

INSIGHTS, CHALLENGES, AND REWARDS: TALKING ABOUT RACE WITH INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE U.S. TODAY

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MATSOL 2018: Friday, June 1: 9:30-10:15am

CLASS CONTENT, PART I: EXPLICIT FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

- Key Terms (collaborative research):
 - *woke, ally, alt-right, Black Lives Matter, etc.*
- ESL-specific distinctions:
 - people of color (✓) vs. colored people (✗)
 - privileges vs. privilege (countable vs. uncountable noun)
- Language for hedging: some/many, may/might, at times, etc.
- Viewing: Ta-Nehisi Coates's statement about why white people can't use the "n" word even when singing along with music

COATES ON THE “N” WORD:

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. “Ta-Nehisi Coates on Words That Don't Belong to Everyone—We Were Eight Years In Power Book Tour.” Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 7 Nov. 2017. Web. 21 May 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=QOI5S3WC9pg>

CLASS CONTENT, PART 2: SUMMARY AND ARGUMENT

- Look closely at Coates’s argument. How does he build his case? Identify his claim, the reasons he gives for his claim, and the evidence he gives for each reason.
- Summarize Coates’s argument in two separate one-paragraph summaries.
 1. Write a standard basic summary for an academic audience.
 2. Write a basic summary for a high-school-student blog, in colloquial language for an audience of teenagers.

CLASS CONTENT, PART 3:
CLOSER ANALYSIS OF RACE AND RACISM

- Race: What is it? Who “counts” as white or black? Why?
- Racism: What is institutional racism? How does it function?
 - Student Q: “Why do some people try to make white people all guilty? So what if I’m white? I didn’t make anyone a slave.”
 - Reading A: excerpts from Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*
- "Nowadays, except for members of white supremacist organizations, few whites in the United States claim to be 'racist.' Most whites assert they 'don't see color, just people'; that although the ugly face of discrimination is still with us, it is no longer the central factor determining minorities' life chances; and, finally, that, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., they aspire to live in a society where 'people are judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin.' [...] Most whites believe that if blacks and other minorities would just stop thinking about the past, work hard, and complain less (particularly about racial discrimination), then Americans of all hues could 'all get along'" (1).
- "I see the problem of racism as a problem of power [...]. Therefore, the intentions of individual actors are largely irrelevant to the explanation of social outcomes" (102).

CLASS CONTENT, PART 4:
PRIVILEGE, DEFINITION(S) AND PARAPHRASE

Privilege: What is it? Who has it? Why do people always say to “check” it?

- Readings: “Peculiar Benefits” by Roxane Gay

”Privilege is a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favor. There is racial privilege, gender (and identity) privilege, heterosexual privilege, economic privilege, able-bodied privilege, educational privilege, religious privilege and the list goes on and on. At some point, you have to surrender to the kinds of privilege you hold because everyone has something someone else doesn’t. The problem is, we talk about privilege with such alarming frequency and in such empty ways, we have diluted the word’s meaning. When people wield the word *privilege* it tends to fall on deaf ears because we hear that word so damn much the word has become white noise.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Anchor conversations in high-quality texts/videos.
- Don't worry about "balancing" viewpoints.
- Don't forget the language of it all! (a.k.a., modals are your friend).
- Give students strategies for class discussions.
- Scaffold and facilitate discussions on sensitive subjects.
- Allow for multimodal processing.
- Encourage lots of metacognitive reflections, at every point.