

# MAP's Suggestions for Improving Diversity and Inclusion<sup>1</sup>

---

There is a lack of diversity among those who participate in philosophy in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Experts have not reached a consensus about the causes and moral evaluation of this lack. Nevertheless, instructors have a unique opportunity to design and/or cultivate a learning environment that reflects our values and commitments, especially to equal opportunity. Instructors owe their students a fair learning environment, where none are burdened by obstacles that are put into place by the context of instruction or that could be mitigated or removed by positive action by the instructor.

The purpose of this document is to present concrete ways that teachers can remove barriers to pursuing philosophy that members of minority and underrepresented groups face. If each of us does what we can, there is hope for substantial progress towards a diverse and inclusive philosophical environment.

This is a living document, open to continual revision. Additional suggestions can be sent to [mapforthe-gap@osu.edu](mailto:mapforthe-gap@osu.edu).

## 1. Diversify your assigned reading list

**Why?** A handout developed by the APA offers three compelling reasons. "First, students from diverse backgrounds are more likely to think the profession is inclusive if they read work by philosophers with similar backgrounds. Second, the profession would be more inclusive if there were more underrepresented minorities on philosophy syllabi. Third, it is easier than ever - given the resources below - to include minority voices."<sup>1</sup>

**How?** Consult the resources below. Here are some strategies you might employ:

- Teach authors from underrepresented groups. For instance, assign Margaret Cavendish in an early modern class.
- Acknowledge or discuss views from non-western philosophical traditions. For instance, teach Ibn Sīnā's (a.k.a. Avicenna) Floating Man argument in conjunction with, or instead of, Descartes's Cogito argument. Or present some varieties of Buddhist ethics as forms of consequentialism.
- Pair historical ideas with more contemporary uses of those ideas. For instance, teach Aristotle's syllogism through Martin Luther King, Jr.'s use of it to analyze white supremacy.

---

<sup>1</sup> This document is a revision of the APA document on "5 ways to be more inclusive" available at: [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/diversity/5\\_Ways\\_to\\_Be\\_More\\_Inclusive.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/diversity/5_Ways_to_Be_More_Inclusive.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Demographics on APA Membership for 2014-2016 are available at: [https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/apaonline.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/data\\_on\\_profession/Member\\_Demo\\_Chart\\_FY2016\\_rev.pdf](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/apaonline.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/data_on_profession/Member_Demo_Chart_FY2016_rev.pdf)

- Pair historical texts with secondary literature from more diverse authors. For instance, teach Louise Antony with W.V.O. Quine.
- Add emerging topics that are relevant to underrepresented groups. For instance, teach disability in a metaphysics class.
- Post a draft of your reading list to Facebook and ask for comments on how to diversify it.
- Give students opportunities to select or propose topics and/or readings relevant to the course theme. (It may help to solicit input from students through an anonymous survey.)

**Resources:**

- APA Diversity and Inclusion Syllabus Collection: [www.apaonline.org/?diversitysyllabi](http://www.apaonline.org/?diversitysyllabi)
- Philosophical texts written by diverse philosophers: [diversifyingsyllabi.weebly.com](http://diversifyingsyllabi.weebly.com)
- Diversity Reading List: [www.diversityreadinglist.org](http://www.diversityreadinglist.org)
- Resources for diverse syllabi: [phildiversity.weebly.com/anthologies-and-resources.html](http://phildiversity.weebly.com/anthologies-and-resources.html)

## 2. Actively cultivate inclusive classroom discussion

**Why?** Students feel most engaged when their interests are being addressed and their concerns are being taken seriously. Unfortunately, in our society, some people are given more credibility than they are due in many conversational settings while others are given less than they are due.<sup>3</sup> This is also true in philosophy classroom discussions. For instance, students from historically marginalized groups may be prepared to let others jump in first while other students are vocal and taken more seriously. Or instructors may unwittingly assign credibility to some by calling on them more frequently.<sup>4</sup> This undermines both the inclusiveness of the classroom and the quality of the discussion because fewer perspectives are expressed. Beyond societal causes, this dynamic can manifest in philosophy classrooms due to implicit or explicit associations between white men and philosophy. Instructors play a unique role in moderating classroom participation, and if they do not attend to this imbalance then it is more likely to appear.

**How?** Consult the resources below. Here are some strategies you might employ:

- Be aware of whom you call on, and how often.
- Use gender-neutral language.
- Ask students about their preferred gender pronoun.
- Avoid using ableist terms and phrases.
- Structure classroom discussions in a way that encourages wide participation, like [think-pair-share](#) or moving from cold-calling to [warm-calling](#).
- If you observe that only a few students have been participating, explicitly say that you'd like to hear from someone who has not yet spoken.

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Myra Sadker and David Sadker, "Sexism in the Classroom: From Grade School to Graduate School" in *The Phi Delta Kappan* 67:7 (1986): 512-515; and Ellen Rydell Altermatt, Jasna Jovanovic, and Michelle Perry, "Bias or Responsivity? Sex and Achievement-Level Effects on Teachers' Classroom Questioning Practices" in *Journal of Educational Psychology* 90:3 (1998): 516-527.

- Appoint a student to keep track of contributions and reflect them back to the class at intervals, then use that opportunity to assess whether each contribution was fairly discussed.
- Restate student contributions back to the full class, and check in with the student about whether you have accurately represented their idea.
- Offer positive affirmations after student contributions.
- Connect or collect the ideas of multiple students.
- Empower students to bring to your attention if they feel like their contributions are not being attended to sufficiently.
- Discuss with your class the results of a mid-semester evaluation that asked them to rate on a scale of 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) the following statements:
  - I feel comfortable speaking in class.
  - I feel like my contributions are respected by other students.
  - I feel like my contributions are respected by the course instructor.

**Resources:**

- Brookfield and Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (Jossey-Bass, 2005). [URL on Google Books.](#)
- Angelo and Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011). [URL on Google Books.](#)
- Best Practices for the Inclusive Philosophy Classroom: <http://phildiversity.weebly.com/student-discussion-and-participation.html>
- MIT Bystander Intervention Information: <http://web.mit.edu/bystanders/>
- Guidelines for respectful, constructive, and inclusive philosophical discussion (compiled by David Chalmers): <http://consc.net/norms.html>
- Pledges for a professional philosopher (by Carrie Jenkins): <https://csi-jenkins.tumblr.com/post/90563605390/day-one>
- Seminar chairing policy suggestions (by the British Philosophical Association): <http://bpa.ac.uk/uploads/Good%20Practice%20Scheme/Seminar%20chairing.pdf>
- How to criticize with kindness (by Daniel Dennett): <https://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2014/03/28/daniel-dennett-rapoport-rules-criticism/>
- Office of Disability Resources Principles for Universal Design: <http://slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/universal-design/>
- Universal Design of Instruction: <http://www.washington.edu/doit/equal-access-universal-design-instruction>
- How to make your classroom space maximally accessible: <https://youtu.be/iU0cjd3a548>

### 3. Undermine the effects and persistence of stereotype threat

**Why?** Research suggests that people underperform when aware that their behavior might be assessed in terms of some stereotype. For instance, when there is only one woman in a classroom, who is aware of the stereotype that good philosophers are typically men, she might refrain from stating an otherwise good objection for fear of confirming the stereotype. This can present an unfair barrier for people operating under stereotype threat that prevents them from reaching their potential and makes their classroom experience less valuable. Stereotype threat compromises not only the inclusiveness of our classrooms, but also the diversity of our majors and profession by discouraging people subjected to stereotype threat from seeing the discipline as welcoming.

**How?** Consult the resources below. Here are some strategies you might employ:

- Design a classroom intervention that begins by encouraging self affirmation. For instance, in an ethics class, ask students to identify the values important to them and to explain why.
- Emphasize how hard work more than genius leads to success in philosophy classrooms.
- Provide diverse role models. For instance, display the picture of the philosopher being discussed.
- Offer explanations for anxiety or poor performance that do not refer to stereotype threat-triggering explanations. For example say to a person who you worry is operating under stereotype threat: “Philosophy is difficult for everyone, but with consistent effort it gets easier over time” or “No one thinks that one can play tennis well without regular practice. The same is true of philosophy.”
- Be aware that stereotype threat can be triggered by what others say, and engage in [bystander intervention](#) when appropriate.

#### **Resources:**

- Learn about stereotype threat:  
<https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/stereotype-threat>
- Consider “Empirically Validated Strategies to Reduce Stereotype Threat”:  
<https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/interventionshandout.pdf>
- See S.J. Leslie, A. Cimpian, M. Meyer, & E. Freeland, “Expectations of Brilliance Underlie Gender Distributions Across Academic Disciplines” in *Science* (2015): pp 262-265.  
<https://www.princeton.edu/~sjleslie/expectations%20of%20brilliance.pdf>

### 4. Undermine negative stereotypes and bias about philosophy<sup>5</sup>

**Why?** One obstacle to pursuing philosophy as a major or profession is being unable to see one’s self as a philosopher. Stereotypes and bias about philosophy can be negative and reinforce this obstacle

---

<sup>5</sup> Stereotypes can be about paradigms or norms. Bias can operate in either explicit or implicit forms. Implicit bias refers to those relatively unconscious and relatively automatic features of prejudiced judgment and social behavior (see <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicit-bias/>). There are multiple ways in which bias can enter the classroom or undermine the integrity of teaching, like the credibility gap already discussed in #2.

in at least one of three ways: 1) falsely dismissive claims about philosophy; 2) generalizing claims or beliefs that are resistant to defeating evidence; or 3) claims about philosophy that are inconsistent with the goals of advancing diversity and inclusion in the profession. For instance, “philosophy is useless” is a negative stereotype that encourages people who are practically-minded, often out of necessity, to look elsewhere when choosing a major or profession. Moreover, when paradigms of the good philosopher are not inclusive and diverse, the obstacle of identifying as a philosopher may become even more salient for minorities in philosophy. Therefore, offering or giving students the opportunity to see alternative models might help alleviate or remove this obstacle and undermine dismissive or biased claims about philosophy.

**How?** Consult the resources below. Here are some strategies you might employ:

- Undermine the idea that philosophy is best practiced by white men by displaying pictures of the authors on your diverse reading list.
- When formulating hypothetical examples to advance student understanding of some topic, depict members of underrepresented groups in philosophy acting in ways that undermine negative stereotypes.
- Show the connection or similarity between philosophy and other practices that the students consider more obviously “useful”.
- Discuss with your class why philosophy is valuable (see OSU’s “Why Study Philosophy?” below).
- Learn about implicit bias and those biases you might have.
- Incorporate some of the other suggestions in this document, like grading anonymously and bystander intervention.

**Resources:**

- Find out your implicit biases: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
- Adapt an idea developed by STEM efforts: <http://unconsciousbiasproject.org/>
- Directory of Philosophers from Underrepresented Groups in Philosophy: <http://www.theupdirectory.com/>
- OSU’s “Why Study Philosophy?”: <https://philosophy.osu.edu/why-study-philosophy>
- For a review of recent scientific studies on implicit bias: <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/researchandstrategicinitiatives/#implicitbias>

## 5. Grade anonymously

**Why?** Students appreciate an instructor’s efforts to maintain a fair grading process. Research suggests the existence of the halo effect and the reverse halo effect, which undermine fairness in grading. The halo effect occurs when, based on a pre-existing positive assessment of a student’s capabilities, an instructor thinks a student’s work is better than it actually is. The reverse effect occurs when, based on a pre-existing negative assessment of a student’s capabilities, an instructor thinks a student’s work is worse than it actually is. These assessments can come from the student’s classroom behavior (which underscores the previously mentioned importance of cultivating an

inclusive classroom discussion) and performance on previous work, which can already be informed by the instructor's bias (either implicit or explicit) towards certain groups. Independent of concerns about diversity and inclusion, it is unfair to allow anything except the quality of the work itself to determine the grade it earns. Anonymous grading takes on added importance in the pursuit of diversity and inclusion because it removes an obstacle to the success of minorities and underrepresented students in philosophy.

**How?** Anonymizing papers and exams limits these effects. After the grading is completed, it is useful to reveal the names in order to help an instructor build a relationship with students.

- The Speedgrader in Carmen allows an instructor to read and return comments on a submission without knowing the student's name.
- For in-class assignments, ask students to use their BuckID number instead of their names. Alternatively, ask students to write their name on the first page of a blue book and then turn over the page before grading, or use a sticky note to obscure the student's name.
- Give students pseudonyms for their assignments.

**Resources:**

- How to grade anonymously through Carmen's Speedgrader:  
<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10452>
- A helpful response to some worries about anonymous grading:  
<http://phildiversity.weebly.com/grading-methods.html>
- Jennifer Saul, "Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat and Women in Philosophy" in *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?* edited by Fiona Jenkins and Katrina Hutchison (Oxford University Press, forthcoming)

## 6. Encourage members of underrepresented groups to think about majoring and pursuing graduate school in philosophy

**Why?** One explanation for why the profession is not more diverse—both in faculty profile and research agenda—is because there are not a proportional number of members of underrepresented groups applying for any particular job. One explanation for why there aren't more members of underrepresented groups applying for jobs is because these groups are underrepresented in graduate programs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* noted that for 2014 only 4% of PhDs in philosophy were awarded to individuals that self-identified as black or African American; and while 62%<sup>6</sup> of college graduates are women, only 29.2% of PhDs in philosophy were awarded to women.<sup>7</sup> Many think the pipeline is not well primed for the desired outcome. While this is clearly the case, instructors should not think that the pipeline is entirely beyond their control. For instance, at a

---

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *The Condition of Education 2016* (NCES 2016-144). Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_ctr.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ctr.asp).

<sup>7</sup> Patel, V. (March 27, 2016). Diversifying a Discipline. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.chronicle.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/article/Diversifying-a-Discipline/235851>.

conference hosted at OSU in 2016 Cristina Beltrán (New York University) indicated that she would never have even considered graduate study if one of her undergraduate instructors had not taken her aside to suggest it to her. For a variety of reasons, it might not occur to members of minority groups to pursue philosophy. This anecdotal evidence suggests that making the possibility salient to these students can have dramatic impact on career choices.

**How?** We suggest that if an instructor notices a member of an underrepresented group who shows interest or ability in philosophy, the instructor should explicitly encourage the student to think about pursuing philosophy further by taking another class, majoring or minoring, or even applying for graduate school. In the case of recommending graduate study, instructors should also consider making the student aware of the current state of the academic job market as well as climate issues for members of underrepresented groups in philosophy and efforts that are underway to improve that climate (see resources below). This recommendation complements efforts to generally encourage interested students to pursue philosophy.

**Resources:**

- Directory of Philosophers from Underrepresented Groups in Philosophy: <http://www.theupdirectory.com/>
- APA Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion: <http://www.apaonline.org/group/diversity>
- APA Committee for Inclusiveness in the Profession: <http://www.apaonline.org/group/inclusiveness>
- Minorities and Philosophy organization: <http://www.mapforthegap.com/>
- What it's like being a woman in philosophy: <https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/>
- Efforts to change climate for women: <https://whatweredoingaboutwhatitslike.wordpress.com/>
- What it's like doing academia with a disability or chronic illness: <https://phdisabled.wordpress.com/>

## 7. Take advantage of campus resources that support students in handling adversity that impedes their learning

**Why?** Research suggests that people underperform when they are suffering from food or housing insecurity, as well as untreated mental health conditions and physical disabilities. Often students feel they need to justify their underperformance to their instructors by divulging personal information, compromising their privacy. These are often unjust and unnecessary burdens. OSU has several resources available to students that maintain their right to privacy. Unfortunately, many students are unaware of these resources.

**How?** We suggest that instructors bring these resources to the attention of their students at the beginning of the semester by including them in their [syllabus](#) and directing students to them in a resource page on [Carmen](#). When students talk with you (either in person or via email) about

situations where resources exist, affirm what they are reporting and ask if they have a management strategy. If not, strongly encourage them to take advantage of available resources, especially in a proactive way. A desire to protect a student's privacy should be set aside, however, if you are concerned the student might be considering suicide. In such exceptional situations, you should ask directly about suicide, among other steps recommended by suicide-prevention training. Finally, attend a skills-building workshop on some topic in diversity and inclusion once a semester.<sup>8</sup>

**Resources:**

- OSU Emergency Grant and Financial Education and Coaching: <http://advocacy.osu.edu/emergency-grant/>
- OSU Food Pantry: <https://www.buckeyefoodalliance.org>
- How to access OSU disability resources: <http://advocacy.osu.edu/health-personal-crisis/disabilities/>
- How to gain an OSU advocate that will maintain confidentiality if one is hospitalized: <http://advocacy.osu.edu/health-personal-crisis/hospitalization/>
- How to confidentially access OSU mental health resources: <http://advocacy.osu.edu/health-personal-crisis/mental-health/>
- OSU resources for students that are veterans: <http://veterans.osu.edu/current-students/academic-resources>
- If you are experiencing a crisis that is not one of disability, hospitalization, mental health, or financial, we still strongly suggest reaching out to <http://advocacy.osu.edu> to see what supportive resources they may be able to provide.
- Suicide-Prevention Training: <https://suicideprevention.osu.edu>

---

<sup>8</sup> For example, attend training on suicide prevention (link above), sexual misconduct prevention (<http://titleix.osu.edu/global-navigation/training.html>), or being an ally to the LGBTQQIAP community (<http://mcc.osu.edu/education-and-training/lgbtq-education-dialogues-programs/safe-zone-training/>).