LEARNING TO LIVE WITH

DIVERSITY

An Initiative of Centre for Gender Equity/Equality
University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

Funded by UNICEF

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH DIVERSITY

A course with 15 hours of duration to be delivered to the university community of all state universities in Sri Lanka

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University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

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LEARNING TO LIVE WITH DIVERSITY

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Message from the Chairman, University Grants Commission

It is with great pleasure that I write this message for the launch of the manual for the course Learning to Live with Diversity. This course, now in its 03rd year in implementation, has become a crucial instrument with which awareness about gender and diversity is disseminated across the university system.

During the process of creating knowledge leaders, focusing on good governance, quality teaching, high impact research and industry engagement is quintessential. As an institution dedicated to providing educational leadership in Sri Lanka, it is evident that promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion among the university community is paramount for achieving the vision of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka.

The recent research study conducted by the University Grants Commission regarding the incidence of Ragging and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) provides significant findings on the causes of such unacceptable actions.

While the university administration is compelled to initiate disciplinary measures as short-term solutions to violence related to diversity and lack of inclusion, more long-term and sustainable approaches are necessary to stem incidents of ragging and SGBV within universities. This initiative, launched by the Center for Gender Equity/ Equality at the University Grants Commission, is an important intervention in this direction, providing useful tools to universities in fulfilling their commitment to the zero tolerance of all forms of violence within the university system.

Senior Professor Kapila Seneviratne
Chairman
University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

24.02.2025

Message from the Former Chairman, University Grants Commission

The higher education landscape has shifted significantly in the last few decades with aggressive job markets demanding more skills, more knowledge, and more positive attitudes from graduates and the broader society demanding that state universities produce graduates who are responsible towards society. While the last few decades of higher education have focused on developing employable graduates through the state universities in Sri Lanka, it is becoming increasingly clear that socio-emotional skills linked to ethics, respect, tolerance for diversity, and critical and creative thinking will become the key attributes that graduates will have to possess in the coming decades. Employers are no longer looking for individuals who have mere book knowledge, but those who can apply that knowledge into practice and who treat the self and others ethically and respectfully.

The Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) identifies several areas of skills that are related to the attitudinal shifts in graduates that are linked to communication, networking, lifelong learning, etc. The objectives of this course have been developed to align with the SLQF. Quality no longer refers simply to imparting knowledge and skills but also to creating inclusive learning spaces that are free of violence and hierarchies that prohibit true and independent learning. Thus, it is my pleasure as the Chairman of the UGC, to present this textbook as well as the course that has been developed by a team of academics from the university system under the aegis of the CGEE for the university community in Sri Lanka.

The University Grants Commission has attempted to stem ragging and violence within universities through various disciplinary and punitive measures. The production of this course and this textbook is an attempt to address the problem through a preventive educational approach, where students will be given an opportunity to reflect on the sources of violence that are prevalent in the university system. Moreover, it gives agency to students to learn about differences and inequalities from a global and political framework. It is my hope that it will help students to think carefully about their responsibility towards themselves, the broader university community, and society at large.

Senior Professor. Sampath Amaratunge
Former Chairman
University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka

Message from Representative, UNICEF, Sri Lanka

The learning environment a university provides is a decisive point for young people both for their careers and lives. In Sri Lanka, the university system is also an equalizer that bridges all community gaps; it is designed to provide equal opportunities to all its students from across the country and create the space for youth from different backgrounds to experience the social diversity that Sri Lanka is proud of.

Ensuring that the learning environment remains conducive to help young people reach their full potential is important – especially given the diverse social and cultural settings the state universities offer. While appreciating that diversity enriches and stimulates, it is important to understand that for most students it is the first true experience of a society's convergence. Therefore, developing the quality of coexistence between ethnicities and cultures, religious and political beliefs, and social and economic classes, in the university setting is imperative.

Education has been increasingly recognized as a key factor in peace and nation building processes. To underline its importance in that regard, explicit targets and indicators have been included under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Education. The course entitled 'Learning to live with diversity' is a prime example of the UGC's commitment towards this goal. Designed to transmit knowledge and shape attitudes of individuals to help them cope with change and diversity, this module uses effective and powerful interactive activities to encourage youth to explore common interests beyond society's dividing lines. We hope that participation in this learning will underpin wider societal collaboration amongst students, even beyond their tertiary education.

UNICEF is pleased to have provided technical and financial support to this important intervention. We highly appreciate the commitment of the Chairman, University Grants Commission and the Director, Centre for Gender Equity and Equality and the team in producing this extremely useful module for students.

I wish 'happy learning' and good luck to all the students!

Christian Skoog
Representative
UNICEF, Sri Lanka

Message from the Director, Center for Gender Equity/Equality, University Grants Commission

It has been an honour to me to work on the course titled "Living with Diversity" that is designed to address violence and SGBVs in the Sri Lankan university system. The course builds up on the visionary goals developed by the CGEE in its establishment and current practice. It attempts to mainstream gender by including key conceptual ideas relevant to understanding gender and its constructedness as well as the way it intersects with other forms of domination.

This course and textbook are aligned with the following goals of the CGEE: I trust that following this course will enable students and the broader university community to become familiar with the goals and the work of the CGEE. We hope that this course will help mainstream the values associated with CGEE with its commitment to eliminating SGBV as well as ragging and related practices that are violent.

I would like to thank the Gender Focal Points of each university, the Standing Committee of the CGEE, the SLQF committee and various academics and artists who supported this project with various comments, inputs, suggestions and encouragement. It is thanks to the vision and the commitment of those who occupy these important positions that this course was developed. I am grateful for the general support received from our university community generally for this project.

This course can only become a reality in the hands of the trainers, lecturers, and students who will bring it alive in actual classroom practice. It is designed to give agency to learners and allow learning through dialogue so that both teachers and students will learn from the experience. It is my hope that this course will help to cultivate a culture of respect, resilience, non-violence, and tolerance of differences throughout the university system.

Prof. Hemamalie Gunatilaka
Former Director, Center for Gender Equity/Equality

University Grants Commission

Commission Member, University Grants Commission

Professor in Business Administration, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Message from the Authors

It is with great pleasure that we present to you this textbook that is designed to support the course titled "Living with Diversity" introduced to Sri Lankan state universities. It has been designed for undergraduates of the university system in Sri Lanka to help our graduates develop important socio-emotional skills related to living in a diverse and multicultural society. Although the course primarily targets undergraduate students, it is designed to help members of our university community, including academics, administrators, and other staff, to reflect on diversity and contribute to developing a more tolerant, ethical, and respectful environment in which everyone can thrive and be productive. As we know, our universities are now quite diverse, with members from very different class, caste, ethnic, and religious backgrounds are part of the university system. They carry varied gender identities as well as individual bodily abilities. Thus, learning to live with such diversity as students and community members of the university is an important skill.

Diversity, inclusion, and tolerance are key liberal values that are part of the global cultural landscape. Not only are our students required to navigate such differences as students, but also, they are also required to adhere to such values in the increasingly global job market. Graduates with high socio-emotional skills are sought out by most potential employers. Moreover, Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) define development models that are adopted by most countries today. As a result, most educational institutions are called upon to show that graduates from these institutions can understand and respond to situations that promote SDGs. This course draws on the following SDGs in its design and delivery.

Goal 04: Quality education Goal

05: Gender equality

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities

Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities

Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

In addition to conforming to SDGs, this course also cites the values enshrined in the Kannangara Report (1943), which outlines the values associated with free education. This document outlines free education as an instrument to cultivate social equity and equality among people from various backgrounds. We consider it important that current students be aware of the rationale behind proposing free education in our country. Below, we quote a relevant passage at length to show you the importance of being aware of cultural differences and social disparities that this system aims to minimize:

The character of an educational system depends upon the character of the society for which it is designed.

"We have assumed that our task was to recommend an educational system suitable for a democracy … This appears to us to mean two things.

First, it means that the individual must be helped to achieve the highest degree of physical, mental and moral development of which he is capable irrespective of his wealth or social status.

Secondly, it means that the individual as a result of his education should be able to use his abilities for the good of the nation in the fullest possible measure and should be able to pass judgement on affairs of State and exercise intelligently the franchise that the State has conferred upon him. In other words, democracy requires in the first place a minimum standard of education and, beyond that, equality of educational opportunity" (Report of the Special Committee on Education, 1943).

This project developed out of a research study on 'Prevalence of Ragging and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sri Lankan State Universities' conducted by the Center for Gender Equity/Equality of the University Grants Commission in 2018/2019. Ragging and violence often results from students' inability to consider class, racial, and gendered differences that exist within the student body, and not being aware of the various inequalities that exist among students in the system and how those differences lead to conflicts. We believe that ultimately, to curtail violence and abuse within the university system, it is important that we have students who are empathetic, caring, and resilient. Thus, the approach taken towards diversity in this course is to address how diversity is often linked to social inequalities. Thereby, the course explores the way social differences are often premised upon social inequalities and imagine practices of inclusivity that can help alleviate the way such social inequalities are reproduced within the power structures of the university. All four major religions practiced in Sri Lanka offer us valuable paths to attain these qualities. However, we also propose a spirituality that will help the members of the university community to live ethical and meaningful lives. Throughout this course, we argue for values based on humility and friendship cemented through positive artistic and cultural practices.

We have designed this course according to principles of critical engagement, dialogue, and leaner-driven teaching and learning. The course design will give agency to students to take ownership of the material. We hope that they will bring their own cultural and social experiences into the process of learning that will enrich the learning experience of all involved, including teachers, facilitators, and peers.

We would like to thank the UGC, UNICEF, and the CGEE who have supported this endeavour with great enthusiasm and insight. Without their continued support, input, and encouragement, this project would not have seen the light of day. We would also like to thank the academics from our university system who gave very generous comments throughout various meetings conducted to receive comments and inputs about the content of the course.

A big thank you also goes to the various artists and producers of films, TV clips, and music used in this course who generously granted permission to use this material free of charge.

It is our hope that students, especially those from monocultural backgrounds, will benefit from this course, learning the importance of living in diverse social and work environments and negotiating differences effectively and productively. Thus, we present this textbook with great hope that this course will have a ripple effect reaching beyond the university community to the broader society. We trust that it will contribute to creating an educated class in our country that is also developed ethically and emotionally so that the best cultural values and diversity of this country will command our social life.

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Acknowledgments

Lesson 1 (Part I)

Introduction to
Learning to Live with Diversity

This lesson consists of two parts.

Part I: Introduction to the Course
Part II: Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion

Lesson 1 (Part I): Introduction to the Course

About the Course

We no longer live in isolated homogeneous communities, where everyone shares the same set of beliefs, cultural norms, language, religion, history, or class identity. Today's globalized world brings us in contact with people who are very different from us, and whose values, ideas, life goals, and socio-cultural identities differ greatly from ours.

Thus, the course aims to understand how to live with those who are different from us and how we perceive diversity as a strength rather than a challenge or a barrier.

Course Objectives

The objectives of the course are:

1. To develop the socio-emotional skills of undergraduate students.

2. To develop graduates who can interact effectively with the larger community by becoming more empathetic, ethical, and respectful towards differences.

3. To provide Training to Trainers who can deliver the modules of this course successfully, and effect behavioural changes in students, and academic and non-academic staff.

4. To develop a sense of inner ethical and spiritual discipline in participants by strengthening their sense of self-identity.

5. To develop graduates who can adapt effectively to local and global work environments that are diverse.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, participants will be able to,

1. Define the concept of diversity and identify and respect different individual, group or community identities.

2. Demonstrate their ability to live in societies that are diverse and their ability to value differences as a strength of a particular community.

3. Communicate effectively across cultural and other socio-political differences in non-violent ways.

4. Network effectively with others from diverse backgrounds, by helping participants to move out of their socially comfortable zones with confidence and respect.

5. Demonstrate the ability to adapt to new social situations and respond positively to change, especially in the workplace, by being socially and culturally flexible, not subscribing to stereotypes, and being open-minded when encountering differences.

Course Content

This course is organized around several themes that focus on various forms of diversity that exist in our society. It focuses on the way identities are linked to gender, ethno-religious, or other cultural differences, class, caste, or other inequalities as well as our bodily and sexual differences. It invites participants to explore these differences and to see how they may play out in violent ways within the university culture. The course proposes that these differences can be turned into strengths to build understanding and acceptance among members of the university community.

Part number	Lesson	Activity Prompt
Introduction	1. Introduction to learning to live with diversity a. Introduction to the course b. Introduction to diversity and inclusion	Interpreting an image
Part 1	2. Introduction to gender diversity	Songs that depict gender stereotypes "Konde Bandala Ape Putha" and "Mihikatha Nalawala"
	3. Gender in society	Video clip of Meghan Markle addressing the UN
	4. Bodies and rights to the body	Video clips on consent and body image
	5. Sexual identities	Interview with Bhoomi Harendran Film clip from "Funny Boy"

Part number	Lesson	Activity Prompt
	6. Individual differences: Neurodiversity and different abilities	Video clips on 'who I am' and 'Human Neurodiversity Should Be Celebrated, Not Treated as a Disorder'
Part II	7. Class and caste identities	Film clip from "Paangshu"
	8. Language as identity	Regi Siriwardena's poem "Colonial Cameo"
	9. Mobility: Between the rural and the urban environments	Clips from the tele drama "Thanamalwila Kollek"
	10. Ethno-religious identities and diversity	The song "Enjoy Enjami" and "Nube Amma"
	11. Accessibility across the digital divide	A group projection of a future university
Part III	12. Organisational power and politics	Writing a short description of an individual experience of a power related issue within personal relationship
Part IV	13. Non-violent behaviour and affirmative interventions	TED Talk by Jamila Raqib on "non-violent resistance"
	14. Spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity	Video clips on Yoga and Tai Chi
	15. Living with diversity: your perspective	Song on identity and individual uniqueness "Mongoliyanuwane"

Pedagogical approach

As students or as academic or administrative staff members of the university, you have experienced a key social location in which people from very different social backgrounds come together.

This course aims to facilitate discussion on how learning to live with diversity can enrich our university culture.

The lack of awareness about why such diversity can be a strength in a community leads to non-inclusive practices and prevents it from reaching its full potential. The rich experiences that diverse members bring into our community can be used to make the community a more intellectually engaging, inclusive place that leads members towards holistic growth.

The course uses activities and various audio-visual materials, online discussions, and examples from cultural texts that facilitate the learning process.

Participants are invited to engage with the materials critically reflecting on their cultural practices and being open to self-development and change. When delivering the course, facilitators and participants are invited to be creative and use materials that are specific to the context in which they are teaching/learning. The course design allows flexibility for those delivering the course to determine alternative/additional material that will help participants to relate to the concepts better. Its content addresses the idea of diversity at the individual, group, and organizational levels, benefitting the university community at all three levels.

To learn/deliver each lesson of the course, the following materials are available.

1. Lesson plan
2. Detailed lesson -with a description of the contents in the PowerPoint slides
3. PowerPoint slides

Pillars that hold our approach to living with diversity:

- Being empathetic
- Being ethical
- Inner self-discipline/non-violent being
- Identity based on inner values
- Positive communication
- Questioning normative thinking/critical engagement with received ideas
- Developing trust

Approvals Obtained

Prior to finalising the contents of the course, it was presented to the following authorities for feedback and approval.

Forum	Presented date for approval
University Grants Commission (UGC)	28th October 2021
Standing Committee on Gender Equity/ Equality	2nd November 2021
Standing Committee on Quality Assurance	10th December 2021
Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD)	25th February 2022

Lesson 1 (Part II)

Introduction to
Diversity and Inclusion
Lesson Plan

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Demonstrate their understanding of what living with diversity is.
2. Identify why learning to live with diversity is important.
3. Discuss the ways in which social identity is multifaceted and what the building blocks of diversity are.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
	This lesson will introduce you to some of the concepts related to diversity and help you to understand what makes that diversity a positive experience and how to live in a diverse society.
20 minutes	**Activity and discussion**
	Discussion of image. What are the identities represented in this image?
	Human faces capture both our commonality and our uniqueness. How does this image emphasize how we are all the same, but different? How does this challenge us to think about diversity in our societies? (This conversation can continue on the blog).
20 minutes	**Concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to diversity and inclusion.

15 minutes	Reflections and checklist
Reflection	• I can define the concept of diversity • I can discuss the way society is made up of various identities and how they work together • I can explain why those differences are important and are a strength of any society

Lesson 1 (Part II)

Introduction to
Diversity and Inclusion
Detailed Lesson

Introduction

This lesson will introduce you to some of the concepts related to diversity and help you to understand what makes that diversity a positive experience and how to live in a diverse society.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Demonstrate their understanding of what living with diversity is.
2. Identify why learning to live with diversity is important.
3. Discuss the ways in which social identity is multifaceted and what the building blocks of diversity are.

Activity

Let us begin by looking at the following image.

What are the identities represented in this image?

Discussion

Human faces capture both our commonality and our uniqueness. How does this image emphasize how we are all the same, but different? How does this challenge us to think about diversity in our societies? (This conversation can continue on to the blog).

Diversity is Central to Our Society

Modern society is highly diverse. We meet people from very different backgrounds in our everyday experiences. Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of sociology, theorized the way that the division of labour (or the organization of society into different classes) paved the way to a society in which people have different interests even as they live together in society. Today, this situation is much more complex. Rapid urbanization leads to people from different rural and urban origins living together. Modern transportation and communication systems bring us in touch with people who come from radically different backgrounds together, either physically or virtually. The reality of globalization means that there are vast numbers of people always on the move, coming into contact with cultures and people who are very different from the backgrounds they are familiar with. In such situations, knowing how to relate to people who are different from us is not only a daily necessity, but also a very important skill.

Culture

Identity, difference, and diversity are, ultimately, operative at the level of culture. What is culture?

Culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, assumptions and practices that distinguishes societies and marks their uniqueness.

Geert Hofstede defines culture as collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.

Thus, culture is a way that people can be distinguished from others bearing their unique marks. It is collective and evolving historically.

Diversity signals the coming together of such different cultures, particularly in modern societies. In today's globalized world, diversity itself has become a site where culture is practiced.

Many disagreements that emerge within the university often arise from the lack of understanding among those whose cultures are different from each other.

Cultures are not fixed and unchanging but evolve with the practices of those who live it. Cultures that do not stagnate adapt quickly to new and global situations to ensure a better life for its members.

Cultures that are open to diversity evolve better allowing equal participation of different social groups to create a more productive society for all.

Diversity and Inclusion in the University Context

The university community is a highly diverse community. Students, academics and people from very different backgrounds converge within the university. These groups may have individual and/or collective interests that may clash with the general intellectual culture of the university. In such situations, it is important that all members of the university community be made aware of how such diversity can be managed. For example, when a student first arrives at the university, it is very important that other students, staff, and lecturers be made to understand that they may feel insecure, lonely, or uncertain, even stressed or depressed about the new situation. They must be taught to understand and respect the newcomer's identity so that they can adjust smoothly to the new society feeling confident that they will be accepted for who they are and that feeling that they will not be judged for their identity. Empathy is central to such a process. If such empathy is not recognized as an institutional value, both newcomers and seniors will only know violent means of initiating students into the new culture. If they only know hierarchy, they will try to reproduce hierarchy within the student body. Similarly, if the university welcomes diversity—that it values people from all backgrounds and accommodates the needs of all those who enter that community—then students and others within the community will shift their attitudes to make the institutional culture more accommodating, sensitive, and respectful.

Our community includes people of various genders/sexual orientations, ethno-religious identities, political ideologies, bodily abilities, socio-economic status/classes etc. Engaging with these differences will cultivate an intellectual culture that does not sweep differences aside but work through them.

For example, if there is someone who is of a non-binary gender, the institution's sensitivity towards that person's acceptance can go a long way in not only making that student feel valued and respected but also in teaching others that that is the accepted and proper behaviour towards someone who is different. If, on the other hand, the institution marginalizes that identity, fails to meet the needs of that person, or even creates a situation in which that person is persecuted for who s/he is, it teaches students also to act violently towards those whose identities are different from the norm. It then builds a false hierarchy between the normative and the non- normative that can lead to marginalization, abuse, or even violence.

In broader society, hierarchies based on social differences lead to violence and conflicts that are destructive to society. As a country, we have not only witnessed a civil war, inter-religious mistrust and disharmony, class-based and gender-based violence that result from inequalities that are a result of such hierarchies. We have also seen the way the university community has struggled with institutionalized forms of violence where students and staff are subjected to various forms of abuse, neglect, or even torture.

One thing to remember is that hierarchies that lead to inequalities can have a disastrous impact on the way that society allows individual freedoms and group identities that lead to

a severe breakdown in the social climate of the institution. When we speak of diversity, we cannot speak of a false harmony where identities, particularly minorities, are suppressed in favour of tenuous harmony. What is truly important is that we acknowledge differences and create a value system that does not lead to institutionalized inequalities. Such democracy should be at the heart of our concept of diversity.

As a place of intellectual inquiry, a university should be a place of intellectual equality. If people are stigmatized for who they are, then only the ideas of some will be held as being valuable in that community. Intellectually and ethically, this can only lead to a cultural blind spot with the university becoming a kind of a hall of mirrors echoing the same ideas without ever having them challenged. Intellectual inquiry thrives on disagreement and dialogue and not on obedience or silence. As such, diversity is always a strength where differences can lead to good conversations and more inclusive behaviours.

Unlike in a religious or other community where everyone is expected to be similar in thoughts and action, an intellectual community treats differences as a strength and uses them productively to create communities in which individuals can belong, without erasing their individual identities/personalities.

By the time students arrive at the university, their individual identities are well developed. Thus, as adults, changes in their behaviour should come from conviction and not habit or force. Rather than erase individuality, a healthy diverse environment encourages engaging with ideas and practices that may conflict with that personality in order to understand, argue, and accept if one wishes. It also teaches students that you can always say "no" to normative ideas or exclusive ideas that one does not find convincing. These are all skills that are crucial to living in a diverse society.

Why is learning to live with diversity important to you?

Learning to live with diversity is important to anyone. But let us take members of our very specific community, the university community. As we know, not all universities in our system are similar. Each one has its history, its own cultural and political identity, as well as its academic focus. So, there cannot be a common set of rules that can apply to all universities when it comes to shared moral or cultural standards. Nevertheless, we are bound to each by one basic common interest: discipline, particularly the intellectual discipline offered to someone who engages in higher education. Ideally, university education should teach us to value ideas, and place importance on critical and creative thinking. And yet, these shared academic and ethical values can come into conflict with individual or group beliefs, institutionalized practices among students, staff, and administrators, and even lead to problems in our university system. Because the university typically comprises of students from various backgrounds, learning to negotiate with those differences is an important skill you need to possess, whether you are a student, an academic or non-academic staff member, an administrator.

If you are a student:

Learning to live with differences will help you to see that there is always more than one perspective to things.

Your learning environment will become enriched greatly. For example, if you study in a class where someone from another religion is present, and the class allows a student to engage with that difference productively, a student will learn how to see the world from a perspective that is different from his/her own experience. Or a classroom that is comprised of students from both urban and rural backgrounds can help the students to compare and contrast the experiences of peers who come from a background that is different and learn about the various experiences of their peers.

This will give a sound understanding of the practical implications of what one is learning and help a student to learn how to apply that knowledge to a variety of contexts. Pedagogically speaking, learning that there is more than one way of life itself is a very important lesson.

Today's corporate culture highly values networking skills. Modern culture sees the ability to build broader networks as a form of social capital. When a graduate enters a workplace, he/she will have to necessarily engage with people who are different from them. Therefore, learning how to engage with social differences will be very helpful to a student.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) introduced the concept of social capital to refer to the non-monetary capital that individuals accrue through their social status, family background, and connections. Social capital generally points us to the non-monetary, intangible, but very present inequalities in society. For example, a student who comes from a low-income background may learn about the cultural habits of those who come from relatively wealthier classes. This will enable that student not only to make friends across class differences but also examine such differences critically. Sometimes, we mystify the cultures of affluent classes simply because we are unable to understand them and examine them critically. Once we get to know people from different classes better, we may also be able to absorb or reject aspects of that culture that otherwise remain mysterious to us.

If you are an academic staff member:

Creating an inclusive classroom is a core part of pedagogical practice. Part of the challenge for a teacher is how to create a classroom where such differences are not seen as drawbacks but as an opportunity to examine the subject knowledge a student gains against a real-life context. Diverse classrooms allow students to grow as individuals by learning from experiences of others. They allow teachers to generate productive conversations about the realities within which the subject knowledge will have to be practiced someday by their students.

Overall, inclusive classrooms lead to a better teaching-learning environment, where lecturers will teach more than just book knowledge to students; differences enable real life conversations that can emerge from a healthy discussion between different life experiences.

Good teachers recognize that students come in various shapes, with various types of abilities and outlooks, and various levels of preparation for university education. While some will come from a background where there is a library at home, others will see a library for the first time when they arrive at the university.

Academics who embrace diversity can create a healthy workplace in which each person is treated with respect and accepted for who they are. Self-worth will be measured, not against normative hierarchies that already exist within society, but on the principle that each individual is important, and adds something valuable to the work culture. This will build trust and respect among colleagues, which is vital to a healthy academic culture. A key aspect of learning to live with diversity is not only respecting one's academic colleagues but also students. Today, there is a great hierarchy between students and lecturers that is sustained through very unhealthy and unethical behaviours that can sometimes border on becoming abusive. Learning to respect others, especially students, and acquiring the skill to remain professional while being non-hierarchical can lead to long-term benefits to teachers: such teachers will become respected for who they are, rather than for the power they hold over a student.

While students gain most knowledge in a classroom, the general culture of student life teaches students the most important life lessons that will remain with them throughout their professional lives.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

You can enhance a student's experience of the university drastically by treating students with respect, being sensitive to their cultural identity, and by providing a quality professional service. This will make people who provide broader student services trusted officials that students can turn to for help.

Moreover, treating each other with respect and the ability of even those who are at the lowest level of administrative hierarchies to live with respect can alter the work environment for an administrative staff member drastically. Professional and ethical behaviour is central to creating a happy working environment. And such behaviour can only be cultivated in an institutional setting where all members are sensitive to diversity and respect differences. For example, an administrator who takes the trouble to ensure that a student with a disability has adequate access to university facilities is not only fulfilling his/her professional duty but also enhancing the quality of the education provided for all members of society, who will take such sensitivity as a social norm rather as a sign of sympathy or goodness. Ultimately, it is administrators and academic staff who have the most say in determining the quality of student life: when such staff members are also sensitive to diversity, the institutional culture can be transformed in significant ways.

Food for thought

Listen to the song api kawuruda and reflect on how you can relate to the concept of diversity to understand how much you know about yourself and others.

This is the story that will unfold throughout this course.

Reflections and Checklist

1. I can define the concept of diversity
2. I can discuss the way society is made up of various identities and how they work together
3. I can explain why those differences are important and are a strength of any society

Lesson 2
Introduction to
Gender Diversity

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;
1. Demonstrate their understanding that "gender is a social construct".
2. Discuss the ways in which gender differences affect the lives of people.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
Introduction	In the last lesson, we discussed how diversity is important to our lives and why learning to live with diversity is useful for students, lecturers, and administrators. In this class, we will learn how understanding concepts related to gender will enhance your ability to live with diversity.
20 minutes	**Activity**
Activity & Discussion	• Let us examine more closely how gender differences are presented in the following songs. • How is maleness/femaleness presented by these songs? • Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how your perception of gender identity has changed/not changed or been challenged. https://youtu.be/ BUqKAP9-gPk - Konde bandala ape putha https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcBBO-H7BfM- Mihikatha nalawala
	Discussion
	• In the first song, a mother speaks about the physical changes shown by her son after he becomes accustomed to the ways of the city. She notes how his voice, his clothes, and his accessories have changed. How do these challenge the idea that a person's sexual identity is natural? (This conversation can continue on to the blog). • List the characteristics of maleness and femaleness highlighted in these two songs.

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to gender diversity.
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can define the concept of gender • I can discuss how gender is socially constructed • I can explain why understanding that gender is socially constructed is important for living in a diverse society

Introduction

In the last lesson, we discussed how diversity is important to our lives and why learning to live with diversity is useful for students, lecturers, and administrators. In this class, we will learn how understanding concepts related to gender will enhance your ability to live with diversity.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will be able to;

1. Demonstrate their understanding that "gender is a social construct".
2. Discuss the ways in which gender differences affect the lives of people.

Definitions

The French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (2014) has said, in her book, The Second Sex, that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman." This now famous statement is at the heart of the way we understand gender today.

The WHO (2022) states that "gender refers to characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed while sex refers to those that are biologically determined" Let us try to understand what these definitions tell us.

Simone de Beauvoir is suggesting that the body we are born with does not determine our being. Instead, we BECOME a woman (or man) by the way we exist socially. The WHO's definition tells us that men and women become gendered socially. That is, there is nothing biologically essential about whether we are men or women. Instead, our gender identity is built upon social ideas and ideals attributed to men and women as social beings.

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding gender differences and creating social spaces that are inclusive of different genders.

In our everyday lives, we attribute a gender to a person based on their biological body, the way they dress, or any other bodily markers that we culturally associate with men and women. For example, we think that women have long hair and men have deep voices. But we know that men also now have long hair, and some women have deep voices and sometimes their voices are artificially adjusted through technology.

Activity

Let us examine more closely how these differences are presented in the following songs.

- How is maleness/femaleness presented by these songs?

- Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how your perception of gender identity has changed/not changed or been challenged.

    https://youtu.be/BUqKAP9-gPk - Konde bandala ape putha

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcBBO-H7BfM-Mihikatha nalawala

Discussion

- In the first song, a mother speaks about the physical changes shown by her son after he becomes accustomed to the ways of the city. She notes how his voice, his clothes and his accessories have changed. How do these challenge the idea that a person's sexual identity is natural? (This conversation can continue on to the blog)

- List the characteristics of maleness and femaleness highlighted in these two songs.

- We can draw on a few concepts to understand the discussion of the songs:

Gender as a social construct

As we have seen in our discussion, the biological body is only one way in which we attribute a gender to somebody. There are several socially constructed markers of gender that we learn through tradition, culture, upbringing, education etc. But these cultural markers are not true in all cultures across all time. For example, even in Sri Lankan culture, men had long hair in the past. But when colonial ideas became dominant in Sri Lankan culture, men began to cut their hair. But now, with the influence of postmodern cultures, men have again begun to grow their hair. On the other hand, the way women dress changes from culture to culture.

Now let us turn to the social roles that are attributed to these bodies. In our society, we think that because women can have babies and nurture them during their infancy, that women are responsible for raising children. We also think that these roles are derived from the biological body. In reality, however, how childcare and nurturing is organized in a particular society is what determines who should/could raise the child. In today's cultures where the role of providing for the family is shared by both men and women, many households also share the responsibility of housework and childcare. On the other hand, today, we think that women are suited to be teachers. But when our education system first began, many men were teachers, and many of them were outstanding teachers. Similarly, we make social choices, career choices, family choices etc. based on social roles that are attributed to these genders.

Yet, if we understand that gender is socially constructed and that gender roles are created socially (and not biologically) we can begin to see how both men and women can become more active and contribute to society based on their capacities and talents, rather than based on their gender.

What is gender socialization?

Gender socialization refers to how girls and boys are educated/conditioned into becoming men and women.

In our culture, girls and boys learn how to become girls or boys or women and men by the social cues given to them as children. For example, some people say, "boys don't cry" or that "girls are to be seen and not heard." Boys are tough, girls are weak but caring. Sometimes, boys are punished or ridiculed for crying and girls who do not like dolls are thought to be weird by adults. What this does is that it conditions the child into adjusting him/herself to

these expectations and internalizing these expectations for themselves as well. Once these roles are internalized, they do not stop at being just "ideas" but begin to shape their behaviour and the way they relate to others' behaviour.

Gender roles

As we have already seen, gender roles are socially constructed. When boys and girls are socialized into their roles, they begin to perform those roles, first in play, but eventually in reality as adults. Our entire system of thinking of how we share work at the levels of both family and society is eventually shaped by these roles.

Gender roles and social acceptance

Norms about how genders should work also create ideas about what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable behaviour according to the gender of the person. Thus, those who violate gender norms or are perceived as not conforming to socially accepted ideas about gender roles often invite ridicule. They get rejected by society, or even sometimes punished in various ways. For example, think of working mothers who are often blamed by mainstream media for not being "good mothers." Or take the example of men who are out of work because of the dire economic situation in the country. They are then ridiculed as useless men if they become househusbands or even publicly ridiculed as not being "proper" men. Because all of us care about social acceptance and want to feel that we belong, many of us follow the accepted norms about our gender roles without questioning them much. However, these can be severely limiting for some people, particularly if their socially accepted gender role stands in the way of performing to their full potential.

Respectable Femininity

Femininity refers to the culturally constructed image of what a perfect woman is. It is usually thought that femininity is a continuum on which different women occupy different places, but always in relation to an ideal feminine image. Different cultures have different ideas of femininity, and perhaps even different feminine ideals. One way to think about femininity is to consider how film-stars project their femininity. They will adjust their looks, their bodies, their attire, and their body language/gestures in accordance with the ideals of femininity at that particular time. In the second song we listened to, the "ideal" woman is the teacher. Consider how her femininity is brought out: the movement of her hip, the way she puts flowers in her hair, dark flowing hair worn in a bun, wearing a sari, pearls at the neck. The woman's body, her dress, and her body language are all projected in terms of an ideal femininity.

Coupled with the idea of femininity, there is also the idea of respectability. Across history, there have been various ideas of about who a "respectable" woman is. Respectability is often linked to class, where women of higher castes or classes were considered to be more "respectable" than other women. It is not only the demeanour that one reflects through the acquired habits of class that are linked to respectability in women, but also their "character" or what society perceives as normative sexual behaviours. For example, young women who do not live with their parents or who have sexual partners without the consent of parents are

seen as having lost their respectability. It is expected that young women should be closely monitored through the supervision of elders who impose patriarchal control over women, and young women who violate that control are seen to be disrespectable. Particularly in settings where young women move out of their homes, either for employment or education, it is common to find that they seek a certain freedom when it comes to sexual behaviour. Those who do not live according to social norms in such settings are often "painted" as defiled women who have no class and have lost their honour. Even in situations where they are coerced into sexual relationships by partners, superiors, or even teachers/elders, the woman is blamed and is made to take responsibility in case of pregnancy or social stigma.

Moreover, in some settings, violating a woman's sense of respectability itself can be a form of violence used against her: for example, take a woman who is uncomfortable with using obscene language might be forced to repeat such language or publicly humiliated by referring to her body or sexuality during ragging. In these situations, a woman's sense of modesty is used against her and others deprive her of her sense of "respectable femininity," making her feel like a "lesser" woman. We must keep in mind, here, that respectable femininity is not an inner quality of a woman or some innate biological characteristic of "good" women, but a social and cultural means through which women's value is based on arbitrary social norms.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The term "hegemony" refers to the way power works invisibly, without appearing as power, thereby deriving consent. When coupled with the idea of masculinity, it refers to the power that men have in society because they are men. The social system we live in is called a "patriarchy": this means that it is a system in which men have a socially derived advantage over women; it is not a power that they possess individually, but one that is drawn from the fact that we live in a system that is based on the "rule of the father" (which is the meaning of the word patriarchy) or the rule of men more generally. This power attributed to men in patriarchy is "hegemonic" because their power seems to be derived from subtle cultural ideas about masculinity, or what a man is: strong, emotionally controlled, intellectually superior, aggressive, assertive, ambitious, tough. These are seen to be "inherent" to a man, so the power associated with these attributes are transferred to men. Let us consider an example: in a classroom, a man who answers questions repeatedly and stands out is commended for his intellectual abilities and assertiveness. If a woman does the same, she is considered to be over- stepping her boundaries and not "respectable." In an office, a male boss harassing a female employee is often considered to be "natural" and to be expected. In a protest, if a man shouts, they are brave or heroic; a woman who shouts in protest is considered unfeminine and disrespectable. In each of these situations, the man's access to subtle control over the situation is actually a social arrangement. But we think it is linked to the innate quality of a man.

When a man refuses to conform to those ideals of masculinity, or fails to do so, he is often met with ridicule and stigma. For example, men whose body language does not communicate power are ridiculed as weak and men who cry are stigmatized. This can become toxic for a man who refuses to perform the ideals of masculinity. He can end up feeling belittled or even suffer psychological trauma.

What the above discussion shows is that both men and women who are restricted by cultural and social norms about masculinity and femininity can be limited, suffer mentally, or be denied access to equal participation in society.

Power relations and equality between genders

As we have seen, our society is a patriarchal society. That is, it is a social system in which power is organized in such a way that men have more access and advantages over women. In such a system, the genders are not considered to be equal in ability, character or strength. In a modern liberal society, we consider men and women to be equal in their rights and abilities. Men and women have equal rights to educational and career opportunities, and it is against the law to discriminate a woman in any way. Moreover, women have the right to perform in public equally, have a voice in decision-making, and have agency over their bodies. As long as we accept the subtle patriarchal power that is at work in our society and we do not challenge it, both men and women will be victims of self-restricting norms that limit them to a very stereotypical existence. Learning to challenge archaic norms and to be flexible in the face of modern liberal ideas about equality between all people including all genders is a positive step towards changing our attitude about how subtle patriarchal power works. Therefore, when living in today's society these values must be respected and as scholars and intellectuals (or potential intellectual voices in our country) it is important to learn how we can affirm and practice equality between the genders in our everyday professional and personal lives.

Violence, harassment and consent

We live in a society that is saturated with violence. From wars to conflicts, from rape, murder, abductions, torture, to everyday conflicts between individuals, our societies have seen various levels of violence practiced against others. While many often talk about such violence in global terms (we are all critical of the Taliban's treatment of foreigners) we hardly ever see the way violence is practiced in our everyday lives in our micro-practices, in our homes, workplaces, and public transport. Violence against women can take many forms: domestic violence and rape are common forms of violence. Because sexual violence is often considered to be a "private" problem, we feel that we should not ask for help or offer help in situations of violence against women/men/children. In our country, it is illegal to rape, abuse, or harass a person. Therefore, learning healthy social skills when it comes to interacting with others.

Let us consider a situation that we often take for granted as normal: in a workplace or a classroom someone makes a sexual advance that the recipient is not interested in. This can take the form of a double-meaning joke, a pass or a hint, or a more direct sexual invitation that is abusive and invasive. If the person to whom you are directing that kind of approach is not interested in it, it is a "sexual harassment." That is, you are harassing someone who is not interested in you sexually. The same applies to public transport. If someone is touching another person in a bus or public place without his/her consent, that is harassment. This is not an expression of desire or love but an expression of power. Therefore, harassment is linked to the power that some people have over others to behave in ways that violate others, whether they are women, children, or those from non-binary genders.

Consent is an important concept for modern relationships. Consent means a clear expression of agreement to engage in a sexual act. This could refer to physical sex or virtual sex that occurs through diverse media. For example, sexting without the consent of the recipient is harassment. In the modern world, it is expected that a clear consent will be sought from a partner before engaging in any kind of sexual activity. It is important to know about such norms in the workplace when interacting with others in the public sphere.

When an allegation about a sexual harassment is made, many people refuse to believe the victim. They try to blame the victim or justify the violence by saying that is a "natural" thing. In some situations, if a man is a victim of abuse, he may not want to come forward because he will be seen as a "weak" man if he does not "enjoy" advances from women. In other situations, perceptions about a woman's "respectability" might be dragged in to justify the harassment. In any such situation, it is important to establish that harassment has occurred by first verifying the victim's version clearly.

Gender and diversity

We no longer think of gender in terms of binary male/female differences. Instead, fluid gender identities where multiple genders are recognised have become the norm. Thus, living in a diverse society will involve understanding that men and women are equal and that people whose gender identities are fluid are also treated as equal members of our society. Accepting gender diversity prevents the marginalization of women and non-binary genders.

Gender in the university context

As state institutions, universities should commit to ideals of equality and access to people of all genders.

Since gender is a socially created difference, as a critical community, we should recognize that gender norms can be challenged.

Differences based on gender must be embraced rather than used as an oppressive tool.

It is also important that ideas of respectability should be based on our commonly shared humanity and not conservative norms that prescribe gendered behaviours.

The university should do its best to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment and abuse in both face to face and online environments.

Why is learning about gender diversity important to you?

If you are a student:

Understanding gender diversity will help you to:
- Learn to accept equality between genders
- Build social capital leading to better networking skills
- Prepare to face diverse work environments and access social mobility

For an academic staff member:

Discussing gender diversity is important to,
- develop a better teaching-learning environment that is gender sensitive
- create gender inclusive pedagogies
- be respectful of others from different genders and sexual orientations
- create teaching-learning environments free of harassment and abusive behaviour.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

Awareness about gender diversity will be useful to,
- create a gender sensitive institutional support system.
- maintain a gender-neutral language in official communications.
- put in place institutional policies against sexual harassment and abusive behaviour.

Checklist
- I can define the concept of gender
- I can discuss how gender is socially constructed
- I can explain why understanding that gender is socially constructed is important for living in a diverse society.

Lesson 3
Gender in Society

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

1. Analyse how gendered stereotypes are constructed in society and how they affect our social roles.
2. Create a visual representation of how gender hierarchies intersect with other forms of domination in social settings in the university/society.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
	In our previous lesson, we examined how gender is constructed socially. We also examined several key concepts related to gender and gender socialization. In this lesson, we will turn to how gender works in society. As we have seen, gender is central to a person's identity. In this lesson, we will also explore how stereotypes about gender affect us in society as well as how gender is linked to other forms of social power and identity.
20 minutes	**Activity and Discussion** • Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how gender roles affect your everyday life. • Watch this short video of Meghan Markle speaking about gender stereotypes and women's empowerment. • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMoVen6_XuA • How does society generally respond to gender stereotyping in the media? Did this speech change your perceptions about gender roles and the way they are used in the media? • If yes, how? • If not, why? (This conversation can continue on to the blog.) • Do you think that the awareness that gender is a social construct leads to women's empowerment?

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to gender in society.
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can discuss how gender stereotypes are reproduced in the university/society • I can explain how gender stereotypes affect the lives of people. • I can explain how gendered domination intersects with other forms of dominations

Introduction

In our previous lesson, we examined how gender is constructed socially. We also examined several key concepts related to gender and gender socialization. In this lesson, we will turn to how gender works in society. As we have seen, gender is central to a person's identity. However, gender does not exist in isolation. Ideas about gender are reinforced in society across generations. Moreover, various other forms of identity intersect with gender identity. In this lesson, we will explore how stereotypes about gender affect us in society as well as how gender is linked to other forms of social power and identity.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

1. Analyse how gendered stereotypes are constructed in society and how they affect our social roles.
2. Create a visual representation of how gender hierarchies intersect with other forms of domination in social settings in the university/society.

What are gender stereotypes?

Let us turn to how the United Nations defines a gender stereotype: "a gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives" (UN Human Rights).

This definition accepted by a global organisation shows us how stereotyping can be harmful and limiting to both men and women.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality refers to the way different axes of domination intersect to produce inequalities in society. This approach looks at the way gendered discrimination or inequality are linked to class, race/ethno-religious identities, age, ableism etc. What this means is that one is not marginalized only as a woman or man, but as a person of a marginalized racial or religious group, or a person from a particular class or caste. Here, we do not use an "either/or" approach but an "and" approach.

For example, let us take a young woman from the Estate sector. If she is to study and enter university, she must not only beat the odds against her as a woman, but also as someone who might be under pressure to work as a labourer in an estate. Imagine such a young woman at the university. Her experiences, outlook on life, goals and aspirations will be shaped by her past. In a university setting, such a young woman brings knowledge about how power works in society through intersectionality.

A key challenge in contemporary society is the need to create social spaces that are inclusive of gender differences and recognize how gender intersects with other forms of domination.

Activity

Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how gender roles affect your everyday life.

Watch this short video of Meghan Markle speaking about gender stereotypes and women's empowerment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMoVen6_XuA

Discussion

How does society generally respond to gender stereotyping in the media? Did this speech change your perceptions about gender roles and the way they are used in the media? If yes, how? If not, why? (This conversation can continue on to the blog). Do you think that the awareness that gender is a social construct leads to women's empowerment?

How do stereotypes affect us in the university?

Gender stereotypes affect many decisions we make in life. For example, our choice of subjects, our career choices, and social roles we assume in collective activities are all affected by stereotypes about gender.

Some people think that men make better engineers and women make better doctors and teachers. Discipline-rated choices that are based on gendered stereotypes can cause deep imbalances in the representation of genders in different faculties.

Sometimes, men are considered to be more violent than women. For example, in ragging, men are stereotyped as having long beards and long hair, being aggressive and loud. But in reality, sometimes, female raggers are just as or more aggressive and louder than their male counterparts. Understanding gender stereotypes will help us to see that such men and women are also performing their own notions of gender and acting in stereotypical ways.

Often, we do not recognize that stereotypes about gender affect our choices as well as our expectations of others.

They affect our personal lives as well in the way we interact with partners or friends of opposite genders. As a result of gender stereotypes, we may have expectations of them that are unreasonable or unfair.

More broadly, stereotypes that exist in society can become limiting, when individuals seek to go against these stereotypes. They may experience social stigma or even experience outright gendered oppression.

Stereotypes strongly influence the way we look at others. But within a university community it is important to look beyond stereotypes.

Everyday life in the university, including expectations about attire, demeanor, professional skills are shaped by our stereotypical understandings of gender.

In such instances, the entire community may be held back, especially if leaders in the community such as student leaders, administrative leaders, leading researchers etc. are limited by stereotypical thinking.

How does intersectionality affect us in the university?

Members of the university community come from different social backgrounds. Their identities are not only formed by their gender, but also by other aspects of identity such as class or race. These interact to create the overall social experience of a member of the community. It also shapes the way power intersects within the community. Let us take an example: In some university settings, the ragging of female students from rural backgrounds is linked to their gender and their class. Because of their economic situation, they are more likely to reside in university hostels, eat at the university canteens etc. However, students who can afford a boarding outside the university or travel from home may escape ragging or maintain a distance from the rest of the community because they have the means to do so. When a student is a female who has been brought up to avoid conflicts, she is likely to be more obedient and accepting of the power of raggers. Generally, they also do not have assertive behavioural skills to help them refuse ragging. On the other hand, a male student may be better equipped to say "no" to ragging, especially, if they have access to resources that allow them to reside outside the university. However, ragging is also linked to masculinity. Those who refuse to rag or be ragged are thought to be "weak" men. In such situations, men will be more likely to form a certain bond with other men, forming their university identity through both their gender identity as well as their seniority or class. Thus, the power hierarchy between seniors and juniors intersect with the gendered identity of a student. In addition, their networks will be formed with people of a similar background, limiting their social circles. Thus, one long-term outcome of the rag is that gendered stereotypes intersect with power related to seniority and class, limiting students' access and character development. They hardly have opportunities to learn assertive behaviour and broaden their networks by going beyond the familiar setting that is framed by their gender and social identity. The situation of those who enter university is already defined by intersections of power. Within the university, such power relations may be reproduced, leading to difficulties that are compounded by multiple forms of domination.

Why is learning about stereotyping and intersectionality important to you?

If you are a student:
1. To be able to empathize with others without being prejudiced by stereotypes.
2. To maximize on individual capabilities by looking beyond gendered stereotypes about skills and abilities based on gender.

3. To be empowered against domination based on gender.

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To develop pedagogies that are not limited by gender stereotypes

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To create an institutional culture in which administrative decisions are not based on gender stereotypes and intersectional inequalities are not reproduced

Reflections and checklist

- I can discuss how gender stereotypes are reproduced in the university/society
- I can explain how gender stereotypes affect the lives of people
- I can explain how gendered domination intersects with other forms of domination

Lesson 4
Bodies and the Right to the Body

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

1. Analyse how gendered stereotypes are constructed in society and how they affect our social roles.
2. Create a visual representation of how gender hierarchies intersect with other forms of domination in social settings in the university/society.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
Introduction	In the last lesson, we examined how gender operates in society and stereotypes about gender. In this lesson, we will examine how our own bodies are part of legal and political discourse. We will discuss how our conceptions about the body and body shape, colour etc. are social and ideological. We will also discuss legal and political rights pertaining to the body, particularly with regard to reproduction.
20 minutes	**Activity**
Activity & Discussion	• We generally think of our bodies and the bodies of others as natural and do not reflect much on their status. View the two videos below: https://youtu.be/TwTWyCIGblM https://youtu.be/pZwvrxVavnQ **Discussion** • How does the idea that consent is an ongoing agreement between two people to engage in sexual activity challenge/not challenge how you view sexual relationships? • Peer pressure regarding the colour, shape, and other gendered signs about our body can be a source of agony for many men and women. Media, advertising, and our culture make unreasonable demands from us when it comes to the way we look. • How does this second video challenge you to view your own body as well as others' bodies differently?

20 minutes	**Concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to bodies and rights to the body
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can identify concepts related to reproductive rights • I can discuss how the body is not merely a biological entity, but a psycho-social entity that is both unique to each individual, but shaped socially

Introduction

In the last lesson, we examined how gender operates in society and explored stereotypes about gender. In this lesson, we will examine how our own bodies are part of a legal and political discourse. We will discuss how our conceptions about the body and body shape, colour etc. are social and ideological. We will also discuss legal and political rights pertaining to the body, particularly with regard to reproduction.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

1. Identify concepts related to reproductive rights
2. Discuss how the body is not merely a biological entity, but a psycho-social entity that is both unique to each individual, but shaped socially

Definition: body image

Body image refers to the self-image of the body. While an individual will have a unique perception of his/her body, that perception will be shaped by social discourses about what a normative body is.

Definition: reproductive rights

This refers to a person's legal right to control the body and decisions that affect one's body, particularly about reproduction.

These include the right to determine whether or not to have a baby, the right to information and access to contraception, the right to have access to reproductive health, and the right to access to knowledge about reproductive health and practices.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to identify the body as a social, political, and legal entity that is shaped by culture and language, even though each body is unique to a person.

Activity

- We generally think of our body and the bodies of others as natural and do not reflect much on their status.
- View the two videos on consent and the body image: https://youtu.be/pZwvrxVavnQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwTWyCIGblM

Discussion

- How does the idea that consent is an ongoing agreement between two people to engage in sexual activity challenge/not challenge how you view sexual relationships?

- Peer pressure regarding the colour, shape, and other gendered signs about our body can be a source of agony for many men and women. Media, advertising, and our culture make unreasonable demands from us when it comes to the way we look. How does this second video challenge you to view your own body as well as others' bodies differently?

Reproductive rights and body issues: Related concepts

Stigma related to discussions about the body and reproductive rights

Discussions about the body are often subject to stigma. Many religions, philosophical approaches, and cultural traditions treat the body as being subordinate to the mind. In some discourses, the body is seen as a place of sin, impurity, and even evil. Moreover, colonial discourses influenced by Victorian culture also treat the body as something to be subjected to control and discipline. The result is that there is much stigma regarding the body and topics such as reproduction, sexuality and pleasure. These function as a barrier to understanding the place of the body in our cultures and in our everyday life.

Economic inequity in access to reproductive health and education about reproduction

In conservative cultures, access to knowledge about reproduction is linked to access to education. Although traditional societies had transgenerational means of transmitting such knowledge, today knowledge about reproduction and the body are transmitted through education and media.

As a result, economic inequality affects the level of access a person has to knowledge about reproductive rights and health. Particularly when it comes to girls and women, there is little access to crucial information about the body and rights to the body. Compounding the issue further, conservative ideologies and bearers of cultural authorities prevent the provision of sex education to children.

Consent

Consent is primarily a legal idea. It refers to the right a person has to refuse to be subjected to any sexual act against their will. Legally, this means that any sexual contact (whether physical, verbal or virtual) that is carried out without the consent of both partners is an offense. Today, however, this strictly legal idea has been expanded. It is slowly becoming a social and cultural norm, where seeking the consent of a partner is an important part of a healthy relationship. Of course, relationships are very complex and the ways that consent is given or not given can sometimes be nebulous. But clarity regarding consent and understanding between partners is important. On the other hand, power hierarchies may lead to silence about abuse because speaking up can have negative economic or social consequences. In countries such as Canada, particularly university student groups have come up with various definitions of consent that go beyond a strictly legal framework and promote consent as an important aspect of adult and consenting sexual relationships.

Body image and issues related to the body image

While each human body is unique, there are certain norms that are culturally determined that shape our perceptions about our bodies. These norms are not universal. For example, historically, some cultures have valued fat bodies over thin bodies; thin waists and flat chests have not always been the fashion.

While norms about the body are always social, our identity and self-expression are linked intimately to our own body. Our perception of who we are is linked to how we see our bodies. Because contemporary cultures are also determined heavily by the media and the market, the body has become even more central to our self-identity. In some situations, the body is valued over our other abilities.

Body image can sometimes become a problem and lead to identity crises. Because we are so attuned to the way our peers see us, we feel pressured to fit into the social ideals about the body. If we lose our sense of self-worth, sometimes we may lose touch with our body.

Self-care is linked to body image as well. If we are not educated to caring about the body, we may end up giving into peer pressure or trying to fit into marketized forms of bodily acceptance. If we do not link our perception of the body to caring for the self, we can end up with various body-related psychological problems related to eating disorders or physical illness.

Advertising and body image

Advertisers often artificially create the gap that exists between a perfect body image and the real body. Various products in the market then target the emotional needs that arise as a result of that gap. As discussed in the video we saw, there are many ways that we can become aware of how advertisers create such artificial bodily ideals. In today's social media culture, the body is promoted through selfies, the impact of social influencers, etc.

If we do not develop a positive attitude towards our body and bodily well-being, environmental and peer pressure as well as unhealthy life practices can lead to serious and life- threatening conditions.

Understanding the body and its ontology

How we experience our body shapes the way we look at things--for example, if we perceive our bodies as young and agile, then our attitudes towards others will be framed through that lens. However, if we fall sick, then our consciousness about the body will change completely. Understanding the ontology of the body affects our work as scholars and researchers and influences the frameworks through which we see the self and others.

The relationship to the body differs across genders

Our relationship to the body is also determined by our gender. Social norms about women's bodies and men's bodies differ, and they have also been attributed to different values. The greater value culturally attributed to male bodies or the objectification of female bodies shape how men and women relate to their bodies. Moreover, the reproductive rights and sexual needs of men and women are different. If these culturally and socially determined values are not acknowledged, several problems related to reproductive rights and health will arise.

Trauma

Women and men go through various bodily cycles and states. For example, women experience menstruation, pregnancy and complications related to fertility. Men too may face issues related to bodily well-being, impotence etc. If these are linked to cultural notions that are discriminatory, the physical and psychological well-being of individuals will be affected. Therefore, knowing how to relate to the body positively and caring for the self are an important part of our personal and social well-being.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is the way we feel pressurized into conforming to social norms that are adopted by those of our own social cohort. Peers can be friends, colleagues, people of the same age etc. Sometimes peer pressure may have a positive influence on our performance, when modelled on realistic expectations. But peer pressure that drives us towards impossible goals, particularly with regard to the body can become a significant problem. It can lead to low self-esteem and interfere with our ability to perform even in our day-to-day activities. Sometimes, peer pressure can also appear in the form of toxic positivity. Here, false assertions of positivity can make us unable to face reality or discuss realistic concerns and anxieties that we may have about the challenges we face. While such false assertions can be linked to the body directly, they may also cause bodily harm if it leads to conditions such as depression or eating disorders.

The body and reproductive rights in the university context

The university is a place where a lot of young people congregate.

Members of the university community come with various levels of understanding about the body and reproductive rights.

They also come from diverse cultural, class, and religious backgrounds. Therefore, norms about the body will be different.

These differences will lead to stigmatization, discrimination etc., and can be very counterproductive within the teaching-learning experience.

Therefore, access to information, reproductive health, discussions about body issues that build up self-confidence, prevention of institutionalized and individual body shaming need to be addressed.

Ragging also promotes violence directed towards the body.

Bodily integrity is violated through ragging, abusive classroom practices, sexual violence and rape that is linked to power hierarchies in the university.

Why is understanding bodily and reproductive rights important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To improve self-image and self-acceptance
2. To have safe sexual practices and be aware of reproductive health
3. To respect the integrity of others' bodies and adhere to principles or consent when engaging in sexual relations

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To create a non-discriminatory classroom where body shaming does not happen.
2. To maintain professional standards when dealing with students, respecting their bodily rights and not using institutional power to exploit students or other members of the university community.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To provide access to reproductive health and reproductive education
2. To create institutional policies and ensure their effective implementation regarding SGBV
3. To ensure that university space and institutional power are not exploited by individuals to harm others' bodily rights (including verbal harassment and psychological harassment)

Reflections and Checklist

- I can identify concepts related to reproductive rights
- I can discuss how the body is not merely a biological entity, but a psycho-social entity that is both unique to each individual but shaped socially

Lesson 5
Sexual Identities

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Locate sexual/gender identity in biological, sociological, cultural discourses
2. Situate human sexuality within a spectrum, rather than see it as a binary or a power hierarchy.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
	In the last lesson, we discussed how bodies are constructed discursively and how bodies have rights. In this lesson, we will examine the spectrum of sexual identities that exist in our society
20 minutes	**Activity**
	Listen to the interview with Bhoomi Harendran, who self-identifies as a trans-sexual person.
	https://youtu.be/5qBgoeb6VXc
	• How does she assert her identity positively?
	• What does this tell us about accepting people for who they are and what they do?
	Watch the video clip from the film Funny Boy.
	Here, a little boy who dresses as a bride is punished even though he has no understanding of why this is a problem.
	• How far do adults project their own ideas about sexuality onto children?
	• Is that fair?
	Discussion
	• Many ideas we have about human sexuality were introduced to Sri Lanka by European colonial cultural institutions.

	• Do you think that we should continue to look at human sexuality through conservative social norms? • In the blog, write a 250-word reflection on how these videos and the discussion on them challenged the way you view human sexuality.
20 minutes	**Related concepts** • A brief discussion of concepts related to sexual identities.
15 minutes	**Reflections and Checklist** • I can locate sexual/gender identity in biological, sociological, cultural discourses • I can situate human sexuality within a spectrum, rather than see it as a binary or a power hierarchy

Introduction

In the last lesson, we discussed how bodies are constructed discursively and how bodies have rights. In this lesson, we will examine the spectrum of sexual identities that exist in our society.

We have also discussed the way reproductive rights and understanding the body is important to living with others and accepting ourselves.

In this lesson, we will look at the way human sexuality and sexual expression are a very important part of our lives.

We will look at how understanding sexuality and its various cultural manifestations are important when living with others.

We will also examine how there are many ways in which humans choose to express themselves and the idea that the heterosexual orientation is one among many kinds of gender identities

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

1. Locate sexual/gender identity in biological, sociological, and cultural discourses
2. Situate human sexuality within a spectrum, rather than see it as a binary or a power hierarchy

Definition – human sexuality

Human sexuality is the way in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings (Rathus et al., 1993).

A key challenge in contemporary society is to understand that there are many ways in which humans express their sexuality and that accepting mutual and respectful forms of sexual expression are an important part of living with diversity.

Human Sexuality

Human sexuality is not simply sex. Instead, because humans are sexual beings, they experience and express sexuality through the culture in which they live. Sexuality is deeply linked to the body, but, ultimately, the way we experience the body is cultural. This is why it is important to understand that people coming from different cultures will experience and express their sexuality differently. Moreover, not all people are heterosexual. Today, the term "queer" is used to refer to all people who do not identify as heterosexuals. These include lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and intersexed people.

While many people see these differences to be biological (and the argument on whether different sexual orientations stem from biological reasons is still inconclusive), it is clear that the way these differences are experienced and expressed are cultural.

With more liberal lifestyles, legal reforms, market orientations, and media practices of including non-binary gendered people, that is, people who do not identify as men or women, there is increasing presence and visibility of queer people in mainstream society.

Thus, it is important to be able to recognize that a person is more than their sexuality and accept them even if they are different from us.

Activity

Listen to the interview with Bhoomi Harendran, who self-identifies as a trans-sexual person. https://youtu.be/5qBgoeb6VXc

- How does she assert her identity positively?
- What does this tell us about accepting people for who they are and what they do?

Watch the video clip from the film Funny Boy.

Here, a little boy who dresses as a bride is punished even though he has no understanding of why this is a problem.

- How far do adults project their own ideas about sexuality onto children?
- Is that fair?

Discussion

Many ideas we have about human sexuality were introduced to Sri Lanka by European colonial cultural institutions.

- Do you think that we should continue to look at human sexuality through conservative social norms?
- In the blog, write a 250-word reflection on how these videos and the discussion on them challenged the way you view human sexuality.

Concepts related to human sexuality

Gender identity as a spectrum

We often think of gender in very binary terms: as men and women. But we know that even biologically, there is a range of bodies and characteristics of bodies. Sociologically the distinction between men and women is even more porous. For example, we assume that boys like cricket and girls like make-up. But, in reality, the way we express our gender is unique to each individual. Sometimes girls hate make-up and boys like to cook.

Thus, our gender identity can be seen as a spectrum, with idealized notions of masculinity and femininity at the two extremes, and men and women identifying with them to various degrees at different points in their lives. Some women are "tomboys", and some men are "girlish" in their childhood but gradually acquire normative gender identities when they grow up. Others do not do so, either for biological, sociological, or psychological reasons (these are

complex with very different answers given in different disciplines).

Thus, men and women express their sexuality in different ways, including in their behavior, their choice of sexual partners, the modes through which they derive pleasure, and by the way they relate to their body.

Heterosexuality is one among many other types of sexual orientations such as Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual, Queer, Intersexed identities

Based on these differences, we can see lesbian, gay, transsexual, queer, and intersexed identities. Even though we have been conditioned into thinking that heterosexuality is the "normal" sexual identity, in reality, heterosexuality is one among a range of other ways of expressing our sexuality.

Although there may be biological causes for these differences, the social value given to those sexual identities is not "natural." Different cultures have viewed queer people in different ways across time. For example, in some Native American cultures, queer people have been considered sacred.

There are no "good" or "bad" sexual orientations. In different cultures, different values are given to these different forms of sexual expression

Thus, just as no two cultures are the same, the way different cultures see different sexual orientations or gender identities vary significantly. Non-heterosexual people were criminalized for their behavior, particularly with the rise of European modernity, and these values were often transmitted to the colonies by European imperial powers.

However, by the 1960s, a vibrant political movement of gay people, particularly in Europe, inspired by the 1960s cultural movements began to mobilize for their rights, demanding equal access to education, healthcare, and employment.

Today, most countries recognize gender diversity as an important aspect of modern societies, and many countries have decriminalized homosexuality.

This history shows us that the values that we attribute to different gender identities are determined by the historical developments in that particular society. Thus, there are no "good" or "bad" sexual orientations.

The only type of sexual expression that is wrong or unethical is non-consensual sex where someone who is unwilling or does not have the power to give consent to sexual activities is used for the sexual pleasure of others

The only time that we could make a moral judgment on an immoral sexual act is when someone uses another person who cannot or does not give consent for sex. This includes children and minors, people who are physically or psychologically not in a situation to give consent to sex, or coercion using family or institutional power. In most parts of the world today, adult

consensual sex is considered legal and acceptable, irrespective of the sexual orientation or the gender identity of the persons involved.

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a concept that refers to the way heterosexuality is always held as the "norm" in society so that all other forms of sexual expression are considered to be a deviation. The concept was developed out of Gayle' Rubin's idea of the sex-gender system. Rubin pointed out that in early societies, the exchange of women was linked to the property relations of a particular society. In order to keep the sex-gender system in place, heterosexuality was made the "norm". Adrienne Rich pointed to the way "heterosexuality" is often institutionally imposed upon women and forced on non-heterosexuality on non-heterosexual women.

Thus, the term "heteronormativity" suggests that this normalizing of heterosexuality is linked, on the one hand to power and property and on the other hand, to socially imposed forms of sexuality that not all women and men would wish to adapt to.

Human sexuality is cultural: the difference between sex and sexuality

Let us turn to the difference between sex and sexuality. Sex refers to the physical/bodily contact between two people that is sexual in nature.

Only the species-quality of humans is linked to sex. However, humans do not experience sex in an emotional or social vacuum.

Just like we no longer just eat raw meat or fruits or vegetables when we are hungry, we no longer just have sex.

Instead, there is an elaborate set of psychological, cultural, social, economic, legal, etc. arrangements regarding human sexuality. Moreover, there is a world of art, literature, cinema, and music that expresses human sexual experiences in many different modalities, from erotica to pornography.

Thus, sex is no longer just a biological act, but a part of a complex cultural construction around the experience of sex. Therefore, the cultural arrangements related to sexuality vary over time and across different cultures.

Cross-dressing and performativity

The prominent queer theorist Judith Butler has pointed to the way gender is performative-- that gender identity is something we perform through language, which writes socially coded behaviours on our bodies. Thus, language "performs" on our bodies, which we then in turn perform. Let us take cross-dressing as an example: cross-dressing involves a man dressing as a woman or a woman dressing as a man. But when this happens, they are also imitating the norms of the opposite sex. In such instances we begin to see how gender norms are all learned behaviours that are established by language.

Intersectionality: class and sexual orientation

Sexual orientation does not exist in a social vacuum. As with other forms of socially constructed inequalities, the access that queer people have varies depending on their class, ethno-religious differences etc. Their marginal identity as queer people intersects with other forms of marginalization that they may experience. On the other hand, queer people who are privileged in other ways may not experience the marginalization of their sexuality as much as someone from a less privileged background.

Sexual identities within the university context

The university is a place where people with different sexual identities and orientations will move with each other.

However, within our university system, the dominant sexual identity still recognized as "normal" is heterosexual identity.

To improve the way members of the university community relate to each other, it is important to create a culture in which human sexuality--whatever orientation--is accepted as an important part of human life.

Moreover, community members who are of non-normative genders may experience stigma and discrimination within the university context.

Sometimes the way a person dresses or talks or behaves because of their gender identity may lead others to measure his/her worth based on those characteristics rather than their intellectual capacities.

Creating a situation in which these identities can be discussed openly and without stigma is an important part of dealing with divisions that may be caused by misunderstandings of human sexual expression.

Why is understanding human sexuality important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To overcome stigma and express one's sexuality in pleasurable and respectful ways.
2. To accept those whose sexual orientation might be different from oneself and to respect them for who they are.
3. To create a healthy social environment in which problems related to sexuality can be discussed in the open so that all students are represented in such conversations.

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To create a teaching-learning environment that is gender-sensitive and not discriminatory against those who are of non-normative genders.
2. To create safe spaces where students can come for help and support if they feel

marginalized or discriminated against by peers. A safe space is a space that has been declared as being free of bias and discriminatory treatment of others.

3. To be respectful towards others irrespective of their gender/sexual identity/ orientation.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To create non-discriminatory policies that will treat LGBTQI persons with respect without stigmatizing them.

2. To provide support services and access to safe sexual practices.

3. To promote healthy and respectful sexual practices.

Reflections and Checklist

- I can locate sexual/gender identity in biological, sociological, cultural discourses
- I can situate human sexuality within a spectrum, rather than see it as a binary or a power hierarchy

Lesson 6
Individual Differences:
Neurodiversity and Different Abilities

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Explain how a person with disabilities brings a range of abilities into a teaching/ learning environment.
2. Identify Universal Design Principles for Learning that can enrich the teaching-learning environment for everyone.
3. Create an accessibility map of one teaching-learning environment participants are familiar with.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
Introduction	So far, in this course, we have examined various types of differences that are largely linked to socially created differences and hierarchy. In this lesson, we will look at how ideas about bodily and psychological abilities are linked to diversity.
20 minutes	**Activity and Discussion**
Activity & Discussion	• View the two video clips recommended for this class. https://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/psa-campaigns/who- i-am-psa/
	https://youtu.be/aWxmEv7fOFY
	• Write a blog post reflecting on how these two videos challenged your view of disability: as an abled bodied person or as a person with a disability.
	• In class, reflect on how you have related to your body as an able- bodied person or a person with a disability.
	• How far are those experiences part of a bodily reality?
	• How far are they a part of the environment that was disabling/not enabling you to interact positively with it?

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to neurodiversity and disability.
20 minutes	**Reflections and Checklist**
	• I can explain how a person with disabilities brings a range of abilities into a teaching/learning environment
	• I can identify Universal Design Principles for Learning that can enrich the teaching-learning environment for everyone
	• I can create an accessibility map of one teaching-learning environment participants are familiar with

Introduction

So far in this course, we have examined various types of differences that are largely linked to socially created differences and hierarchy.

In this lesson, we will look at how ideas about bodily and psychological abilities are linked to diversity.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the participant will be able to;

1. Explain how a person with disabilities is someone who brings a range of rich abilities into a teaching/learning environment.
2. Identify Universal Design Principles for Learning that can enrich the teaching-learning environment
3. Create an accessibility map of one teaching-learning environment participants are familiar with.

Definitions

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), people with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to recognize that people with disabilities bring strengths and abilities that are unique. The full participation of people with disabilities in society can be ensured through positive institutional and social arrangements that facilitate that engagement.

Generally, we associate disability with impairment. This suggests that a person with a disability is "lacking" in some way.

The above definition suggests that whatever physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that one may have become a problem because they encounter socially created barriers that disable such people from participating effectively in society or interacting with others.

In this light, a person with a disability does not "lack" something but has a set of "different" abilities that are not always recognized by our normative understanding of what an ability is.

Often, the term "differently abled" is used to describe a person with a disability. Here, the disability becomes an attribute of the person.

This denies the individuality of that person and creates a negative picture. The term person with a disability, in contrast, recognizes the "person" first, and the disability as one of the characteristics that that person has the latter term is used by the UN. The term "differently

abled" is another positive term that can be used to describe a person with a disability. Both "differently abled" and a person with a disability are accepted terms that can be used.

Let us now discuss how a person with a disability can be thought beyond the paradigm of impairment.

Activity

- View the two video clips recommended for this class: Neurodiversity and Who I am.
- Write a blog post reflecting on how these two videos challenged your view of disability: as an abled bodied person or as a person with a disability.

Discussion

In class, reflect on how you have related to your body as an able-bodied person or a person with a disability.

- How far are those experiences part of a bodily reality?
- How far are they a part of the environment that was disabling/not enabling you to interact positively with it?

Concepts

Disability is a result of the interaction between a person and his/her environment

Generally, we think of a person with a disability as someone who is lacking, someone who is missing a part of a "normal" body or a "normal" cognitive ability or a "normal" state of mind or psychological condition.

In today's world, however, disability is seen as an interaction between a person and his/her environment.

For example, most of our built environment is designed with people from a certain body type in mind.

But for someone with a disability, such an environment makes it difficult to function fully because of the way the environment is built.

When we design physical environments or social environments, we do not consider the fact that human beings come in many shapes, sizes, bodily and mental abilities.

Thus, if we are inclusive in the way we build our environments, create our institutions, and organize our culture, then a person with an impairment will have the opportunity to perform fully, and be given opportunity to interact with this environment productively.

There are many ways in which we can think of disability: the most recognized and visible form of disability is physical disability.

However, many people also suffer from invisible disabilities, cognitive difficulties and mental illness that bar them from functioning productively within society.

For example, a child with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) might be a highly gifted child who is unable to "fit in" to a rigid classroom structure and may require a different method of learning.

Someone struggling with mental illness may have mood swings and may not be able to function within a rigid timetable or sit through very long classes. Often, taking breaks, sequencing work, and creating spaces to take short breaks can improve their ability to reconnect and keep track of their work.

This is why, today, we no longer see impairment as the problem. Rather, progressive societies take on the challenge of creating an environment that is inclusive of people with disabilities.

Stigma

Recognizing disability as something that is linked to interaction with the environment, rather than a lacking on the part of the person, enables us to diffuse the stigma that is linked to disability.

Overcoming stigma helps us to recognize that a person with a disability brings talents and abilities that are different from those who have normative bodies and mental cognitive structures. Accepting and including a person with a disability, thus, strengthens our communities and makes our society more productive.

Ableism

"Ableism" is the idea that an "able-bodied" person is superior to someone with a disability. Such a sense of ableism creates social and cultural stigma against people and create inequalities in the access they have to health, education, and livelihoods.

Recognizing that "normality" is a socially and culturally constructed idea, also helps us to see that what is seen as a disability in one setting may, in another setting, be seen very differently.

For example, if we examine many ancient literary texts, visionaries, seers, and people who see the future are generally portrayed as being blind. They are associated with wisdom.

Ableism also occludes the way that disability is very contingent.

When somebody is defined as an "able-bodied" person-they may not see that they have experienced disability at some point in their lives. They do not recognize the way illness, injury etc., can cause us to be temporarily disabled.

Many able-bodied people experience some form of disability in their lifetime. For example, injury, pregnancy, carrying a small baby can all impede our mobility. Similarly, many people today have experienced stress, depression or other mental illness at some point in their lives.

While some may struggle with these disabilities throughout their lives, many others may experience disability temporarily. Thus, we are all situated within a spectrum of ability-disability.

This brings us to the term "Neurodiversity"

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity, as we have seen in the video viewed for this class, refers to the way our neurological differences are actually linked to our process of evolution. The traits that we see in people with cognitive differences are linked to different ways of seeing and relating to the world.

Thus, the term "neurodiversity" refers allows us to see mental or cognitive differences between people as a strength.

In some instances, such people become brilliant scientists, thinkers, philosophers, teachers, etc. who bring much into this world.

Historically, it was thought that people with disabilities should be segregated from the rest of society. Particularly in education separate schools/classrooms were set up for children with disabilities. However, today, there are other schools of thought with regard to this.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning refers to the way teaching-learning environments are set up in such a way that the entire learning space is adjusted so that a person with a disability can interact productively with the environment. At the same time, someone who is currently not disabled will also benefit from such designs.

For example, in a classroom, having a running script for a lesson (or subtitles) will help someone with a hearing impairment to understand the lesson better. At the same time, students who can hear will also benefit from the extra emphasis received through the script or subtitles. To give another example, a building with ramps will enable a student on a wheelchair to function independently. At the same time, it will be helpful for someone who is pregnant or someone who is carrying something heavy, or who cannot climb stairs due to illness.

Multiple Intelligences

The term "multiple intelligences" refers to the idea that students have different types of intelligences. For example, Howard Gardner (2010) recognizes eight different types of intelligences: Verbal-linguistic intelligence, Logical-mathematical intelligence, Spatial-visual intelligence, Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, Musical intelligences, Intrapersonal, Naturalist intelligence, Existential intelligence.

(https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide/gardners-theory-of-multiple- intelligences.shtml)

Thus, designing lessons in such a way that students with these different types of intelligences can be capitalized on. The key is understanding that different individuals have different bodies, cognitive abilities, mental structures, and intelligences.

Knowing this will help us to become more accepting of others and to make our classrooms places that thrive on the diversity.

Reasonable accommodations: most universities in Sri Lanka today have legal requirements to make reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. While this is an excellent first step towards making students with disabilities more empowered to learn, using technology, designing classrooms to suit all students will enrich the teaching-learning experience for everyone.

Holistic access

Marion Quirici from Duke University describes holistic access as follows: "Holistic access involves economic accessibility, language accessibility, access to gender-neutral bathrooms, a commitment to chemical-free and scent-free environments - and this is really important for people with environmental illness, but most institutions aren't aware of that". And then finally, childcare is a really critical piece. So, just from this initial list, you already get the sense that holistic access transects all categories of difference and need. It is not just about disability. It is about the many ways that our bodies and minds interface with our surroundings'.

As we can see, we can take the idea of reasonable accommodation well beyond its current paradigm, towards creating an accessibility that is holistic, inclusive and empowering to many different people.

Extra Reading:

https://www.reachcils.org/guidelines-writing-and-referring-people-disabilities/

Disabilities and abilities within the university context

As an institution that aims at intellectual inquiry, the university is a place where different types of abilities and intelligences should be included.

Often, there is little attention to the uniqueness of each individual's abilities within our universities.

Sometimes, a person with a disability will have to rely on the goodwill of others or the empathy shown by others to carry out their everyday activities.

While this speaks to the way our cultures view people with disabilities, and it is a goodwill gesture, they cannot, also replace institutional responsibility towards ensuring equal access.

Many of the students who graduate from the university will become influential social figures, leaders, teachers in their respective communities.

Thus, understanding that physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments associated with persons with disabilities are linked to the environment will have a long-term impact on Sri Lankan society's commitment to diversity.

Why is understanding different abilities important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To better relate to others irrespective of their (dis)abilities
2. To actively promote intellectual cultures and physical environments that provide equal access to all members
3. To receive institutional support (if/when required) without fear of stigma

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To create classrooms that apply universal design learning principles wherever possible
2. To enable students with disabilities or mental illness to participate in teaching-learning by reducing barriers that may impede them
3. To avoid stigmatizing students whose learning styles may be different
4. To make resources for those needing assistance available

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To ensure equal access, particularly in the physical set up of buildings, availability of technology and other facilities, and providing basic requirements such as transport and reasonable accommodation at exams
2. To create awareness regarding disability, mental illness, neurodiversity, etc. among all students and staff
3. To make resources available for those needing assistance

Reflections and Checklist

- I can explain how a person with disabilities brings a range of abilities into a teaching/learning environment
- I can identify Universal Design Principles for Learning that can enrich the teaching-learning environment for everyone
- I can create an accessibility map of one teaching-learning environment that participants are familiar with

Lesson 7
Class and Caste Identities

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Demonstrate how class and caste add diversity to a social setting.
2. Discuss the ways in which class and caste affect the lives of people..

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
	In the two previous lessons we have discussed at length how gender influences the way we think about ourselves and those around us. We saw that it is a major identity category in today's world. In this lesson, we will examine another form of identity that affects people deeply: their class identity and caste identity. Class and caste shape the type of access we have in society as well as the access we have to education, employment, and even marriage.
20 minutes	**Activity**
	• In order to address the main question of this lesson let us watch the excerpt from the film "Paangshu". How are class and caste presented by the film?
	• Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how your perception of class and caster have changed/not changed/been challenged
	Discussion
	• In this extract of the film, you see a mother visiting a house where she is given a lower chair to sit on. Observe how caste is represented in the interactions between the characters. What do they tell us about the caste of the mother (played by Nita Fernando). What do you think is her caste/occupation?
	• Why do you think the young girl picks up the clothes and gives them to the mother's hand? What does that tell us about the new generation's attitudes towards caste? How are her attitudes different from those of her grandmother?

	• The mother's demeanour and clothes also indicate to us that she is poor. The stark differences between her and the other women from higher class are shown by the house clothing, furniture etc. We judge class identity by how people dress, behave, or speak. Why is this problematic? How does our prejudice regarding class differences lead to conflict? • Do you think that we should maintain class and caste differences in society or change our attitudes towards caste to accept every human being as being valuable?
20 minutes	**Related concepts** • A brief discussion of concepts related to class and caste
15 minutes	**Reflections and Checklist** • I can explain the concepts of class and caste • I can discuss how social inequalities are reproduced through class and caste

Introduction

In previous lessons we have examined how gender, sexuality, disability etc., which are generally considered to be "natural" or biological differences, lead to social differences and inequalities. In the next few lessons, we will explore how socially defined identity categories lead to diversity, difference and inequality. In this lesson, we will examine how class identity and caste identity affect people deeply. Class and caste shape the type of access we have in society as well as the access we have to education, employment, and even marriage.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Demonstrate how class and caste add diversity to a social setting.
2. Discuss the ways in which class and caste affect the lives of people.

Definition – social class

Social class is commonly thought of as a social relation determined by a group's place or function in the process of production. Social class is also understood in terms of social status, and members of a class may move upward in the class hierarchy.

Class is a social relation between people with competing economic interests. They form their identity through their common belonging to a class. Therefore, it is important to know that people from different classes do not represent some innate cultural quality, but a social relation that is linked to various cultural ideas about different groups with contradictory economic interests. The concept of class allows us to see these differences as being "social" and to understand those differences as being historical and not natural. It will also enable us to work against inequalities caused by class differences in society.

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding class differences and creating social spaces that are just and equitable.

Definition – Caste

The encyclopedia Britannica defines caste as "any of the ranked, hereditary, endogamous social groups, often linked with occupation, that together constitute traditional societies in South Asia" (Madan, 2019).

Caste is also known as warna, jathi, kula, cati in local languages. Caste is often seen as been trans-historical although in actuality caste intersects with class in modern capitalist societies.

It is important to discuss caste in relation to diversity because it still functions as a marker of identity within certain social and economic spaces. For example, caste becomes important in marriage and sometimes people base their social or political affiliations based on caste. Sometimes, caste affiliations affect employment as well.

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding caste differences and creating social spaces that are inclusive of people with different caste identities.

Activity

In order to address the main question of this lesson let us watch the excerpt from the film "Paangshu". How are class and caste presented by the film?

Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how your perception of class and caste have changed/ not changed/been challenged.

Discussion

In this extract of the film, you see a mother visiting a house where she is given a lower chair to sit on. Observe how caste is represented in the interactions between the characters. What do they tell us about the caste of the mother (played by Nita Fernando)? What do you think is her caste/occupation?

Why do you think that the young girl picks up the clothes and gives them to the mother's hand? What does that tell us about the new generation's attitudes towards caste? How are her attitudes different from those of her grandmother?

The mother's demeanour and clothes also indicate to us that she is poor. The stark differences between her and the other women from a higher class are shown by the house clothing, furniture etc. We judge class identity by how people dress, behave, or speak. Why is this problematic? How does our prejudice regarding class differences lead to conflict?

Do you think that we should maintain class and caste differences in society or change our attitudes towards caste to accept every human being as being valuable?

Concepts related to social class

Status and class:

Social class is often apprehended through another related concept: "status." Status is linked to how one's wealth is expressed symbolically and culturally. It also refers to the place one has in a more culturally inflected social hierarchy. Thus, the way a person dresses or talks can be linked to their class but will be an indicator of their status. A person of a higher "status" will have greater access to wealth and to various other markers of that wealth that are not necessarily economic.

Let us take an everyday example. Today, many employ credit as a means of meeting their various needs. However, different types of borrowings signal social status differently. Borrowing on a credit card is seen to be more "respectable" and even a sign of wealth. There are hierarchies between various levels of credit cards—gold, platinum etc. Other borrowers may be using a simple credit system from the village shop, writing their monthly credit in a

book. Some may borrow from credit cooperatives. These are seen as signaling a lower social class and a social status, even though both parties are, essentially, engaging in borrowing.

Class as an economic category:

Class is, according to the well-known Marxist definition, a "social relation." That is, class is a way groups of people relate to each other based on each group's common economic interests. The economic system within which we live at present is capitalism, where there are two dominant classes: capitalists, or those who own capital, and workers, or those who own labour. The relation between these two dominant groups is linked through production. As we know, this initial and basic understanding of class has become quite complicated today, but the basic matrix spelt out by this theory remains valid. Several intermediary classes have emerged as well as different types of capital such as finance capital and social capital. When we try to understand class with regard to the concept of diversity, it is important to keep in mind that people define their class identity based on the economic activities they engage in, as well as the kind of access and lifestyle that that class identity gives them. Thus, diversity of class identities is positive to a society, as far as interaction and engagement between people of different classes allow for a better understanding of where they come from.

The origins of the capitalist system:

Within capitalism, class is a dynamic category. During the Middle Ages, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to be upwardly mobile in society. If you were the son of a peasant, you will also remain a peasant through your entire life. Within capitalism, because class is NOT linked to one's birth or intrinsic qualities of an individual, one's class could change, and one could reach higher in the social ladder.

With industrialization and the emergence of city states in Europe the new economic system of capitalism emerged. Although its early form it was related to commercial capital, it eventually played an important role in the development of the European industrial economy. Today, the dominant form of capital in the world is linked to finance capital. These origins are important to keep in mind because it reminds us that economic systems are not static and unchanging natural orders, but a result of dynamic historical situations that have contributed to social and political change.

Class-based Closure:

In the Sri Lankan economy, the main source of employment is the private sector. Within the private sector, the dominant language of communication is English. As a result, in hiring processes, intentionally or unintentionally, there is a tendency to choose people who have better English language skills or those who reflect class values associated with English. Many individuals who occupy prominent places within the private sector also form an informal network of past pupils of elite schools who function as gatekeepers of the employment market. Such gatekeeping procedures may also cause closures that are based on class. In such situations, class as well as the behaviour and language associated with class, will act as a barrier to upward social mobility and access to employment.

Class interests and Equality:

Although capitalism is a very dynamic system that allows people to move up in society, it has also led to deep social inequalities. The capitalist system, both at a global level as well as at the national level, produces economic inequalities where large numbers of people are left to depend on their wages with little access to move upwards in society. Inequalities between classes do not only mean that some people are poor and others are rich. It also means that in situations where public services are not very strong, they will not have access to basic needs such as education and health, housing, nutritious food etc. that can have long term effects on the entire society.

If those who are deprived of access to social benefits and individual betterment due to their class become aware that their situation is a result of the economic inequalities in society, they will then come to identify with others who are in the same position as them. This means that they will come to share common class interests. The contradiction between competing class interests will be expressed as an antagonism between those who belong to these classes. Social equality would push towards a more equitable society in which those who are deprived will also have a fair share of opportunity and access.

Diversity does not mean that we ignore class and caste inequalities and pretend like everyone is equal within unequal relationships. Instead, within the concept of living with diversity, we acknowledge those inequalities in order to empower those who are weakened or disadvantaged by this system. Harmony is always achieved through a commitment to recognizing how inequalities work and building friendships and solidarities across various classes and castes.

Social capital:

Social capital refers to the forms of social value and resources that individuals acquire through class that cannot be measured in monetary terms and are intangible. It refers to networks, support systems, shared values and/or identity, language, education, other available common goods that are not part of the tangible wealth of an individual or community. For example, in Sri Lanka, belonging to the elite class does not simply mean that you are wealthier than others, but also that you speak, dress, and carry yourself in identifiable class-determined ways. In addition, knowing a language of prestige, networks (kinship or otherwise) that give access to better jobs, wealth, or other privileges can be a form of social capital. On the other hand, someone from a working-class background may not have access to wealth and/or capital but will develop support networks within the community that will help them to sustain their way of life through the support of the community.

Free Education

Education that is provided free from primary to university education in Sri Lanka is a unique historical feature of the development of the education system of the country. The original goals of the Free Education policy, stated in the 1943 report, were to develop education as a tool of equity and building equality not only among individuals, but also among different classes and ethnic groups:

The character of an educational system depends upon the character of the society for which it is designed.

"We have assumed that our task was to recommend an educational system suitable for a democracy . . . This appears to us to mean two things.

First, it means that the individual must be helped to achieve the highest degree of physical, mental and moral development, of which he is capable irrespective of his wealth or social status.

Secondly, it means that the individual as a result of his education should be able to use his abilities for the good of the nation in the fullest possible measure and should be able to pass judgement on affairs of State and exercise intelligently the franchise that the State has conferred upon him. In other words, democracy requires in the first place a minimum standard of education and, beyond that, equality of educational opportunity" (Kannangara Report 1943).

This report sees education as a form of social capital that will enable each individual to acquire a holistic education that is in keeping with their interests and talents and not to be limited by one's social class, caste, or wealth. It also enables individuals to exercise their newly won franchise productively in a democracy. Thus, in some cases, certain forms of social/public goods may function as forms of capital that are collectively owned and shared. To access such goods also means we are bound with responsibility towards others and have to be tolerant and respectful of others who share these with us.

Concepts related to caste

Like class, caste is a social hierarchy that is linked to hereditary relations. However, unlike class, one cannot typically change one's caste. It is based on what group one is born in to. Caste becomes particularly important when it comes to taboos, marriages, and certain occupational practices that are linked to caste. Thus, until quite recently, dancers and drummers belonged to a particular caste and their work was often seen, not as a specifically aesthetic activity, but as an activity performed by people who were born into that particular caste. Caste becomes important in marriage because usually caste is seen as being endogamous, that is, marrying within the group. Historically caste has been linked to occupation, with people of certain castes being considered to be of "upper castes" while others have been considered untouchables.

Caste is often seen as being trans-historical although in actuality, caste intersects with class in modern capitalist societies.

Because caste is linked to one's birth, that is, something that we do not choose, and we cannot change, many people think of caste as being trans-historical or not affected by historical change. But this is not true. Caste identities change and some people choose to drop caste markers such as family names through legal means in contemporary society. Today, caste is often folded into class categories and lead to inequalities that intersect between class and caste.

Thus, caste can affect an individual's social mobility, particularly when linked to employment. As a university community, thus, it is important to learn to recognize that just like class and gender, caste too is a socially constructed category and not determined by birth as it is usually understood. When it comes to caste differences, living with diversity suggests that we recognize the common humanity of all people and acknowledge that hierarchies linked to caste are historical and open to change.

Class and caste in the university context

The university community is comprised of people originating from different classes and castes.

As state institutions, universities should be committed to providing equal access to all members in the community.

As such, the university should not reproduce class and caste inequalities existing in society and must accept people from all backgrounds equally.

University should be a place of empowerment and empathy that enables people to respond sensitively to people from different backgrounds.

An intellectual community that can engage with social inequalities critically recognises the constructed nature of such inequalities and finds creative pathways to reduce them.

Why is learning about class and caste important to you?

Why is learning about class and caste important to you?

If you are a student:
1. To understand how social inequality is reproduced.
2. To empower yourself and others for social justice.
3. To practice ethical and respectful behaviour towards others.

If you are an academic staff member:
1. To develop pedagogical practices that are attuned to and challenge subtle class and caste inequalities.
2. To create inclusive classrooms that empower students from marginalised backgrounds. Practice ethical and respectful behaviour towards others.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
1. To develop a support system that assists students from marginalised backgrounds and helps them to achieve their full potential.
2. To create supportive administrative structures that do not reproduce existing social inequalities.
3. To practice ethical and respectful behaviour towards others.

Reflections and Checklist

- I can explain the concepts of class and caste
- I can discuss how social inequalities are reproduced through class and caste

Lesson 8
Language as Identity

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Demonstrate the ability to approach language differences critically
2. Discuss how language can become an identity/class marker in Sri Lankan society
3. Critique exclusionary notions of language standards.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
Introduction	We have now examined the way gender, class, and caste shape our identity and how these create social differences and hierarchies that lead to inequalities. In this lesson, we will discuss how language is part of our identity and how our linguistic identity affects us in a diverse society.
20 minutes	**Activity** • Read the following poem to examine how language becomes an identity. • Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how language identity is linked to ideas of superiority and can be employed for subtle exclusionary practices. (This conversation can continue on to the blog.) **Discussion** • In this poem, the Sri Lankan poet Regi Siriwardena is describing the experience of a child who feels ashamed of his mother's use of the native language in front of his school friends. Many of us have experienced similar shame in the face of people who consider some languages to be superior to others. How does the poet bring out the complexity of that shame? • Even when speaking the same language, some varieties (Standard Sri Lankan English) are considered to be superior while some varieties are ridiculed (rural Southern Sinhalese). How do you think a speaker of a language feels in such situations? Why is language so important for our identity? How does access to language determine what we can voice in a group and how much will our ideas be accepted based on the language we speak?
Activity & Discussion	

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to language and identity
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can explain how language becomes an identity marker • I can critique language standards and discuss how they can become exclusionary • I can discuss how and why English has become a class-marker in Sri Lankan society

Introduction

We have now examined the way gender, class, and caste shape our identity and how these create social differences and hierarchies that lead to inequalities. In this lesson, we will discuss how language is part of our identity and how our linguistic identity affects us in a diverse society.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

1. Demonstrate the ability to approach language differences critically
2. Discuss how language can become an identity/class marker in Sri Lankan society
3. Critique exclusionary notions of language standards

Definition

Language is a symbolic system that enables communication between individuals and the transmission of culture. A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding that language is not a static tool available for human communication, but a constantly changing, shifting cultural form that is central to people's identities. All human societies are based on the language(s) their members use to communicate with each other.

In ancient times, a person was only exposed to one language, at best. We have heard of learned people in the past who spoke several languages, but they were rare and belonged to an uncommon breed of cosmopolitan scholars.

However, in the modern world, being at least bilingual has become an everyday need. We come into contact with people who speak different languages in face-to-face and virtual environments. As a result of colonization and globalization, some languages have become the languages of education, commerce and trade. Thus, it is nearly impossible to remain monolingual in the modern world.

Some languages have gained a prestigious value derived from extra-linguistic socio-political factors.

Such prestigious languages are seen to be superior to other languages and those who use them are seen to be better than others. The way people speak a language is marked by accent and the vocabulary they use.

Activity

- Read the following poem to examine how language becomes an identity.
- Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how language identity is linked to ideas of superiority and can be employed for subtle exclusionary practices. (This conversation can continue to the blog.)

Poem

Colonial Cameo
-By Regi Siriwardena
In the evening my father used to make me read
aloud from Macaulay or Abbot's Napoleon
(he was short and Napoleon, his hero; I his hope for the future).
My mother, born in a village, had never been taught
the superior tongue. When I was six, we were moving house
she called at school to take me away.
She spoke to the teacher in Sinhala. I sensed the shock of the class,
hearing the servant's language; in dismay
 followed her out, as she said "Gihing ennang"
I was glad it was my last day there. but then the
bell pealed a gang of boys came out sniggering
and shouted in chorus "Gihing vareng" as my farewell
My mother pretended not to hear the insult.
The snobbish little bastards! But how can I blame them?
That day I was deeply ashamed of my mother.
Now whenever I remember, I am ashamed of my shame.

Siriwardena (2005)

Discussion

In this poem, the Sri Lankan poet Regi Siriwardena is describing the experience of a child who feels ashamed of his mother's use of the native language in front of his school friends. Many of us have experienced similar shame in the face of people who consider some languages to be superior to others. How does the poet bring out the complexity of that shame? Even when speaking the same language, some varieties such as Standard Sri Lankan English are considered to be superior while some varieties are ridiculed; for example, rural Southern Sinhalese. How do you think a speaker of a language feels in such situations? Why is language so important for our identity?

How does access to language determine what we can voice in a group and how much our ideas will be accepted based on the language we speak?

Concepts related to Language as Identity

Language as Identity

Identity is the self-image of an individual or group that defines belonging to that group.

Identity is the self-image that an individual or group has about who one is or what a group is. Identity is based on shared cultural features or similarities and defines belonging/non-belonging to the group.

Language can be "a marker of dominant ideology, class consciousness and a medium of class struggle" (Luke & Graham, 2006), that is, language can be seen as transmitting dominant ideologies and is related to the way individuals and groups become conscious of their class positions and interests.

In some situations, language can even become a site of struggle between classes and/or other ethnoreligious groups in affirming identity as well as access to power. We must, therefore, always recognize that our knowledge of language is social and is not an insurmountable barrier when it comes to language learning.

Language is tied to social history

There are three main languages spoken in Sri Lanka. Typically, Sinhalese people speak Sinhalese and Tamil people speak Tamil. English was the language of the colonizers of Sri Lanka. Many people learn English as a second language because it is so crucial for our day-to- day survival. But, upon closer examination, we can see that the situation is not that simple or clear cut. Although all Sinhalese speak Sinhalese, there are regional varieties of spoken Sinhala that have different levels of social acceptance attached to them. Thus, one variety of Sinhala may be considered "funnier" than others, based on pre-existing ideas about the value of the language. Similarly, there are many varieties of the Tamil language, distributed regionally and with different levels of prestige attached to them. Another way we can see language varieties within the same language is how the media uses it. For example, the Sinhala used in popular radio programmes in private channels may vary significantly from the more "sober" use of language in State-media that is closer to written or formal Sinhala.

Because Sri Lanka was colonized by the British and English is the language of colonialism, historically, English has gained a level of prestige within Sri Lankan society. The modern form of education was begun in Sri Lanka by missionaries who arrived in the island and was initially linked to the religious denominations that were running that education system. Several of the early schools that continue to be considered "prestigious" today, were begun as part of these Christian missions, or, subsequently, the Theosophical Society that set up Buddhist schools parallel to Christian schools. Children who studied in these "English medium" schools were those who had access to power and prestige. Although vernacular language schools were begun in the early 1900s, and they were state run schools, they did not offer the higher levels of education or access that the English medium schools provided. Although these schools were later absorbed into the state system, particularly after the introduction of vernacular education for all schools, the distinction between elite schools that offer a better "English education", and all other schools continues to this day. What is important here is to understand that "knowledge of English" is linked to both our colonial history as well as the various language policies and historical decisions regarding education or funding for education taken by the State. Thus, while language is an identity marker and a form of self-expression, it is also related to social history.

English as a language of prestige

Because English developed as a language of prestige, it also became a tool of discrimination against those who could not speak the language. In the university, particularly, English acquired the name "kaduwa" because it became such a powerful class-marker within educational institutions and broader society in general. As more and more people were educated in vernacular languages, they began to realize that that education did not necessarily give them the knowledge or access that English did. So "kaduwa" or "kadda" as it is sometimes called today, was linked to both prestige and discrimination.

Language standardization

One main way in which English or "kaduwa" discriminates people is through language standardization. Sri Lankan linguists have long argued that the variety of English spoken in Sri Lanka is "Standard Sri Lankan English," that is, a variety of English developed in Sri Lanka, based on Received Pronunciation (RP English) or, Queen's English. However, we must remember here that even in England, "Queen's English" is only used by a very small number of people and is sometimes considered to be archaic. In Sri Lanka, Standard Sri Lankan English is linked to a minority of users who learn the language in prestigious schools or in their homes. The most widely used type of English in Sri Lanka is "non-standard Sri Lankan English" sometimes derogatorily called "not-pot" English. Although speakers of SSL look down upon non-standard speakers, it is quite widely used and understood throughout the country. The distinction between the standard and non-standard varieties is based largely on accent. When we examine the history of English in Sri Lanka, it becomes clear that these distinctions are social and political, and are not, in any way linked to the inherent value of an individual.

Language can be defined as a marker of dominant ideology, class consciousness and a medium of class struggle (Voloshinov, 1973). That is, language can be seen as transmitting dominant ideologies and is related to the way individuals and groups become conscious of their class positions and interests. In some situations, language can even become a site of struggle between classes and/or other ethnoreligious groups in affirming identity as well as access to power.

Language change

Language is not a static entity. Languages that do not change are called "dead" languages (for example Latin and Sanskrit) as they remain unchanged because there are no speakers of these languages in the world anymore. Living languages change as a result of social change. For example, if we take English, it has evolved so much over time that today, we can hardly recognize the language in which someone like Shakespeare wrote in, during the Renaissance. If we consider the Sinhala or Tamil we speak today, it is drastically different from the way it was used even a couple of centuries ago. Language change is brought about by contact with other languages, changes in our material life, changes in technology, and changes in the value attributed to a particular language. For example, code-switching (or switching between two

languages or varieties) is much more accepted today than even just two decades ago, largely due to the impact of media and Information Technology. Powerful social media platforms also transform language at a highly rapid pace. If our approach to language is not "prescriptive" that is prescribing the correct way to use language but is "descriptive" meaning we describe how language changes, then it becomes easier for us to deal with such shifts in language. Since language is very dynamic, those who are adamant about "standards" sometimes come across as quite parochial people who are inflexible or unable to adapt to new realities. On the other hand, the prestige associated with a language is linked to power, so those power structures may not change as fast. However, being aware that language is something that changes and that difference and change leads to our ability to relate better to others is important when living in contemporary society. Language change is affected by technology, and the way we use a language may change across generations.

How language can become a barrier

As we have seen, language can become a barrier in social mobility. In the Sri Lankan context, English functions as such a barrier. However, language need not be an insurmountable barrier. What is important is that our attitude towards languages and their speakers as well as access to language education changes. If we can look beyond a person's accent and accept them for their skills and capacities, the idea that a person who does not speak a "standard" language is inferior in skill will change. Similarly, broadening the access to English education can be a powerful way of creating social change and equality.

Language and media

Media coins new words or gives existing words new meaning. It also enables users to borrow freely and encourages the dynamic use of language. Thus, the media is crucial to the way language is transformed in our society.

For example, the shift of the meaning of the word "bukiya", which once meant "race bukiya" or "betting center", and now means "Facebook", shows us how language is changed by media and technology.

Language as identity in the university context

Linguistic diversity is a common feature of any university community. In multilingual societies such as Sri Lanka, such diversity can be a source of great creativity and strength, if pedagogical practices become inclusive and accepting of difference.

As an intellectual community, understanding the way power operates through language and critiquing power is important.

By drawing on such discussions about language and power, the university community can further ensure that language does not function as a barrier.

Why is understanding that language is an identity marker important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To understand how language becomes an identity marker.
2. To critique language standards and empower others through linguistically inclusive practices.

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To develop pedagogical practices that do not turn language into a barrier for learning.
2. To create inclusive classrooms that empower students from different language backgrounds.
3. To move beyond stigma associated with language to recognise the intellectual potential of each student.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To develop a system that accommodates people from a variety of linguistic backgrounds.
2. To maintain documents in all three languages and provide access to language translations during meetings, as far as possible.

Reflections and checklist

- I can explain how language becomes an identity marker
- I can critique language standards and discuss how they can become exclusionary
- I can discuss how and why English has become a class-marker in Sri Lankan society

Lesson 9
Mobility: Between the rural and the urban environments

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Compare and contrast the social values attributed to rural and urban environments and perceptions about them.
2. Critique the social divide between the rural and the urban.
3. Interpret the notion of mobility as a mode of individual and social change.

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
	In the previous lessons, we discussed various forms of social differences that shape our identity--gender, class, caste, language. In this lesson, we will examine another kind of social divide that affects many of us as we move across rural and urban environments.
20 minutes	**Activity** • In class, write a short description (250 words) of a childhood trip you remember. • View Clip 1 (scene: trip) from the popular teledrama *Thanamalvila Kollek*. • Compare your memories with what you have seen in the clip • View Clips 2 and 3 (scene: leaving the village & living in France) from *Thanamalvila Kollek*. **Discussion** • In class, discuss the way a trip, a journey, or movement is an important part of life and how it transforms our experiences of rural and urban environments. • Blog: Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how movement opens us to new worlds/ experiences.

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to mobility and the rural/urban divide.
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can explain that differences between rural and urban environments are not fixed and that movement between the two can lead to personal and social change
	• I can critique the social divide between the rural and the urban

Introduction

In the previous lessons, we discussed various forms of social differences that shape our identity-gender, class, caste, language.

In this lesson, we will examine another kind of divide that affects many of us as we move across rural and urban environments.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to,

1. Compare and contrast the social values attributed to rural and urban environments and perceptions about them.
2. Critique the social divide between the rural and the urban.
3. Interpret the notion of mobility as a mode of individual and social change.

Definitions

The urban-rural divide refers to the way predominantly urban and predominantly rural areas within a country present identifiable economic, political, social, ecological, and cultural differences.

A key challenge is to recognize that the rural and urban differences are shaped by social and economic realities and to realize that the various perceptions that we have about the two need not be treated as fixed or unchanging.

While these differences point to actually existing disparities, often, the difference between the two is narrativized as modern myths about absolute, unchanging places.

In reality, both urban and rural areas are constantly changing, intersecting across various other divides that exist in society.

Thus, while there are often economic, political, ecological, social, and cultural differences that do exist between urban and rural environments, they are not fixed, nor should they be treated as such.

Instead, in the modern global economy, most people, irrespective of whichever class they come from, move constantly across regional and national borders and are exposed to a variety of experiences that are both rural and urban.

Many of us have a fairly well-developed idea about what an urban environment is and what a rural environment is. Often, these perceptions are shaped by our past experiences and what we have encountered in our lives.

As we move through various experiences, and as we encounter new urban or rural environments, it becomes possible to compare those experiences.

We then realize that in fact, many of the stereotypes we have about rural and urban environments are ways in which real disparities have been historically narrativized.

The journey across rural, urban, or even national borders teaches us that there are no longer pure or fixed rural or urban environments and that we can go beyond these differences, both individually and socially.

Activity

- In class, write a short description (250 words) of a childhood trip you remember.
- View Clip 1 (scene: trip) from the popular teledrama Thanamalvila Kollek.
- Compare your memories with what you have seen in the clip.
- View Clips 2 and 3 (scene: leaving the village & living in France) from the popular teledrama Thanamalvila Kollek.

Discussion

- In class, discuss the way a trip, a journey, or movement is an important part of life and how it transforms our experiences of rural and urban environments.
- Blog: Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how movement opens us to new worlds or experiences.

Concepts related to Mobility

Narratives about rural and urban environments

As we have already discussed, our ideas about the rural and the urban have been constructed by various kinds of stories, films and other cultural texts about these environments. Ideas about "pure" and "uncorrupted" villages and village people who are supportive of each other, community-oriented, and moral, self-sustained are common in our societies; on the other hand, some may think of the city as progressive, cultured, rich, or alienating and mechanical. While there are some empirical realities related to these stereotypes, much of it has also been constructed through various historical and cultural narratives. Take for example, the Sinhalese poems of the early 20th Century or corresponding Tamil experience/text that romanticized the village. Such poems drew their inspiration from 18th Century British Literature that also valorized the rural. As we know, the early 20th Century was also a time of social change in Sri Lanka, so there was a need to think about the village as something different from the sordid realities of the city.

Nostalgia

Part of the reason that the village and the rural were romanticized in the past is nostalgia. Nostalgia is an emotion that expresses longing for a past that is actual or imagined and has been irrevocably lost. Thus, when people move to the city or go abroad, their ties to the village are severed as their identities become more hybridized. In such situations, they often begin to relate their past through nostalgia, where the longing is translated into a perfect image, eliminating the complexities of their previous experiences.

We see that the romanticization of the village or rural areas is tied to such nostalgic feelings for the past. The media, politicians, literature, film, sometimes even some academic disciplines mobilize such romanticization of the rural.

On the other hand, the city may also be represented in stereotypical ways. Often, when writers want to represent upward social mobility, they show a character moving from a village to a city and beyond, associating the city with change and dynamic life, riches, and new experiences.

What is important to realize is that both are stereotypes. While some people who come to the city succeed and become rich etc., not everyone does. On the other hand, someone who moves from the city to the village may sometimes try to enact the stereotypes they have about city- dwelling. A recent trend in Sri Lankan cinema depicts the latter by showing "progressive" and forward-thinking teachers who arrive from the city in the village and clash with village people in order to give students a better education ultimately leading to success.

Intersectionality

As with other structures of domination, the rural-urban divide is linked to other structures of power. For example, in economies where wealth, jobs, access to education or access to leisure are concentrated in cities, there are real, material distinctions between urban and rural areas. In such situations, economic disparities intersect with narratives about rural and urban environments and people. For example, recruiters from the garment industry tend to recruit young women from rural areas (particularly after national examinations) because they think that such young women are more moral and obedient. Thus, the poverty that exists in rural areas that intersect with stereotypes about rural women's morality and sexuality make them easy candidates for low-paying, insecure jobs. In other situations, urban women are almost always represented as middle or upper-middle class and morally corrupt when a negative stereotype about the city needs to be invoked in a situation.

Authenticity

The idea of cultural authenticity is often linked to stereotypes about the rural and the urban. Certain signs that are associated with "national culture"—such as Kandyan dancers, Osari-clad women or women in cloth and jacket, certain rituals such as Thovil, New Year Celebrations, certain types of food such as jak curry are often associated with the village. Thus, when we wish to show our cultural authenticity, we often invoke images of the past or images of the rural countryside. In some situations, such images about the village are sold by marketing campaigns to villagers themselves by objectifying a mythical cultural authenticity regarding rural cultures.

The touristic view of the "village"/ Insider-outsider perspective

The "touristic view" of a village refers to how we objectify the village as something to be viewed from the outside and enjoyed. That reduces the complexities that exist within a village community into a happy, rosy picture, which will then, in turn, be marketed to outsiders who

may be unfamiliar with those realities. In contrast, a touristic view of an urban environment will be linked to the celebration of the characteristics of a city such as skyscrapers, nightlife, and freedom and wealth, without recognizing the problems and inequalities that are realities of a city.

Identity shapes the way we view the rural and the urban

Our view about rural and urban environments is also shaped by our own identities and journeys. The way I relate to my own past and view my life journey (as moving from the rural to the urban or being urban or being rural etc.), also shapes the way I view these environments. Let us imagine, for example, a teacher who arrives in a rural school who is prejudiced against the rural way of life. Such a teacher may criticize the practices and the behaviours of the people in the village, lowering their sense of self-worth and preventing them from thinking reflectively about their own culture. This may even lead to the entrenchment of various prejudices that may exist within the community against outsiders. The lack of sensitivity about another's self- perception or identity can lead to the strengthening of prejudices on both sides. This impedes change and reflexivity.

Movement/mobility

While some people are afraid of movement and change, in fact, embracing movement is a key part of living in today's world.

Movement can refer to physical movement across a spatial area generally. It could also refer to the inner movement of someone, of change, and to social movements.

Movement as a Journey

All in all, we can think back to the way "trips" have changed in our culture. If we think of how people went on pilgrimages in the old days, either on foot, old bullock carts etc. (this is itself a kind of stereotype!), and compare it with "Dam Rejina/Weli Rejina" busses that are common in popular culture today, we can see how the journey itself has become the purpose of the movement. The point of the journey becomes the journey itself, in some ways, leading to enjoyment and sometimes, knowledge.

How the rural and the urban divide manifests in the University Context

The urban/rural divide has a deep impact within our university system because the majority of the student population in state universities come from predominantly rural areas.

This leads to cultural differences between students.

Sometimes these can lead to various types of violence--ragging, fights between student groups who see their identity in terms of rural/urban divisions.

Often, lack of communication between groups who self-identify as rural or urban can lead to misunderstandings.

Understanding the way such myths about the urban and the rural work will help build better networks and provide invaluable social capital to those who are willing to cut across these lines.

Some student sub-cultures may be based on stereotypes regarding the urban and rural even though, in reality, such stereotypes correspond little with the actually existing realities.

Why is Understanding the myths about the divide between the rural and the urban important to You?

If you are a student:

1. To understand how myths and narratives about the urban and the rural are constructed and to be able to look beyond stereotypes.
2. To embrace change as a positive experience.
3. To form diverse social networks and social capital.

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To be self-reflexive about your own identity as a teacher.
2. To be a more inclusive teacher by not adhering to stereotypes about the rural and the urban.
3. To create more critical classroom spaces that allow students to engage with their identity.
4. To accept students' experiences of mobility and change and respect their views about change.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To create an environment where transitions from rural to urban or urban to rural environments is easier for students.
2. To ensure that material divisions based on rural/urban identities are not reproduced in institutional policies and practice.

Reflections and checklist

- I can explain that differences between rural and urban environments are not fixed and that movement between the two can lead to personal and social change
- I can critique the social divide between the rural and the urban

Lesson 10
Ethno-Religious Identities and Diversity

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Define the term ethno-religious identity
2. Discuss the role played by ethno-religious identities in society
3. Demonstrate the understanding that all ethno-religious identities are valuable to each community and that all identities must be valued and respected equally
4. Analyse how the uniqueness of each identity can be a source of social strength, rather than a point of division

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
	In previous lessons, we have examined the way various types of social differences affect the way we understand ourselves and others. In this lesson, we turn to ethno-religious identities and the way our ethnic identities as well as our religious identities shape our experience of life.
20 minutes	**Activity**
	• View the following videos and write a brief response to the two songs based on the discussion below. Listen to *numbe amma itha kaluyi* and view the videos created by Youtubers for this song.
	• In groups, produce your own visual representation of the song in any medium you prefer (YouTube, Tik Tok, Slideshow, etc.).
	Discussion
	• The song *Enjoy Enjaami* makes several cultural references to roots, ancestors, nature, and the earth.
	• Why do you think this song makes these connections? What do you think is the theme of this song? What cultural cues can you pick up from the song about the overall theme? Why is belonging, the past, and the future so important to people? Why is continuity from the past and belonging to a community/ethno-religious community important to people?

	• The Nube amma song talks about the way the Sri Lankan nation is a mix of many ethnic identities. In a rather humorous way, it tries critique the idea of "racial/ethnic purity" or authenticity. • How does it challenge the way you generally see your own ethnic identity? What do you feel about its rather colloquial language? Does it present a view that is different from how you have learnt about ethno-religious identity before (in school or in other community settings)?
20 minutes	**Related concepts** • A brief discussion of concepts related to ethno-religious identities
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist** • I can define the term ethno-religious identity and discuss the role it plays in society • I can explain why ethno-religious identities are important to all communities just as they are important to my own community • I can discuss how ethno-religious differences are a source of social strength, rather than a point of division

Introduction

In previous lessons, we have examined the way various types of social differences affect how we understand ourselves and others. In this lesson, we turn to ethno-religious identities, and the way our ethnic identities as well as our religious identities shape our experience of life. We will first turn to the definition of ethnic and religious identities.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the participant will be able to,

1. Define the term ethno-religious identity
2. Discuss the role played by ethno-religious identities in society
3. Demonstrate the understanding that ethno-religious identities are important to all communities just as they are important to one's own community
4. Analyze how the uniqueness of each identity can be a source of social strength, rather than a point of division

Definitions

Ethnic identity refers to group identities based on colour, religion, language, and may sometimes be extended to cover caste, tribal, or national identifications.

It provides a sense of belonging based on one or more of these characteristics.

Since ethnic identity in Sri Lanka is not as clear cut as one would suppose, and since religion also plays an important role in how one's understanding of ethnic identity is shaped, we have used the term ethno-religious identity in this lesson.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to acknowledge that our attachments to our ethnic or religious identities are important, as well as to recognize that others will value their identities equally.

In many communities in the world, the ethnic identity as well as the religious identity of a person is very important, as it gives them a sense of belonging and a shared point of spiritual contact with others in that community. In this lesson, we will examine why acknowledging the way that each culture is unique is important; at the same time, we will also look at how the differences between cultures can be a strength to any diverse society.

Two words are often used, sometimes interchangeably, to signal group belongings based on colour, religion, or language: race and ethnicity. While the first is often used to refer to colour differences between Black and white people, the "biological" basis of colour has often been challenged. Since we are discussing the more culturally defined ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka, we use the term "ethnic" and "religious" or "ethno-religious" together. We will begin by looking at how most Sri Lankans have a very hybrid ethnic and religious identity. We will then discuss why, despite this hybridity, our attachments to ethnic and religious identity are still important to people.

Activity

View the videos of the following songs: *Numbe amma itha kaluy* and *Enjoy Enjaami*. The video for *Nube Amma* has been created by Youtubers while *Enjoy Enjami* has been professionally designed.

Create your own video for either one of these songs in any medium you prefer (YouTube, Tik Tok, Slideshow, etc.).

Discussion

The song *Enjoy Enjaami* makes several cultural references to roots, ancestors, nature, and the earth.

Why do you think this song makes these connections? What do you think is the theme of this song? What cultural cues can you pick up from the song about the overall theme? Why is belonging, the past, and the future so important to people? Why is continuity from the past and belonging to a community/ethno-religious community important to people?

The song *Nube amma* talks about the way the Sri Lankan nation is a mix of many ethnic identities. In a rather humorous way, it tries to critique the idea of "racial/ethnic purity" or authenticity.

How does it challenge the way you generally see your own ethnic identity? What do you feel about its rather colloquial language? Does it present a view that is different from how you have learnt about ethno-religious identity before (in school or in other community settings)?

Concepts related to Ethno-religious identities and diversity

A set of criteria used to define a common identity

We can think of ethnic and religious identities as a set of common characteristics that define a common identity.

Ethnicity is a fairly nebulous term as a taxonomy, because in different parts of the world it is framed differently. Often, it is defined in terms of a common ancestry, a shared past, or a shared set of cultural values.

Sometimes ethno-religious identities are defined spatially—i.e., through a shared geographical location or even national boundaries.

Although we treat ethnic and religious identities as being interconnected in this lesson, sometimes, they can also challenge other forms of identities that exist within the same ethnic or religious community.

These lines are often blurred. For example, while we generally speak of Sinhala speakers as Buddhists, there is a sizable Christian community that speaks Sinhala and self-identifies

as Sinhalese. On the other hand, the Tamil ethnic community also has both Hindus and Christians, while Muslims in some areas speak Tamil but do not self-identify as Tamils.

Legends and myths about common identities and ancestries that define ethnic or religious communities become hardened over time and become rearticulated through contemporary political discourses.

Although we tend to see ethnic identities and religious identities as being fixed and unchanging, digging deeper into ethno-religious identities shows that such identities are dynamic and shifting.

Hybridity

We generally think of our identities as being clearly defined and distinct from that of others. Yet, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that our cultures are quite hybrid today. Hybridity refers to the way cultures are mixed.

Historical processes such as colonization, local and international migration, as well as rapid developments in transportation and communication have ensured that no culture can be removed or isolated from others. Our cultures are always in contact with others.

While some processes that have led to cultural hybridity such as colonialism are very violent, hybridity has become an unavoidable fact of contemporary life. When it comes to ethno-religious identities, such hybridity generally means that we cannot think of or maintain "untainted" or pristine cultures that have not been touched by others. Instead, what we always find is that religious practices and ethnic characteristics such as food, clothes, music etc. have always been influenced by other cultures.

Thus, hybridity helps us to look for what is common among different cultures, rather than what is different among them.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is the longing we have towards the past. It is not a simple emotion that one feels when one is lonely. Instead, nostalgia is a key affect in which love and desire towards the past shape the way we think about our ethno-religious identities today.

As discussed earlier, ethnic groups often rely on the attachment to the past as a mode of articulating their love for the group in the present. Nostalgia can take the forms of pride and attachment to historical myths, mythical characters, or even religious events, which then form part of our ethno-religious imagination today. People who have been uprooted from their cultures may experience nostalgia as a way of dealing with the historical traumas they have experienced.

While such nostalgia is not always a negative effect, it is important that we are able to recognize it for what it is. All ethno-religious groups are attached to their identities and their pasts, so, in itself it may not be a bad thing. However, we may confuse the past with

the present and create situations in which our attachment to our past can lead to violence against our cultural Others in the present if we do not understand nostalgia.

Ethnic histories as historical narratives

All ethno-religious groups form their identity through various historical narratives that construct their past for them. While some of these may be based on actually existing evidence others may be based on myth, folklore or other forms of oral history. As with nostalgia, it is important to recognize that each narrative is a way of framing history and need not be a final statement about any historical reality.

Historical reality is always in process and is never a static or fixed thing. While historical narratives give us a sense of belonging and can lead to the formation of positive group identifications, it is important to recognize that that should not be done at the expense of other ethno-religious or cultural groups.

Linguistic origins and other shared histories

One very interesting fact about ethno-religious differences is how there are many linguistic and other kinds of histories that are shared between ethno-religious groups that are historically considered to be antagonistic towards each other. For example, the Sinhala and Tamil languages have been influenced by each other. Some religions share the same origins and even the same places of worship. In such situations, seeking what is common between our identities may lead to better understanding, rather than looking for differences.

Tracing language origins or the history of ideas or religions, comparative studies between religions etc., can make diversity within a community a very enriching experience.

Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the sense of uniqueness attributed to a particular community. Such authenticity might be attributed based on food, language, or cultural habits. However, cultures are dynamic forms of human interaction and, often, claims to authenticity are made based on a plethora of evidence that shows that there are no pure or pristine "authentic" cultures. Instead, most cultures are hybrid and have little that is truly "authentic".

Indigenous communities and identities

Indigenous communities and identities are those that have suffered colonial and capitalist onslaughts on their land, resources, and cultures, and who struggle to sustain their identity in the face of cultural and economic colonialism.

The identity of such communities is often put under scrutiny and practically, they are often subjected to deprivation because of their political or cultural status. For example, tribal people in some parts of India, Native Americans in the US and Canada, or the Maori people are Indigenous people who have lost their land and culture due to Colonialism.

Such communities are now protected by law. In the case of Sri Lanka, the Veddah community is an example: their status as a separate ethnic group has been denied to them at the political level, while their land has been taken over by modernization projects such as large dam historically. They have been absorbed into adjacent cultures, and the "pristine" culture of the Veddah people is no longer a reality.

Learning to live with diversity requires that we recognize that claims to cultural authenticity are generally suspect. At the same time, it is important to also recognize that some ethnic and religious groups may have experienced historical deprivation and may have had their cultures destroyed by colonial and capitalist encounters. In such situations, the recognition of their rights is central to understanding and respecting diversity.

Religious identity and fundamentalism

Religious identities are based on faith. It is an important aspect of an individual identity and provides a common point of reference for shared religious rituals and experiences. While shared religious beliefs and practices are central to cultural identity, some fundamentalist religious trends try to promote dogmatic religious identifications and downplay the diversity that exists within communities that share a common religion. In such instances, religion can become destructive.

How ethno-religious differences manifest in the University Context

Generally, the university is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic institution.

In all universities, most ethnic groups and religious groups are represented in the student body.

Moreover, disciplines related to religions, languages, and history are taught in many universities. For example, Pali and Buddhist Studies, Christian Culture and Christian Studies, Islamic Studies, Hindu Studies, Sinhala, Tamil, etc. are all taught within our university system.

This diversity allows our educational programmes to engage in comparative studies that will enable critical encounters with multiple religions and histories of ethnic groups.

Different universities have different demographics, varying by the region and the study programmes offered.

This rich diversity allows for a learning environment in which students, ideally, will be exposed to various cultural and religious events, festivals, and ideas, especially through extra- curricular activities that focus on ethno-religious festivals.

Acknowledging and embracing this diversity is an opportunity to learn about others and to learn that others may see the world differently.

Why is understanding how to respond to ethno-religious differences positively important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To improve socio-emotional skills
2. To empathise with and learn from peers representing other ethno-religious communities.
3. To become more flexible and adaptable in new cultural situations.

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To represent the cultural diversity of our universities when developing classroom materials
2. To encourage students to interact with people from different ethno-religious backgrounds in classroom activities.
3. To become non-judgmental teachers who can navigate a diverse classroom without stereotyping.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To create an institutional environment in which students and staff from all ethno-religious backgrounds will have equal access.
2. To offer institutional support to students/staff to transition into a culturally diverse university environment.

Reflections and checklist

- I can define the term ethno-religious identity and discuss the role it plays in society
- I can explain why ethno-religious identities are important to all communities just as they are important to my own community
- I can discuss how ethno-religious differences are a source of social strength, rather than a point of division

Lesson 11
Accessibility across the Digital Divide

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Identify the ways in which the digital divide affects university level teaching and learning
2. Explain the way the digital divide affects career prospects
3. Create a list of competencies that will be required to adjust to the new online work environments

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
Introduction	So far, we have examined the various ways in which inequalities, diversity, and differences in our society lead to identity formation. We have examined gender, class, and caste etc., which are differences that have existed in society for a very long time. In this lesson, we will look at a divide that affects many of us most immediately as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic--the divide between those who have access to ICT and those who do not.
20 minutes	**Activity**
Activity & Discussion	- In groups, develop a scenario of a university in 10 years' time. - How would the buildings look? What digital environments will be used? How will the students be different? - Create a visual and written scenario that projects a future university setting. **Discussion** - How far does your vision of future universities rely upon ICT? - Can this future be achieved if there is no equal access to ICT and related skills? - Reflect on how our relationship to our own work and the performance of others is shaped by digital accessibility.

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to the digital divide.
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can identify the ways in which the digital divide affects university level teaching and learning • I can explain the way the digital divide affects career prospects • I can create a list of competencies that will be required to adjust to the new online work environments

Introduction

So far, we have examined the various ways in which inequalities, diversity, and differences in our society lead to identity formation. We have examined gender, class, and caste etc., which are differences that have existed in society for a very long time.

In this lesson, we will look at a divide that affects many of us most immediately as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic-the divide between those who have access to ICT and those who do not.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the participant will be able to,

1. Identify the ways in which the digital divide affects university level teaching and learning
2. Explain the way the digital divide affects career prospects
3. Create a list of competencies that will be required to adjust to the new online work environments

Definitions

The United Nations defines the digital divide as a social issue linked to the different amounts of information between those individuals who have access to the information society and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and those who do not.

A key challenge in today's world is the sudden and unexpected move to online environments. Many parts of the world had to simply shift to online platforms to manage most day-to-day activities as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. This has led to a new kind of inequality between those who have access to ICT and those who do not- in terms of devices, connectivity, and skills.

The United Nations has recognized that a new divide has been caused by the vast expansion of ICT and its practical value in our everyday lives.

This new divide, also known as the "digital divide", refers to the difference between people who have access to ICT and those who do not.

Recognizing this new social inequality is important, particularly in a new "normal" situation in which most everyday activities such as shopping, education, staying in touch etc. are carried out online.

Activity

- In groups, imagine a scenario of a university that will exist in 10 years' time.
- How would the buildings look? What digital environments will be used? How will the students be different?
- Create a visual and written scenario that projects a future university setting.

Discussion

- How far does your vision of the future universities rely upon ICT and digital accessibility?
- Can this future be achieved if there is no equal access to ICT and related skills?
- Reflect on how our relationship to our own work and the performance of others are shaped by digital accessibility.

Concepts related to Accessibility across the digital divide

Digital competencies vs. other competencies

Digital competencies have become central to the educational and employer demands in the contemporary world. For example, language competencies, interpersonal skills, leadership skills and socio-emotional skills are some of the competencies that are required to function productively within educational and work environments.

Among these, digital competencies have acquired an immediate and critical value following the Covid 19 pandemic which required that most daily activities be conducted online.

Digital connectivity and accessibility: hardware, software, capacity-building, digital literacy, and digital skilling

Digital connectivity refers to the infrastructure necessary for acquiring digital competencies and working in online environments. Digital accessibility refers to the available level of hardware and software necessary to access an online environment. This will include devices and connectivity. For example, if the internet connection is slow or unstable, even the most productive workers may not be able to function properly.

Even the most capable people will find it difficult to perform if they do not have these basic requirements. However, in addition to the hardware, software, and connectivity, one also requires digital skills and capacity building within digital environments. For example, an excellent teacher, who may suddenly be asked to shift to online teaching will not be able to teach at his/ her full capacity if s/he does not have the digital skills necessary to perform effectively in an online environment.

These digital skills will include understanding digital platforms and what they can and cannot do, ability to input information using digital devices and being skilled at navigating the WWW. These skills will often have to be learnt. In such situations, capacity building in online environments becomes a social necessity. For example, providing adequate connectivity, training in digital skills, and developing online communication skills become necessary to ensure that the online educational and work environment continues smoothly.

In addition, the way online and off-line environments interact during education or work sessions can create significant difficulties or complications for the participants.

Intersectionality between class, gender, and disability and the digital divide

When a digital divide exists, the intersectionality between class, gender, and disability can play a crucial role. For example, if online capacities are not built through the development of the online environment, women, or children from non-privileged backgrounds may find it difficult to access education or work. This can create significant difficulties as well as interrupt work. Wherever participants are not sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities, similar problems can occur.

For example, if a class note is not checked for accessibility before it is sent to students, a student with a visual impairment may be unable to access it through a screen reader. Thus, for online educational or work environments to be productive for the participants, those building the capacity of such systems should be sensitive to these needs of people who may not have access. Otherwise, a fundamental social inequality can lead to a collapse of the overall system due to lack of accessibility.

Prestige linked to digital accessibility and capacities that can create inequalities

Since the Covid 19 pandemic has made online environments the primary way through which most educational activities and some work activities are conducted, the digital divide caused by this new situation may lead to serious tensions and social problems. If such inequalities become linked to social prestige and or social stigma, in the long run, this can lead to social identities that can become seriously divisive. For example, just as the prestige linked to English has created complex social identities, the digital divide may affect the personality and identity of people that can have serious consequences.

Online security and protection

Digital security and safety are two other issue linked to digital accessibility. With increasing participation in online environments and platforms, many people may become vulnerable to cyber-attacks. Since most of our data is now online, digital security has become key. If the online platform does not have adequate facilities to back up information or adequate virus guards etc., the users will be vulnerable in the online environment.

In addition, practices such as cyber-bullying can make organizational environments unsafe for those working in them. It then becomes crucial that policies and guidelines on online behavior and ethics be developed so that the safety of those participating in this environment can be ensured.

Digital identity as an expression of the self

Another aspect of digital accessibility is the use of digital identity as an expression of the self. Digital identities allow people to fashion their image--whether physical appearance, projection of personality, or level of accomplishment--without being restricted by material realities. This can lead to creative forms of self-expression and ways of connecting to others. For example, a person who is a very shy in person may engage actively in an online class

discussion because of the invisibility and the safety that the online environment gives him/her. In such situations, the digitally mediated connection between people can take new avenues and forms.

Relating to others through digital media

Digital platforms can also help to connect with others who are physically far away. Geographical limitations on what forums we can be part of, what lectures we can listen to, or what meetings we can take part in, have been overcome through various online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet etc. They provide previously unavailable opportunities, especially to students and scholars within a university context.

Virtual realities vs. real realities

Although virtual platforms can be a great opportunity for many people, we cannot forget that they will transform all aspects of our culture. It can function as a great deskilling process when it comes to traditional competencies such as memory, writing by hand, or talking loudly to a large group of people, as these skills are hardly necessary in online platforms. However, at the same time, this overreliance on technology can become a problem particularly if there are situations where these major human capabilities developed over millennia are lost.

Moreover, digital identities can be counterproductive if used to hurt or harm others. Spending long hours on digital devices can also lead to long term physical and mental illness.

Moreover, the unregulated impact that prominent personalities on social media can have might be harmful for long-term social well-being. For example, influencers whose activities are not and cannot be monitored or regulated may create ideas or hypes that can destroy crucial ethical and political values that are necessary to sustain a democratic and equitable society. Or they can seriously influence the culture in more conservative directions.

Digital divide within the university context

The digital divide has become one of the starkest forms of inequality that exists within our university system.

Since university education now relies quite heavily on online learning platforms, access to ICT largely determines how far students can access education.

The quality of the education that is delivered by a particular lecturer or acquired by a student will now be determined by how far the teacher/student has digital access.

The digital divide is particularly relevant in the commodification of higher education where the delivery of education is focused almost exclusively on content delivery.

The digital divide can also create inequalities between sub-groups within the university and between facilities.

Why is understanding the digital divide important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To be mindful of the digital gap and support those who do not have digital access
2. To develop creative practices to share lesson materials, readings, and interact with the learning materials through peer-learning activities etc.
3. To develop ethical values that enable you to become a more flexible and respectful person in digital environments (this will be a key skill that will be required in future job markets)

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To develop pedagogical approaches that facilitate alternative access to those who may have lesser digital access.
2. To develop classroom practices that enable students who have little access to participate fully within the teaching-learning process.
3. To avoid stigmatizing students whose learning styles may be different when it comes to using technology.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To develop pedagogical approaches that facilitate those who may have lesser access to online environments.
2. To develop classroom practices that enable students who have little access to the online environment to participate fully within the teaching-learning process.

Reflections and Checklist

- I can identify the ways in which the digital divide affects university level teaching and learning
- I can explain the way the digital divide affects career prospects
- I can create a list of competencies that will be required to adjust to the new online work environments

Lesson 12
Organisational Power and Politics

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Define the concepts of power and politics in an organisational context
2. Interpret the use of power and politics
3. Critique the impact of the use of power tactics on organizational performance

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
	In previous lessons we have examined the way various types of social differences affect the way we understand ourselves and others. In this lesson, we turn to the way organizational power and politics affect our experience within formal institutions.
20 minutes	**Activity**
	• In class, write a short description (250 words) of an individual experience of a power-related issue within a personal relationship.
	Discussion
	• In class, discuss who the parties involved in the incident were. What were the bases of power that were exercised within the individual experience?
	• Blog: Develop a discussion on how you would have dealt with personal experience if you had theoretical knowledge and understanding of organisational power and politics.
20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to organizational power and politics.

15 minutes	Reflections and checklist
	• I can explain the concepts of power and politics in an organisational setting • I can interpret how power and politics are used in interpersonal relations • I can critically evaluate the impact of the use of power tactics on organizational performance

Introduction

In previous lessons, we have examined the way various types of social differences affect the way we understand ourselves and others. In this lesson, we turn to the way organizational power and politics affect our experience within formal institutions.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to,

1. Define the concepts of power and politics in an organisational context
2. Interpret the use of power and politics
3. Critique the impacts of the use of power tactics

Definitions: Power:

The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his[her] own will despite resistance. (Weber cited in Luthans, 2011, p. 313)

A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. (Dahl, 1957)

Definition: Politics:

Politics is the ways and means of exercising power within the context of an organisation.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to acknowledge that each individual is unique and to exercise power with an understanding of the differences that exist in various contexts.

Activity

In class, write a short description (250 words) of an individual experience of a power-related issue within a personal relationship.

Discussion

In class, discuss who the parties involved in the incident were. What were the bases of power that was exercised within the individual experience?

Blog: Develop a discussion on how you would have dealt with the personal experience if you had the theoretical knowledge and understanding of organisational power and politics.

Organizational Power and Politics – Related Concepts

Power and dependency: Power exists due to the dependency of the relationship between the power holder and the target. If there is no such dependency, the power holder cannot exercise power over target (Robbins, 2013, p. 444-446). A person can have power over you only if he/she controls something you desire.

Different sources of power:

Legitimate Power (Authority): This is the right of decision and command that a person has over others. Thus, the person who is the subject of influence believes that it is right and proper for another to exert influence.

Reward Power: The right to make decisions about the allocation of rewards and promotions based on organizational rationalized criteria.

Coercive Power: This base of power exists for the same reason that reward power does but instead of rewarding another person, punishment is threatened or applied.

Expert Power: This is the power vested in people due to their expertise in certain professions. For example, lawyers, accountants, and physicians.

Referent Power: People possess referent power because s/he has influence over others, acquired from being well-liked or respected by them.

Relational Aspect of Power: Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something one holds onto or allows to slip away. Rather, power is relational; becomes apparent when it is exercised. Because of the relational aspect, power is not associated with a particular institution, but with practices, techniques, and procedures. (Adapted from Foucault, 1980).

Political Behaviour: Activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organisation. However, political behaviour consists of influence or attempts to influence the distribution of advantages within the organisation. Being fundamentally political entities, organisational politics is the way in which organizational members use power in the organizational setting. Leaking confidential information, spreading rumors, withholding critical information are some such behaviours.

Power Tactics in Political Behaviour: Power tactics are the ways in which individuals translate power bases into specific actions. They include Legitimacy, Rational persuasion, Inspirational appeals, Consultation, Exchange, Personal appeals, Ingratiation, Pressure and Coalitions. A brief description of each tactic is given below.

Legitimacy: Relying on your authority position or saying a request accords with organizational policies or rules.

Rational Persuasion: Presenting logical arguments and factual evidence to demonstrate a request is reasonable.

Inspirational Appeals: Developing emotional commitment by appealing to a target's values, needs, hopes, and aspirations.

Consultation: Increasing the target's support by involving him or her in deciding how you will accomplish your plan.

Exchange: Rewarding the target with benefits or favours in exchange for following a request.

Personal Appeals: Asking for compliance based on friendship or loyalty. Ingratiation: Using flattery, praise, or friendly behavior prior to making a request. Pressure: Using warnings, repeated demands, and threats.

Coalitions: Enlisting the aid or support of others to persuade the target to agree.

Power relations in different social settings:

Power relations exist within families. This may be between the wife and husband, between children and parents or even between children. Most people do not realize that they are experiencing power relations at home. For example, the ability of a wife to either make decisions or to be consulted in making decisions with regard to important household matters is directly related to the financial independence of the wife. Similarly, we experience different power relations in institutions such as universities. Ragging experienced by freshers in a university is an example. Mostly, we understand the legal power which is commonly known as authority which flows from top to bottom of an organisation's hierarchy. However, we also experience other sources of power within organisations such as expert power and coercive power.

How power and politics manifest in the university context

- Similar to any other formal organisation, power and politics operate within a university context as well
- However, there are other sources of power that are exercised which are mostly informal in nature
- Ragging can be explained as an explicit version of exercising informal power mostly through coercive means

Why is understanding power and political behaviour in an organisation important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To be aware of how informal power structures work, and learn how to navigate power; relations between students, academic staff, and administrative staff
2. To be aware of formal power relations and authority that exist within the university system

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To be aware of when and where to express formal authority
2. To deal with manifestations of informal power and avoid conflicts resulting from them
3. To understand and steer clear of political manipulations of institutional power that may lead to negative consequences for the self and the community at large

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To make it clear to the university community on who has formal authority
2. To deal with manifestations of informal power and avoiding conflicts resulting from them
3. To understand and steer clear of political manipulations of institutional power that may lead to negative consequences for the self and the community at large

Reflections and Checklist

- I can explain the concepts of power and politics in an organisational setting
- I can interpret how power and politics are used in interpersonal relations
- I can critically evaluate the impacts of the use of power tactics

Lesson 13
Non-violent Behaviour and Affirmative Interventions

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Define non-violent behavior and assertive behaviour
2. Design a brochure on how to engage with someone who is aggressive in a public setting
3. Formulate a ten-point charter on non-violent practices that will be helpful within a university context

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	Introduction
Introduction	So far in our course, we have looked at the way various types of differences exist in society. In this lesson, we will examine strategies we can use to come to accept the self and others, to be non-violent towards the self and others, and to bring about change through non-violent means.
20 minutes	**Activity** • Watch the TED talk on non-violent resistance. **Discussion** • We live in a very violent and unequal world. In this world, many of us grow up with the idea that violence is the answer to violence. Listen to Jamila Raqib, who argues that non-violence is one of the most important ways in which we can resist violence and power. • Do you think that being non-violent before a violent person can change a situation? Why or why not? What strategies can we use to make non-violence work? • Popular political protests are not the only area in which non- violence can be practiced. How does having inner peace and a non-violent approach in a violent situation help to manage conflicts?
Activity & Discussion	

20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to non-violent behaviour.
15 minutes	**Reflections and checklist**
	• I can define the terms non-violent behavior and assertive behaviour • I can demonstrate knowledge on how to engage with someone who is aggressive in a public setting • I can disseminate knowledge on non-violent practices that will be helpful within a university context

Introduction

So far in our course, we have looked at the way various types of differences exist in society.

While differences are central to human society, language, and experiences, we have constructed hierarchies out of these differences, marking some people with certain attributes as being better than others.

Material inequalities that exist in our society also create differences that are unjust and divisive.

In this lesson, we will examine ways to accept the self and others, to be non-violent towards the self and others, and to bring about change through non-violent means.

We will examine how non-violence can be practiced at the psychological, behavioural, verbal, and physical levels.

Non-violent practices today also involve caring for the environment.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to

1. Define non-violent behavior and assertive behaviour
2. Design a brochure on how to engage with someone who is aggressive in a public setting
3. Formulate a ten-point charter on non-violent practices that will be helpful within a university context

Definitions

Non-violent behaviour involves an active process of bringing political, economic, social, emotional, or moral pressure to bear in the wielding of power in contentious interactions between collective actors (Schocks, 2005).

A key challenge in contemporary society is to accept the self and others without judging. Simple as this sounds, this is very difficult to practice in a society where we are always judged by how beautiful, successful etc. we are. To live with diversity requires at least some measure of accepting the self and others.

Elaboration of definitions

Accepting the self and others involves respect towards non-violence. We live in a very violent society in which we direct aggression towards the self and others: harshly judging others, criticizing them, and constantly engaging with situations that are violent. We have little understanding of assertive communication and assertive behavior.

So far, in our lessons, we have looked at how differences are created through various social, cultural, and political structures that create both inequality and differences that cannot be easily reconciled.

In this lesson, we will examine ways in which we can change our behaviours and accept others practicing non-violence as the basis of our interactions with others.

As this definition shows, various collective actors negotiate their power in societies that are riddled with such differences. Non-violence involves using moral, economic, or social power-- rather than physical violence or military power when negotiating collectively.

Although this is the broader definition of non-violence as a social and political practice, the same applies to individuals:

When negotiating with others, it is important to not use power in a negative way that is harmful to others. Instead, non-violent behaviour involves the assertion of one's position (whether it be in relation to needs, ideas, or emotions) through means that reject or consciously refuse violent means that are harmful to the self or others.

Activity

- Watch the TED talk on non-violent resistance

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIpgrZ8yS-Q

Discussion

We live in a very violent and unequal world. In this world, many of us grow up with the idea that violence is the answer to violence.

Listen to Jamila Raqib, who argues that non-violence is one of the most important ways in which we can resist violence and power.

Do you think that being non-violent before a violent person can change a situation? Why or why not? What strategies can we use to make non-violence work?

Popular political protests are not the only area in which non-violence can be practiced. How does having inner peace and a non-violent approach in a violent situation help to manage conflicts?

Concepts

Assertive communication

Assertiveness is a type of communication in which one is able to convey the way s/he feels about something without coming across as denigrating others.

Assertiveness is a learned behavior. It is a middle ground between aggressive behavior, in which we disregard the needs of others, and passive behavior, in which we disregard our own needs. We learn how to handle and manage conflict from our environment.

We may repeat our behaviors that we have learnt from others when we engage in aggressive or passive behaviors. Assertive behavior may be determined by the situation in which we are interacting with others.

One way to understand the way the context determines our assertive behavior is what can be recognized as "high context cultures" and "low context cultures." In high context cultures, the contextual clues given when we communicate play a key role in communicating our meaning.

In a low context culture, the contextual clues that we give when we communicate play a lower role in determining how we get our message across.

Thus, the way we communicate is structured by the context, who we are speaking to, how we have been trained to address people in formal and informal settings.

Our assertiveness is communicated by our ability to express ourselves verbally and non-verbally in a way that shows that we are willing to listen to the other, take another's point of view into consideration, take another's situation into consideration, but also communicate our own ideas clearly.

Sometimes, when people lack the verbal skills to express themselves clearly or the social skills to engage with others without an undue sense of superiority of the self or a sense of inferiority, they end up not being assertive.

In some situations, this may lead to confrontational and aggressive behavior. In other instances, it may lead to low self-worth and low self-esteem-- the feeling that the self doesn't matter.

Practicing assertive communication skills begins with an acceptance of oneself and the ability to see that others have other ideas.

On the other hand, if we become aggressive in the face of a different opinion or a conflict with another, we may end up creating unpleasant and violent situations that can be counter-productive to the entire social situation.

"I" statements ("I like", "I want", "I don't like") that are brief and to the point

- Co-operative phrases, e.g., "What are your thoughts on this"
- Emphatic statements of interest, e.g., "I would like to"
- Distinction between fact and opinion, e.g., "My experience is different"
- Suggestions without "shoulds" or "oughts" e.g., "How about…" or "Would you like to…"
- Constructive criticism without blame, e.g., "I feel irritated when you interrupt me"
- Seeking others' opinions, e.g., "How does this fit in with your ideas?"
- Willingness to explore other solutions, e.g., "How can we get around this problem?"

Non-violent behaviour (as opposed to violence, harming others, hatred towards others etc.)

When we have learnt how to assert ourselves and communicate our assertiveness without hurting others (or minimizing the hurt), we can reach the inner empowerment necessary to be non-violent.

We live in a culture that valorizes violence. Violence may be obvious aggressive behavior, but it could also be passive behavior that undermines, harasses, or hurts others without seeming to do so.

Non-violent behavior refers to a fundamental belief that acting without violence towards others and standing up to violence with non-violence can be an effective way to achieve personal, political, or social goals.

Non-violence refers to the way people face up to violent people in non-violent but symbolically powerful ways. For example, looking straight into the face of the aggressive person, not responding to physical violence but gaining a steady audience to the violent behavior of the other. To do this, one needs inner discipline and a power that a violent person does not have.

Some of the greatest struggles of the modern world have been won using the non-violent method. Violent conflicts have seen far less success.

For example, figures like Martin Luther King and various non-violent groups have developed strategies to engage with violence in non-violent ways. Non-violence can be practiced at the personal, social, and political levels.

Being non-violent does not equal being weak -it means that you stand up to someone who is powerful or violent without getting violent yourself.

Affirmative intervention

Affirmative intervention is the practice of intervening in a tense or violent situation without causing further violence.

For example, if someone is behaving aggressively towards me, I could return the same aggression or respond calmly but strongly. I could say, "let us discuss where our differences are" or "it would be helpful if we could talk about this".

If the situation is too tense, we could also practice an affirmative silence or say, " I can only engage with you if you have a collected and rational conversation with me".

On the other hand, if I see someone being subjected to violence, I could intervene (typically a person who practices non-violence will intervene in such a situation). Sometimes, if physical violence is being used, you can distract the assaulter by asking a non-aggressive question or seeking help from others. However, it is best not to use reactive violence in such situations because that can harm the person being abused even more.

If verbal violence is being used, asking: "why" or finding another way to distract the person and de-escalate the situation might work. Of course, there is no formula for how to act in such a situation, but a nonviolent person will always stand up to violence against the self or others.

Non-violent behaviour on online platforms

Online platforms have today become extremely violent. Verbal abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, and hate speech are rampant in cyberspace. Being non-violent on online platforms begins with understanding that words (like actions) can hurt.

Sexual advances that are unwelcome by the other party, using others (particularly minors) for sexual gratification using images or words can have very harmful effects on others. Particularly when interacting with strangers online, it is important to know how to stay safe online as well as understand what could count as harassment. Sometimes what I consider "just fun" may be hurtful to others. Thus, internalizing appropriate language, knowing that you must have the consent of the other person when making any sexual advances, and ensuring that you are not, even unknowingly engaging with a minor is very important. Such acts can have a powerful impact on the victim and strong legal measures can be taken against the perpetrator.

Particularly with the new online environment that has become ubiquitous as a result of the pandemic, compels us to spend a lot of time online. Therefore, it is very important to know the accepted behaviour and language when engaging in an online classroom etc. or even when engaging in intimate conversations online.

The larger point is, behave in such a way that you would like to be treated when you enter into an open, online space.

Creating institutional support for non-violence:

Non-violence can only be effective in situations where there is an institutional commitment to non-violence. Through awareness campaigns, using art, theatre, and other creative means, institutions such as universities can create environments where non-violence is the norm.

Creating safe spaces, mechanisms for quick responses to handle violent situations, practical training in assertive behaviours for first year students etc. can be effective ways to create an institutional culture that is non-violent.

Healing

If you are someone who has suffered trauma, healing is important to practicing non-violence. While therapy can help with very severe cases, art, poetry, and theatre etc. can also help with collective healing from traumatic experiences. Sharing the gift of empathy with others can be a wonderful way to start non-violent action.

Non-violent behaviour and affirmative interventions within the university context

Violence is very common within our university system.

Students and even sometimes academics and administrators use violent language and behavior when they want to win an argument or establish their power.

In the long run, this has led to a general weakening of the intellectual culture within the university.

A non-violent person is someone who values others and their ideas, without looking down on them or hurting others. Someone who will stand up for him/herself or others without getting violent about it.

Such behavior can diffuse tense situations and prevent practices such as ragging that is based on practicing violence on others.

Political disagreements must lead to critique and debate, not violence and using power against others.

Similarly, violence within the university can sometimes be invisible and structural. Non-violent behavior also means that we counter those with our own ethical behavior that values every human being.

Why is practicing non-violent behaviour important to you?

If you are a student:

1. To develop self-awareness and self-acceptance
2. To be aware of non-destructive but powerful ways to challenge unjust power/ inequalities
3. To develop positive social relations and networks through interacting with others in affirmative ways including affirmative communication

If you are an academic staff member:

1. To be able to respond to violent situations without being reactive
2. To not abuse institutional power to exert pressure on others by using direct or indirect violence
3. To create classroom situations where students feel safe and there is no direct or indirect use of violence

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To implement awareness programmes among students that promote non-violent approaches.
2. To develop policies that will prevent the use of violence that draws on institutional power directly or indirectly.

Reflections and checklist

- I can define non-violent behavior and assertive behaviour
- I can demonstrate knowledge on how to engage with someone who is aggressive in a public setting
- I can disseminate knowledge on non-violent practices that will be helpful within a university context

Lesson 14
Spiritual Experiences, Ethics, and Diversity

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Create a list of inner spiritual practices that can be healing
2. Develop visual/map of spiritual and ethical practices that will help to accept the self and others better

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
	In the last lesson, we discussed the importance of non-violent behavior within a university setting.
	In this lesson, we explore ways we can develop inner resilience to violence through spiritual experiences and ethics that transcend our ethno-religious identities.
20 minutes	**Activity**
	• View the two videos that suggest two forms: mindfulness and mind-body balance.
	Discussion
	• Write a list of practices in our daily life that make us sick in the mind and the body.
	• What are some of the everyday situations that lead us to unethical behaviors such as using academic/institutional authority to abuse/coerce/discriminate others, lying, cheating/plagiarism, using violence against others, giving into peer pressure and mob-mentality?
20 minutes	**Related concepts**
	• A brief discussion of concepts related to spiritual experiences, ethics, and diversity.

15 minutes	Reflections and checklist
Reflection	- I am aware of inner spiritual practices that can be healing - I am aware of spiritual and ethical practices that will help us to accept the self and others better

Introduction

In the last lesson we discussed the importance of non-violent behavior within a university setting.

In this lesson we explore ways we can develop inner resilience to violence through spiritual experiences and ethics that transcend our ethno-religious identities.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to,

- Create a list of inner spiritual practices that can be healing
- Develop a visual map of spiritual and ethical practices that will help to accept ourselves and others better

Spiritual experiences, ethics, and diversity

This lesson takes a practical approach on how to develop mind-body balance and why that is important.

We will also discuss the importance of ethical behaviour within the university setting and how that enriches our experience as scholars.

We will approach spiritual experiences as something that transcends our religious identities and discuss them as an aspect of inner growth in our character.

Activity

- View the two videos that suggest two forms of mindfulness and mind-body balance
  https://youtu.be/u2Lu5wu-T24
  https://www.facebook.com/FangYuanTaiChi/videos/311235063489320/?sfnsn=wa

Discussion

Write a list of practices in our daily life that make us sick in the mind and the body

What are some everyday situations that lead us to unethical behaviors such as lying, cheating/plagiarism, using violence against others, giving into peer pressure and mob- mentality, etc.

Concepts

Mind-body wellness

As we have seen throughout these lessons, humans are beings of the body and the mind. Thus, our inner growth begins with the well-being of both the mind and the body. We live in a culture that makes us sick both in the mind and the body because of harmful environmental practices, economic deprivation that forces people to suffer both mentally and physically,

generalized violence, overwork and exhaustion, and unhealthy habits. Thus, mind-body wellness requires deliberate effort.

We grow up learning that our mind and body are separate, and for most people, when they are young, the focus is on education, which, today, is devoted almost exclusively to the development of the mind. Even sports and recreational activities have become competitive and not a means of relaxing and enjoying one's mind-body balance.

Thus, to focus on our inner growth, we need to regain the balance between the mind and the body, we need to find the best way to find our unique expression of our inner self.

Mind-body wellness is not simply about doing Yoga or meditation because of social pressure: it is about finding what makes one strong, internally, as a person.

Awareness

Awareness refers to our sensitivity to our environment, ourselves, and our interaction with it. It is a form of developing inner consciousness, where we become ethically committed to what we do (rather than do things due to peer pressure or social pressure). Particularly when it comes to life choices, careers, etc., we sometimes make choices that do not make us happy. Or we engage in destructive competition that is harmful to ourselves and to others.

Becoming aware is a means of developing inner strength to do what we believe in and to refuse to engage with anything that falls outside our ethical framework. Sometimes, there is a lot of pressure to over-perform or even engage in corruption or violence just to show that we are powerful or strong. Such behavior arises from a lack of self-awareness. People who have inner strength are often calm and humble about it and find joy in what they accomplish through their own hard work.

As we have discussed in previous lessons as well, toxic positivity, unrealistic body ideals, normative gendered behaviours, performing class etc. can lead to much unhappiness. Awareness is not simply about being morally good or pure. No human being is that. It is more about synching with our inner self, understanding our weaknesses and desires, and setting realistic achievable goals to life. Viewing success holistically--rather than in material or educational terms alone-- is also central to awareness.

Finally, knowing to let go when situations become harmful or overly stressful is also a part of inner awareness. In short, awareness is about understanding our environment and our place in it and setting goals that allow us to remain healthy and happy people.

Non-religious perspective on spirituality

Spirituality is different from religion. Although all religions rely upon spirituality for faith, spirituality cannot be limited to one's belief. Spirituality is a radical form of relating to the self and the world by understanding the deep connections between us and our environment.

People express their spirituality in different ways: through art, gardening, teaching, taking care of the environment or animals, or through love, social service, politics etc. What is important is that it allows us to connect with our own inner being.

Each religion practices different forms of mind-body wellness—meditation, yoga, other bodily disciplinary systems, fasting, prayer

While some religions use meditation, fasting, and prayer to connect with the self, others may use singing, yoga, poetry and art to express spirituality. Part of learning to live with diversity is recognizing our own inner spirituality and ethical being and recognizing the ways in which others express their spirituality. There are many paths to truth. Perhaps there are many truths and different Gods. But the mind's ability to connect with the inner being of our existence and living with awareness and empathy towards others is a shared but unique experience across cultures and religions.

Spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity within the university context

Because universities focus heavily on intellectual development, the balance between the mind and the body is often overlooked.

As a result, many students and scholars suffer from inner anxiety caused by the pressure to perform, peer pressure, and institutional pressure. Sometimes, overwork and exhaustion are a genuine problem.

Stress caused by lack of mind-body awareness can lead to difficulties in moving and interacting with others positively because the self is suffering.

Within universities, where students and others often struggle with stress, toxic or violent behaviours that are destructive to the self and others can have a negative effect in the overall institutional culture.

Why are spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity important to you?

If you are a student:
1. To make an effort to take care of yourself (Mind and body).
2. To better relate to others irrespective of their differences, backgrounds.
3. To practice ethical behaviour in academic engagements.

If you are an academic staff member:
1. To introduce a learning environment which facilitates ethical practices within the classroom.
2. To maintain an unbiased, ethical relationship with the students.
3. To create intellectual discussions that will enable students to understand the value of spirituality and ethical decision-making.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:

1. To implement a support system that will facilitate the practice of spiritual efforts within the university environment.
2. To be ethical and moral while at work.

Reflections and checklist

- I am aware of inner spiritual practices that can be healing
- I am aware of spiritual and ethical practices that will help us to accept the self and others better

Lesson 15
Living with Diversity: Your Perspective

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Synthesize knowledge gained throughout the course to intervene in a few proposed scenarios that draw on the themes discussed in the course
2. Engage in an inner reflective dialogue and develop their own approach to living with diversity in the university context and society at large

Lesson Structure

05 minutes	**Introduction**
	In this final lesson, the participants are invited to reflect on what they have learnt in this course, the activities they have engaged in, and the attitudinal and behavioural changes these discussions have led to.
20 minutes	**Activity and Discussion**
	In groups, discuss how you would intervene in one of the following scenarios. Enact the scene, proposing how you can respond to the situations given below:
	• Ragging scene: gender, body, gender identities
	• Social gathering: welcome party—organizing the party
	• Interaction between student and lecturer during exam-- online
	• Inner spiritual being—how to intervene in a situation where someone is struggling with mental illness/ suicide
20 minutes	**Reflections and way forward**
	Reflections on the themes and experiences explored in this course
	Reflect on what you have learnt within the journey of 'learning to live with diversity'.

	Make a self-evaluation of the extent to which you have developed the required knowledge, skills and competencies to be a person who is capable of appreciating diversity, living happily with diversity, and making use of diversity as a strength. In class, listen to the song Mongoliyanuwane. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDA3ptF5OmQ While listening to the song, try to develop a holistic mental picture of what you learnt within the course.
15 minutes 	**Reflections and checklist** • I am aware of how diversity exists in the university context and how I can interact with it positively • I am aware of how to engage in an inner reflective dialogue and develop my own approach to living with diversity in the university context and society at large

Introduction

In this final lesson, the participants are invited to reflect on what they have learnt in this course, the activities they have engaged in, and the attitudinal and behavioural changes these discussions have led to.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to,

1. Synthesize knowledge gained throughout the course to intervene in a few proposed scenarios that draw on the themes discussed in the course.
2. Engage in an inner reflective dialogue and develop their own approach to living with diversity in the university context and society at large

In groups, discuss how you would intervene in one of the following scenarios. Enact the scene, proposing how you can respond to the situations given below:

- **Scene 1: Ragging scene: gender, body, gender identities**

Imagine that you are a final year student who is walking inside the campus. You see a group of students. It is clear that some are seniors and others are freshers. You hear comments targeting freshers about the body, sexual innuendos and suggestive remarks, obscene language etc. Some of those who are addressed are women, but there are both men and women in both the groups.

There are many ways that one can react to such a situation. While some will choose to intervene immediately, others will respond later.

> » How would you intervene in such a situation? Would you speak up? Would you talk to the victims? Would you talk to the perpetrators of violence (verbal, sexual, other)? What would you say?
>
> » If you decide not to speak up, what other forms would you choose to express your response? (Artistic expression, legal action, negotiate with those who have the power to intervene, organize with others who feel that such violence is wrong etc.)

- **Scene 2: Social gathering: welcome party—organizing the party**

A group of third year students are organizing a "going down" party for their seniors. An argument emerges, when one of the students proposes that the compering be done in English. Another one proposes a dress-code, saying that the participants should all be dressed in traditional clothes (for example, sarees for women and sarong/kurtas for men), which others from the batch resist. They feel that they should have Western attire because now they are close to graduating and so must have a more upbeat look. The 3rd years are worried about how to maintain the hierarchy with some of the 4th years, who are unpopular in the department. Another is worried that a senior (from the same village as her) will attend the party and that her caste identity (which she has managed to keep a secret) will be revealed

by the senior. Instead of discussing these differences openly, the discussion develops into an argument where social differences are soon reduced to personal differences. Afraid that the disagreement will lead to a fight, one of the students call the lecturer in charge of the batch.

If you are the lecturer who is responsible for this event and is a close mentor of these students, how would you respond to the students?

Think of ways that the content learnt in this course will help you to identify the social differences at work here.

> » How would you communicate with the students to diffuse the conflict?
> » How would you create a situation in which everyone feels valued and that their ideas are recognized and taken into consideration?
> » As students, how would you expect a lecturer to intervene in a situation like this?

- **Scene 3: Interaction between student and lecturer during exam—online**

A student has an online presentation during which her connection fails. The lecturer suspects that the connection failure is an excuse made by the student because she is not prepared enough for the presentation. Even though the student explains repeatedly that something is wrong with the connection, the lecturer refuses to believe her. The student decides to complain to the Head of the Department. While the Head is sympathetic to the student's dilemma, he decides to inquire into the situation and figures out that another student, who has a disability related to hearing has had similar problems during an online presentation. Other students, when asked, also tell him how their devices sometimes fail during examinations and how they have been marked down in such situations. The Head is aware that he must use this information wisely as he does not want to upset the balance of power within the department or have anyone become unhappy about his headship. He also does not want to upset the relationship between students and the departments' lecturers.

> » If you are this student's friend, what would you do? Would you try to explain how the digital divide can affect students, particularly during assessments? What would be some of the recommendations that you would make to avoid such a situation?
> » If you are the lecturer, what questions would you ask the student in order to assess the truthfulness of what the student is saying? What are some of the measures the lecturer could have taken to prevent this misunderstanding from happening?
> » Based on what you have learnt about power and authority and the politics of power within the university, how do you think the Head should act? If he decides to talk to all the parties concerned, how would knowledge about the digital divide, online safety, digital equity etc. inform such a conversation? How would future digital citizens like you handle a situation like this? What guidelines/ethical behaviours/digital infrastructure could help improve this situation?

- **Scene 4: Inner spiritual being—how to intervene in a situation where someone is struggling with mental illness/suicide**

You come to know that a batch-mate is struggling with mental illness and may be at risk of harming himself. You realize that he has tried to start casual conversations with you and sense that he may wish to open up to you. You speak to your batch-mate and try to encourage him gently to visit the Counselling Unit. But he does not seem interested.

> » What are some of the immediate steps you would take to prevent any harm happening to your friend? Who would you reach out for help? Reflecting upon the incident, what would you consider to be your own qualities that would inspire someone to reach out to you in case of a personal problem or spiritual or mental crisis?

> » If you are the person who is going through mental illness or a spiritual/ inner crisis, what are some of forms of self-care you will practice within the university? What are some of the services/support systems that will be helpful to you that you would tap into? What are the attributes of a friend or a lecturer you will trust in a situation such as this?

After completing the activity, complete the following:

> » Generate a list of concepts, skills, and ethical commitments you have acquired by being in this class.

> » Discuss the ways in which these can develop towards a long-term desire to learn about others, intervene in situations of conflict or violence, and develop inner resilience and strength.

> » In class, listen to the song Mongolianuwane.
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDA3ptF5OmQ

> » While listening to the song, try to develop a holistic mental picture of what you learnt within the course.

Reflections and Checklist

- I am aware of how diversity exists in the university context and how I can interact with it positively
- I am aware of how to engage in an inner reflective dialogue and develop my own approach to living with diversity in the university context and society at large

POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS - LESSON 01

Learning to Live with Diversity

An Initiative of Centre for Gender Equity and Equality
University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka

Funded by UNICEF

About the course

Today's globalized world brings us in contact with people who are very different from us, and whose values, ideas, life-goals, and socio-cultural identities differs greatly from ours

The course aims at understanding how to live with those who are different from us and how we perceive diversity as a strength rather than a challenge or a barrier

Course Objectives

1 Develop the socio-emotional skills of undergraduate students.

2 Develop graduates who can interact effectively with the larger community by becoming more empathetic, ethical, and respectful towards differences.

3 Provide Training to Trainers who can deliver the modules of this course successfully and effect behavioural changes in students, academics and non-academic staff.

4 Develop a sense of inner ethical and spiritual discipline in participants by strengthening their sense of self-identity.

5 Develop graduates who can adapt effectively to local and global work environments that are diverse.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, participants will be able to,

Define the concept of diversity and identify and respect different individual, group or community identities

Demonstrate their ability to live in societies that are diverse and their ability to value differences as a strength of a particular community

Communicate effectively across cultural and other socio-political differences in non-violent ways

Network effectively with others from diverse backgrounds by helping participants to move out of their socially confortable comfort zones with confidence and respect

Demonstrate the ability to adapt to new social situations and respond positively to change, especially in the workplace, by being socially and culturally flexible, not subscribing to stereotypes and being open minded when encountering differences

Course Content

	Topic	Activity Prompt
Part I	1. (a) Course introduction (b) Introduction to diversity and inclusion	Interpreting an image The song : "Api Kavrudo"
	2. Introduction to gender diversity	Video clip of Meghan Markle addressing the UN
	3. Gender in society	Songs that depict gender stereotypes
	4. Bodies and rights to the body	Video clips on consent and body image
	5. Sexual identities	Interview with Bhoomi Harendran Film clip from "Fanny Boy"
	6. Individual differences: Neurodiversity and different abilities	Video clips on disability and neurodiversity
Part II	7. Class and caste identities	Film clip from "Paraha"
	8. Language as identity	Regi Siriwardena's poem "Colonial Cameo"
	9. Mobility: Between the rural and the urban environments	Clips from the tele drama "Thanamalwila Kollek"
	10. Ethno-religious identities and diversity	The song "Enjoy Enjami"
	11. Accessibility across the digital divide	One story with many endings
Part III	12. Organizational power and politics	A group projection of a future university
Part IV	13. Non-violent behaviour and affirmative interventions	TED Talk by Jamila Raqib
	14. Spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity	Video clips on Yoga and Tai Chi
	15. Living with diversity: your perspective	Song on identity and individual uniqueness

Pedagogical approach

This course aims to facilitate a discussion on how learning to live with diversity can enrich our university culture

Lack of awareness about why such diversity can be a strength in a community leads to non-inclusive practices and prevents it from reaching its full potential

The course uses activities and various audio-visual materials, online discussions, and examples from cultural texts that facilitate the learning process

Participants are invited to engage with the materials critically reflecting on their cultural practices and being open to self-development and change

Its content addresses the idea of diversity at the individual, group, and organizational levels, benefitting the university community at all three levels

Pillars that hold our approach to living with diversity

Being empathetic	Being ethical	Inner self-discipline/non-violent being	Identity based on inner values

Positive communication	Questioning normative thinking/critical engagement with received ideas	Developing trust

Lesson 1
Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

i.   Demonstrate their understanding of what living with diversity is.
ii. Identify why learning to live with diversity is important.
iii. Discuss the ways in which social identity is multifaceted and what the building blocks of diversity are.

Activity

> Let us begin by looking at the following image. What are the identities represented in this image?

Discussion (15 minutes)

Human faces capture both our commonality and our uniqueness. How does this image emphasize how we are all the same, but different? How does this challenge us to think about diversity in our societies? (This conversation can continue on to the blog)

Diversity is central to our society

Individual: every person is different from each other

Group: consists of members who, while bearing individual differences, also share an identity as a group

Society: consists of individuals who are different, but also share some common ideas, goals, and values. These commonalities are created within cultures

A key challenge is to understand diversity and embrace it as a strength rather than a barrier.

Culture

Culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, assumptions and practices that distinguishes societies and marks their uniqueness

"The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Geert Hofstede)

Cultures are not fixed and unchanging

Cultures that are open to diversity evolve better

Diversity and inclusion in the university context

As a community, the university is highly diverse

Includes various genders/sexual orientations, ethno-religious identities, political ideologies, bodily abilities, socio-economic status/classes etc

These differences are hierarchical in larger society and often lead to conflicts and social tensions

But, diversity is a strength in universities as we learn to engage with ideas that are different from ours and respect differences

An intellectual community treats differences as a strength and uses them productively to create communities

Why is learning to live with diversity important to you?

If you are a student:
- Enjoy a better teaching-learning experience
- Build social capital leading to better networking skills
- Prepared to diverse work environments; access social mobility

If you are an academic staff member:
- Better teaching-learning environment and inclusive classrooms
- Create a healthy and productive work environment
- Build trust and respect among colleagues
- Interact with students in an ethical and respectful manner

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Create a supportive administrative environment and respectful towards students
- Develop a healthy working environment treating every member with respect
- Help provide a service that is sensitive to diversity

Food for thought

➢ Listen to the song *api kauruda* and reflect on how you can relate to the concept of diversity to understand how much you know about yourself and others.

Api kawuruda   - Clip 1

This is the story that will unfold throughout this course.

Checklist

✔ I can define the concept of diversity

✔ I can discuss the way society is made up of various identities and how they work together

✔ I can explain why those differences are important and are a strength of any society

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Thank you!!

LESSON 02
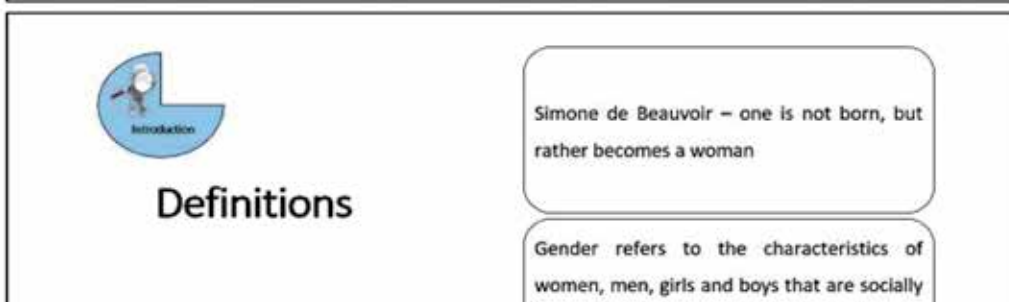
Lesson 2
Introduction to Gender Diveristy

Learning
Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to;

1. Demonstrate their understanding that "gender is a social construct".

2. Discuss the ways in which gender differences affect the lives of people.

Definitions

Simone de Beauvoir – one is not born, but rather becomes a woman

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed while sex refers to those that are biologically determined (WHO)

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding gender differences and creating social spaces that are inclusive of different genders.

Let us examine more closely how these differences are presented in the following songs.

→ How is maleness/femaleness presented by these songs?

→ Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how your perception of gender identity has changed/not changed/been challenged.

Konde bandula ape putta – Clip 1

Mihikotho nalawala - Clip 2

Discussion (15 minutes):

➤ In the first song, a mother speaks about the physical changes shown by her son after he becomes accustomed to the ways of the city. She notes how his voice, his clothes and his accessories has changed.

→ **How do these challenge the idea that a person's sexual identity is natural?** (This conversation can continue on to the blog)

➤ List the characteristics of maleness and femaleness highlighted in these songs.

Gender as a social construct

In our common sense way of thinking, we think that difference between maleness and femaleness is biological.

However, sociologists argue that while there are basic differences between biological bodies, the roles that we attribute to those bodies are created socially through various cultural and/or other conventions.

Respectable femininity

Hegemonic masculinity

Power relations and equality between the genders
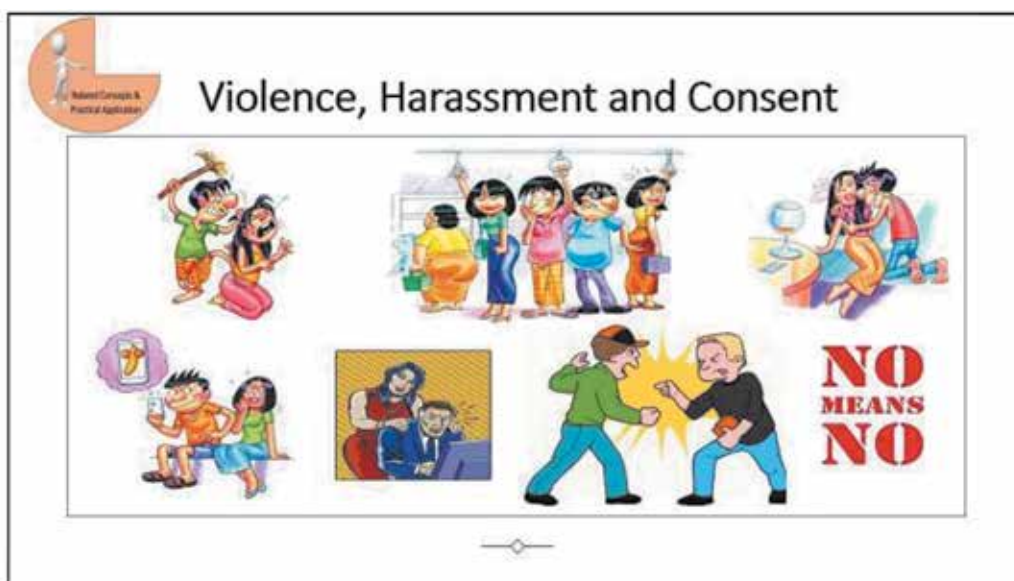
Why is learning about gender diversity important to you?

If you are a student:
- Learn to accept the equality
- Build social capital
- Prepared to face diverse work environments; access social mobility

If you are an academic staff member:
- Develop gender sensitive teaching-learning environment
- Create gender inclusive pedagogies
- Be respectful of others
- Classrooms free of harassment and abusive behaviour.

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Create a gender sensitive institutional support systems.
- Maintain a gender-neutral language
- Put in place institutional policies

Reflections and Checklist

- ✓ I can define the concept of gender
- ✓ I can discuss how gender is socially constructed
- ✓ I can explain why understanding that gender is socially constructed is important for living in a diverse society

Thank you!!

LESSON 03

Lesson 3
Gender in Society

Learning
Outcomes

By the end of this lesson participants will be able to;

1. Analyse how gendered stereotypes are constructed in society and how they affect our social roles.

2. Create a visual representation of how gender hierarchies intersect with other forms of domination in social settings in the university/society.

Gender
stereotypes

According to the UN, "a gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives".

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the way different axes of domination intersect to produce inequalities in society. This approach looks at the way gendered discrimination or inequality are linked to class, race /ethno-religious identities, age, ableism etc.

A key challenge in contemporary society is the need to create social spaces that are inclusive of gender differences and recognize how gender intersects with other forms of domination.

Activity & Discussion

➢ Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how gender roles affect your everyday life.

➢ Watch this short video of Meghan Markle speaking about gender stereotypes and women's empowerment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMoVen6_XuA – Meghan Markle

Activity & Discussion

Discussion (15 minutes):

➢ How does society generally respond to gender stereotyping in the media? Did this speech change your perceptions about gender roles and the way they are used in the media?

→ If yes, how?

→ If not, why? (This conversation can continue on to the blog)

➢ Do you think that the awareness that gender is a social construct leads to women's empowerment?

How do stereotypes affect us in the University?

- Gender stereotypes affect many decisions we make in life.
- Often we do not recognize that stereotypes about gender affect our choices as well as our expectations of others.
- They affect our personal lives as well.
- More broadly, stereotypes that exist in society can become limiting, when individuals seek to go against these stereotypes. They may experience social stigma or even experience outright gendered oppression.

How does intersectionality affect us in the University?

- The overall social experience of the member of the community.
- Ragging and intersectionality.
- Reproducing intersectionality.

Why is learning about stereotyping and intersectionality important to you?

If you are a student/an academic staff member/an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Empathise without being prejudiced.
- Maximize on capabilities and not gender.
- Be empowered against domination based on gender

In addition:
If you are an academic staff member:
- Develop pedagogies that are not limited by gender stereotypes
If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Institutional culture and administrative decisions are not based on gender stereotypes.
- Ensuring that intersectional inequalities are not reproduced.

Reflections and Checklist

- ✓ I can discuss how gender stereotypes are reproduced in the university/society
- ✓ I can explain how gender stereotypes affect the lives of people
- ✓ I can explain how gendered domination intersects with other forms of domination

Thank you!!

LESSON 04

Lesson 4
Bodies and the Right to the Body

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;
i. Identify concepts related to reproductive rights
ii. Discuss how the body is not merely a biological entity, but a psycho-social entity that is both unique to each individual, but shaped socially

Introduction

Body Image

Refers to the self-image of the Body. While and an individual will have a unique perception of his/her body, that perception will be shaped by social discourses about what a normative body is.

Reproductive rights

This refers to a persons legal right to control over the body and decisions that affect one's body, particularly with regard to reproduction.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to identify the body as a social, political, and legal entity that is shaped by culture and language, even though each body is unique to a person.

Activity

➤ We generally think of our body and the bodies of others as natural and do not reflect much on their status. View the two videos below

Tea and Consent   – Clip 1

The science of body image   – Clip 2

Discussion (15 minutes)

➤ How does the idea that consent is an ongoing agreement between two people to engage in sexual activity challenge/not challenge how you view sexual relationships?

➤ Peer pressure regarding the colour, shape, and other gendered signs about our body can be a source of agony for many men and women. Media, advertising, and our culture makes unreasonable demands from us when it comes to the way we look.

→ **How does this second video challenge you to view your own body as well as others' bodies differently?**

Reproductive rights and body issues related concepts

- Stigma related to the body and reproductive rights
- Economic inequity in access to reproductive health and education about reproduction
- Consent
- Body image and issues related to the body image
- Advertising and body image
- Understanding the body and its ontology
- Relationship to the body differs across genders
- Trauma
- Peer pressure

The body and reproductive rights in the university context

- The university is a place where a lot of young people congregate
- Various levels of understanding about the body and reproductive rights
- Norms about the body will be different
- These differences can be very counterproductive
- Individual body shaming
- Ragging promotes violence directed towards the body
- Bodily integrity is violated in the rag

Why is understanding bodily and reproductive rights important to you?

If you are a student:
- For improved self-image and self acceptance
- Safe sexual practices and reproductive health
- Respect the integrity of others' bodies and adhere to principles of consent when engaging in sexual relations

If you are an academic staff member:
- Create a non-discriminatory classroom where body shaming does not happen
- Maintain professional standards when dealing with students, respecting their bodily rights

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Provide access to reproductive health and reproductive education
- Create institutional policies and ensure their effective implementation regarding SGBV
- Ensure that the university space and institutional power are not exploited by individuals to harm others' bodily rights

Reflections and Checklist

✔ I can identify concepts related to reproductive rights

✔ I can discuss how the body is not merely a biological entity, but a psycho-social entity that is both unique to each individual, but shaped socially

Thank you!!

LESSON 05

Lesson 5
Sexual Identities

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson , participants will be able to;
i. Locate sexual/gender identity in biological, sociological, cultural discourses
ii. Situate human sexuality within a spectrum, rather than see it as a binary or a power hierarchy

Introduction

Human sexuality

Human sexuality is the way in which we experience and express ourselves as sexual beings (Rathus et al., 1993).

A key challenge in contemporary society is to understand that there are many ways in which humans express their sexuality and that accepting mutual and respectful forms of sexual expression are an important part of living with diversity.

Human sexuality
(Cont'd)

Human sexuality is expressed and experienced culturally

"Queer" identity and bodies (LGBTQI)

The increasing visibility of queer people in society

Activity

➢ Listen to the interview with Bhoomi Harendran, who self-identifies as a trans-sexual person.

Bhoomi Harendran Interview   - Clip 1

→ How does she assert her identity positively?

→ What does this tell us about accepting people for who they are and what they do?

➢ Watch the video clip from the film Funny Boy.

➢ Here a little boy who dresses as a bride is punished even though he has no understanding of why this is a problem.

→ How far do adults project their own ideas about sexuality on to children?

→ Is that fair?

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ Many ideas we have about human sexuality were introduced to Sri Lanka by European colonial cultural institutions.

➢ **Do you feel that we should continue to hold on to those norms?**

➢ Do you think that we should continue to look at human sexuality through conservative social norms?

➢ In the blog, write a 250 word reflection on how these videos and the discussion challenged the way you view human sexuality.

Concepts related to human sexuality

- Gender identity as a spectrum
- Heterosexuality is one among many other types of sexual orientations
- There are no "good" or "bad" sexual orientations
- The only type of sexual expression that is wrong or unethical is non-consensual sex
- Heteronormativity
- Human sexuality is cultural-the difference between sex and sexuality
- Cross-dressing and performativity
- Intersectionality: class and sexual orientation

Sexual identities within the university context

- A place where people with different sexual identities and orientations will move with each other
- The dominant sexual identity still recognized as "normal" is heterosexual identity
- Important to create a culture in which human sexuality—whatever orientation—is accepted as an important part of human life
- Community members who are of non-normative genders may experience stigma and discrimination within the university context
- Measure his/her worth based on gender rather than intellectual capacities
- Creating a situation in which these identities can be discussed openly and without stigma

Why is understanding human sexuality important to you?

If you are a student:
- Overcome stigma and express one's sexuality in pleasurable and respectful ways
- Accept those whose sexual orientation might be different from oneself and to respect them for who they are
- Create a healthy social environment in which problems related to sexuality can be discussed in the open so that all students are represented in such conversations

If you are an academic staff member:
- Create a teaching-learning environment that is gender-sensitive and not discriminatory against those who are of non-normative genders
- Create safe-spaces where students can come for help and support if they feel marginalized or discriminated by peers
- To be respectful towards others irrespective of their gender/sexual identity/orientation

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Create non-discriminatory policies that will treat LGBTQI persons with respect without stigmatizing them.
- Provide support services and access to safe sexual practices
- Promote healthy and respectful sexual practices

Reflections
and
Checklist

✓ I can locate sexual/gender identity in biological, sociological, cultural discourses

✓ I can situate human sexuality within a spectrum, rather than see it as a binary or a power hierarchy

Thank you!!

LESSON 06

Lesson 6
Individual Differences: Neurodiversity and Different Abilities

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

i.   Explain how a differently-abled person is someone who brings a range of rich abilities into a teaching/learning environment
ii. Identify Universal Design Principles for Learning that can enrich the teaching-learning environment
iii. Create an accessibility map of one teaching-learning environment participants are familiar with

Introduction

Persons with disabilities/ differently-abled people

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

A key challenge in contemporary society is to recognize that persons with disabilities bring strengths and abilities that are unique. The full participation of persons with disabilities in society can be ensured through positive institutional and social arrangements that facilitate that engagement.

Persons with disabilities/ differently-abled people (Cont'd)

Disability beyond an 'impairment'

Socially created barriers

A person with a disability does not "lack" something but has a set of "different" abilities that are not always recognized by our normative understanding of what an ability is

Disabled person/Differently-abled/A person with a disability

In the first term, the disability becomes an attribute of the person

This denies the individuality of that person and creates a negative picture

The term person with a disability, in contrast, recognizes the person first, and the disability as one of the characteristics that that person has

The latter term is used by the UN

Let us now discuss how disability can be thought beyond the paradigm of impairment

Activity

➢ View the two video clips recommended for this class.

The 'Who I Am' PSA Campaign — Clip 1

Human Neurodiversity Should Be Celebrated, Not Treated as a Disorder — Clip 2

➢ Write a blog post reflecting on how these two videos challenged your view of disability: as an abled bodied person or as a person with a disability.

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ In class, reflect on how you have related to your body as an able-bodied person or a person with a disability.

→ How far are those experiences part of a bodily reality?

→ How far are they a part of the environment that was disabling/not enabling you to interact positively with it?

Individual differences: Neurodiversity and different abilities related concepts

Disability is a result of the interaction between a person and his/her environment

Stigma

Ableism

Neurodiversity

Universal Design for Learning

Multiple Intelligences

Holistic Access

Disabilities and abilities within the university context

The university is a place where different types of abilities and intelligences should be included

Often, there is little attention to the uniqueness of each individual's abilities

A persona with a disability should not have to rRely on the goodwill of others or the empathy shown by others

Institutional responsibility towards ensuring equal access

Many of the students who graduate from the university will become influential social figures

Understanding persons with disabilities will have a long term impact on Sri Lankan society's commitment to diversity

Why is understanding different abilities important to you?

If you are a student:
- Better relate to others irrespective of their (dis)abilities
- Actively promote intellectual cultures and physical environments that provide equal access to all members
- Receive institutional support (if/when required) without fear of stigma

If you are an academic staff member:
- Create classrooms that apply universal design learning principles wherever possible
- Enable students with disabilities or mental illness to participate in teaching-learning by reducing barriers that may impede them
- Avoid stigmatizing students whose learning styles may be different
- Make resources for those needing assistance available

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Ensure equal access, particularly in the physical set up of buildings, availability of technology and other facilities, and providing basic requirements such as transport and reasonable accommodation at exams
- Create awareness regarding disability, mental illness, neurodiversity etc. among all students and staff
- Make resources for those needing assistance available

Reflections & Checklist

- ✔ I can explain how a 'differently abled' person brings a range of abilities in to a teaching/learning environment
- ✔ I can identify Universal Design Principles for Learning that can enrich the teaching and leaning environment for everyone
- ✔ I can create and accessibility map of one teaching-learning environment participants are familiar with

Thank you!!

LESSON 07

Lesson 7
Class and Caste Identities

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;
i. Demonstrate how class and caste add diversity to a social setting
ii. Discuss the ways in which class and caste affect the lives of people

Social Class

Commonly thought of as a social relation determined by a group's place or function in the process of production. Social class is also understood in terms of social status, and members of a class may move upward in the class hierarchy.

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding class differences and creating social spaces that are just and equitable.

Caste

Caste can be defined as any of the ranked, hereditary, endogamous social groups, often linked with occupation, that together constitute traditional societies in South Asia (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Also known as *warna, jathi, kula, cati* in local languages. Caste is often seen as being trans-historical although in actuality caste intersects with class in modern capitalist societies.

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding caste differences and creating social spaces that are inclusive of people with different caste identities.

Activity

➤ Let us watch the excerpt from the short film "Paangshu"

Paangshu- Clip 1

→ **How are class and caste presented by the film?**

➤ Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how your perception of class and caste have changed/not changed/been challenged.

Discussion (15 minutes)

➤ In this extract of the film, you see a mother visiting a house where she is given a lower chair to sit on. Observe how caste is represented in the interactions between the characters.

→ What do they tell us about the caste of the mother (played by Nita Fernando)?

→ What do you think is her caste/occupation?

→ Why do you think that the young girl picks up the clothes and gives them to the mother's hand?

→ What does that tell us about the new generation's attitudes towards caste? How are her attitudes different from those of her grandmother?

→ The mother's demeanour and clothes also indicate to us that she is poor. The stark differences between her and the other woman from higher class are shown by the house clothing, furniture etc. We judge class identity by how people dress behave or speak. Why is this problematic? How do our prejudice regarding class differences lead to conflict?

➤ Do you think that we should maintain caste differences in society or change our attitudes towards caste to accept every human being as being valuable?

Class related concepts

- Status and class
- Class as an economic category
- The origins of the capitalistic system
- Class-based closure
- Class interests and equality
- Social capital

Class related concepts Cont'd

- Free education

The character of an educational system depends upon the character of the society for which it is designed.

"We have assumed that our task was to recommend an educational system suitable for a democracy . . . This appears to us to mean two things.

First, it means that the individual must be helped to achieve the highest degree of physical, mental and moral development of which he is capable irrespective of his wealth or social status.

Secondly, it means that the individual as a result of his education should be able to use his abilities for the good of the nation in the fullest possible measure and should be able to pass judgment on affairs of State and exercise intelligently the franchise that the State has conferred upon him. In other words, democracy requires in the first place a minimum standard of education and, beyond that, equality of educational opportunity"

(Kannangara Report, 1943)

Caste related concepts

- Caste and history
- Caste and culture
- Hereditary and endogamous
- Upward social mobility and caste
- Stigma

Class and caste in the university context

- People of different classes and castes
- Committed to provide equal access
- Should not reproduce class and caste inequalities
- A place of empowerment and empathy
- Engage with social inequalities critically

Why is learning about class and caste important to you?

If you are a student:
- Understand how social inequality is reproduced
- Empower yourself and others for social justice
- Practice ethical and respectful behaviour towards others

If you are an academic staff member:
- Adopt pedagogical practices that challenge class and caste inequalities
- Empower students from marginalised backgrounds
- Practice ethical and respectful behaviour towards others

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Develop a system that accommodates students from marginalised backgrounds
- Create supportive administrative structures
- Practice ethical and respectful behaviour towards others

Reflections & Checklist

- I can explain the concepts of class and caste
- I can discuss how social inequalities are reproduced through class and caste

Thank you!!

LESSON 08

Lesson 8
Language as Identity

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

i.   Demonstrate the ability to approach language differences critically
ii.   Discuss how English is a class-marker in Sri Lankan society
iii. Critique exclusionary notions of language standards

Introduction

Language

A Language is a symbolic system that enables communication between individuals and the transmission of culture.

A key challenge in contemporary society is understanding that language is not a static tool available for human communication, but a constantly changing, shifting cultural form that is central to people's identities.

Language
(Cont'd)

All human societies are based on the language(s) their members use to communicate with each other

Some of these languages have gained a prestigious value derived from extra-linguistic socio-political reasons

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Activity

➢ Read the following poem to examine how language becomes an identity marker.

➢ Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how language identity is linked to ideas of superiority, and can be employed for subtle exclusionary practices.

Colonial Cameo

In the evenings my father used to make me read
aloud (from Macaulay, or Abbot's **Napoleon** (he was
short,
and Napoleon, his hero; I, his hope for the future).
My mother, born in a village, had never been taught

that superior tongue. When I was six, we were moving
house, she called at school to take me away.
She spoke to the teacher in Sinhala. I sensed the shock
of the class, hearing the servants' language; in dismay

followed her out as she said, "Gihing ennang."
I was glad it was my last day there. But then the bell
pealed; a gang of boys rushed out, sniggering,
and shouted in chorus, "Gihing vareng!", as my
farewell.

My mother pretended not to hear the insult.
The snobbish little bastards! But how can I blame
them? That day I was deeply ashamed of my mother.
Now, whenever I remember, I am ashamed of my
shame.

Regi Siriwardena

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ In this poem, the Sri Lankan poet Regi Siriwardena is describing the experience of a child who feels ashamed of his mother's use of the native language in front of his school friends. Many of us have experienced similar shame in the face of people who consider some languages to be superior to others.

→ How does the poet bring out the complexity of that shame?

➢ Even when speaking the same language, some varieties such as Standard Sri Lankan English are considered to be superior while some varieties are ridiculed; for example, rural Southern Sinhalese.

→ How do you think a speaker of a language feels in such situations? Why is language so important for our identity?

→ How does access to language determine what we can voice in a group and how much our ideas will be accepted based on the language we speak?

Language as identity related concepts

- Language as identity
- Language is tied to social history
- English as a language of prestige
- Language standardization; Kaduwa
- Regional varieties
- Languages change
- Technology and language change
- Generational differences
- How language can become a barrier
- Language and power
- Language and media

Language as identity in the university context

- Linguistic diversity as a source of creativity
- Inclusive pedagogical practices
- Power and language
- Language should not be a barrier to learning
- Stigma associated with language varieties
- Individual potential over the language variety spoken

If you are a student:
- Understand how language becomes an identity marker
- Critique language standards and empower others through linguistically inclusive practices

Why is learning about language as identity important to you?

If you are an academic staff member:
- Develop pedagogical practices that do not turn language in to a barrier for learning
- Create inclusive classrooms
- Move beyond stigma

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Develop a system that accommodates people from a variety of linguistic backgrounds
- Maintain documents in all three languages and provide access to language translations during meetings as far as possible

Reflections & Checklist

✓ I can explain how language becomes an identity marker

✓ I can critique language standards and discuss how they can become exclusionary

✓ I can discuss how and why English has become a class-marker in Sri Lankan society

Thank you!!

LESSON 09

Lesson 9
Mobility: Between the Rural and the Urban Environments

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;

i. Compare and contrast the social values attributed to the rural and the urban environments and perceptions about them.
ii. Critique the social divide between the rural and the urban.
iii. Interpret the notion of mobility as a mode of individual and social change.

Urban- Rural Divide

The urban-rural divide refers to the way predominantly urban and predominantly rural areas within a country present identifiable economic, political, social, ecological, and cultural differences.

A key challenge is to recognize that the rural and urban differences are shaped by social and economic realities and to realize that the various perceptions that we have about the two need not be treated as fixed or unchanging.

Urban- Rural Divide (Cont'd)

Perceptions about the rural and the urban

The difference between the two is often narrativized as modern myths about absolute, unchanging places

In reality, they are in flux

Actual disparities that are economic, social, cultural, and ecological

Comparing experiences

Stereotypes are historically narrativized

There are no longer pure or fixed rural or urban environments

We can go beyond these differences both individually and socially

Activity

➤ In class write a short description (250 words) of a childhood trip you remember.

➤ View clip 1 from the popular teledrama *Thanamalvila Kollek*.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzW6RujsxLo - Clip 1

→ **Compare your memories with what you have seen in the clip**

➤ View Clips 2 and 3 from the popular teledrama *Thanamalvila Kollek*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4piSUCSpek – Clip 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrpnvylUZOIU – Clip 3
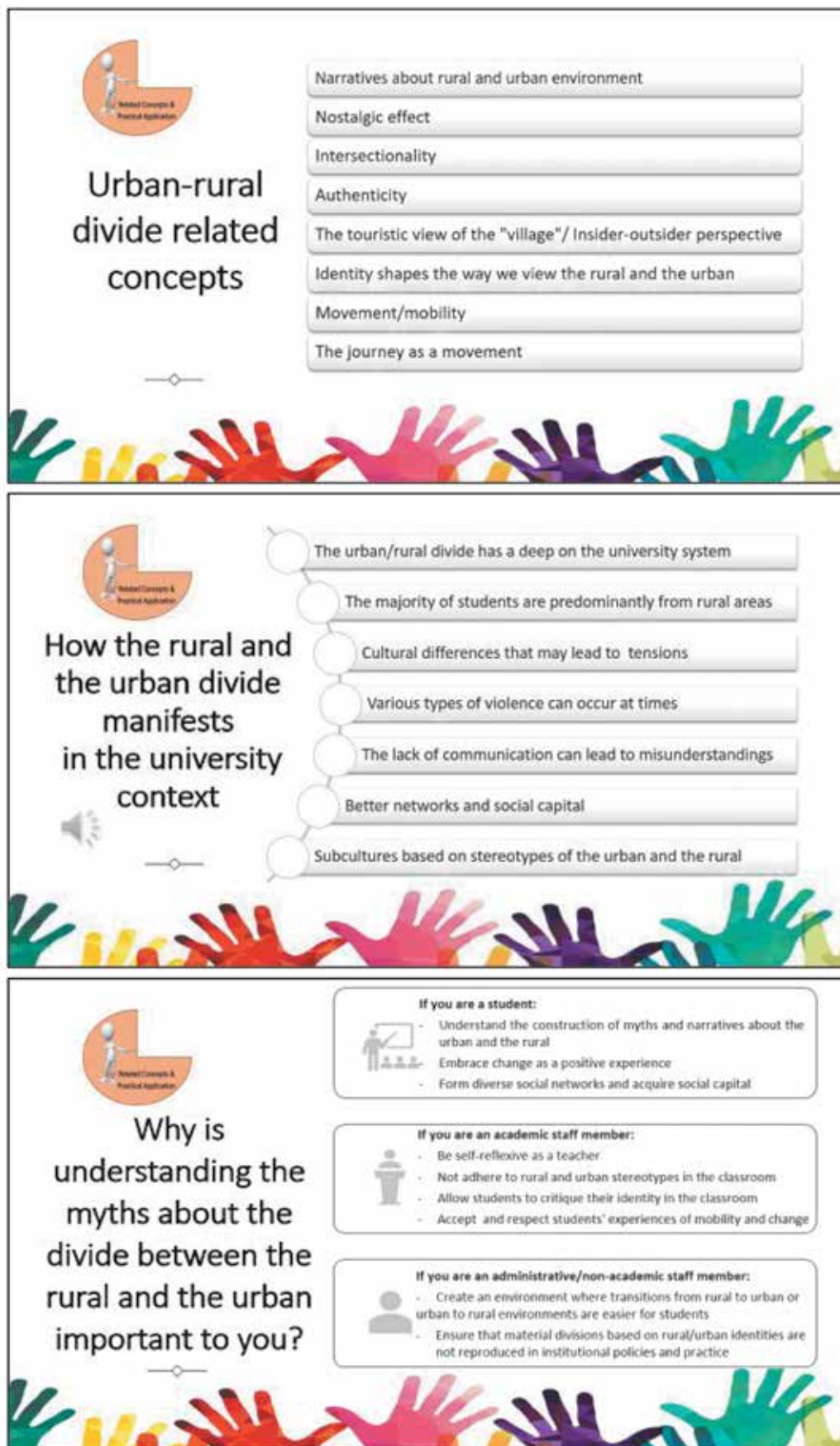
Discussion (15 minutes)

→ In class, discuss the way a trip, a journey, movement is an important part of life and how it transforms our experiences of rural and urban environment.

→ Blog: Write a brief reflection (250 words) on how movement opens us to new worlds/ experiences.

Urban-rural divide related concepts

- Narratives about rural and urban environment
- Nostalgic effect
- Intersectionality
- Authenticity
- The touristic view of the "village"/ Insider-outsider perspective
- Identity shapes the way we view the rural and the urban
- Movement/mobility
- The journey as a movement

How the rural and the urban divide manifests in the university context

- The urban/rural divide has a deep on the university system
- The majority of students are predominantly from rural areas
- Cultural differences that may lead to tensions
- Various types of violence can occur at times
- The lack of communication can lead to misunderstandings
- Better networks and social capital
- Subcultures based on stereotypes of the urban and the rural

Why is understanding the myths about the divide between the rural and the urban important to you?

If you are a student:
- Understand the construction of myths and narratives about the urban and the rural
- Embrace change as a positive experience
- Form diverse social networks and acquire social capital

If you are an academic staff member:
- Be self-reflexive as a teacher
- Not adhere to rural and urban stereotypes in the classroom
- Allow students to critique their identity in the classroom
- Accept and respect students' experiences of mobility and change

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Create an environment where transitions from rural to urban or urban to rural environments are easier for students
- Ensure that material divisions based on rural/urban identities are not reproduced in institutional policies and practice

Reflections & Checklist

✓ I can explain that differences between rural and urban environments are not fixed and movement between the two can lead to personal and social change

✓ I can critique the social divide between the rural and the urban

Thank you!!

LESSON 10

Lesson 10
Ethno-Religious Identities and Diversity

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the participants will be able to;
i. Define the term ethno-religious identity
ii. Discuss the role played by ethno-religious identities in society
iii. Demonstrate the understanding that ethno-religious identities are important to all communities just as they are important to one's own community
iv. Analyse how the uniqueness of each identity can be a source of social strength, rather than a point of division

Ethno-religious identity

Ethnic identity refers to group identities based on colour, religion, language, and may sometimes be extended to cover caste, tribal or national identifications. It provides a sense of belonging based on one or more of these characteristics.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to acknowledge that our attachments to our ethnic or religious identities are important, as well as to recognize that others will value their identities equally.

Ethno-religious identity (Cont'd)

In many communities in the world, the ethnic identity as well as the religious identity of a person is very important, as it gives them a sense of belonging and a shared point of spiritual contact with others in that community

Since we are discussing the more culturally defined ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka, we use the term "ethnic" and "religious" or "ethno-religious" together

Activity

➢ View the videos of the following songs.

Enjoy Enjaami song with English lyrics - Clip 1
Nube amma — Clip 2

➢ The video for "*Nube Amma*" has been created by Youtubers while "Enjoy Enjami" has been professionally designed.

→ Create your own video for either one of these songs in any medium you prefer (YouTube, Tik Tok, Slideshow, etc.).

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ The Enjoy Enjaami song makes several cultural references to roots, ancestors, nature, and the earth.

→ Why do you think this song makes these connections?
→ What do you think is the theme of this song?
→ What cultural cues can you pick up from the song about the overall theme?
→ Why is belonging, the past, and the future so important to people?
→ Why is continuity from the past and belonging to a community/ethno-religious community important to people?

Discussion (15 minutes)

➤ The song *Nube amma* talks about the way the Sri Lankan nation is a mix of many ethnic identities. In a rather humorous way, it tries to critique the idea of "racial/ethnic purity" or authenticity.

→ How does it challenge the way you generally see your own ethnic identity?

→ How do you feel about its rather colloquial language?

→ Does it present a view that is different from how you have learnt about ethno-religious identity before (in school or in other community settings)?

Ethno-religious identities related concepts

A set of criteria used to define a common identity

Hybridity

Nostalgia

Ethnic histories as historical narratives

Linguistic origins and other shared histories

Authenticity

Indigenous communities and identities

Religious identity and fundamentalism

How ethno-religious differences manifest in the university context

The university is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic institution

Most ethnic groups and religious groups are represented in the student body

Disciplines related to religions, languages, and history are taught

Critical encounters with multiple religions and histories of ethnic groups

Different universities have different demographics

This rich diversity allows for a learning environment

Opportunity to learn about others, and to learn that others see the world differently

Why is understanding how to respond to ethno- religious differences positively important to you?

If you are a student:
- Improve socio-emotional skills
- Empathise with and learn from peers representing other ethno-religious communities
- Become more flexible and adaptable in new cultural situations

If you are an academic staff member:
- Represent the cultural diversity of our universities when developing classroom materials
- Encourage students to interact with people from different ethno-religious backgrounds in classroom activities
- To become non-judgmental teachers who can navigate a diverse classroom without stereotyping

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Create an institutional environment in which students and staff from all ethno-religious backgrounds will have equal access
- Offer institutional support to students/staff to transition into a culturally diverse university environment

Reflections and Checklist

✓ I can define the term ethno-religious identity and discuss the role it plays in society

✓ I can explain why ethno-religious identities are important to all communities just as they are important to my own community

✓ I can discuss how ethno-religious differences are a source of social strength, rather than a point of division

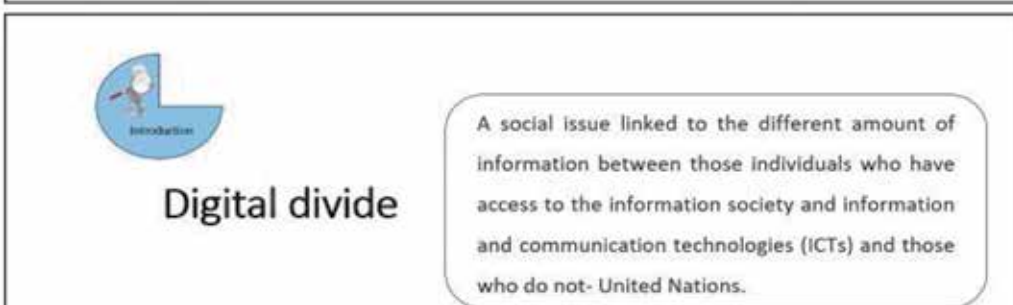Thank you!!

LESSON 11

Lesson 11
Accessibility across the Digital Divide

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the participants will be able to;
i.   Identify the ways in which the digital divide affects university level teaching and learning
ii.   Explain the way the digital divide affects career prospects
iii. Create a list of competencies that will be required to adjust to the new online work environments

Introduction

Digital divide

A social issue linked to the different amount of information between those individuals who have access to the information society and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and those who do not- United Nations.

A key challenge in today's world is the sudden and unexpected move to online environments. Many parts of the world had to simply shift to online platforms to manage most day-to-day activities as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. This has led to a new kind of inequality between those who have access to ICT and those who don't- in terms of devices, connectivity, and skills.

Digital divide (Cont'd)

A new divide between those who have access to ICT and those who don't

Stemming from an inequality in access

Identity and everyday life linked to accessibility to ICT

Activity

> In groups, imagine a scenario of a university that will exists in 10 years' time.
  → How would the buildings look?
  → What digital environments will be used?
  → How will the students be different?
> Create a visual and written scenario that projects a future university setting.

Discussion (15 minutes)

> How far does your vision of the future universities rely upon ICT and digital accessibility?
  → Can this future be achieved if there is no equal access to ICT and related skills?
> Reflect on how our relationship to our own work and the performance of others are shaped by digital accessibility.

Digital divide related concepts

Digital competencies vs. other competencies

Digital connectivity and accessibility: hardware, software, capacity-building, digital literacy and digital skilling

Intersectionality between class, gender, and disability and the digital divide

Prestige linked to digital accessibility and capacities that can create inequalities

Online security and protection

Digital identity as an expression of the self

Relating to others through digital media

Virtual realities vs. real realities

Digital divide within the university context

The digital divide has become one of the most stark forms of inequality

University education now relies quite heavily on online learning platforms

The quality of the education will now be determined by how far the teacher/student has digital access

The digital divide is particularly relevant in the commodification of higher education

Why is understanding the digital divide important to you?

If you are a student:
- Be mindful of the digital gap and support those without digital access
- Develop creative practices with the learning materials
- Develop ethical values that enable you to become a more flexible and respectful person in digital environments

If you are an academic staff member:
- Pedagogical approaches that facilitate those who may have lesser digital access
- Developing classroom practices that enable students who have little access to participate fully with the teaching-learning process
- Avoid stigmatizing students whose learning styles may be different

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Pedagogical approaches that facilitate those who may have lesser digital access
- Avoid stigmatizing students whose learning styles may be different

LESSON 12

Lesson 12
Organisational Power and Politics

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to;
i. Define the concepts of power and politics in an organisational context
ii. Interpret the use of power and politics
iii. Critique the impacts of the use of power tactics

Power

The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his[her] own will despite resistance (Weber cited in Luthans, 2011, p.313)

A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl, 1957).

Politics

Politics is the ways and means of exercise of power within the context of organisation.

A key challenge in contemporary society is to acknowledge that each individual is unique and to exercise power with an understanding of the power differences that exist within organisations.

Power and politics related concepts

Power and dependency

Different sources of power

Relational aspect of power

Political behaviour

Power tactics in political behaviour

Power relations exist within families, work organisations and in institutions

Activity

➢ In class, write a short description (250 words) of an individual experience of a power-related issue within a personal relationship.

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ In class, discuss who the parties involved in the incident were and what were the bases of the power that was exercised within the individual experience.

➢ Blog: Develop a discussion on how you would have dealt with the personal experience if you had the theoretical knowledge and understanding on organisational power and politics.

How power and politics manifest in the university context

Similar to any other formal organisation, power and politics operate within a university context as well

However, there are other sources of power that are exercised which are mostly informal in nature

Ragging can be explained as an explicit version of exercising informal power mostly through coercive means

Why is understanding how power and politics in the university context important ?

If you are a student:
- Be aware of how informal power structures work, and learn how to navigate power; relations between students, academic staff and administrative staff
- Be aware of formal power relations and authority that exist within the university system

If you are an academic staff member:
- Be aware of when and where to express formal authority
- Deal with manifestations of informal power and avoid conflicts resulting from them
- Understand and steer clear of political manipulations of institutional power that may lead to negative consequences to the self and the community at large

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- To make it clear to the university community on who has the formal authority
- Dealing with manifestations of informal power and avoiding conflicts resulting from them
- To understand and steer clear of political manipulations of institutional power that may lead to negative consequences to the self and the community at large

LESSON 13

Lesson 13
Non-violent Behaviour and Affirmative Interventions

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to;
i.   Define non-violent behavior and assertive behaviour
ii. Design a brochure on how to engage with someone who is aggressive in a public setting
iii. Formulate a ten-point charter on non-violent practices that will be helpful within a university context

Non-violent behaviour

Involves an active process of bringing political, economic, social, emotional, or moral pressure to bear in the wielding of power in contentious interactions between collective actors (Schocks, 2005).

A key challenge in contemporary society is to accept the self and others without judging. Simple as this sounds, this is very difficult to practice in a society where we are always judged by how beautiful, successful etc. we are. To live with diversity requires at least some measure of accepting the self and others.

Non-violent behaviour (Cont'd)

Introduction

We live in a very violent society in which we direct aggression towards the self and others

So far, in our lessons we have looked at how differences are created through various social, cultural, and political structures that create both inequality and differences that cannot be easily reconciled.

In this lesson, we will examine how we can change our behaviours and accept others by practicing non-violence

Asserting one's position without denigrating others

Activity & Discussion

Activity

➢ Watch the TED talk on non-violent resistance.

Jamila Raqib ted talk - Clip 1

Activity & Discussion

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ We live in a very violent and unequal world. In this world, many of us grow up with the idea that violence is the answer to violence. Listen to Jamila Raqib, who argues that non-violence is one of the most important ways in which we can resist violence and power.

→ Do you think that being non-violent before a violent person can change a situation? Why or why not?

→ What strategies can we use to make non-violence work?

➢ Popular political protests are not the only area in which non-violence can be practiced. How does having inner peace and a non-violent approach in a violent situation help to manage conflicts?

Non-violent behaviour related concepts

- Assertive communication
- Non-violent behaviour (as opposed to violence, harming others, hatred towards others etc.)
- Inner empowerment to face a violent situation with courage
- Being non-violent does not equal to being weak
- Ethical behavior
- Mob mentality or siding with the majority
- Affirmative intervention
- Non-violent behavior in online platforms
- Healing

Non-violent behaviour and affirmative interventions within the universit context

- Violence is very common within our university system
- Students and even sometimes academics and administrators use violent language and behavior to win an argument or establish their power
- General weakening of the intellectual culture within the university
- A non-violent person is someone who values others and their ideas
- Prevent practices such as ragging through non-violence
- Political disagreements must lead to critique and debate, not violence and using power against others
- Invisible and structural violence

Why is practicing non-violent behaviour important to you?

If you are a student:
- Develop self-awareness and self-acceptance
- Be aware of non-destructive but powerful ways to challenge unjust power/inequalities
- Develop positive social relations and networks through interacting with others in affirmative ways

If you are an academic staff member:
- Able to respond to a violent situation without being reactive
- Not to abuse institutional power to exert pressure on others by using direct or indirect violence
- Create classroom situations where students feel safe and there is no direct or indirect use of violence

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Implement awareness programmes among students that promote non-violent approaches.
- Develop policies that will prevent the use of violence that draws on institutional power directly or indirectly.

Reflections and Checklist

I can define non-violent behavior and assertive behaviour

I can design a brochure on how to engage with someone who is aggressive in a public setting

I can formulate a ten-point charter on non-violent practices that will be helpful within a university context

Thank you!!

LESSON 14

Lesson 14
Spiritual Experiences, Ethics and Diversity

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to;

i.   Create a list of inner spiritual practices that can be healing
ii. Develop a visual/map of spiritual and ethical practices that will help to accept ourselves and others better

Introduction

Spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity

This lesson takes a practical approach to developing mind-body balance

We will also discuss the importance of ethical behavior within the university setting and how that enriches our experience as scholars

Approach spiritual experiences as something that transcends our religious identities and discuss them as an aspect of inner growth in our character

Activity

➢ View the two videos that suggest two forms mindfulness and mind-body balance.

Yoga As A Spiritual Practice   - Clip 1

Fang Yuan Tai Chi   - Clip 2

Discussion (15 minutes)

➢ Write a list of practices in our daily life that make us sick in the mind and the body.

➢ What are some of the everyday situations that lead us to unethical behaviors such as lying, cheating/plagiarism, using violence against others, giving into peer pressure and mob-mentality?

Spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity related concepts

Mind-body wellness

Awareness

Non-religious perspective on spirituality

Each religion practices different forms of mind-body wellness

Spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity within the university context

- Because universities focus heavily on intellectual development, the mind-body balance is often overlooked
- Inner anxiety caused by the pressure to perform, peer pressure, and institutional pressure
- Overwork and exhaustion
- Stress caused by lack of mind-body awareness can leading to interpersonal conflicts
- Within the universities there can be toxic or violent behaviours that are destructive to the self and others

Why is spiritual experiences, ethics and diversity important to you?

If you are a student:
- Make an effort to take care of yourself (Mind and body)
- Better relate to others
- Practice ethical behaviour in academic engagements

If you are an academic staff member:
- Ethical practices within the classroom.
- Maintain an unbiased, ethical relationship with the students.
- Create intellectual discussions leading to the value of spirituality and ethical decision making,

If you are an administrative/non-academic staff member:
- Implement a support system that will facilitate the practice of spiritual efforts within the university environment
- Be ethical and moral while being at work

Reflections and Checklist

✓ I can create a list of inner spiritual practices that can be healing

✓ I can develop a visual/map of spiritual and ethical practices that will help to accept ourselves and others better

Thank you!!

LESSON 15

Lesson 15
Living with Diversity: Your Perspective

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to;
i.   Synthesize knowledge gained throughout the course to intervene in a few proposed scenarios that draws on the themes discussed in the course.
ii. Engage in an inner reflective dialogue and develop their own approach to living with diversity in the university context and society at large

Activity

➢ In groups, discuss how you would intervene in one of the following scenarios. Enact the scene, proposing how you can respond to the situations given below:

❑ Ragging scene: gender, body, sexual identities

❑ Social gathering: welcome party—organizing the party

❑ Interaction between student and lecturer during exam--online

❑ Inner spiritual being—how to intervene in a situation where someone is struggling with mental illness/suicide

Scene 1

Imagine that you are a final year student who is walking inside the campus. You see a group of students. It is clear that some are seniors and others are freshers. You hear comments targeting freshers about the body, sexual innuendos and suggestive remarks, obscene language etc. Some of those who are addressed are women, but there are both men and women in both the groups.

Scene 1

There are many ways that one can react to such a situation. While some will choose to intervene immediately, others will respond later.

→ How would you intervene in such a situation? Would you speak up? Would you talk to the victims? Would you talk to the perpetrators of violence (verbal, sexual, other)? What would you say?

→ If you decide not to speak up, what other forms would you choose to express your response? (Artistic expression, legal action, negotiate with those who have the power to intervene, organize with others who feel that such violence is wrong etc.)

Scene 2

A group of third year students are organizing a "going down" party for their seniors. An argument emerges, when one of the students proposes that the compering be done in English. Another one proposes a dress-code, saying that the participants should all be dressed in traditional clothes (for example, sarees for women and sarong/kurthas for men), which others from the batch resist. They feel that they should have Western attire because now they are close to graduating, and so must have a more upbeat look. The 3rd years are worried about how to maintain the hierarchy with some of the 4th years, who are unpopular in the department. Another is worried that a senior (from the same village as her) will attend the party and that her caste identity (which she has managed to keep a secret) will be revealed by the senior. Instead of discussing these differences openly, the discussion develops into an argument where social differences are soon reduced to personal differences. Afraid that the disagreement will lead to a fight, one of the students call the lecturer in charge of the batch.

Scene 2

→ If you are the lecturer who is responsible for this event and is a close mentor of these students, how would you respond to the students?

Think of ways that the content learnt in this course will help you to identify the social differences at work here.

→ How would you communicate with the students to diffuse the conflict?

→ How would you create a situation in which everyone feels valued and that their ideas are recognized and taken into consideration?

→ As students, how would you expect a lecturer to intervene in a situation like this?

Scene 3

A student has an online presentation during which her connection fails. The lecturer suspects that the connection failure is an excuse made by the student because she is not prepared enough for the presentation. Even though the student explains repeatedly that something is wrong with the connection, the lecturer refuses to believe her. The student decides to complain to the Head of the Department. While the Head is sympathetic to the student's dilemma, he decides to inquire into the situation and figures out that another student, who has a disability related to hearing has had similar problems during an online presentation. Other students, when asked, also tell him how their devices sometimes fail during examinations and how they have been marked down in such situations. The Head is aware that he must use this information wisely as he does not want to upset the balance of power within the department or have anyone become unhappy about his headship. He also does not want to upset the relationship between students and the departments' lecturers.

Scene 3

→ If you are this student's friend, what would you do? Would you try to explain how the digital divide can affect students, particularly during assessments? What would be some of the recommendations that you would make to avoid such a situation?

→ If you are the lecturer, what questions would you ask the student in order to assess the truthfulness of what the student is saying? What are some of the measures the lecturer could have taken to prevent this misunderstanding from happening?

→ Based on what you have learnt about power and authority and the politics of power within the university, how do you think the Head should act? If he decides to talk to all the parties concerned, how would knowledge about the digital divide, online safety, digital equity etc. inform such a conversation? How would future digital citizens like you handle a situation like this? What guidelines/ethical behaviours/digital infrastructure could help improve this situation?

Scene 4

You come to know that a batch-mate is struggling with mental illness and may be at risk of harming himself. You realize that he has tried to start casual conversations with you and sense that he may wish to open up to you. You speak to your batch-mate, and try to encourage him gently to visit the Counselling Unit. But he does not seem interested.

Scene 4

→ What are some of the immediate steps you would take to prevent any harm happening to your friend? Who would you reach out for help? Reflecting upon the incident, what would you consider to be your own qualities that would inspire someone to reach out to you in case of a personal problem or spiritual or mental crisis?

→ If you are the person who is going through mental illness or a spiritual/inner crisis, what are some of forms of self-care you will practice within the university? What are some of the services/support systems that will be helpful to you that you would tap into? What are the attributes of a friend or a lecturer you will trust in a situation such as this?

completing the activity:

❏ Generate a list of concepts, skills, and ethical commitments you have acquired by being in this class.

❏ Discuss the ways in which these can develop towards a long-term desire to learn about others, intervene in situations of conflict or violence, and develop inner resilience and strength.

❏ In class, listen to the song Mongolianuwane.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDA3ptF5OmQ

❏ While listening to the song, try to develop a holistic mental picture of what you learnt within the course.

We hope you will take this experience with you as you go out into the world and live and work with others who are different from you.

Good Luck!

Thank you!!

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