

Lesson 1

Classroom Atmosphere and Moral Questioning

Activity 1

Exercise: Setting the Rules of the Classroom

A series of exercises will help you establish your rules for discussion as a class. Beyond justifying your arguments, when you judge, you need to do so by justifying your position so that someone might argue against it, but also do it in a way that won't hurt other people in the classroom. To imagine how someone might be hurt, let's take a moment and drop down the "VEIL OF IGNORANCE" (Rawls, 1971). We will learn more about Rawls' veil of ignorance in a later chapter, for now, imagine you are behind a curtain and when you step into the classroom you will not know if you will be Black, White, Latino, or Asian American, whether you'll be an immigrant or born here, whether you are able-bodied or have a disability, whether you are straight, gay, questioning, or trans-gendered, whether you are very experienced sexually or completely inexperienced, whether you are from a very religious family or a very liberal one, whether you have been sexually abused or raped in your past or whether you have escaped this kind of trauma, whether you've been bullied or not, or whether you are poor or rich. Imagine each of these and think about what kind of rule YOU would want for your protection if you were to arrive into the classroom with this feature of your identity.

BEGIN HERE... And skip around as you like. When your rules start to sound alike for each situation, you can jump to the end and just come up with three general rules.

YOUR RULES

If you were _____ you would want there to be a

rule that says:

If you had a disability, the rule you would want to have in the classroom that would protect you would be:

If you were African American:

If you were gay:

If you had been sexually abused as a child:

If someone you care about has worked as a prostitute:

If you were Asian American:

If you came from a very strictly religious family:

If you came from a liberal family:

If you had been raped:

If you were trans-gendered:

If you had been bullied:

If you were Jewish:

If you were questioning your sexuality:

If you had been hurt recently by a partner:

If you have low self-esteem:

If you INVENT YOUR OWN:

GENERAL RULES THAT THESE MIGHT BOIL DOWN TO?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

