LIS Pedagogy Chat is a discussion series for library and information science instructors. Our goal is to provide an informal space to ask questions and share ideas about online pedagogy, and to build a community of practice. Each session focuses on a different topic and features a short presentation on best practices followed by a facilitated discussion and a collaborative document of ideas to share. Slides and notes from each session are available in a shared folder. For more information, see https://www.lispedagogychat.org/

Teaching for Intellectual Character

September 8, 2023
Moderators: Tim Gorichanaz

Link to Slides

Presentation Notes

What Intellectual Character is and why it matters
Thinking back to college-- what comes to mind?
  Relationships-- with friends and professors.
  Maybe some generalizations about courses/facts
"Education is what remains after you forget everything you learned in school"
Different view/ mission of education

This presentation comes from chapter in Inglorious Pedagogy

What is the point of education? Especially if most of what we teach is going to be forgotten?
Education comes from Latin educare-- to lead out (like Plato's allegory of the cave)
So education is about bringing our students somewhere new, metaphorically
Some of this comes from the book Intellectual Character by Ron Ritchhart, 2002.
  Patterns (of thinking, interaction, behavior) make up intellectual character.
  Those dispositions associated with good and productive thinking, wise reasoning
Virtues of creative, reflective and critical thinking
In virtue epistemology, there are other thoughts on intellectual character-- often defined as intellectual virtues, defined as qualities of wise reasoning, intellectual courage and humility, love of learning.

Intellectual humility-- being open to the idea that you could be mistaken
Knowing your intellectual limits
Responding to evidence, especially when new evidence comes out

Humility is a gateway to the other virtues

4 Practices to cultivate intellectual character and intellectual humility
1. Answer justification and explanation
   a. Ask students to explain and justify their answers. Clarifies their thinking and makes them focus on evidence. Ask them on a scale of how sure they are of their answer
2. Sparking curiosity
   a. Sparking of learning, engaging emotion in learning. Curiosity-- the desire to find out more. How do we generate that in our students? Throughline questions-- big questions that don't have a single answer. Check in on these questions at different times…see how answers change. Help students ask their own questions. Trust and surprise are both elements of curiosity.
3. Maximizing psychological safety
   a. Feeling safe, justified belief that you won't be embarrassed or looked down on for asking questions. Feel comfortable expressing ignorance. Psychological safety is priority in making teams work too. Tactics: Learn students names; act as a model for what good thinking/wise reasoning could look like. Extend our trust to students.
4. Upgrading
   a. Grades are more harmful than they are good. Ungrading is any alternative to assessing students. Like an employee annual review-- talk about what you did over the course, what you did well, etc. Lessening categories of grading can help (check, check plus, check minus-- instead of 1-100 or A-f etc.)
   b. https://doi.org/10.1177/14697874221093640

Where do we want to lead our students?

Discussion Notes

What are you already doing to promote intellectual character (and how have your approaches evolved)?
experiential learning exercises which fit into the category of Love of Learning-- example--giving students an incomplete bibliography (on paper, complete with coffee stains) with the story that their co-author was in the hospital with kidney stones, paper is due tomorrow, so you have to complete the bibliography in a half hour.

work on building trust in the classroom - admit what I don't know - and let students know when I am learning from them. I also do the 'ask for explanation' but not to the full extent you do - this a great idea to improve assessments

Gamification-- escape rooms
Reflective activities

Weekly readings lists where I emphasize students can select what they want to read based on their prior knowledge, background, curiosity, etc., rather than "you must/should read everything."

What other intellectual virtues would you like to focus on? How might you do that?

What is the dichotomy between confidence and humility? Seems contradictory, but humility isn't diffidence, but an open-ness, not arrogance. encouraging intellectual humility can do a lot to also foster confidence, because it pushes back against the idea that anyone should know it all.

What about when people come from different cultural backgrounds that might not align with some of these virtues? Like if intellectual autonomy is not valued?

We've been trained to focus on observable activities… is there a tension between that focus and a focus on intellectual character? We don't always have access to what is going on in the students' minds… can come out in self-reflections. "Contemplative pedagogy" with a lot of reflection and journaling.

How can these virtues-- like intellectual humility-- help us think about relationality and difficult issues (e.g. climate crisis)? There are ideas around justice information as an intellectual virtue-- can include evaluating information. Recognizing that some knowledge is difficult, or has been hidden or silenced and assessing it on its own merits.

Linda Zagzebski: Intellectual virtues help us "maintain cognitive contact with reality." Character is part of that.

Ability to support others-- collaborative work.
Collaborative learning can be framed differently, not dividing the work up, but doing the work together and allowing each other's thoughts and ideas to come forward, this would include open-mindedness and humility
One manifestation might be creating situations in which students who are doing well with the content/skills can support those who are struggling

Encouraging people to take intellectual risks, not being afraid to fail. Need a sense of psychological safety to encourage that risk-taking.
It also matters where you are at in the process - playground approach is a great place to start and get ideas, while analyzing data or citing sources is a good place to be careful and thorough?

Resources

- [Inglorious Pedagogy: Difficult, unpopular and uncommon topics in LIS Education](). EDITED BY KEREN DALI AND KIM M. THOMPSON
- [Intellectual Character]() Ron Ritchhart 2002
- [Curious?]() Todd Kashdan
- [Small Teaching](). Lang
- [Rightquesition.org]()
- [It made me feel like it was okay to be wrong]() Tim Gorichanaz in A*ctive Learning in Higher Education*
- *Information Literacy Reflection Tool to address some of these "less measurable" objectives, like curiosity and open-mindedness: https://ilreflection.org/get-the-ilrt/*
- Ungrading https://doi.org/10.1177/14697874221093640
- another co-authored example of some experiential stuff we did that worked well: https://creativelibrarypractice.org/2020/08/31/challenge-fantasy-and-curiosity-activating-students-intrinsic-motivation-within-information-literacy-sessions/