**Decolonizing Your Pedagogy**

A Guide for Instructors in International Relations and International Studies

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**What is decolonizing pedagogy?**

Decolonizing is *related to*, but *distinct from*, projects focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Whereas DEI initiatives are aimed at ensuring multiple voices are present, in a pedagogical context decolonizing work is aimed at changing the assumptions we hold about knowledge and its mobilization.

Decolonizing pedagogy involves questioning *what kinds of knowledge* (curriculum) and *what ways of knowing and learning* (pedagogy) we take for granted. It means examining both how we teach students about power and how we enact power relations in our classrooms, assignments, and syllabi.

As a first step, this may involve including readings and case studies from a wider range of authors and country contexts, but diversifying syllabi in and of itself is not a decolonial act. Instead, we want to think about not only what we are teaching but *how* we are teaching it and why. In the US, this means learning about, taking seriously, and incorporating non-Western and Indigenous ways of knowing.

On the back of this handout, you will find questions to guide you along the path of decolonizing your pedagogy.

**Suggested further reading**

* Bhambra, Gurminder K., Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nisancloglu. 2018. *Decolonising the University*. Pluto Press.
* McKittrick, Katherine. 2021. *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Duke University Press.
* Meghji, Ali, Seetha Tan, and Laura Wang. 2022. “Demystifying the ‘Decolonizing’ and ‘Diversity’ Slippage: Reflections from Sociology.” In *Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization: Practical Tools for Improving Teaching, Research and Scholarship*, edited by Abby Day, Lois Lee, Dave S.P. Thomas, and James Spickard, 31. Bristol University Press.
* Shilliam, Robbie. 2015. *The Black Pacific*. Bloomsbury. (Esp. Ch. 1)
* Shahjahan, Riyad A., Annabelle L. Estera, Kristen L. Surla, and Kirsten T. Edwards. 2022. “’Decolonizing’ Curriculum and Pedagogy: A Comparative Review Across Disciplines and Global Higher Education Contexts.” *Review of Educational Research* 92 (1): 73–113.
* Smith, L.T. 2021. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (3rd ed.)*. Bloomsbury
* Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. “Decolonization is not a metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1): 1–40.

**Decolonizing toolkits**

* Birmingham: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/hefi/decolonising-curriculum-doc.docx
* Keele (framed as a "manifesto"): https://www.keele.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/equalityframeworksandactivities/equalityawardsandreports/equalityawards/raceequalitycharter/keeledecolonisingthecurriculumnetwork/#keele-manifesto-for-decolonising-the-curriculum
* Manchester Metropolitan University: https://www.mmu.ac.uk/about-us/professional-services/uta/reducing-awarding-gaps/decolonising-the-curriculum-toolkit
* SOAS: https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/files/2018/10/Decolonising-SOAS-Learning-and-Teaching-Toolkit-AB.pdf

**Questions to Guide Decolonization**

\*Some of these are borrowed from SOAS’s “Decolonising SOAS: Learning and Teaching Toolkit”

-What are the assumptions contained within my syllabus and class? Does understanding the content require a grounding in Western or Eurocentric heuristics? Scholarly practices?

-Am I reading de/post/anti-colonial work in my field? If not, how can I prioritize expanding the boundaries of my own knowledge?

-Am I always comfortable when I’m teaching? Do I design activities based on my comfort? Who might this praxis be excluding?

-How can I create a safe environment in which students are encouraged and supported in seeking help and taking risks?

-How do my students think about “facts” and “opinions”? In what ways are these racialized categories? Can I present other frameworks for how we might know something about the world?

-How can I incorporate non-academic sources of knowledge into my course activities and assignments? Can I use, and can I provide opportunities for my students to use, visual art, music, storytelling, etc.?

-How are my students’ own challenges and aspirations factored into my pedagogy? Do I know what these are?

-Can I shift the focus away from grades and toward experimentation, creativity, and play as equally valid methods for learning?

-Whose territories am I on? Do I teach from? What are the colonial relationships that have shaped these spaces and how does that factor into my classroom?

-How can I connect my course to other decolonization efforts happening on my campus and/or in my students’ local communities?