

Developing Awareness of Power for Justice in Social Science Rubric

APPENDIX B

The Developing Awareness of Power for Justice in Social Science rubric has been designed to assess lesson plans in the Social Sciences, specifically World History, for whether they effectively engage students in critiquing power structures, developing empathy through a centering of the experiences of the oppressed, and ultimately instill in students a praxis of justice-oriented citizenship. It was developed by the author for use in developing a California World History Unit but could be applied to any other Social Science course work.

		Successful	Starting To	Not Present
Critique of Power	Does the curriculum illustrate how those in power benefited from the oppression of others?	Clear evidence of the way that the powerful benefited from oppression is presented. Curriculum allows students to see the benefits reaped by those in power and the specific ways they manipulated laws and policies to maintain that imbalance.	Some evidence of active creation of imbalance is present, such as the review of a law or policy, or evidence of desire to maintain the status quo by those in power.	Curriculum is only focused on experience of the poor and the results of that oppression.
	Does the curriculum carve out space for connections to current events and systems?	Curriculum calls for specific connections to current events and policies. Assessment includes a validation that students can connect historical acts and systems to contemporary systems of power.	Discussion of connections is suggested or mentioned, but not emphasized or assessed. May call for connections to other historical events but not the present.	The lesson exists entirely in the historical time in which it is set with no reference to similarities to any other time periods or the present.
Center Experiences of Oppressed & Support Empathy Development	Does the curriculum include first-hand accounts of the lives of oppressed groups to develop empathy?	The experiences of the oppressed are centered through a variety of primary sources representing the experiences of the oppressed. The sources are in the first person and represent real lived experiences of lower classed persons during the time that do not uphold stereotypes. The sources show	One or two personal narratives are featured but they do not figure prominently into the curriculum and/or are not from the perspective of the oppressed themselves. Experiences are shared in a way that engenders paternalistic thinking or implies that individual effort could	The oppressed are presented as statistics or a vague “other” group without exploration of individual experiences. There is no way for students to engage with the lived experiences of the oppressed, making any

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		individuals actively trying to better their lives and being unable to do so because of systemic oppression.	ameliorate the conditions of all impoverished individuals.	understanding of their circumstances an intellectual experience only.
	Does the curriculum illustrate one or more activists working towards equality? Are the activists from both powerful and oppressed backgrounds?	In addition to stories of the oppressed, the curriculum features individuals from the oppressed communities taking action and organizing towards better conditions. Allies from upper class backgrounds are also featured to give students the opportunity to imagine themselves as doing the same. Stories of activists show that anyone can affect change but demonstrated the importance of working collectively with oppressed communities in that effort.	Curriculum shows wealthy citizens working in small ways to support those who do not enjoy their class privilege without partnering with those who best understand their needs. Curriculum may openly imply that the success of any social movements was only the result of politicians or philanthropists working on behalf of oppressed communities, or it may just leave that conclusion to be inferred.	No activists are discussed, change, if presented, is illustrated as if it happened naturally without any activism.
Support the Development of a Justice Praxis	Does the curriculum include discussion activities so students can become comfortable speaking about the material and practice making	Significant amounts of class time are allocated for live class discussions, group discussions or discussion boards. Instructors are called to ensure equity of voice in the classroom and classroom norms are put in place to ensure respectful disagreement. Students are assessed on their ability to make evidence-based arguments and demonstrate an evolution of	Some student discussion is present, but students can participate at their own discretion and speak largely based on preconceived opinions without demonstrating any evolution of thought. Students are not guided towards expanded vocabulary relevant to the issue.	Curriculum is instructor-focused and based on the banking model. Assessment is based solely on students regurgitating facts shared by the teacher without independent thought in class. Some independent thought may be invited in summative assessments like essays, but that is only

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evidence-based arguments?	thought. The development of a relevant vocabulary is prioritized to support students in these efforts.		shared with the teacher and students don't have the opportunity to discuss or develop their ideas collectively.
Does the curriculum create a space for critical reflection?	Students are required to maintain a journal for personal reflections throughout the unit. Students are given prompts to encourage them to consider their own power in current society and how that impacts their positionality in exploring the content. Students are encouraged to make personal connections to injustices past and present and to consider if they see themselves in any of the individuals studied. Reflection is used as a way for students to consider what other areas of current society or history similar ideas may be relevant to. Instructor responds to reflections in a supportive way and guides students to supportive resources on their journey.	Students are required or encouraged to journal for the sake of journaling without any teacher feedback or critical prompts. Summative assessment may include a component of reflection on personal growth, but no suggestion of connecting historical power holders to the student is made.	Students do not reflect on the material. All assessments are content-based without exploration of any challenges to the student's identity.
Does the curriculum recognize students as knowledge	There is an emphasis on students exploring primary source documents but also on generating their own discussion questions and research questions.	Students complete scaffolded research or participate in short discussions.	Teacher leads all learning and provides all resources, students are meant to absorb not create or

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	creators of their own?	Ample time is allocated for students to add to the discussion with their own insights, considerations, and research.		provide context and information.
	Does the curriculum provide opportunities for students to practice critical analysis of documents or media from the time?	Students review documents from a variety of sources and identify differences and similarities. Students are able to practice recognizing how different narratives serve different goals and objectives and discuss how to apply these skills in other contexts, including current media consumption and research.	Students review multiple primary source documents and answer structured questions that may highlight some differences in perspective.	Students review a set of documents that all represent the same point of view selected by the teacher or prescribed by content standards.