How to Stop Harming Students: An Ecological Guide to Antiracist Writing Assessment
Asao B. Inoue with Mya Poe

PURPOSE
- What are your antiracist goals for your writing assessment?
- What makes those goals antiracist?

POWER
- How are dominant White habits of language and judgement critiqued? How do you stop using them against students?
- How do students participate in (i.e., negotiate and/or change) your classroom ecology?

PARTS
- How are the ways that you assess writing -- and the ways you teach your students to judge writing -- antiracist?
- How are the processes of circulating those judgements antiracist?

PROCESS
- How are the ways that you assess writing -- and the ways you teach your students to judge writing -- antiracist?
- How do the people involved in antiracist writing assessment understand themselves, the ideologies and histories that inform their values, and their impact on students?

PRODUCTS
- What antiracist outcomes are there in the community or classroom?
- What makes those consequences antiracist?
- How does your use of power in the classroom result in opportunity for students?

PEOPLE
- How do the people in antiracist writing assessment practices consciously monitor their impact, not just their intentions, on students and grow from that self-reflection?

PLACES
- What are the racialized aspects of writing classrooms?
- How are those racial aspects and politics made explicit to everyone and used in antiracist ways?

FOUNDATIONS
- What we think of as “good writing” is socially, culturally, and historically constructed by groups of people with particular language habits; thus, the assessment of language is political.
- Our judgments about writing are always bound within an historical and evolving system of racial hierarchy that reinforces White supremacy.
- All writing and style conventions, composing processes, argument structures, and genre conventions are shaped by White supremacy and legacies of oppression and trauma to BIPOC.
- These oppressions and traumas are often reinforced through assessment practices.
- Antiracist writing assessment attempts to redress these injustices.
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• Antiracist writing assessment attempts to redress these injustices.

To change your writing assessment practices toward antiracism, consider: their purposes, the people involved, places (re)created, processes generated, parts circulated, power relations in the ecology, and the products that come out of that ecology.

PURPOSE

What are your goals for antiracist writing assessment?

What makes those goals antiracist?

Antiracist goals for writing assessment can be small or large, for example:
• I want to develop antiracist peer review practices.
• I want to change writing program policies that harm BIPOC.
• I want to teach my students antiracist writing assessment practices for tutoring in a community literacy program.

PROCESS

How are the ways that you assess writing -- and the ways you teach your students to judge writing -- antiracist?

How are the processes of circulating those judgements antiracist?

Create antiracist processes in a classroom by asking questions, such as:
• How do we read the texts in front of us in antiracist ways, i.e., ways that offer us the racial politics of language in our reading practices?
• How do I allow for a range of composing processes? How do I encourage students to draw on their linguistic repertoires when composing?
• How can our processes of feedback and assessment begin with deeply listening to others first in order to understand the politics of language and judgement?
• How do I value linguistic diversity in my responses by focusing my instructions on the labor involved, not simply the output or outcome.
• How do I engage with students in self-assessment through processes of dialogue about our different ways with words and language habits?

How are dominant White habits of language and judgement critiqued? How do you stop using them against students?

How do students participate in (i.e., negotiate and/or change) your classroom ecology?

Redistribute power in equitable ways by considering questions, such as:
• How can I include students in assignment design and create labor instructions for all assignments with them?
• How can I teach students about the history and politics of written genres and the habits of language that students and I use?
• How can I get students to critically investigate dominant White habits of language and judgement in the communication practices they are expected to mimic in school and society, looking closely at who has determined those habits and what consequences to various groups of people they have produced?
• How can students negotiate their grades in my course? Do I allow them alternatives?
• Does my use of power in my classroom result in opportunity for students?

How are the texts, assignment sheets, rubrics, readings, and other artifacts used in the writing classroom antiracist?

How does each artifact help do antiracist assessment work, or lead to antiracist outcomes (products)?

Examine the parts of antiracist writing assessment, by asking questions such as:
• Where do I include materials from BIPOC in my writing classroom, and how do I ask my students to engage with those texts? Do those texts help inform my approach to assessment?
• How can I develop criteria, rubrics, and vocabulary for feedback with my students, using their words to help define what we expect, how we will talk about judgement in writing, and what feedback means?
• In what ways can my students and I do research on our own language practices in order to come up with language expectations and questions for feedback?
How can the people involved in antiracist writing assessment understand themselves, the ideologies and histories that inform their values, and their impact on students?

How do the people in antiracist writing assessment practices consciously monitor their impact, not just their intentions, on students and grow from that self-reflection?

**Question the people, including your role, in antiracist writing assessment by asking questions, such as:**

- Historically, who has been in positions of power in writing classrooms? Why them? Who was judged?
- Who are the people currently involved in antiracist writing assessment practices?
- How do I understand my intersectional subject position? What power do I have in the writing classroom?
- What habits of language and judgment make up who I am? Why do I value those things? What would happen if I valued something else?
- How are dominant White language habits and standards of language critiqued and not used against students in my classroom?

What are the racialized aspects of writing classrooms?

How are those racial aspects and politics made explicit to everyone and used in antiracist ways?

**Interrogate the places that make up your assessment ecology by asking questions, such as:**

- What language habits and dispositions (writing standards and expectations) are present in my writing course?
- How is failure defined and circulated in my writing course? Who is associated with failure?
- What kind of expectations do my rubrics/contracts/portfolios create in my writing course? Who do they value most? What language habits do they promote most?
- How can I make our classroom discussions about assessment safer for BIPOC and braver for White students?

What antiracist outcomes are there in the community or classroom?

What makes those consequences antiracist?

How does your use of power in the classroom result in opportunity for students?
Create antiracist products in a course by affirming the following:

- Students in my class define, measure, and reflect upon what they want to learn and what they have learned as individuals situated in larger political and language systems.
- The lessons and artifacts we produce in our classroom are circulated in the university community and even the communities around the university in order to do antiracist work as broadly as possible.
- At the end of the term, my students can explain how dominant language expectations and judgement practices can harm BIPOC, and they can articulate antiracist alternatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Thanks to Tieanna Graphenreed for her assistance on the infographic design and content related to Black Critical Geography.

REFERENCES


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