment.

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Introduction

Feminist pedagogy is informed by feminist theory and practice and seeks to challenge and dismantle the interlocking systems of oppression and inequality in all social institutions, including higher education (Mitcho, 2016). It is an educational approach that seeks to transform power dynamics and relations in education by critically examining and analyzing privileges, oppression, and intersectionality in a complex and evolving society (McCusker, 2017). Using a feminist pedagogical framework in the curriculum can create a more equitable, just, and empowering educational environment that prioritizes students’ abilities to be critical thinkers, active community leaders, and change agents. Instructors face several pedagogical challenges in effectively engaging undergraduate students in developing social justice competency (Adams, 2007). Some students may have deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes that resist change, while others may have no prior experience or exposure to social justice concepts, making it equally challenging for each to engage with the material. Given these challenges, instructors must facilitate student engagement and growth by providing clear definitions, concrete examples, and engaging activities that build student understanding. Most importantly, some discussions about social justice can be emotional and controversial. Therefore, instructors must create a trauma-informed and supportive learning environment where students feel valued and can explore new ideas, challenge their assumptions, and grow personally and academically.

One way to foster an inclusive and engaging classroom is to be creative and flexible in teaching approaches, let students lead the conversation through the power of knowledge, and facilitate opportunities for active student participation and reflection (Hess & Macomber, 2021). This can include using hands-on, experiential-learning activities that encourage students to lead discussions and debates and provide opportunities to apply their learning to real-world problems and situations. Instructors can also incorporate technology and multimedia resources, such as videos, podcasts, and online discussions. By approaching social justice education with creativity, flexibility, and commitment to student learning and growth, instructors can effectively engage students and help them develop the critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills necessary to become active and engaged members of a more just and equitable society. The overall pedagogical framework of social justice education is to integrate “affective, personal, social, and experiential dimensions of teaching and learning” (Adams, 2007, p.15). Importantly, social justice education demands equity of voice from students who yearn to equip them with skills to tackle social injustices because of differential distributions of power and privilege. From a pedagogical perspective, social justice education should guide students in articulating their logical reasoning to challenge the status quo. The “*Seeking Social Justice Podcast*” project has students create three podcast episodes, on topics of their choosing while it guides students to understand the concepts of diversity and inclusion in the United States, including racial and ethnic groups and other populations defined by gender, sexual orientation, income, physical and mental ability, age, and religion. The project facilitates skill development for culturally competent undergraduate students through self-examination, experiential learning, and critical reading of class materials.

The podcast project can be delivered in person or online for an undergraduate-level social justice class, which focuses on ongoing issues regarding equality, equity, and access to

opportunities. As an upper-division and interdisciplinary curriculum, students enrolled in the class are often from different majors with various career trajectories. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate various topics, activities, and discussions on current social justice issues and offer critical reflections that engage student learning and cultivate a sense of social responsibility and empathy applicable to each student's future aspirations.

Rationale

Critical pedagogy proposes that education is a practice of freedom instead of domination (Freire, 1968). Therefore, active contributions from the students in the class are crucial to implementing and evaluating both the actionable and measurable curricula objectives. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, around 33% of Americans aged 18-29 listen to podcasts (Walker, 2022). Podcasts have become popular as an educational tool because they stimulate great success for instructors and students (Lee et al., 2008; Popova & Edirisingha, 2010; Popova et al., 2014). The format is convenient, flexible, and can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and at the student's pace. The content of the podcasts can be highly engaging, using a variety of formats, such as interviews, storytelling, and discussions, to hold listeners' attention and provide a more dynamic learning experience.

Importantly, listening to podcasts can provide a personalized learning experience by allowing students to choose the podcasts they listen to. By creating podcasts, instructors can provide a more personalized learning experience tailored to each student's needs and interests. Podcasting "makes it possible for (students) to understand and manipulate the description of the world" (Popova & Edirisingha, 2010, p.2).

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for the project are intended to enable students to be able to:

1. articulate, examine, analyze, and articulate the connection between the impact of personal values and skills to create strategies combating social, political, legal, and economic justice for oppressed populations.
2. demonstrate an understanding of the impact of personal and professional values and ethics in working with diverse populations.
3. critically examine their attitudes and values regarding human diversity and evaluate their compatibility with professional work.
4. articulate and demonstrate their understanding of the needs of marginalized and oppressed populations and generate the assets that increase the resilience and options of oppressed populations.

Explanation

The "**Seeking Social Justice Podcast**" project allows students to use their voices

through research and public speaking to address social justice issues in their communities. Students (in groups of 2 to 3) must produce three 10-15 minute podcast episodes focusing on social justice topics they choose. A list of possible topics can be finalized based on course content and class discussion, and the instructor may approve social justice topics proposed by the students. All three episodes will connect with one social justice topic selected by the team.

1. The first episode will present a research topic that students chose. Students will work in their groups to present a podcast episode that: (a) highlights the main points of a set of readings on an issue of privilege and oppression within our society or their intended career fields, (b) includes a group activity that “brings to life” the main points of key issues for these readings, and (c) provides the class with relevant resources for future action on this particular issue.
2. The podcast’s second episode will introduce a local/national advocacy group fighting for social justice issues identified in the first episode. The instructor should provide examples of such organizations at the beginning of the semester.
3. The podcast’s third episode will be a “self-narrative and storytelling” episode focusing on personal growth and understanding surrounding the social justice issue selected in the first episode. This will be an independent episode produced by each student.

In a feminist pedagogical approach, the teacher is seen as a facilitator of learning rather than an authority figure, and the students are encouraged to lead their learning and contribute to the class’s collective knowledge. The teaching methods are often interactive and participatory, encouraging students to think critically, ask questions, and challenge their assumptions and beliefs and those of others.

The instructor may host each podcast, guiding conversations, promoting student discussion, and facilitating discussions that challenge dominant narratives, explore multiple perspectives, and promote critical thinking. The instructor can also encourage students to share their experiences and perspectives, creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. By doing so, the instructor will be helping to prepare students to become informed, engaged, responsible, and respectful citizens. Several user-friendly and open-source online tools can be used to record, edit, and publish podcasts. Common open-resource and online editing tools include Audacity, GarageBand (Mac Only), Soundtrap, Zencastr, and Anchor. Completed episodes will be uploaded and publicly streamable from two major online audio hosting platforms- SoundCloud and Spotify. Instructors can also explore other open-source and hosting platforms, including Anchor, Breaker, and Google Podcasts.

Debriefing

Podcasts provide a dynamic and interactive format for students to engage with social justice issues and explore different perspectives, which can be more engaging than traditional writing or lecture-based assignments. Student-led podcasts allow students to take the lead in researching, speaking, and presenting information on social justice issues, which can be

empowering and increase their engagement with the material and become more active seekers of social justice. The active delivery of students' learning experience through the development of these podcasts allows the instructor to facilitate discussion to address current social justice issues, provide valuable context, and make the content more relevant and meaningful for students. In addition, podcast assignments on social justice can empower students to have a voice and share their perspectives on important issues, deepen their understanding, and foster critical thinking skills. The assignment can be advantageous to students in many ways. First, students are given the opportunity to explore, examine, analyze, and present social justice issues they are most interested in. Second, students work independently and collaboratively to research and present social justice issues and solutions. Third, as the podcasts' creators, students have the valuable opportunity to discuss measurable and actionable policy recommendations. Fourth, students have opportunities to listen to others' action plans and provide feedback. Fifth, the process of creating a podcast requires students to develop their communication skills, including speaking, listening, writing and interviewing. These skills are valuable in many different professional and personal situations. By creating a podcast, students can apply their learning to a real-world scenario and experience the process of communicating complex ideas to a broader audience. During debriefing, students must critically reflect upon their involvement with others in the project. Essential skills are assessed, including critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-management. Specific questions will be directed to students, which are provided below:

1. What do you bring to the making of the podcast experience?
2. In what ways did you do well in this podcast experience?
3. What are the strengths and limitations of the podcast project?
4. If you were doing the podcast again, what would you do differently to improve your work?

Assessment

The following rubric is an example that could be used for assessment. Instructors can use both peer and instructor assessments due to the interactive nature of the assignment. Having both instructor and peer assessments provides a more comprehensive evaluation of student performance as it considers multiple perspectives on the quality of the podcast. This approach aligns with the philosophies of feminist pedagogy such as inclusivity, empowerment, equality, collaboration, and personal agency. It can help provide a more accurate evaluation of student achievement and minimize the risk of bias. Additionally, peer assessment can allow students to learn from each other, develop their critical thinking and analytical skills, and encourage students to engage with each other's work.

Using a specific rubric for grading student-led podcasts in a social justice context is important because it provides clear and consistent criteria for evaluation. Here is an example of a basic podcast rubric that can be modified to fit the context of other courses. One advantage to using this specific rubric listed below is that it ensures that students are assessed on the important elements of podcast-making, such as the quality of information presented, the use of credible

sources, the organization of the podcast, and the ability to meet the time requirement.

Instructor Assessment

Criteria	Exceptional (A)	Meet Expectation (B)	Sufficient Performance (C)	Below Expectation (D)
<p>The podcast assignment is evaluated based on the quality of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content 2. Source cited 3. Creativity 4. Delivery 5. Length requirement 	<p>The podcast discussion and content are clearly stated, presenting a solid argument and teaching the audience something new. The podcast is engaging and is approximately 15 minutes in length. Academic sources are well cited.</p>	<p>The podcast discussion and content are somewhat convincing. However, it presents a somewhat weak argument. The podcast lacks some creativity or is slightly too short/long. Academic sources are included but lack depth.</p>	<p>The podcast describes the topic and social justice concept and applies the concept to the topic to teach the audience something new, but it lacks clarity or creativity or is not performed engagingly. Academic sources are cited, but the amount of research effort is lacking.</p>	<p>The podcast does not describe the topic and/or psychological concept and/or fails to apply the social justice concept to the topic. The podcast demonstrates substantive misunderstandings of the topic or concept or is far too short/long. No academic resources cited/incorrect sources cited.</p>

Peer Assessment:

The peer assessment was adapted from the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence at Penn State University. This peer assessment should be facilitated as the project progresses.

Please answer all questions below from your perspective. If you cannot answer a question, please explain why the information is unavailable.

1. While preparing for the podcast assignment, what specific goals are the team trying to accomplish? Please list the goal(s) in your priority order. Do you think the team agrees on the contents of this list?
2. What activities has the team specifically chosen to undertake or assign to achieve its goals? Which activities, if any, are particularly effective?
3. Does each team member have specific, even unique, responsibilities that help the team attain its goal(s)? List all team members by name and their responsibilities.
4. How satisfied are you regarding the working process of the podcast assignment?

Please rate it on a scale of 1 to 10: 1 as not satisfied and 10 as very satisfied.

5. How satisfied are you with the content of the podcast assignment? Please rate it on a scale of 1 to 10: 1 as not satisfied and 10 as very satisfied.

Conclusion

Implementing a feminist pedagogy approach in social justice curricula and facilitating the creation of student-made podcasts can be powerful for transforming education and promoting social justice. By centering on the students' experiences and perspectives of power and oppression, feminist pedagogy can help them develop a deeper understanding of the root causes of inequality and encourage them to actively create positive changes. One of the advantages of using podcasts in education is their flexibility and adaptability to different topics and disciplines. Moreover, creating podcasts can be an interdisciplinary project incorporating various skills and knowledge. For example, students can work on researching and analyzing various topics in a class, developing interview questions, and recording and editing audio.

Podcasting provides an excellent platform for discussing and exploring various social justice issues that are not covered in a timely manner, either by mainstream media or academic research. This can be particularly important for understanding current and pressing social justice issues evolving and changing constantly. Student-made podcasts can promote critical thinking, encourage collaboration and teamwork, and empower student voices. By allowing students to explore important topics and share their ideas with a broader audience, making the podcasts can also help create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

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