

Overview/Introduction

As a social work instructor, I am primarily dedicated to fostering anti-racist and decolonized spaces in the classroom in order to promote critical engagement around issues of diversity and social justice. In practice, being dedicated to these ideals includes activities such as inviting students to share reflections about who they are, why they are here, and what they hope to gain from their learning experience. I have always dedicated the first class session to this type of community-building and boundary-setting, and use evidence based tools such as the NAME Steps developed by the CSWE Council on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression to address harmful language that might occur in the classroom. I have received positive feedback from my students about this approach to setting up the class; students have said they felt “...*connected, heard, and respected*”.

Social Justice-Oriented and Evidence-Based Learning

I am dedicated to my own critical reflexivity in order to respond authentically and respectfully when difficult issues surface in the classroom. While teaching appointments are accompanied with inherent power, I will always acknowledge power differentials and do what I can to create a learning community in which knowledge is co-constructed and the breadth of power differences between instructors and students are mitigated. For example, I have frequently adjusted assigned readings, based on student feedback, to center BIPOC and LGBT scholars and perspectives. One student wrote, “*She kept the room power dynamics equal, she was aware of the power she holds as being a white instructor but worked on not letting this affect the classroom, she asked the students for our opinions and allowed us to guide her in decision making rather than her making decisions on her own. Overall, she is a great instructor!*”.

I strive to balance this social justice-oriented approach with evidence-based practice and learning. As a clinician for over five years, I have expertise in a number of evidence-based interventions including dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), prolonged exposure therapy (PE), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). I enjoy bringing my clinical experience into the classroom as well as utilizing evidence-based approaches to learning and course design. A student from one of the foundation-level practice courses said, “*Having Anna as my professor is what contributed most to my learning. She really cares about the well-being and learning of her students. She shared many of her own experiences in the field that helped to provide relevant examples about what we were learning. I felt valued and respected in this class*”.

Responsive and Creative Teaching Style

In March 2020, I had exactly one week to translate one of our graduate student research courses to virtual learning in response to the pandemic. This research class is the second of a two-part series in which students work closely with their practicum placements to develop and implement their own research project. Nearly all of my students had to abandon the hard work they had done over the previous quarter and come up with a brand new research project that could work in a virtual world due to the pandemic. I overhauled major parts of the syllabus in order to teach various types of literature review methods during our synchronous classes, while

creating asynchronous lectures on quantitative and qualitative methods. I met individually with each student three times over the course of the quarter in order to check in with them, answer questions, and provide more individualized guidance on their projects. I had students with critically ill parents on the other side of the country, students who were suddenly out of work or looking for work, students who were feeling completely isolated, and students who were supporting children. Students shared with me that the individualized time over the course of the quarter not only helped them feel connected, but also prioritized and supported. During our final week of class, George Floyd was murdered. Once again, I tossed out what I had planned and instead created space for communal dialogue, journaling, and reflection. Despite this class's notoriety for being a difficult course to teach even in non-pandemic times, I received some of my highest student ratings that quarter. One student said, "***Anna has been an amazing instructor. Given what we have collectively had to endure over the last quarter this has been the best it could have been***". Another student said, "***Anna did a great job in connecting the heady course content to social work practice and to unfolding current events...her dedication to our individual success is seen and felt***".

Ultimately, I consider my teaching style to be similar to my clinical style: holding both person-centered orientation and evidence-based approaches as simultaneously important. I strive to be authentic in both the limits of my experience and understanding as well as what I can contribute given my background in both evidence-based clinical practice and evidence-based course design.