

# Can I Submit That?

## Using Student Assessment to Challenge Power Structures in Our Learning Environments

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CTLT Spring Institute, UBC

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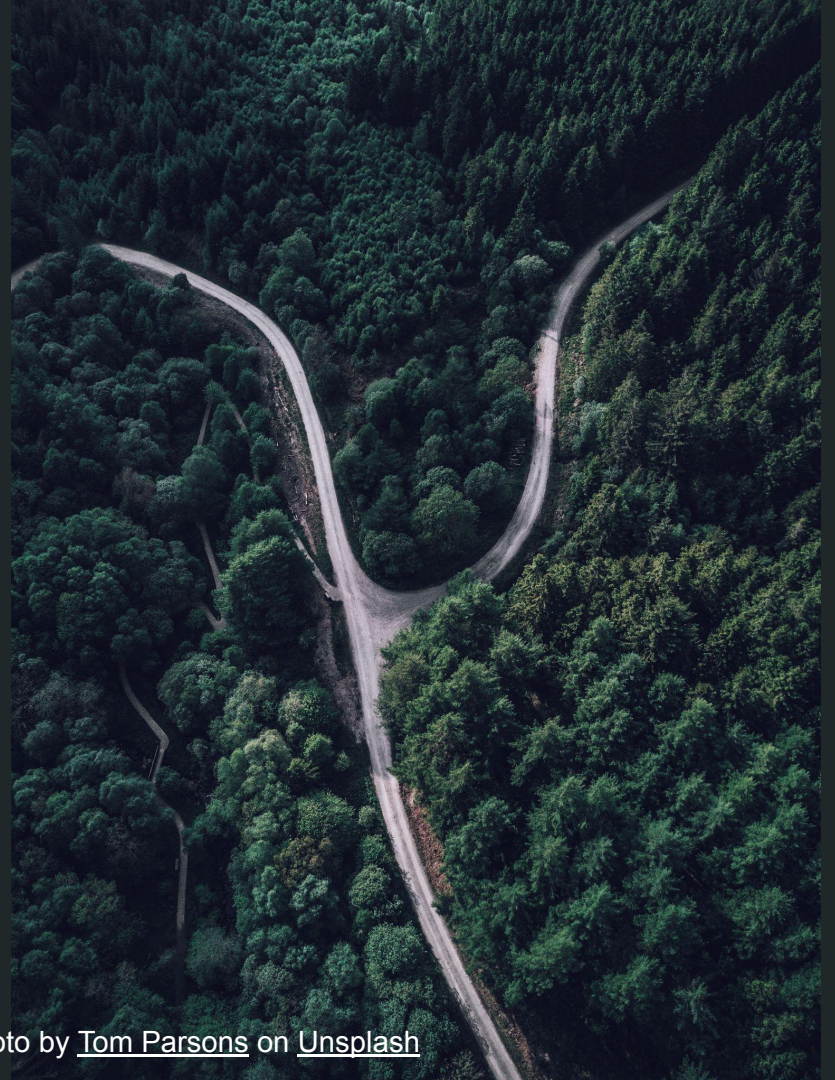
# Land Acknowledgement

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# Our Stories

How we got here

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# Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, you will be able to

- (1) Identify how traditional methods of student assessment can reinforce oppressive power structures in higher education.
- (2) Critically appraise your own methods of student assessment.
- (3) Apply an anti-oppressive and relational lens to begin to design more just and equitable methods of student assessment.

# Agenda

1. What is student assessment?
2. Anti-oppression & relational teaching
3. Critical appraisal & critical reflexivity
4. Pull these three together:
  - a. Student assessment
  - b. Critical appraisal and reflexivity
  - c. Anti-oppression & relational
5. Facilitate application to participant assessment
6. Share and wrap up

# Who are we?

- We are not the first people to do this. We've been inspired by:
  - Candice Rideout, Food, Nutrition, and Health
  - Christine D'Onofrio, Arts History, Visual Art & Theory
  - Carol-Ann Courneya, Cellular and Physiological Science
- Many UBC colleagues are also dedicated to **Ungrading**
  - CTLT Spring Institute
    - June 1, 9-10:30 a.m. Implementing Alternative Grading Practices
  - Slack Group

# What is student assessment?

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Please go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and use this passcode 4203 4963

This is an open ended question. Feel free to submit multiple responses.

# What is student assessment **not**?

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Please go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and use this passcode **4203 4963**

This is an open ended question. Feel free to submit multiple responses.



# Student Assessment: Grading

- 100 percentage scale emerged in the 1900s. Letter grades widely adopted in the 1940s with K-12 as required.
- Seemingly facilitated uniformity of student evaluation across institutions.
- Aims of assessment & grading:
  - Sorting students into groupings of who is best, good, pretty good, and needs improvement.
  - Communicating to students. That is, grades can be seen as feedback on learning and performance of learning.
  - Motivating students to engage in learning

Schinske & Tanner, 2014; Stachowiak, 2016-present

How can we do better?

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“In the ‘nutritionist banking’ approach to education, even when offered under the guise of progressive education, has as its major goal the fattening of the student’s brain through the ‘deposits’ of the teacher’s knowledge and thus, under this pedagogical model, **students absorb understandings ‘not born of [their own]...creative efforts...[as learners.]’** (Freire, 2018, p. 29)

# Anti-Oppression Teaching

- “Contend[s] that the roots of the problems people face lie not in personal failings but in oppressive social structures and relations” (Danso, 2015, p. 573)
- Anti-oppressive paradigm informs our thinking so that we can critique and interrogate systems of power, hegemony within higher education that actively marginalize and oppress students.



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# Relational Teaching

- Centres the educator-learner, teacher-student relationship in pedagogy
- “A practice wherein connection and disconnection with students, power, identity, and emotion shape the teaching and learning endeavor.” (Schwartz, 2022)
- Authenticity, trust, empathy, connection, common humanity are the foundations
- Creates learning spaces where students feel able to take risks in their learning and assessments.

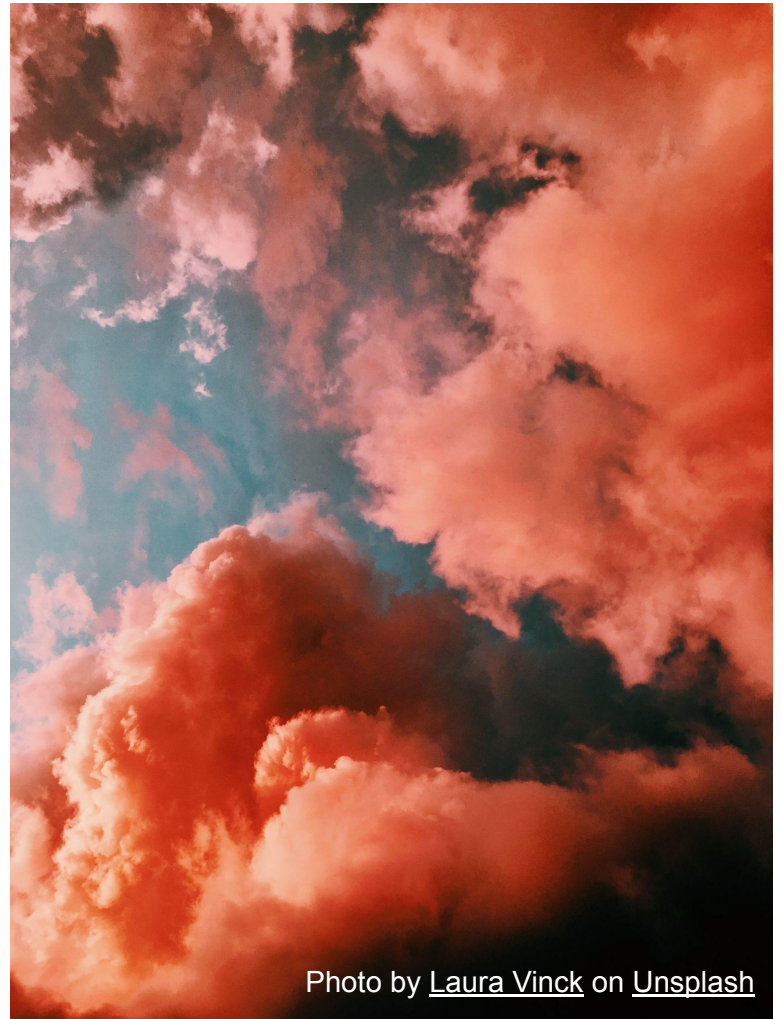


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# Why Anti-Oppression & Relational Teaching Matter

- Creates space for diverse student perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom, which enriches belonging and student learning experiences
- Fosters collaborative educational spaces between educator and student (Noddings, 2002), where students are motivated by this agency in their learning.
- Culturally, ideologically and socially relevant curricula that are more effective in enabling the academic development of all students (Caraballo & Soleimany, 2018, p. 83)



# Other tools: Critical appraisal & critical reflexivity

## Critical appraisal

- Critical - “exercising or involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation”  
[www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)
- To challenge, contest, question, reflect, think
- Evaluate assertions made and to appraise the broader contextual factors informing these assertions (Hammell, 2017)
- Critique of systems, contexts
  - Who benefits? Why? Who designed these? Why? What ideologies are present? How do they impact students? Why?

## Critical reflexivity

- Unpacking of our own positionality as educators.
- “...finding strategies to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others... it is becoming aware of the limits of our knowledge... (Bolton, 2018, p. 13-14)

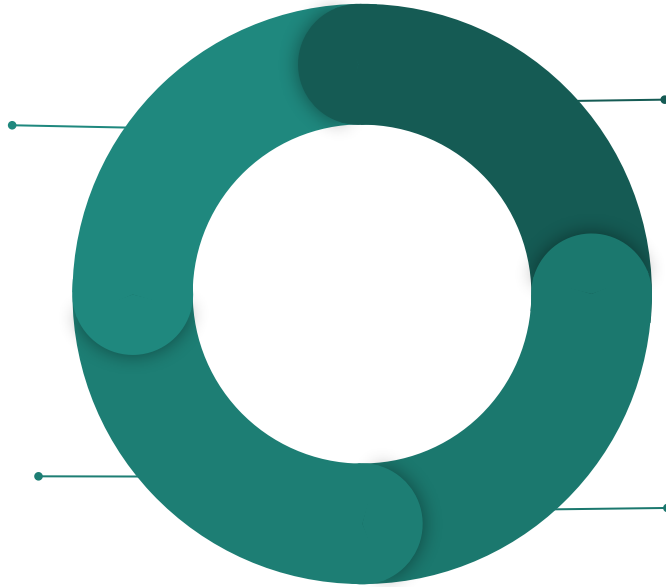
# Our Approach

## Relational Teaching

Centring relationship,  
humanity

## Anti-Oppression

Interrogate and  
problematize systems of  
oppression in higher  
education



## Critical Appraisal

Active questioning of  
contextual factors shaping  
student assessment.

## Critical Reflexivity

Critical knowing of your  
positionality.



Examples: Educator & Student perspectives

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OSOT 511 example:  
Critical Creative  
Project or  
Summative Test

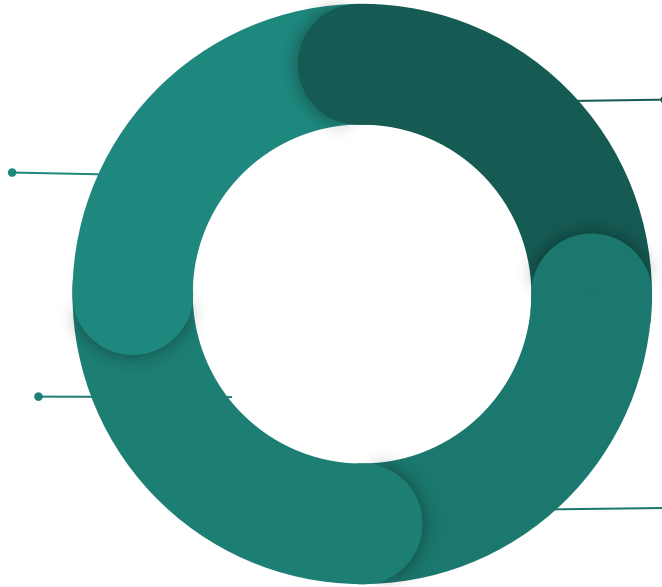
# Food, Nutrition, and Health 200 - Examples

## Critical Appraisal

Intro to Food Science  
About 100 students  
6 weeks in July and August  
90% from outside the Faculty

## Critical Reflexivity

Frugal upbringing  
Carnivore, Local foods  
My 'science' education  
Drifted away from the industry



## Relational Teaching

With me: pre-class survey  
With self: their learning goals  
With fellow students: team contract (survey)  
With community: interviews

## Anti-Oppression

One real deadline - five days before final exam

# Critiquing a Traditional Student Assessment

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# Applying an Anti-Oppressive & Relational Lens

## Critical Appraisal & Reflexivity

- Why do you do this assessment? Who designed it?
- What learning outcome(s) are you evaluating on this assessment?
- Does this assessment align with your values?

## Anti-Oppression

- Does the design of the assessment advantage or disadvantage certain students? How? Why?
- How are students a part of this assessment? Why?

## Relational

- What does the assessment tell students about their role in their education?
- What does it tell them about their worth? Their value?

Applying an Anti-Oppressive & Relational Lens

**Judy's FNH 200 - End of the Term Research Paper**

~ 100 students

6 weeks in July and August

90% from outside the Faculty

# Applying an Anti-Oppressive & Relational Lens

## Judy's FNH 200 - End of the Term Research Paper

### Critical Appraisal & Reflexivity

- Why do you do this assessment? Who designed it? **Judy**
- What learning outcome(s) are you evaluating on this assessment? **Yes**
- Does this assessment align with your values?
  - **Missing "LIFE"**

### Anti-Oppression

- Advantage or disadvantage certain students? How? Why?
  - **Science Student**
  - **Outgoing**
- How are students a part of this assessment? Why?
  - **Not really**

### Relational

- Student's role in their education? **Not much**
- What does it tell them about their worth? Their value?  
**Measured by grade**

# Applying an Anti-Oppressive & Relational Lens

## Judy's FNH 200 - End of the Term Research Paper

~ 100 students

6 weeks in July and August

90% from outside the Faculty

- **“Missing LIFE”** Added option - Community interview, anyone they know who work in the food industry
- **Science Student, Outgoing:**
  - Team Contract (survey), with questions about academic strengths, hobbies, obligations in the summer, etc
  - Formative and summative Peer Evaluation
- **Part of Assessment:**
  - Clear rubrics
  - option to opt-out
- **Role in Education:**
  - Helping the community members
  - Helping each other
  - Contributing to exam questions

### All Due Dates Are Guidelines only

- For all assessments
- Ultimate date is 5 days before the final exams



# Let's Give it a Try: Critiquing a Traditional Student Assessment from OSOT 511

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# Applying an Anti-Oppressive & Relational Lens

## Katie's OSOT 511- Critical Appraisal Paper

### Critical Appraisal & Reflexivity

- Why do you do this assessment? Who designed it?
- What learning outcome(s) are you evaluating on this assessment?
- Does this assessment align with your values?

### Anti-Oppression

- Does the design of the assessment advantage or disadvantage certain students? How? Why?
- How are students a part of this assessment? Why?

### Relational

- What does the assessment tell students about their role in their education?
- What does it tell them about their worth? Their value?

Your Turn

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## Your turn

In random pairs and triads, you will be assigned to a Breakout room. Once you are in the room, please consider these questions:

1. What assessment(s) would you like to change? Why?
2. What is stopping you? *Consider macro, meso, and micro levels.*

Please contribute your thoughts on the Google Slides (link shared in Chat).

We will structure the next activity based on your responses.

About 10 minutes

# Begin your re-design - applying the approach

- Breakout room with the following topics, please choose your own adventure.
- Topics:
  - To be added by Judy based on what they share in breakout room
  - Topic 1
  - Topic 2
  - Topic 3
- Once you are in the room, please share your thought using any prompt questions on the following slide

# Applying an Anti-Oppressive & Relational Lens

## Critical Appraisal & Reflexivity

## Anti-Oppression

## Relational

## Action

- Why do you do this assessment? Who designed it?
- What learning outcome(s) are you evaluating on this assessment?
- Does this assessment align with your values?
- Does the design of the assessment advantage or disadvantage certain students? How? Why?
- How are students a part of this assessment? Why?
- What does the assessment tell students about their role in their education?
- What does it tell them about their worth? Their value?
- What is a first step that feels most doable (i.e. you're 70% sure you can do it).
- What resources do you need? Where can you find these?
- What emotions come up for you? What fears might you have? Why? What resources do you have to mitigate these?

# Sharing & Discussion

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# Key Takeaways: MOT graduate students

*Nicole*

- Every student learns differently - choice and agency can help to mitigate power structures in our learning. It can also help role model for us as future health care professionals!

*Leeza*

- Having a choice gives us the opportunity to direct our learning! I did not realize that I was under the assumption that professors go through the university to set the curriculum for a course... I did not realize that they have choice too! What do they want to see from their students?

*Parm:*

- The power of choice can allow students to feel at ease and in control of their knowledge. Especially in a professional setting we all have a certain way of doing things not one is better than the other but having the opportunity to choose is where we can thrive.



# Gratitude

“Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process”

(hooks, 2001, p. 21)

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