

Radical Pandemic Pedagogy: Participatory Methods for Teaching Political Economy Virtually

Anastasia C. Wilson
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
awilson@hws.edu or @anastasiawils

Towards Critical Digital Pedagogy in Economics

“Critical Pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning predicated on fostering agency and empowering learners (implicitly and explicitly critiquing oppressive power structures).” Morrison and Stommel 2018

Countering Capitalist Schooling and the “Banking Model” (hooks, Freire)

- Online Environment poses challenges to participatory style teaching and critical pedagogy

How to build inclusive, critical, and participatory pedagogy in an online classroom, especially in a liberal arts college setting?

- Context: adapt to Political Economy at Hobart and William Smith Colleges
- We know economics has a problem with inclusivity, as demonstrated by its lack of diversity, even in heterodox economics and political economy

- **Democratizing the Classroom through Ground “Rules” and Participatory Activities**
- **Modeling Care, Consent, and Democracy in the Virtual Classroom**
- **Critical Digital Pedagogy x Pomodoro Method for Engagement**
- **Participatory Activities Examples: Simulations**
- **Additional Ideas and Questions for Inclusive Teaching of Economics and Political Economy**

Political Economy at HWS

300 level requirement

First official introduction to alternative schools of thought

Following the methods described by Waller (2012)
“Teaching Political Economy to Undergraduate Students”

- Engagement with original texts
- Comparison of schools of thought
- Discussion
- Written essays
- Reading logs

Challenge for Fall 2020: Teaching Political Economy Virtually

- Introduction to Theory, Abstraction, and Pluralism
- (Original) Institutional Economics
- Keynesian and Post-Keynesian Economics
- Marxism and Economics
- Feminist Economics

Democratically Making the Ground “Rules” and Student Learning Survey

Many of these methods and activities were adapted from and inspired by the methods used in the Center for Popular Economics in-person and virtual summer institutes (facilitated by executive director Francisco Perez of UMass Econ, and Amrita Wassan of the Center for Popular Democracy)



Ground “Rules” Activity

In the first week of class, students break into small groups and are tasked with coming up with 3-5 “ground rules and norms” for the class. How should we facilitate participation using our Zoom classroom tools? How do we make sure everyone is included and respected? What kind of classroom environment would you like to be apart of?

Then, regrouping as a class, we use these to democratically develop our collective ground “rules” for the semester

Rules for the Zoom chat

Facilitation rules i.e. how we take stack

Expectations for maintaining a respectful environment while still fostering debate

Student Learning Survey

I ask students to complete a student learning survey in the first week of class where they “tell me about yourself as a learner”

What are your goals? What are the things you find challenging? What would you like to improve? What teaching/learning styles work well for you, which do not? Is there anything else I should know about you?

Group Ground Rules Suggestions: What are our rules of engagement? Best practices for asking questions, commenting, and responding?



Keep in mind an etiquette to limit response times. Utilize the raised hand feature.

Use the reaction emojis. And respect others when they are talking. Using the chat is the best thing to communicate if you have a question mid conversation. Mute yourself when not talking

Use the raise hand function, one person unmuted at a time so there's no talking over each other, keeping screen in gallery mode so we can see everyone, no bombing in the chat function

Group Ground Rules Suggestions: What are our rules of engagement? Best practices for asking questions, commenting, and responding?



1. Be open-minded and respectful of others' opinions 2. Keep mic muted unless you have something to say. 3. (Professor) record meetings and share with class instead of designating note-takers. 3. The

1. Be respectful and stick to debating ideas. 2. Everyone's camera should be on. 3. Post questions/ comments/ or name in the chat so everyone doesn't talk at once

1) Start discussions in small groups to get ideas out there. Then move ideas toward bigger group where the discussion can be continued. 2) Never use blanket statements. 3) Clarify readings as much as

Keep on Mute when not talking. Type an asterisk in the chat when you're not talking. Use the raise hand feature.

1) Have the same break out groups for a few weeks straight so we can work with the same people and develop better thoughts/argument 2) Be respectful and mindful of others thoughts

archie et al - Call on people for answers on questions, use a popcorn style, use chat to make comments and build on others comments, be considerate to others

Always have one person or a pair of people leading the conversation. Use chat reaction to raise hand, be respectful, do not talk over people. Possibly (Have it so by the end of that class everyone reacts or shares there

Modeling Care, Consent, and Democratic Decisions

Zoom Recording and Privacy Policy

Making clear that your privacy will not be violated in the classroom via recording/surveillance



Polls and Check-ins

To determine student preferences on activities, activity formats (breakout or group discussion), to rate assignments and activities, gain consent for breakout room and random room assignment

Anonymous Mid-semester Feedback

Start, stop, continue

Rate specific activities

Due Dates as a Coordination

As a coordination mechanism; negotiate ahead of time if you are worried about a due date (3 days before due date)

Awareness of Mental Health

Acknowledging and accommodating

Digital Critical Pedagogy x Pomodoro Method

Foster participation
and inclusiveness

Minimize “Zoom
fatigue”

Encourage
(intrinsic)
engagement

Warm-ups and check-ins

Low stakes participation opportunities for a diversity of learning and communication styles

“1-minute essays”, check-in questions, or quick breakout groups/polls

Shorter Lectures (20-25 minutes)

Work with digital attention spans, some research supports this as a way to work effectively and efficiently (Pomodoro method of 25-minutes blocks)

Participatory Activities and Discussions

Planned activities to push students towards critical thinking, including drawing on their own knowledge and experiences

“Surrender the role of the expert” while facilitating critical engagement (Schneider 2010)

Participatory Learning: Role Playing and Activities

“Critical Pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning predicated on fostering agency and empowering learners (implicitly and explicitly critiquing oppressive power structures).”

Role Playing and Simulations
(Rose 2005)

“Coffee Crisis”

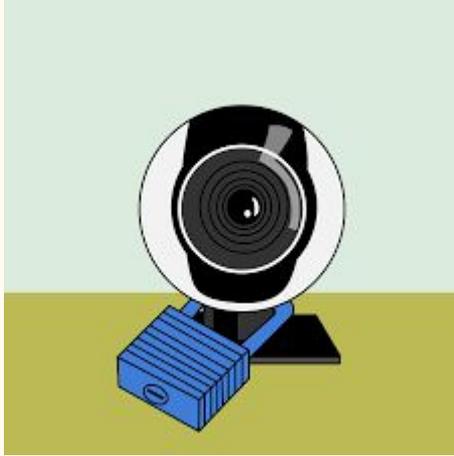
Students into workplace groups: a local for-profit coffee shop (divide group into managers and workers), a fast food brand coffee shop (group are all workers, instructor is Big Boss from MegaBrand™, and a worker-owned and self-managed cooperative coffee shop (all students are worker owned and instructed to democratically decide next steps) under different conditions (i.e. varying levels of unemployment benefits/social welfare as a “fallback” for workers). Students are given scenarios of crisis: a drop in revenue and profits, etc. What will your firm decide to do to weather the crisis?

“The Anarchy of Production”

Break students into groups representing different workplaces: a bicycle factory and a rubber factory, then further as workers and managers. Model different scenarios of economic crisis: underconsumption, overproduction, disproportionality, etc. Under each scenario, students in each group calculate changes in labor, capital, and surplus. Calculate $C + V + S =$ Market Price

(Rose 2005) describes how such participatory activities like simulations or role playing games in their political economy classroom have “...always been fun and instructive, because it helps students understand different theoretical perspectives and their policy implications while simultaneously being participatory and involving.”

Other Ideas and Approaches



Towards “Abolitionist” Critical Pedagogy? Against Punitiveness and Surveillance

- Balance minimizing the carcerality of a syllabus with maintaining “rigor”
- What if students conflate carcerality with “rigor”?
- Addressing the intersections between punitiveness/surveillance and student mental health
- Other issues: digital surveillance and academic freedom

Student Facilitation/Flipped Classroom

- Currently using a class blog assignment in Economics and Gender
- Group blogs about weekly readings and then facilitated 10-20 minutes of class

Labor-Based Grading Agreements/Contracts

- Students tracking of the “work” put into assignments, readings, revisions, and writing
- Self assessment and peer assessment models

References

- Ariga, Atsunori, and Alejandro Lleras. 2011. "Brief and Rare Mental 'Breaks' Keep You Focused: Deactivation and Reactivation of Task Goals Preempt Vigilance Decrements." *Cognition* 118 (3): 439–43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2010.12.007>.
- Carbacho-Burgos, Andres. 2001. "Teaching Radical Economics: The Center for Popular Economics and Its International Institutes." *The Radical Teacher* No. 61: 19–24.
- Freire, Paulo. 2000. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York: Continuum.
- hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge.
- Morrison, Sean Michael, and Jesse Stommel. 2018. *An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy*. Hybrid Pedagogy Inc.
- Rose, Nancy E. 2005. "Engaged Pedagogy and Political Economy." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 37 (3): 341–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613405279031>.
- Schneider, Geoffrey. 2010. "Democratizing the Classroom: Sequencing Discussions and Assignments to Promote Student Ownership of the Course." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 42 (1): 101–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613409357185>.
- Waller, William. 2012. "Teaching Political Economy to Undergraduate Students." In *International Handbook on Teaching and Learning Economics*, edited by Gail M. Hoyt and KimMarie McGoldrick. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781002452>.

Questions, Comments, Thoughts, Suggestions?

awilson@hws.edu

@anastasiawils on the bird app

Thank you!