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**Reserve some time to discuss sensitive topics**

Diversity is a recurring theme in my lectures. For example, with my students I often discuss diversity among migrants, and we look at how governments approach this issue. I try to show students the relation between different forms of diversity, such as ethnicity, gender, social class, religion and sexuality. How a society or group deals with one form of diversity is often linked to how it deals with other forms. These things cannot be seen as separate, nor can they be discussed in isolation.

I try to make my students aware, in a non-political way, of how societies see, emphasise and anchor differences in their legislation.

One way I do this is through my 5.1.2e

5.1.2e This course focuses on food and food cultures, in order to understand how and when a food culture changes. This can then be extended to other cultural changes, since food says so much more about us than what we like to eat. It's a fun and accessible way to talk about differences, because people enjoy talking about food.

In my other courses, I often give my students an assignment called 'Who am I?' Students have to write down ten things that determine their identity, such as 'Christian', 'trumpet player', 'dancer', 'woman', etc. We then discuss the answers by theme with the entire group. This allows me, together with the students, to find out which topics students

find important and what they identify with. This is a useful tool in talking about differences, because differences are contextual; they are constructs. This is what I try to help my students understand.

Lecturers should be aware of diversity among students, but I also believe that all students should be treated equally. I think this is what most benefits the students themselves. A student from a lower social class may have had to show courage and determination, but this doesn't mean that he or she should be given special favours. A student with a migrant background still has to be able to write correct Dutch even if her parents cannot help her because they don't speak Dutch themselves. I believe that I help her better by pointing out her mistakes than by pretending they don't exist; after all, such mistakes will also not be ignored in her later work.

Even when you try to start a dialogue about difference, as a lecturer you cannot always foresee the impact certain topics will have on your students. For example, two of my students recently gave a presentation about lover boys in which they tried to explain the lover boys' image. Another student responded strongly to their story; she believed the presenters had created a stereotype. I would have liked to discuss this further, but our programme was unfortunately too full already. I thought it was a pity and I think it would have been good to return to the topic later. I would therefore advise all lecturers to include some time in their programme for these kinds of situations. It's all about learning to deal with diversity, and this sometimes requires more time than you originally planned.



**Be transparent and encouraging**

There are many forms of diversity in education. The risk is that we focus only on differences in gender, religion and culture, and disregard 'simpler' forms. By this I mean for example differences in character: not all students are self-confident or dare to join in a discussion. If we want to be aware of differences between students and make our teaching truly inclusive, I believe we also have to look at these other differences.

At the beginning of my courses, I always try to make it clear to students that it is not my goal to test them, but that I would like *everyone* to have a good time and to get a good grade. I repeat this a few times during the course, so I hope my students feel that they are all equal and that there is room for them to develop. I also try to be as transparent as possible about what I expect of my students.

I know that this way of teaching can be frustrating for some lecturers, because students might be frightened by the amount of material they are expected to command by the end of the course. But I believe this is a good approach, because it lowers the students' anxiety level. And I'm happy to say that my students seem to appreciate my transparency and clarity.

My courses focus on religion, so we automatically address the students' personal views on the topic. I try to discuss these different perspectives in my lectures, and I offer students room to share their ideas with the group. Religious diversity is therefore not really an issue in my

lectures. I do notice that not all students are equally skilled, and this is something I take into account. I believe this is the way to create inclusive teaching. At the same time I also make it clear to the students that part of the responsibility rests with them. If they encounter a problem, they can come to me; this is not a sign of weakness but of maturity. For example, one of my students recently informed me that he was unable to hand in an assignment on time. I didn't just say 'OK', but asked him why he was unable to meet the deadline, because I wanted to understand him better, but also because I wanted to make it clear that I was making an exception for him. This kind of openness and mutual understanding has a very positive effect.

If we want to do justice to diversity among our students, I think we have to consider all forms of diversity, and find ways of dealing with them. I personally find this important, but I've also noticed that it helps students know where they stand. Open the dialogue for everyone, make sure that all students know that they can come to the lecturer if they have a problem, and at the same time encourage them to grow and be successful. I believe this is how lecturers can contribute to high-quality inclusive teaching.



**It helps if the lecturer dares to be vulnerable too**

The study programme in Physics attracts different kinds of students, including students with autism or psychological problems. This certainly impacts how I teach, and at the same time it's also something I learn a lot from, as do the other students. In that respect it's an advantage that our study programme is relatively small, because when you know students personally, it's easier to give them the attention they need. I find it extremely valuable to see how much both students and teachers benefit from this process.

For example, I know I have to talk to autistic students differently from non-autistic students: I am more specific in addressing their behaviour, while in other ways I try on the contrary to be less direct. I know by now that this is the best approach for autistic students. The great thing is that other students understand this too, without it leading to unequal treatment. I'm moved to see other students relate consciously and attentively to their autistic fellow students. Of course students are often irritated by one another, but the good thing about this exchange between different kinds of students is that they learn to accept their own idiosyncrasies by learning to deal with those of others. And I learn from it too; it even makes me happy, the more so since these students make me aware of the fact that I have autistic and personality traits of my own.

I believe that studying should focus not only on content, but also on

psychosocial aspects. Studying is a process in which you not only acquire knowledge, but also learn to collaborate with others, and to get to know yourself. For example, if a student consistently fails an experiment, and he comes to understand why, he is then confronted with his own limitations. This can be unpleasant at times, but it's also necessary; after all, real life is also full of limitations. I often remind students of this in my lectures. I try to teach them that their study years are the perfect time to practise these kinds of situations, and to learn to deal with differences and disappointments.

Besides autistic students, some students unfortunately also have problems at home or suffer from depression, especially in the last year while they write their thesis. We train our students to be highly critical and to take nothing for granted. This critical attitude is sometimes misunderstood by students and turns into feelings of 'not being good enough'. I constantly try to address these issues in general terms, and I remind students that I'm available if they need to talk. In this way I offer students the opportunity to be vulnerable, which some of them find very difficult. I see that it really helps if I make myself accessible and vulnerable too. I also struggle with things, such as stress about getting a grant for PhD research, and I often share these feelings with my students. This combination of being a point of contact and showing that I am also vulnerable is probably the reason why students often come to me during coffee breaks to make an appointment.

I think that as lecturers, we have to make it clear that it's OK to recognise and acknowledge our shortcomings. As an individual, you learn a lot from this, you avoid suffering for yourself and others, and you experience more pleasure in your work. This is what I try to teach my students. I think that if I can both teach them about physics and lower the threshold for talking about such things, I will have done my job as their teacher.



**Be aware of differences, but don't always mention them**

I teach in the bachelor's and master's programmes in History and I meet a lot of different students. It goes without saying that every student is unique, but what I notice most is the students' religious background. Among my students there are always a few orthodox Protestants whose seriousness, diligence and political views make them stand out. In my lectures, we talk about topics such as pillarization and reformation, and that's when you notice that students have very different ideas about these topics.

I think it's very good to give voice to different perspectives, as long as everyone can talk about it in a normal way. And this is where the challenge lies for the lecturer: he or she has to try and involve students in the discussion and make it clear that there is room for all kinds of ideas, but at the same time, the lecturer should also make sure that students are not stigmatised because of their background. This would be the case if, for example, I were to continuously ask the orthodox Protestant students for their opinion from the perspective of their religious background. I would be reducing this group of students to a particular identity and run the risk that they believe they are only associated with this particular trait. Even though I would be trying to involve them, the students still might feel isolated and excluded from the group.

It's clearly a challenge for me as a lecturer to find a balance in this. I try to do so by stimulating students to think critically about different perspectives from their own, and instead of addressing students on the basis of their background, by asking general, open questions. This allows me to quickly see what the students themselves find most comfortable. Some students like to keep study and private life separate, and I think that as a lecturer I should be able to do that too. I also try to reveal as little as possible about my own vision and ideas. This is a way of trying to maintain an open atmosphere and not create the impression that some ideas are more important than others, just because I happen to share them. My seminars give students space to share and critically discuss their ideas, while I try to limit my role to that of debate leader.

I think this makes it possible as a lecturer to avoid taking diversity among students too much into account and creating an unwanted effect with your good intentions. Some lecturers try to make students feel comfortable by making it clear that they are aware of their defects and traits. Sometimes, this has the opposite effect, that students feel excluded as members of a specific group. I therefore think that it's important to register difference, but not always to mention it. I try as much as possible to get an idea of the group I face. This allows me to better anticipate their needs in consequent lessons.

When I was a student, I never paid much attention to my lecturers' neutrality. Now I teach myself, I am very conscious of it. When I plan a deadline, I try to take my students' background into account, without making this explicit. For example, I never plan a deadline on Sunday evening, because I know that for some Christian students, this is a compulsory day of rest. I don't have to take such things into account; it is my own personal choice to take this into account when making decisions, because I notice that some students appreciate it.



### **How you discuss topics determines whether students feel involved or excluded**

There are many differences among my students, but the advantage of my field of study is that we discuss many of these differences in class. For example, I see that social class differences play a role, but students rarely mention this. The students who come to see me after an exam are often those who give the impression of coming from a highly educated and wealthy family; they come to see me because they want a high grade. At the same time I see that students who fail usually don't come to see me, and that these tend to be first-generation students who find it difficult to make an appointment. I try to address this problem by making it clear in my lectures that everyone has a right to talk to me, irrespective of their origins or background. That helps.

I've noticed that if you want to involve all students, you need to not only take a personal approach, but also think about the content of your courses. In my 5.1.2e I cover topics such as class, ethnicity and gender, and I see that this helps students feel involved because they feel that their perspective is also represented. We talk openly about how exclusion happens. For example, when we talk about forming and belonging to a national community, students often mention a Dutch passport, language, and culture as binding factors for a Dutch identity. A shared history and the experiences of World War II also play a role. But students rarely refer to the history of the former Dutch colonies as a binding factor, even though this is also part of Dutch history. This is because this part of Dutch history is usually not taught in secondary school. However, many students come

from former Dutch colonies. Therefore, when I talk openly about Dutch colonial history, these students feel free to tell me about their experiences and background. In this way, students' experiences are recognised, diversity among students is openly addressed and the whole group can learn from one another.

I think that the way in which a lecturer discusses topics or explains things determines whether students feel involved or excluded. The way a lecturer approaches the students' contribution may make some students feel that there is no room for their ideas or that they are not valued. In a trial lecture, a student remarked that 'ethnicity can change, but gender does not.' I responded by explaining that people are not always the same gender as their body, and that gender too can change. After class I was approached by a student with questions about the study programme and my lecture. It became apparent that this student was transgender and that she felt understood, which is why she had decided to ask me some questions. I can imagine that if I had not corrected the other student's remark, this student might have felt excluded and unsafe, which would have made the study programme less attractive for her.

Irrespective of the topic, as a lecturer, you have to be able to show that your approach is inclusive. You have to dare to address different topics and differences, but also to protect students when hurtful remarks are made. If you really want your teaching to be inclusive and for students to have space to express their opinions, you have to be open to the possibility that there will be conflicts and that students may criticise your authority as lecturer.



**Keep thinking about the impact of certain topics**

I teach at the Law department, both at bachelor's and at master's level. Every year we welcome approximately 760 first-year students, an incredibly diverse group. The fact that we have so many first-year students is due to the fact that we have no entry requirements: everyone is welcome. As a result we always have a very mixed group.

This large and diverse group of students brings positive influences, but it also makes it difficult at times to teach in a way that makes everyone feel seen. In my mentor group of 30 first-year students, I can talk to students individually, and I try to assess how students experience their courses and what expectations they have, but this is not feasible when teaching lectures to such huge groups. I find this a great pity, and I'm working on changing it, because I think it's important for study performance and self-development that students feel seen.

I see important differences between students with respect to ambition, cultural background, religion, social milieu and skills. Although it's difficult, I try to take these differences into account when I teach. For example, when I ask a question, I ask students to first write down their answer, and then discuss their answers in small groups. I then ask every group to name one answer that the group members came up with, and which may be someone else's answer. In this way I invite students to first think about the materials themselves, and with group assignments I try to make it clear that all answers matter.

I believe it is important that all students feel involved in the lecture and the group. Ultimately, we are all creating an academic community together, and everyone should feel at home. I admit that I find it a real challenge to give all students an opportunity to be heard. By not taking up a stance myself, and by inviting students to share their opinions, I try to give all students room to get involved. But if the discussion becomes too one-sided, I play devil's advocate, but always making it clear that this is not my personal opinion but the response of a potential opponent.

As a lecturer you have to keep thinking about your teaching, your students and yourself. There is always the risk that at some point you start teaching on automatic pilot, without any awareness of the students facing you or the impact of the topics you teach or your own biases. For example, a few students asked me once why so many of the court cases we were studying were about headscarves. This made me realise that I had not thought enough about my choice of topic; I had only looked at how topical the cases were, and not paid enough attention to the fact that they might create a one-sided impression. This was a lesson for me: the content of my courses should also take into account the diversity of my students' background.

However, I do believe that we should not devote too much attention to diversity, as this creates a risk of stigmatisation. Lecturers have to strike a balance in this respect, and in my opinion this begins with becoming aware of how you teach and looking at it critically.

**Be aware that many students see the lecturer as a role model**



Within the study programme in Film and Literary Studies, I teach a Minor on 5.1.2e This minor attracts students from all faculties, partially because it's taught in English, which makes it accessible to many students. But one of the key reasons why this minor is popular is that few students are offered courses on these topics within their own study programmes, and there is a need to talk about these topics. Most study programmes view gender and sexuality as an isolated topic, and refer students who want to talk or learn about it to study programmes that do have room for it. I've noticed that as a result some students come to believe that they have to remain faithful to dominant ideas within their own study programme, and conclude that there is no room for their individual contribution. I think this is something students are starting to resent, which is one of the reasons they follow this minor.

Many of them come from minorities; others are dealing with depression or other mental illnesses. In my lectures, I build in moments for talking openly about such things. Some students make use of this opportunity, others don't. For the latter group I also emphasise that students can come to see me. Sometimes transgender students tell me how they want to be addressed. In this way, I hope to make it clear that I am not only here to teach a class, but also to offer room for students to gather to exchange ideas and experiences.

My objective in teaching is among other things to make students aware of the 'limitations' and privileges that they and others share. I try to help them become aware of this for example by inviting them to complete reflective writing assignments. At the start of a course I ask students a question related to the course topic, and ask them to first answer it for themselves, and then discuss their answers with one another. I think it's useful for students to talk about their own

examples and listen to those of others, because this helps them to learn from one another. Sometimes students' first response is 'there is nothing wrong with us.' By listening to the experiences of others, they find out that they are not as normal as they thought they were.

I also try to make students aware of diversity by integrating their experiences and observations with the existing literature, so that by the end of the course they have tools with which to return to their own study programme. At the same time I don't want to overemphasise limitations and differences, because students may otherwise get the idea that they are only associated with these traits. To achieve these two objectives, I try to focus on the literature in the lectures, and I always ask open questions. I discuss the scientific knowledge available without addressing specific students, and in this way leave it to the students to respond to something that concerns them or not.

I believe that this is the responsibility of the lecturer. For many students, a lecturer is a role model: he or she sets the tone in class. You have to be aware of *how* you say things, but also of *what* you say. Who do you quote? What literature do you discuss, and what do you leave out? The choices you make in this context greatly impact the students' mind-set and their future views. Lecturers should be very aware of the impact of the examples/authors they use.



## Allow students to become aware of diversity indirectly

I trained as a Japanologist, but I now teach in various study programmes. I teach courses in the Master's in Asian Studies, and in the Bachelor's in International Studies. At International Studies, I

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plays a key role in making students aware of topics such as power relations, discrimination and diversity. It's a compulsory course within the bachelor's programme and is taught to 600 to 700 students every year. Approximately one-third of this huge group has a non-Dutch nationality. Every year again I face an incredibly diverse group, which I try to serve to the best of my abilities.

Despite my best efforts, it's impossible to always accommodate all 700 students. I try to make my lectures as accessible as possible by telling entertaining stories, using PowerPoint and other multimedia tools, and by giving as concrete examples as possible. In this context I am keenly aware of the differences between my students, but I try to not address these too explicitly. The purpose of this course is to teach students about prejudices from across the world: how they arise, and what role people – and therefore also my students – play in perpetuating them. I hope that the content of my courses makes my students aware of diversity among people. Instead of explicitly naming differences, I try to stimulate my students to find out for themselves.

I consciously choose this indirect approach. Diversity is not only about minorities, but also about ourselves; the expectations we have of others. I teach how power relations shape our worldview, and try to make it clear to students that prejudices are based on power relations, assumptions and expectations. I always begin my course with the same example: a male British researcher who mapped all the world's cultures in the shape of a triangle. His overview is attractive and persuasive, but

it is also completely wrong. I explain to the students that we would have been less easily persuaded if the researcher had been an Indonesian woman. His nationality and gender give the British researcher a certain amount of authority. This is not something I agree with, but it is the way our brains are programmed thanks to two centuries of Western world dominance. And it is something we should be aware of.

The same applies to my position as lecturer. I enjoy certain privileges and a certain amount of power because I am male, white, well-educated, fluent in English and middle-aged. My self-confidence as I face a group of students is partially based on these factors. I mention this repeatedly in my lectures to make my students aware of how we unconsciously deal with differences, and to challenge the power imbalance between myself and them. I think that for students who do not come from the same privileged circle it's encouraging to see the lecturer challenge his own power position.

In short, students face certain challenges that are very difficult to break through. With the contents of my course I try to help my students see for themselves that there are differences, and how to deal with them. Personally, I try to deal with diversity by taking an indirect approach to the programme content, and by continuously revealing and challenging my own power position and that of others.

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*Institute for History*



**Don't only look at the progress made, but keep thinking about what is still needed**

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I see a certain amount of diversity among the students in my seminars, the most striking of which is difference in skills. Some students have more problems with academic writing and thinking than others. I come from a very different academic culture (the French), in which the lecturer has very limited contact with students and is not aware of their needs. But in England I discovered a very different approach to dealing with students, one that is far more personal and direct. This has made me very aware of the fact that some students require more explanation and attention than others, and that they may experience it as a problem if they do not receive this additional attention. I therefore try to help these students, for example by making individual appointments with them and encouraging them to e-mail me if they don't understand something.

I think it's important at the start of the year to offer students the opportunity to discuss their experiences and the differences they see. This can be done in class, but also in a more private context such as a one-on-one conversation with the lecturer. In this way, as a lecturer you can find out which students want to talk about their background and which ones don't. These are choices that as a lecturer you have to respect. At the same time, a lecturer should be careful not to infantilise his or her students when diversity is discussed in class. It's important to engage students in the debate and confront them with the reality of

the lack of recognition for diversity, also in the past. This helps students learn to think about these issues, and to listen to each other's opinions.

I recently started a debate on the position of women in the Netherlands, to see how students felt about it. One girl said that 'it was better than it used to be', implying that things were just fine now. A boy said that 'there was no such thing as the glass ceiling, and women had to stop acting like victims.' A number of female students, who were usually rather quiet, challenged their classmates' opinions, which led to an interesting debate on diversity. I didn't have to guide the debate, it led itself. As a female lecturer, this made me feel very proud.

These kinds of successes are wonderful, as is all other progress in the debate on diversity. However, we run the risk of primarily celebrating the achievements and not paying enough attention to what still needs to be done to achieve equality and inclusivity. I think lecturers should be careful to not too easily be satisfied with any sign of progress, but instead keep addressing diversity in class. In this way, we can keep the topic and the debate alive.

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5.1.2e

*Institute for History*



## Lecturers should be aware of their own expectations

This year I taught the course in 5.1.2e which focuses on inclusivity. I try to teach my students how to deal with culture in a work environment. Culture may be invisible, but it is nevertheless very present. It's all about things you don't see, but that impact us all the same. The German author Enzensberger once compared culture to an Alka-Seltzer: you may not see it in a glass of water, but it still impacts how we behave. The same holds for culture and its norms and values. In my lectures I try to not only teach students skills and give them some knowledge of other cultures, but also to help them acquire self-knowledge and understanding of their own culture. If you want to communicate with others, you have to not only take others into account, but also be aware of your own expectations and chosen forms of interaction.

I think it's very important for lecturers to also take this into account. Students have such diverse backgrounds and they are used to such different forms of interaction, that it's actually impossible to have a single teaching style. For example, I had a number of Chinese students in class, and their attitude was clearly very different from that of Dutch students. Based on their culture, Chinese students are used to viewing a lecturer as an authority figure: you cannot ask her questions or criticize her. They need a certain amount of physical and social distance between lecturer and students. I on the other hand expect all students to actively take part in class, be independent, ask questions and be critical: the exact opposite of what my Chinese students were used to.

This is when I realised that my expectations are also culturally bound, and that, as a lecturer, I cannot simply assume that all students will be comfortable with my expectations. So I decided to take a different

approach to guiding my Chinese students. During breaks I would address them personally and in a more formal manner, one that better matched their familiar interaction forms. By taking this personal approach I also reduced the physical distance. At the same time, I explained to them – partially out of my discipline's vision that students need to understand and respect different perspectives – that in the Netherlands we use other interaction styles that they should also learn to understand.

If we want our teaching to be inclusive, I believe we all ultimately have to adjust a little.

I used to think 'as long as you respect each other, it's fine', but I have changed my mind. Respect is not enough; we also have to learn to *deal* with the underlying diversity. For a lecturer, this begins with becoming aware of your own expectations, and the critical question of whether these expectations are justified for all students. Some students come from a culture with other modes of interaction and learning, and this impacts how they deal with output, feedback and deadlines. As a result, they may feel uncomfortable with the lecturer's expectations, with the consequence that they perform less well and are less able to develop their talents. It is the lecturer's challenging task to recognise such differences among students, without of course falling into the opposite trap and stigmatising these differences.



## Consider the impact of your subjects when you're teaching

I teach mainly

5.1.2e

5.1.2e

The research topics are mostly about slavery.

What's striking is that students tend to come in to lectures with strong assumptions about the history of colonialism and slavery. Which is not surprising, given that it's a subject which attracts a great deal of public attention and about which opinion has become extremely polarised. It's important that students understand that activists have played a key role in putting this subject on the agenda. I therefore always explicitly state this context, because it immediately raises the question of your own stance on this as an historian.

Some students are extremely driven by how society perceives the colonial history of the Netherlands and, as a result, focus mainly on the relevance of the history of slavery to society today. I like to inspire students to look at this past in a different way, which is why I always start by depoliticising the subject: I don't go straight to its contemporary relevance but go back instead to the historical sources. What they tell us about how slavery actually worked. Some students really enjoy that and are open to it whilst others stick to their own views. Which is fine too. But, as a professional historian, I would of course prefer students to try and understand subjects from multiple perspectives.

I've haven't consciously worked on inclusive education, but I do always try to consider the potential impact of my subjects on students. I'm not afraid to allow people to voice dissonant views, I think that's inevitable with subjects like mine. Sometimes that makes people angry but, on the other hand, it's good to see that students then argue the case for their resistance and begin to reflect rather than simply staying angry.

Personally, I tend not to take a stance because it's my job to introduce students to different perspectives and arguments. My own views on those things are less important.

When we learn about Dutch colonial history we rely on historical sources in which the compilers of those sources used colonial language. That language often makes it difficult to determine the value of the contents of the source, because students may come to identify with the compilers of those sources. However, colonial language is dehumanising. Words like 'nigger' and 'slave woman' were intended to express people's subjection, inferiority and sexual availability. The use of those words is not only uncivilised and inappropriate, it also means that the reader has difficulty understanding the position and choices of these people and their way of thinking. This is why I always choose my words with great care. The way I talk about things as a lecturer influences the way students think about those things. So by exercising great care myself, I hope to teach students the importance of language in these subjects.

I don't know if this is always the right way to approach students, because in some cases students are simply looking for clarity. However, I hope that students leave my lectures questioning their previous assumptions, because I have made them aware of the context and made them look beyond society's perceptions.