



Relevance of Inclusion and Belonging for All in a Forest Recreation Course

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Equity-Minded SoTL Question

How does exploring stories of connection to nature among diverse groups, relative to one's own, facilitate the relevance of inclusion and belonging for all in the outdoors?

Background

- Relevance of course content supports student motivation and learning^{1,2}
- Offers potential to support culturally inclusive thinking about self and others³
- Inclusion and access to the outdoors a priority for natural resource agencies and professional societies^{4,5}

Project Approach

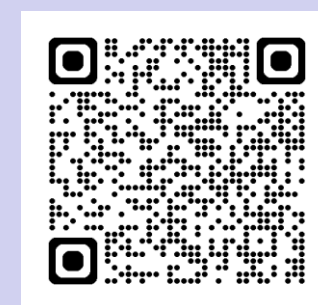
- 300-level course with 40 students in fall semester 2024
- Surveys on interests and relevance of course topics
- Inclusive recreation assignment and activity, exploring outdoor nonprofit groups and first person narratives in a film series



Outbound
Collective



Latino
Outdoors



Outdoor
Afro



Melanin
Base Camp

Syllabus Statement

You belong in this class! Whatever your recreational experience – rugged or refined; consumptive or non, reflective or exhilarating, independent or social – your perspective and background is valued. We each bring a unique blend of ideals, identities, learning styles, and preferences to this space. I will strive to provide resources and examples that represent the full breadth of human experience in the outdoors and to use inclusive language and approaches.

Class Survey & Inkshedding Activity

- Students seeking career placement, path towards a rewarding job, and an opportunity to make a difference
- Drawn to outdoor careers through recreation experiences and family influence
- 95% of class able to offer a connection to stories of diverse recreationists, while 100% identified ideas for creating inclusive spaces as a future professional
- Positive feedback and support evident in inkshedding groups
- Overall moderate perceived relevance of these topics at semester's start and end

Stories of Connection

Sometimes we don't think about how others' experiences affect them, and it can be hard to think about being in their shoes unless they tell us directly.

I identify heavily with the disability rights movement, and it was the first time I felt a sense of "I'm represented here."

Everyone is different, but we can all find joy in recreation. I realized I am a part of a much larger network of people that enjoy doing the same activities I do.

Reflection

This project represents an entry point into the continuous cycle of inquiry of equity-minded SoTL. Developing an understanding of this international field, learning from and being inspired by seasoned SoTL scholars, and developing connections across the Universities of Wisconsin has been a truly rewarding experience. While a substantive change in relevance of equity-minded course content was not observed through quantitative measures, qualitative findings point to thoughtful reflection and meaningful connections made by students, suggesting value in the intervention. Moreover, positive feedback and support expressed through the class inkshedding activity lends support to the effectiveness of this teaching approach.

Our Appreciation

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Selected References

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