

SLATE Teaching Guide:

Supporting International Students in HKS Classrooms

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International students bring a wide range of cultural contexts, knowledge, educational backgrounds, languages, and lived experiences. This Teaching Guide features strategies and practices used by HKS faculty to best support and leverage the depth and wealth of international perspectives in the classroom.¹

KEY STRATEGIES, & PRACTICES HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS TEACHING GUIDE:

<u>Make implicit cultural norms explicit</u>	• Minimize jargon and culturally-specific clichés • Be transparent about norms and expectations • Use research to ground conversations on cultural differences
<u>Create environment of inclusion</u>	• Use student names and be mindful of pronunciations • Use Teachly to get to know students • Consider how students may respond to course policies • Recognize multi-faceted experiences of students • Model application of concepts in international contexts • Solicit student feedback
<u>Leverage international examples in course materials</u>	• Assign complementary international readings to U.S. cases • Consider if international representation in course materials is symbolic in nature • Ask students to contribute international cases/examples

Make implicit cultural norms explicit

- **Minimize jargon and culturally-specific clichés.** Non-native English speakers may struggle with linguistic nuances (such as U.S.-specific jargon and overly technical language). This can prevent them from fully grasping or engaging with a lesson or discussion. When crafting lesson plans, try to identify jargon and consider its importance within the lesson. If it is an essential piece of

¹ Compiled from ideas discussed at SLATE teaching seminars and related forums. If you would like to add to this guide contact [Erin Baumann](#), Senior Associate Director of Professional Pedagogy at SLATE.

students' learning, pause to define the term or phrase in plain language or provide students with a glossary of terms. If colloquialisms arise during class discussion, the instructor might rephrase student comments in a way that is more accessible and/or precise, helping international students to contextualize information in a way that promotes learning. (*Ideas drawn from Akash Deep and Pinar Dogan*)

- **Be transparent about the norms and expectations of classroom engagement.** American pedagogical norms place a high value on spontaneity in discussions, and tend to minimize silence in the instructional space. These practices can differ from other educational contexts and can be a shock to some international students. But, when clearly explained to students as both a pedagogical strategy and technical rhetorical practice, unstructured discussion can also be a deeply rewarding change of pace that motivates their interest and learning. Alternatively, you might decide to deliberately structure the discussion through warm-calling, while cross-referencing Teachly, to successfully and equitably manage class discussions. (*Ideas drawn from Akash Deep and Kathryn Sikkink*)
- **Use research to ground conversations about cultural differences.** Lauren Brodsky notes that “bringing in a reading from the book [The Culture Map](#) gave me a platform to discuss issues of communication in an international context (e.g. low v. high context communication cultures - how this impacts our style and structure of communicating and writing). Then, I worked to put this in a course (policy memo) and a professional context.”

Create an environment that promotes inclusion

- **Use student names and ask them to help you pronounce them correctly.** This practice helps students feel “seen” and helps give you greater confidence in your own classroom. [Read more here on the name pronunciation feature integrated into Canvas](#). (*Ideas drawn from Akash Deep and Arthur Applbaum*)
- **Use [Teachly](#) to get to know students.** Student profiles on Teachly can be valuable in learning more about their interests and experiences. (*Ideas drawn from Jack Donahue, Teddy Svoronos, and Kathryn Sikkink*). Note: In 2023, Teachly piloted a new feature that allows faculty to ask custom course-specific questions. Contact Teddy Svoronos for more information.
- **Consider how different students may respond to course policies.** For instance, policies that put the onus on students to ask for flexibility can disadvantage students who are less comfortable asking faculty for an exception. (*Ideas drawn from Pinar Dogan*)
- **Recognize multi-faceted experiences of students.** Students bring a range of lived experiences. For instance, approaches to writing and language are influenced by both national and professional cultures. Likewise, when organizing students for group projects, nationality may be just one of several components to consider in creating diverse teams ([GRumbler](#) is a useful tool for facilitating formation of diverse student groups). Or, you may choose to highlight specific needs of regions (South Asia, Latin America, etc.) in your teaching rather than countries. (*Ideas*

drawn from Arthur Applbaum, Lauren Brodsky, Jack Donahue, Deborah Hughes Hallett, Jeeyang Baum, and Malcolm Sparrow)

- **Model application of concepts and ideas in international contexts.** Helping students see how concepts apply or play out in non-U.S. contexts can be a powerful way for students to learn. Before inviting students to share their own examples, it can be helpful for the instructor to model this practice. (*Ideas drawn from Gloria Ayee*)
- **Prompt students to intentionally use diverse examples.** Lauren Brodsky notes that “in one session every student posted a U.S. example on our Canvas Discussion Board. So, we talked about why that was and what the impact would be to bring more international examples... [It takes strong, consistent nudges to get this diversification and internationalization to happen.”
- **Solicit feedback.** Survey or speak with students directly, or add specific questions to a mid-course feedback survey designed to solicit feedback from particular groups. (*Ideas drawn from Lauren Brodsky and Akash Deep*)

Leverage international examples in course materials

- **When teaching U.S. cases, assign a complementary reading that expands the application/ context of the lesson that’s from a non-U.S. setting.** Akash Deep notes how he routinely tries to complement a domestic U.S. case by bringing in an international example drawn from recent news articles to illustrate that lessons from the case have broader applicability.
- **Avoid surface or symbolic representation.** Yet, merely including international examples or case studies doesn’t inherently provide international perspectives on a topic or issue. (*Ideas drawn from Pinar Dogan*)
- **Ask students to contribute international examples and cases.** “I tend to teach more U.S.-focused cases because that is what I know best. Students regularly asked for more cases, so I worked with my students to find relevant international cases that could be brought into the class.” - Lauren Brodsky

CONTACT SLATE

For questions or if you would like to build any of these strategies into your teaching practice, contact:

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