

# ***Feminist Pedagogy: Course Handbook of Principles, Theory, & Applications***

WGS 302: Gender & Pedagogy  
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# Carolyn M. Shrewsbury, “What Is Feminist Pedagogy?”

Sherry Brewer

## Primary assumptions and values that Shrewsbury brings to the classroom:

Shrewsbury argues that three concepts are fundamental assumptions and values for a feminist classroom.

1. *Empowerment.* Power is a crucial part of creating a creative learning community. In a feminist pedagogy, however, power is defined not as domination, but as “energy, capacity and potential.” Power is the glue that holds the community. Rather than limiting power (as in an understanding of power as domination), in a feminist classroom “the goal is to increase the power of all actors.” (10) A sense of power is crucial to students’ development and learning.
2. *Community.* The feminist classroom cultivates a sense of mutuality, connection and care in which “decision making ... can take place by the consensus process as well as by formalized decision rules.” (12) Students share a sense of responsibility for the learning of others, not just their own.
3. *Leadership.* Developing leadership is an important part of the liberatory goals of a feminist classroom. Students gain leadership skills through responsible participation in developing aspects of the course. (13) The feminist teacher serves as role model and helps “members of the class develop a community, a sense of shared purpose, a set of skills for accomplishing that purpose, and the leadership skills so that teacher and students may jointly proceed on those tasks.” (14)

## How are these related to this course? How are they connected to at least one other reading?

Shrewsbury’s article directly relates to the goals of this course in considering “issues of power, identity, authority and vulnerability” (syllabus, p1) by examining and redefining the role of power in the classroom as well as the source of authority for the feminist teacher.

The idea of empowering students to represent their own interests is crucial to both Shrewsbury and to Ming-yeh Lee and Juanita Johnson-Bailey (“Challenges to the Classroom Authority of Women of Color.”) The writers of both articles are concerned with the teacher’s role in encouraging students “to come to voice” – to responsibly be engaged in classroom decisions. (Lee, 58). The authors all follow the work of Carol Gilligan in valuing the classroom as a site of caring.

## Describe a specific pedagogical choice that would embody the author’s values.

Toward the goal of developing students’ leadership and sense of responsibility for group learning, as well as their own learning, at the beginning of the course the professor can facilitate a discussion in which students are encouraged to get in small groups of 3-4 students to develop one or two of their own goals for the course. As groups report back, students see how the goals relate to one another and collectively incorporate them into the syllabus.



# Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, “Queer Theory and Feminist Pedagogy”

## Richard Coble

### Primary assumptions and values

Rabinowitz’s piece centers around the tensions in teaching queer theory between recognizing the centrality of identity in one’s life – especially the centrality of recognizing identities often marginalized in the academy – and queer theory’s inquiry into the constructed and political nature of identity. In this tension, she values personal experience as a source of authority, but she does not want it to stand untheorized, i.e. without looking into the unspoken assumptions and power relations embedded within experience: “Thus, personal experience will come up and is relevant. But experience without examination does not necessarily constitute good evidence, and the teacher has the job of pushing students if no one else does. Students and teacher alike must be open to the possibility that the reading can and will change their perspective, otherwise what is the point of reading?” (182). At the same time, experience can also speak back to theory, and thus Rabinowitz prizes having a wide variety of voices and experiences within the classroom, though she is also wary of assigning any type of expert status to someone in a certain identity category.

### Relation to the course

Feminist pedagogy holds close to the assumption that the personal is political. This is clear in Valle’s *Pedagogy of Concientizacion* in which an epistemology rooted in the experience of marginalized communities combats the hegemonic assumptions of the academy. At the same time, we have often discussed the need to look at experience critically, to see the ways our experiences reproduce the very systems of power that we are seeking to analyze and critique. Thus, we have read pieces such as Lal’s “Dangerous Silences” and Boler’s “Pedagogy of Discomfort,” both of which seek to bring the unspoken politics and assumptions of identity and experience into the critical reflection of the classroom.

### Pedagogical choice

I have been designing a course that I am titling, “Youth Sexuality and Identity in Church Discourse, Practice, and Care.” The course objectives are as follows:

1. To understand the dynamics and connections between discourse, identity, and experience on a personal and political level.
2. To evaluate critically the messages centering around youth and sexuality in American churches.
3. To understand the impact of these messages on the actual spiritual and sexual lives of teenagers.
4. To incorporate this understanding into an informed and nuanced ministry of care for teenagers.

The following is a midterm assignment that I hope furthers these objectives:

The midterm centers around your analysis of a young adult memoir chosen from the following list:

*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang

*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson  
*Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel  
*Stitches: A Memoir* by David Small

Engaging our readings and class discussions as well as a close reading of the text, write a 10-12 page paper (3000-3600 words) answering the following questions:

1. How does the youth in this memoir position her or himself beside the discourses of identity and sexuality present in her immediate context? How do these discourses influence the teenager? How does the teenager push against these messages?
2. In what ways is care exercised in this memoir? What, if any, would be your role as a pastoral caregiver in this teenager's life?
3. How do the situations depicted in the memoir echo or differ from your own life experiences and how would this affect your care?

In answering these questions, your paper should:

1. Include a clear and persuasive thesis that does not simply summarize the material but makes a constructive argument and response.
2. Demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the issues reflected in the memoir as well as deep personal reflection about your life and ministry.
3. Draw directly from course readings, with clear and correct citations throughout.
4. Follow the proper rules of grammar as well as sentence and paragraph construction.

My hope is that this will help the students explore the constructed nature of identity while at the same time looking at the particularities of how individuals form their identities within a political context. I am hoping to foster the type of critical reflection and valuation of identity that is central to Rabinowitz.



## **María Eva Valle, “Antiracist Pedagogy And *Concientizacion*: A Latina Professor's Struggle”**

Lis Valle

The primary assumptions behind María Eva Valle's argument is that revolutionary political consciousness is necessary for social change and that individual action is not enough to effectuate change, or to overcome the harm that hierarchical power in institutions can produce. These assumptions lead her to encourage us to bring collaborative learning processes into the classroom. Building on the work of bell hooks, Valle states how collaborative learning is a form of transgressing coercive hierarchies by “building democratic relationships premised on mutual control and participation.” (160) To that end, she encourages educators to “create a communal place of learning that can be sustained by a collective process of engagement.” (160) Therefore, in order to effectuate social change, educators can address overarching power relations by adopting pedagogical choices that challenge hierarchies and demonstrate shared power.

This *Feminist Pedagogy* course addressed power relations in modeling collaborative processes based on mutual control and participation. The most evident way that this course embodied these values was having students take turns leading the teaching and learning

experiences by generating and facilitating a case study. The course also demonstrated these values by showing openness to adapt the direction of the course based on students' needs. On page two of the syllabus it reads, "As we get closer to the date, we'll see what you need from this workshop, so details TBA. We'll also consider early on if we should have the workshop sooner, so we may shift the date of the activities a bit to accommodate your needs."

The assumptions and values that Valle encourages also relate to the concept of "feminist process" that Jane Kenway and Helen Modra address in their essay, "Feminist Pedagogy and Emancipatory Possibilities." Regarding the effects of feminist process, Kenway and Modra state, "... consensual, collaborative, non-hierarchical processes of learning/teaching can help to change what is known as well as to create growth-enhancing classrooms." (149)

One way to embody the values of shared power and collaborative learning/teaching processes could be to assign students to invite input from their classmates as they prepare an essay, speech, or sermon. The following assignment illustrates collaboration in the way that all students will take turns in leading the group, and in that students will contribute ideas to each other's sermons. It challenges hierarchies by decentering the professor and by requiring the students to listen to their classmates and share their power with them.

Assignment in preparation for an Exegesis Workshop:

*Next session, during our time together, each one of you will have 10 minutes to present in class. Here are some suggestions:*

- *Prepare to present the overview of your exegesis in five minutes. Make sure to include your reflection on what would this text say or mean to its original hearers (item 7 on the Exegesis Worksheet). Also include your findings that are most relevant to the conversation that you will facilitate.*
- *Facilitate a 5-min. conversation. Prepare 1 or 2 questions that you would like to pose to your classmates that will help you develop your sermon. This is a good time for you to test some of your ideas or to receive input on aspects about which you would like to have a variety of perspectives.*
- *Consider sharing the highlights of your exegetical research, what is most relevant to the direction you think your sermon will take. Consider listening in silence to your classmates when they answer your questions, taking notes about their answers and about your own reactions or initial thoughts on their answers.*



## **Berenice Malka Fisher, "Is Women's Experience the Best Teacher?"**

Kellie Cavagnaro

### **Primary assumptions and values Malka Fisher brings to the classroom—**

Malka Fisher defends the assertion of personal beliefs and experiences in the classroom, noting that "[b]eliefs remain suspect in academic work because, it is argued, they keep us from having... scholarly objectivity." She emphasizes that there is no separation between the thought and the thinker, noting, "We are always, in one way or another, believers" (55). Malka Fisher discusses two types of beliefs, *substantive* and *procedural*. Substantively, she believes in the lived reality of women's inequality and oppression, and the need to right this wrong. Procedurally, she advocates

feminist discourse as a valuable best practice to aid in the process of dismantling systematic oppression of women. Two of the students she discusses illustrate these points well: *Eloise*, who believes that feminism is disinteresting and “out of date”, (violating Malka Fisher’s *substantive* assumptions) and *Titania*, who aggressively asserts her feminist beliefs to the effect of silencing others (undermining Malka Fisher’s sense of *procedural* feminism in the classroom). Eventually *Eloise* self-reflects on her fear of walking the streets alone and realizes that opportunity to make choices depends on advantages, and she begins to reconsider hers. Malka Fisher reasons that *Titania*’s inability to engage and respond to other students makes talk of gender injustice seem useless, as there is no exchange and thus no resultant understanding and action.

As a pedagogical priority, Malka Fisher notes that her frustrations with this student help her “understand that I give priority to feminist political discourse over specific expressions of feminist beliefs” (57). She asserts that experience “can be a powerful and problematic element in feminist classrooms”, and yet, that “consciousness-raising stresses the importance of paying attention to women’s experiences”, particularly because “we become especially aware of our relationship to our environment when it becomes problematic” (60). Having a diverse group of students bring their experience into the classroom highlights personal *contradictions within experience* that cause one to doubt assumptions and thus transform beliefs (such as with *Eloise*). Furthermore, hearing from others emphasizes ways that *context affects experience*, encouraging awareness of unequal privilege.

#### **Relations to our coursework and to “Dangerous Silences: Lessons in Daring”, by Shafali Lal—**

Malka Fisher works to engender class activities with a sense of value and purpose so students “buy into” the work and trust that they will benefit from it. However, she is careful to note that students may or may not accept her beliefs, and she may or may not always manage to practice them. Ultimately, she asserts, “sharing experiences about race is crucial to feminist discussions of oppression... through *experiential criticism*... women’s experience controverts male-centered theories and misogynist stereotypes... generat[ing] counterexamples that push us to reconsider or replace prevailing theoretical frameworks” (64). Shafali Lal would likely support these assertions, as she emphasizes that “students are not decontextualized beings who receive knowledge passively or uncritically.” Lal advocated bringing emotions into the classroom, while warning against the dangers of silence on critical issues of equality, advocating the “need to teach students to think critically about the very personal components of their identities, to contemplate the social consequences of their life choices, and to develop structural analyses of such choices and experiences” (Lal 2000:12).

#### **A pedagogical choice that would embody these assumptions and values in the classroom—**

Malka Fisher’s specific response to her feelings of frustration with *Titania*’s aggressive self expression and reference to maternal influences led her to make a pedagogical choice that not only created space to honor *Titania*’s—and other students’— perceptions of maternal influence in their feminist considerations, it also assuaged *Titania*’s attention-grabbing behavior and seemingly allowed her to put a nagging topic to rest. The experience also changed Malka Fisher, causing her to self-reflect on her embarrassment of how her own mother might discuss feminism, causing her to question the authoritative knowledge that she grants to academic institutions. This completed the holistic endeavor, as Malka Fisher found the procedural discourse to be transformative for her as well. As she so aptly notes, “*feminist discourse is not an ideal to be achieved but a process to be developed*” (59).



## Berenice Malka Fisher, “Dangerous Curves: Safety and Self-Disclosure” Laine Walters Young

**Primary Assumptions and Values:** Fisher finds the need to develop and constantly re-evaluate disclosure rules for her classroom. She is concerned about her students’ safety on a variety of levels: physical, social, psychological, and at the level of discourse. She holds these concerns in tandem, however, with a feminist commitment to radically rethink the distinction of the public/private binary (139), as well as other binaries such as emotion/rationality, etc. She highlights bell hooks’ conceptualization of the feminist classroom as ideally creating a “feeling of community” (139) which, if done well, should work to mitigate feelings of fear and anger in the classroom and bolster feelings of trust and solidarity. She talks about the importance of honesty in the classroom, but clearly and crucially identifies what honesty is not, and sensitively discusses reasons for why some might be wary of self-disclosure, such as lack of privilege and safety.

**Illustrative quote:** “Safety is neither a false nor simple issue.” (137) “Education cannot take place without some degree of self-disclosure. To function effectively as a teacher, I must ask students to reveal what they have understood of the course content.” (138)

**Related to the course and other readings:** Malka Fisher’s discussion of safety and disclosure, as well as elements of Megan Boler’s “A Pedagogy of Discomfort” from *Feeling Power*, provide the conceptual tools which Shafali Lal in her article “Dangerous Silences: Lessons in Daring” found so wanting in her experiences as a graduate teaching fellow at Yale when she realized her students did not have “practices of speaking about and learning from our individual and collective identities.” (2)

**Pedagogical Choice:** “Pedagogy of Community: Making it a Mutual Classroom” statement

This statement is my slightly-Christianized, open-structure (Fisher 147) version of Jeannie Ludlow’s Bill of Student Rights (7), and my advisor Bonnie Miller-McLemore’s Teaching Assumptions (which is primarily a guide on how to read, write and think—a version of this document will be given to my students as well).

I wrote this Pedagogy of Community specifically for my Analytic Autoethnography course (my syllabus for our WGS 302 portfolio), but it probably can and should be amended for my other courses. Given the demands of my AE course, it seemed crucial to offer students a written sense of guidance on what is involved, in my understanding, of creating community in the classroom. It focuses on mutuality and mentorship and outlines Malka Fisher’s concepts of safety and honesty, as well as the role of privileges, consequences and expectations in these concepts. It gives prescient mention to Boler’s “witnessing” versus “spectating” as a matter of learning how to become invested in each other, as well as allowing ourselves to acknowledge 1) our “morally ambiguous” nature and 2) that this process often provokes emotions (182-186).





**Ming-yeh Lee and Juanita Johnson-Bailey,  
“Challenges to the Classroom Authority of Women of Color”  
Claire Brown**

Lee and Johnson-Bailey bring a critical eye to a critical pedagogy, prompting intersectional analysis of feminist pedagogy with particular attention to race. The authors use the basic tenets of the field to critique themselves, using mastery, voice, positionality, and authority, key themes of education, as a compound lens for complex reflection within feminism. The authors’ approach “emerged from our experiential background of having been different and displaced,” and they refuse to permit feminist pedagogy to remain in only one social category for liberative work. (63) The authors’ values and approach is best summarized in this introductory paragraph:

By addressing power issues inherent in the classroom, feminist pedagogy has asked academicians to examine their individual practices, curricula, and perspectives for issues of gender, race, and class subjugation. Furthermore, feminist pedagogy has encouraged teaching practices that empower students by asking teachers to develop styles that are nonauthoritative and nurturing. However, we suggest that no one-size-fits-all feminist pedagogy exists and that feminist pedagogy and women of color can make for a dangerous liaison. (55)

The self-critical caution of liberative teaching also resonates through the case studies prepared and presented in seminar, and particularly in Ellsworth’s “Why Doesn’t this Feel Empowering?” Case studies have offered examples of multiple perspectives of students and faculty in a “feminist” classroom, and with Ellsworth’s articulation of the continual struggle and conversation necessary for pedagogical choices to be liberative. One possibility for practical integration of these suggestions, building from the applications included by Lee and Johnson-Bailey, would be to encourage students to name sites of “other”-ing they experience, and the places where their experience makes exception to potential places of inattention in feminist pedagogy, or to typologies and linguistic framing that might create or exacerbate, rather than alleviate places of oppression.



**Robert C. Anderson, “Teaching (with) Disability: Pedagogies of Lived Experience”  
Raquelle K. Bostow**

*“In teaching about disability, the first step means becoming aware of one’s own body – and the bodies of others in the room. The body is everywhere in social life, texts, and public discourse. We just have trouble seeing it, because we are so immersed in our own skin.” (Anderson 367)*

Anderson acknowledges that the body is not often seen as a source of knowledge, particularly in discussions about disability or impairment. Thus, when teaching disability, an analysis of one’s own body could be the best place to start. By understanding that one’s own body is a “primary site for lived experience” (370), students might come to the conclusion that every person’s body is different and as a result will have a different experience, outlook and interaction with the

world. Disabled, or impaired, bodies, from this outlook, could perhaps be seen as not *disabled* but different. To get students thinking about their own bodies, you might have them compose a list of activities that they perform well and do not perform well. Do students consider their inability (or lack of desire) to perform certain activities (run 10 miles, reach the book on the top shelf at the library, do a cartwheel) a disability? If not, then the professor could ask the class: what do we define as disability? Students could discuss with partners and then come back to class discussion in order to find a definition that suits everyone. You might also mention that in the same way that “able-bodied” students may not see not being able to perform an activity as a “disability,” “dis-abled” students/people may view themselves in the same way: “Re-imagining difference does not remove impairments, but resists how society disables people who have them” (Anderson 371). Other values that Anderson emphasizes in his article are reflexive pedagogy, the connection between disability and shared learning, and the need for disability to no longer be excluded from academic discussion. While reflexive pedagogy involves teachers considering their knowledge, how they perform it and its implications for others (368), shared learning suggests a collaborative classroom in which everyone is a teacher and a student.

Anderson’s statement on “disability” as a previously silenced area of study corresponds with our course objective (in WGS 302) to understand and articulate “difference” in order to minimize the marginalization of identities. Anderson quotes Foucault’s claims on “disqualified knowledges” (373) when he recognizes that disability falls into the realm of ignored topics in the academy, calling for the need to include it in the discussion and learn from experiences of disability and impairment. The connection between education and experience that Anderson stresses in his article also correlates with our methods in WGS 302 as we employ case studies to interpret class readings, thus blurring the lines between education and experience. Many authors have discussed the need to examine personal experience within the classroom, as it has become a pillar of critical pedagogy (Rabinowitz, Highberg, Fisher, etc.). Lastly, Anderson highlights that all marginalized groups have disabilities, as most people will experience some sort of disability in their lifetime. Thus, discussions on disability can be a way to further analyze how intersectional (or multiple) identities and oppressions affect a person’s life experience. This fact helps us to not only understand intersectionality within individual experiences, but to find links between various groups. Where should lessons on disability appear in the classroom, Anderson asks? To answer the question, he quotes Garland Thomson: “it should be an integrated part of all the courses we design, just as many of us have begun to consider race, gender, and class issues as fundamental aspects of all disciplines and subjects of inquiry.” (377)

A pedagogical choice that embodies the value of the body as a source of knowledge and experience could be to conduct an activity in which students take on various disabilities and then reflect on their experience. The class could start out by making a list of (what you/they consider to be) disabilities. Then, together you could define disability as a class (what is the “perfect” body? the “able” body? the “disabled” body?). You could then discuss the linguistic differences and implications of the terms “disabled” and “impaired” and might choose to use one or the other for class discussions. After you collectively compose a list of disabilities, students could modify their bodies to experience life (or, perhaps, just class time) differently. For instance, students could put an arm behind their back to simulate having only one arm or hand, they could wear sound-blocking ear plugs to recreate the experience of a deaf person, wear thick blind folds to experience blindness, use a wheelchair for a day, etc. After students spend an hour with these impairments (the professor might consider having the students perform this activity for an entire day), ask the students to reflect on their experience: how did this change your point of view, daily experience? in a positive, a negative, or just a different way? The teacher might choose to perform the activity along with the

students and share their own experiences. In class discussion of the activity, the teacher or students might conclude that disability is just another experience of being a human: “Seldom do we see disability presented as an integral part of the spectrum of human variation, the particularization of individual bodies” (Garland-Thomson ctd. in Anderson); “Disability can create knowledge, open doors wider, build ramps to awareness that we all essentially have in us anyway. This happens when any body leads anybody” (Brueggemann ctd. in Anderson 373). To reflect further on their specific impairment, and/or others, the class might discuss how society might stigmatize someone for this/these impairment(s). You could then attempt to rearticulate this stigmatization as an advantage, or a viewpoint in order to come back to the value of the “body as a site of knowledge and wisdom” (Anderson 377).

**Other activity ideas** (some suggested in Anderson article):

- I. Have students share experiences of (real) disability, race, gender, sexuality (375)
  - a. find points of connection/difference
  - b. discuss ways in which campus addresses disability/ies
- II. negotiated curriculum: have students choose readings from a list of options that include embodiment and disability
- III. Reflect on celebrities or family members with disabilities (impairments). Do you know anyone with a disability, and does it keep them from doing what they want to do?

**Other Resources on teaching disability:**

- IV. Reference activity packet on Virginia Commonwealth University’s website  
<http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/C-SAL/downloadables/PDF/DisabilityAwarenessPacket.pdf>
- V. Great tips on noticing disability in students and how to respond as professor:  
<http://www.dsp.berkeley.edu/teachstudentswithdisab>



## **Jeannie Ludlow, “From Safe Space to Contested Space in the Feminist Classroom”**

Anna Carella

***What are the primary assumptions and values Ludlow encourages us to bring to the classroom?***

Ludlow follows bell hooks (in *Talking Back*, 1989) in rejecting the possibility of a “safe space.” She explains that “safety” has always had a second coded (unspoken) meaning; it wasn’t only intended as a space of self discovery for everyone, but was also meant to create a space free of harassment for disempowered students. Following bell hooks, Ludlow argues that such a possibility is impossible. She argues that safety is a privilege that is “inherently mutable and contestable and unavoidably influenced by identity politics.” A “safe space” benefits the privileged; it allows them to ignore their own dominance and to ignore the experiences of members of the non-dominant group. Calling attention to one’s dominance threatens it, and leads to defensiveness over the loss of safety. The goal, then, should be a contested space. She defines a contested space as a space open to conflict, “disputed and collaborative,” where students can “affirm another’s witnessing, to testify together,” “in which dominant discourses of oppression can be ‘undone’ through collaboration,

coalition-building, and political education.” The contested classroom remains “open to the possibility of simultaneous truths,” it “must be able to incorporate identity politics and personal experience and, at the same time, and understanding of (and resistance to) the ways that personal experience can be essentialized in order to close off analysis.” She says, “[i]n a safe space classroom, we might strive for an environment that is free from domination or authority. In a contested space classroom, we know that no space is free from domination, so we examine the effects of power and privilege in our classroom environment.” Like hooks, Ludlow says the goal should be to empower students by encouraging them “to come to voice in an atmosphere of risk.”

### **How are the above related to this course?**

For me, our feminist pedagogy class has been more an exercise in consciousness raising than in contention as a coalition building technique. Which is not to say that there hasn’t been contention, or that identity politics were not at play – they always are. Yet, we’ve mostly avoided open contention. I think this was partly due to the use of case studies which were either loosely based on experience or not at all, and enabled us to distance ourselves and the rest of the class from our personal experiences. And it was partly due to the general agreement in the classroom that feminist voices are marginalized on campus and in academia.

### **Describe a specific pedagogical choice that would embody #1.**

Ludlow gives us four pedagogical tools: 1) a Students’ Bill of Rights 2) what she calls a pinwheel, or adapted Circles of our Multicultural Selves<sup>1</sup> and 3) a map of cultural power in the U.S. (which religion/race/gender has the most power?) and 4) and #3 used in conjunction with the gender pyramid from Kate Bornstein’s *My Gender Workbook*.<sup>2</sup> The goal of any pedagogical exercise would be, as she said, to “examine the effects of power and privilege in the classroom environment.” Another tool would be Paul Kivel’s “Race and Class”<sup>3</sup> exercise (which could be adapted) where people are encouraged to physically take a step forward or back depending on the privileges they bring to the classroom.



## **Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Why Doesn’t this Feel Empowering?: Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy”**

Alexandra Rodriguez

In her article, Ellsworth is trying to demystify “Critical Pedagogy” as well as other notions that seem to be apolitical and democratic in today’s teaching practices such as “safe space”, “reason” and “dialogue”. She encourages us to be honest and state our agendas and be aware of

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<sup>1</sup> An example available here <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself.html>

<sup>2</sup> Available for purchase, but I also found an excerpt online free <http://www.yorku.ca/spot/caitlin/bornstein.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. “If you were taken to art galleries, museums or plays by your parents, take one step forward.” <http://www.paulkivel.com/component/jdownloads/finish/1/76/0?Itemid=31>

our positions, privileges, and experiences. She wants us to bring our partial voices recognizing that they are partial narratives hence they are problematic. As she pointed out: “Yet social agents are not capable of being fully rational and disinterested; and they are subjects split between the conscious and unconscious and among multiple social positions.” (108). From those experiences she encourages a group dialogue that could eventually lead to activism outside the classroom. She argues that: “Realizing that there are partial narratives that some social groups or cultures have and others can never know, but are necessary to human survival, is a condition to embrace and use as an opportunity to built a kind of social and educational interdependency that recognizes differences as “different strengths” and as “forces for change” (110).

It seems that she is challenging the same myth of the classroom as a “safe space” for democratic dialogue. This notion of “safe space” has also been challenged by Jeannine Ludlow in her article “From Safe Space to Contested Space in the Feminist Classroom”. In her analysis she emphasizes the impossibility of safety and the need to recognize that safety is a privilege that depends on an individual’s position in the society. According to her, we can recognize two kinds of safety: one which means “rest from persecution and harassment” and the other that means “armored and concluded”. She proposes the notion of a “contested space” to replace the notion of safe space. “A space that is not necessarily defined by conflict, but that includes room for conflict.”

As a pedagogical choice, Ellsworth suggests to include partial narratives, in other words different voices which means that the curriculum should include significant amount of cultural production and knowledge produced by people of color, thus, the minorities in the classroom would not be treated as the “expert” and with the goal to educate white majorities.

