

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND CLASS CLIMATE IN THE INFORMATION LITERACY CLASSROOM

CULTIVATING INTELLECTUAL EMPATHY AND CRITICAL REFLECTION

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POLITICAL POLARIZATION & “POST-TRUTH” RHETORIC

“Post-truth”:

“relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”

– [Oxford Dictionaries](#)

POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE U.S.

“Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades.”

- Pew Research Center, 2014

POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE U.S.

“When it comes to getting news about politics and government, liberals and conservatives inhabit different worlds. ...

And whether discussing politics online or with friends, they are more likely than others to interact with like-minded individuals.”

– Mitchell et al., 2014



“HOT COGNITION”
(LODGE & TABER, 2005)

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“THE WEB OF BELIEF”
(QUINE, 1951; LINKER, 2014)

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THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Do these concepts resonate with you as a
librarian/teacher?

With behaviors that you observe in
students, friends, or yourself?

CHALLENGES & POSSIBILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

- In light of these human tendencies and an increase in political polarization, how can we cultivate environments that foster learning and inclusivity?
- How can we encourage critical and reflective dialogue that invites multiple perspectives, without collapsing into absolute relativism or post-truth rhetoric?

SOCIAL IDENTITY & CLASS CLIMATE

SOCIAL IDENTITY

“the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn”

(Ambrose et al., 2010. p. 170)

SOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT (HARDIMAN & JACKSON, 1992)

- Naïve stage
- Acceptance (of messages about different groups)
 - Resistance
 - Shame/disintegration (dominant groups)
 - Pride/immersion (minority groups)
 - Redefinition/internalization

CLASS CLIMATE

“the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn”

(Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 170)

CLASS CLIMATE AS A CONTINUUM
(DESURRA & CHURCH, 1994)

	Marginalizing	Centralizing
Explicit	Explicitly marginalizing	Explicitly centralizing (marginalized perspectives are intentionally sought out and integrated)
Implicit	Implicitly marginalizing (most classrooms)	Implicitly centralizing

“FACULTY STUDENT ORIENTATION”
(ASTIN, 1993)

Students’ positive perceptions of faculty as caring about their academic and personal success, including concerns of minority groups:
Correlated with higher student retention, graduation rates, and self-reporting on critical thinking skills

“FACULTY DIVERSITY ORIENTATION”
(ASTIN, 1993)

Curriculum that affirms diverse perspectives and experiences correlated with higher GPA

- Readings and other course materials that address racial issues
- Diverse examples and metaphors

**CLASSROOM CLIMATE:
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**
(AMBROSE ET AL., 2010, P. 174)

- Stereotypes
 - Tone
- Faculty-student & student-student interactions
 - Content

MICRO-INEQUALITIES & STEREOTYPE THREAT

- Summative effect of micro-inequalities can adversely affect learning (Hall, 1982, Pascarella et al., 1997)
 - Stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995)
- Tokenism (minority students expected to speak for a minority group)

PEDAGOGICAL TAKEAWAYS FROM AMBROSE ET AL., 2010

- “Make uncertainty safe.”
- “Resist a single right answer.”
- “Incorporate evidence into performance and grading criteria.” (Pushes students beyond just asserting an opinion)
 - “Examine your assumptions about students.”
 - “Model inclusive language, behavior, and attitudes.”
 - “Use multiple and diverse examples.”
- “Establish and reinforce ground rules for interaction.”

CLASS CLIMATE & INFORMATION LITERACY

INFORMATION BEHAVIORS, SOCIAL IDENTITY, & CLASS CLIMATE

- Cognitive bias + motivated reasoning
- Information evaluation + critical thinking

Instructional contexts (examples):
credit courses, one-shots, curriculum,
digital learning objects

BRAINSTORM: TEACHING STRATEGIES

What teaching strategies do or might we use:

- to foster positive and inclusive class climates?
- to encourage reflective dialogue and learning?
- to increase awareness of cognitive biases and how they may influence information behaviors?

POSITIVE CLASS CLIMATE IN THE IL CLASSROOM: TEACHING STRATEGIES

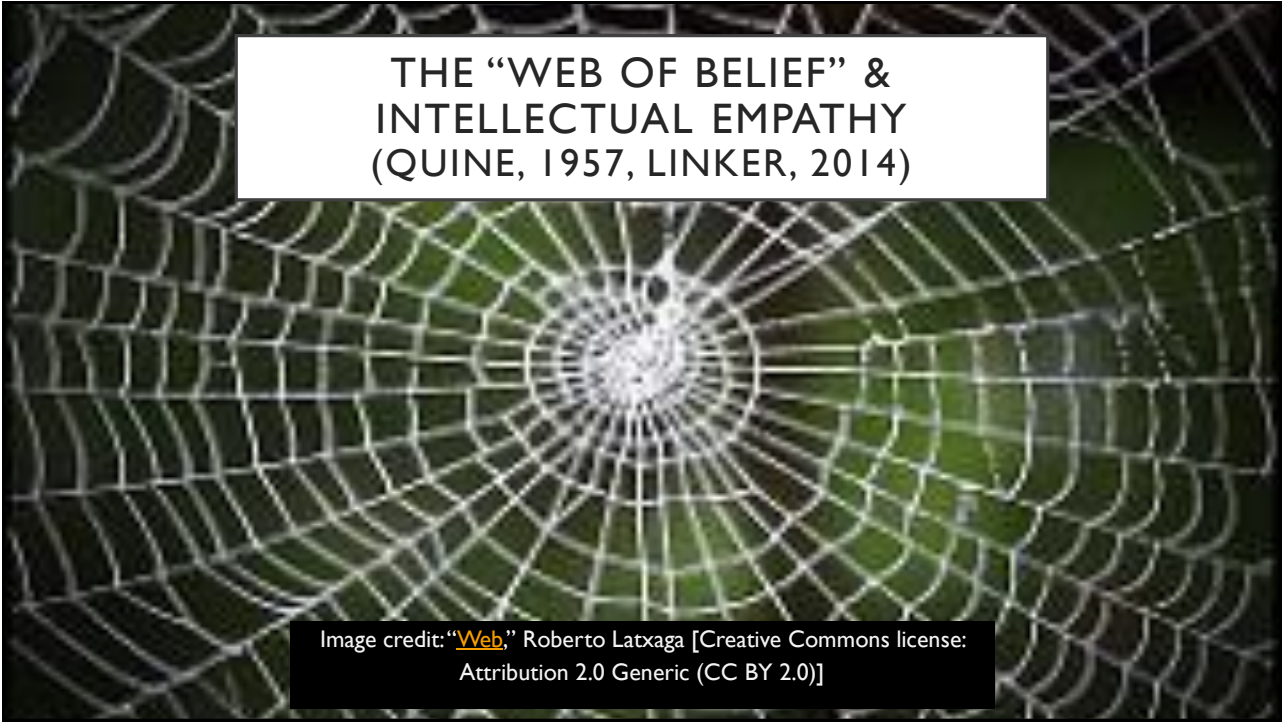
- Inclusive language and tone (e.g., syllabi, assignments)
 - Classroom ground rules
- Cognitive bias & the “web of belief” (Linker, Quine)
 - Criteria for source evaluation & critical thinking
 - Criteria for critical thinking & dialogue
 - Structured class discussions
 - Opportunities for student feedback

CLASSROOM GROUND RULES

- Be open-minded. Respect that not everyone will share your view.
- Be honest and real with one another while remaining respectful to everyone.
 - Reflect before responding.
- Understand that we all sometimes have inaccurate information. Be open to critically examining information and reassessing it if need.
- Don't monopolize the conversation. Give everyone a chance to share.

CLASSROOM GROUND RULES (CONTINUED)

- Do not interrupt.
 - Accept and respect that others may have different views.
 - Remember that our goal is to learn through our interactions with one another, not to convince others of our own perspectives.
 - Appreciate that we all have unique experiences and backgrounds that shape our perspectives.
 - Appreciate that we can learn through listening openly to one another and sharing about our viewpoints.



THE “WEB OF BELIEF” &
INTELLECTUAL EMPATHY
(QUINE, 1957, LINKER, 2014)

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CLASS DISCUSSION POLITICAL POLARIZATION & MEDIA HABITS

- What implications might political polarization have for the kinds of information that people are exposed? How might it influence people’s social interactions and social relationships?
- Why might people be more prone to cognitive biases in this climate?

(Support your ideas with information the related readings or other relevant sources.)

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION: WEB OF BELIEF

Think of a moment when you strongly disagreed with someone.

- How did you feel when your belief was challenged?
 - Did they present compelling evidence/analysis for their perspective?
- Did/would considering their perspective require that you reconsider your own “web of belief”?
- Does your experience confirm or challenge Linker’s description of the “web of belief” in certain ways?

COGNITIVE BIAS

- [*Intellectual Empathy*](#), Maureen Linker
- [“Political Polarization and Media Habits”](#) (Pew Research Center)
- [Confirmation & Other Biases](#), Lesson 3 of Facing Ferguson: News Literacy in the Digital Age (Facing History)
 - [“Can You Solve This?”](#) (video)
 - [Implicit Association Test](#)
- [The Debunking Handbook](#), (Skeptical Science)
 - The Worldview Backfire Effect

CRITERIA FOR SOURCE EVALUATION:
EXAMPLE: WIKIPEDIA'S GUIDELINES

- Process (encouraging accuracy, verifying information, correcting misinformation)
 - Expertise
- Aim (publication or author's purpose)

(Caulfield, *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*, p. 82-83)

CRITICAL THINKING &
“HUNTING ASSUMPTIONS”
(BROOKFIELD, 1995)

- Causal
- Prescriptive
- Paradigmatic

CRITERIA FOR CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS (BROOKFIELD, 1995, P. 181)

- A central focus on identifying assumptions
- Examining the accuracy and validity of those assumptions
- Examining the contextual validity of specific assumptions
 - Identifying the evidence for generalizations
- Outlining an inferential chain that leads to shared conclusions
 - Generating varying perspectives on an issue
- Remaining wary of groupthink, refraining from premature consensus

CONVERSATIONAL PROCESSES FOR CRITICAL THINKING (BROOKFIELD, 1995, P. 182)

- Structures that ensure all have the opportunity to contribute
 - Time limits
 - Space for reflective silence
- Seeking similarities, differences, and connections among contributions
 - Shared power
- Seeking examples that illustrate the relevance of new ideas/concepts
 - Active listening

STRUCTURED DISCUSSIONS: EXAMPLES FROM BROOKFIELD (1995, P. 183-?)

- Circle of Voices
- Circular Response
 - Chalk Talk
- Structured Silence

BRAINSTORM: TEACHING STRATEGIES

What teaching strategies do or might we use:

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