Assessment and Equity: How to Consider ‘Fairness’ in the Classroom Space

A Heuristic on Equity (an abridged version borrowed from Asao Inoue’s *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*):

1) **Purposes**- What various purposes for learning are made *explicit* about the assessment of students’ writing? How involved are students in constructing and articulating the purposes for each assessment process?

2) **Rubric-Building**- How are codes and expectations for writing constructed, articulated to students, and justified to them as appropriate expectations of the course? Can the rubric be more than standards and be dimensions of exploration, for instance?

3) **Power**- How is power distributed in the classroom space? How much agency do students have? How are vulnerable students (students of color, quiet students, students with disability, etc.) conscientiously encouraged to participate in the writing process? How do you use your own power as a teacher to help marginalized students and how do you share power with students?

4) **Products**- How does what you want students to produce center around equity?

**Heuristic in Practice:**

**Classroom Rubrics Designed around Equity**: One approach could be designing classroom rubrics with equity in mind. This could mean working with students in class to design rubrics and/or considering how each aspect of your rubric might hinder or help marginalized students.

- Spending class time discussing what should and should not be on rubrics
- Using the heuristic above to discuss rubrics with students

**Individual Grade Plans**: Another option is to work with students, one-on-one, on individual grade plans for the class or the assignment. This means you and the individual student would come up with ways to assess their writing, noting what the student wants to achieve and what’s important to them as a student.
• These plans emphasize individual grading criteria instead of a one-size-fits-all approach
• Of course, these take much more work on your part and might not be best for larger classes.

**Contract Grades:** Recent research in writing studies has altered the way we think about grading and writing assessment. Many now view the process, or the labor, as more important as the product.

• Research illustrates how unreliable and inconsistent people are with grading writing and some of this might be built around unconscious bias (Elbow 1997, Bowman 1973, and Tchudi 1997)
• Contracts built around labor in the classroom space—(absences, late assignments, missed assignments, or assignments off topic)
• Students meet course goals and outcomes at even a higher rate than in product-based classes