

PLANNING GUIDE FOR THE FIRST CLASS SESSIONS

- What are your goals for the semester? To have discussion and debate? A collaborative learning environment? Personal reflection? Application of theory to practice? How will you share these goals with students?
- How will you introduce yourself? What will you share about your learning journey, both through course content (e.g., related personal, professional, or research experience), and your role as a teacher and discussion leader)?
- How will students introduce themselves?
 - What would you like to know or might need to know about students?
 - What is the best format to get this information? E.g., survey (electronic or on paper), writing prompt, etc.
 - What information might help students better understand and connect with each other? What is the best format? Will you use community building activities?
- How will you shape discussion participation?
 - Will you discuss participation?
 - If so, how? Will you simply share some of your expectations or go through a group or democratic exercise? Will you bring in a short reading, video clip, or vignette for discussion?
 - Will you establish formal ground rules/ discussion norms?
 - If so, what will the process look like? Are there any rules you would/ would not like to see included? Does this need to be done before the first discussion, or might this process work better after community building?
 - Under what circumstances would you refer back to the rules or norms?
 - How will you manage time in the discussion and provide opportunities for everyone to be heard?
 - Will you use some structured discussion formats (e.g., ask students to pair up and then share ideas)?
 - Will students have assigned leadership roles at points throughout the semester?
 - What precedent will you set for when class starts and ends?
- Are there any particular “thorny” areas you would like to address?
 - How might you open dialogue around race, class, culture, etc.? Through short readings, video clips, or vignettes? Structured activities?
 - Is there a need to create common language around terms? If so, what will that process look like?
- Finally, how will you prepare for the very first session?
 - What physical setup would you like for the room? If there is flexibility, how will the chairs be arranged and why? How will you use the space to support your goals for establishing a supportive learning community?
 - What are your strategies to learn student names? Will you bring the course “facebook” with you? Provide name tags or name tents? Do you plan to do an activity around learning names?
 - How will you allocate time?
 - What needs to be accomplished in terms of course business (e.g., office hours, availability, etc.)?
 - What course content needs to be addressed in the first session?
 - What might students expect from section going forward in terms of format, content, etc.
 - How might you integrate course content and course administration with welcoming or community building activities?