

Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion in an Agricultural Education Methods Course

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Introduction

- As society continues to diversify, agricultural teacher education must be able to prepare future educators to create inclusive classrooms
- This is especially problematic given the diversity and inclusion issues identified in agricultural education research as well as the inherent complexities of agricultural identity
- Diversity and inclusion topics can be strategically folded into your teaching methods course curriculum
- I lay out a direct approach to address diversity and inclusion in a five-week unit

How it Works

- The teaching methods course is a 400-level course, 16 weeks long, and meets once a week for ~3 hours each session
- The enrollment numbers for the course are typically around 10 students and students are either juniors or seniors
- The following table highlights the first five weeks and how the diversity and inclusion topics are ordered and matched with a teaching method
- While this outline explicitly links topics together in 5 weeks, instructors should try to cover and link other related topics in the rest of the course

How it Works (cont.)

Diversity Topics	Teaching Method Topics
Who are we as individuals and our values	Facilitation of discussion on challenging topics
Rural, urban, and suburban audiences	Teacher-centered (behavioral) approaches to teaching
Youth and adult audiences	Individual student (cognition) approaches to teaching
Traditional (more conservative) and non-traditional (more liberal) audiences	Group (social cognition) approaches to teaching
Racially and ethnical diverse audiences	Approaches to teaching focused on deeper meaning (constructivist)

- We go to a restaurant and/or public gathering space for food and discussions on the 1st to day to discuss what they value about agriculture and how these values are similar and different from other students
- The next four weeks directly connect teaching methods that are grounded in Schnuck's approach to learning theories and diversity topics are split into four general categories
- Each class session is generally subdivided into three parts: 1) an overview of the differing audiences; 2) the learning theory; and 3) teaching demonstration using one of the methods with a scenario based on an audience
- I utilize videos, research data, facilitated discussion, and personal testimonial from students to help guide the instruction

Results to Date

- I slowly employed and develop this approach over the past six years and have had great results
- Students feel open to talking about challenging topics, bridging value gaps between their peers, and identifying when groups are not being equitable served within agricultural education settings

Future Plans & Advice to Others

- I highly recommend that instructors have training in these areas and an understanding of their implicit biases
- These biases include agricultural ideologies, which are not usually covered in formal trainings
- Finally, always be ready to modify the course as the need arises.
- I typically change one or two elements of the course each year based on social context or need
- I also include real-world, on-campus issues into my class, often in real time, and find a way to make it part of the lesson for an upcoming class

Cost & Resources Needed

- The only cost is the appetizers on the first day of class
- I use a variety of different free video clips from You Tube to provide context for discussion