

Faculty Workshop Scenarios

Background

18 students were interviewed to develop content for the scenarios. Most students were sophomores and juniors who have grown up/gone to school in Singapore.

Main themes that came up in the interviews:

- Difference in class participation reduced to whether someone is local or international
- Assumption that a secular academic perspective is shared by everyone
- Western-centric references that cannot be understood by everyone
- Lack of familiarity with Singapore context and junior college teaching styles

Scenarios

1. You are co-teaching a class with one of your colleagues. During one seminar, your colleague is leading the class discussion, and you are sitting at table with a group of students. Your colleague makes reference to a feminist writer whom they assume the rest of the group agrees with. You hear one of the students at your table lean over to another student and say, "All of these *ang mos* assume 'we' are all crazy liberal feminists! What do they know?" The students see that you have heard them, and they stop talking immediately, and look embarrassed. What do you do?

2. You have assigned a reading as part of a course you are teaching. The author is South Asian. You think the reading has some important ideas, but it is not written very 'well.' You introduce the seminar by apologizing to the class for the clunky-ness of the reading, and explaining how you hoped they could still get something valuable from it. One of the students raises their hand to propose that perhaps the writing style is a deliberate challenge to normative narratives about 'good writing' – an example of the post-colonial resistance. You feel that this point distracts from the ideas you're hoping to cover in class, so you quickly respond with a "No, that's irrelevant – bad writing is bad writing" and try to move on. The same student interrupts you with "Oh so, American writing is good writing and everything else is bad writing?" The class falls silent, and everyone shifts uncomfortably in their seats. What do you do?

3. You have a guest speaker visit the seminar you are teaching. The speaker is an acclaimed scientist, and they are here to talk to the class about evolution. During the seminar, a student raises a question about the place of creationism within evolution. The guest speaker laughs, and makes reference to how they are appalled that there are people who still believe that some divine being created the world in seven days. They expect the student to laugh along, but instead the student becomes silent and looks visibly upset. As this happens other students begin laughing and whispering and turning around in their seats to look at the student who asked the question. The tension is palpable. What do you do?

4. You are teaching a class in which you ask students to do independent projects on the layout of various cities. By way of example, you compare the urban layout of Detroit to that of Atlanta. One student raises their hand and asks angrily asks you "Prof. is this an

American institution? We are living in Singapore. We don't know anything about Detroit, New York, D.C., or Atlanta. Can we for once not have imperialist neocolonial references thrown around?" The class goes quiet. What do you do?

5. In a course you are teaching, you are discussing socio-economic disparity within the context of Singapore. A student in your class proposes an idea about how foreign domestic workers in Singapore might feel blessed to have the opportunity to live and work in a first-world country like Singapore. This student is an ethnically Chinese and Singaporean. In response, another student raises their hand and says "Sorry, but your Chinese privilege obviously blinds you to the harsh realities of being a foreign worker in Singapore. You will never be able to empathize with the struggles of a foreign domestic worker." This student grew up in Bangladesh. There is tension in the room. What do you do?