

Podcasting for Social Justice: An Interview Series

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Podcasts support inclusivity and access in classrooms in several ways. For instance, students from oral cultures or for whom English is not a first language may find listening more accessible than reading, students can multitask while listening to course material, and students can become exposed to new perspectives. Instructors should be intentional about curating diverse voices in the podcasts they assign. Furthermore, instructors can create podcasts to form a more personal connection with students in a large lecture course or online course. Finally, instructors can assign students to create a podcast as a course project, which can support students' connections with each other and with community members, and help them see themselves as knowledge creators with perspectives worth sharing with the world.

In this series, you will read about the advantages of using podcasts to support social justice in the classroom. You will hear stories from instructors and students who have used podcasting in the classroom in various ways to support social justice learning.

Keywords: equity, prejudice, implicit bias, microaggressions

Introduction

Podcasts provide great opportunities to support social justice learning, and there are many ways to incorporate them into the classroom. In this series, you'll hear stories from instructors and students who have done so successfully. But first, what does the research say about podcasting for social justice?

Podcasts are inclusive

For one, giving priority to aural (sound-based) modes in the classroom acknowledges a significant, but historically overlooked, way that some cultures and marginalized groups have used to make meaning (Selfe, 2009). Students from oral cultures or for whom English is not a first language may find listening to be more accessible than reading; in fact, especially when paired with a transcript or related readings, listening can improve reading comprehension, increase empathy, and develop active listening skills (Gonzalez, 2021). In addition, students with busy home and work lives can listen while attending to other tasks. This is not to say that audio is better than the written word; these different modes simply engage learning in different ways, thus expanding access to a wider range of learners.

Apart from serving as an inclusive teaching practice, podcasts can also introduce students to the voices, stories, and perspectives of people who have been marginalized or underrepresented in academic spaces. However, instructors will

need to be intentional about curating diverse voices, since the majority of top podcast hosts in the United States and UK are white and male, which doesn't reflect the diversity of the larger population. Radio producer and hip-hop artist Chenjerai Kumanyika (2015) reflects on the advantages of speaking in his authentic voice in a context in which "white-sounding" voices are privileged. He comments on the value and depth that diversity brings to radio: "Different hosts with different voices tell different kinds of stories. And vocal styles communicate important dimensions of human experience."

Podcasts are personal

Instructors can even create podcasts to connect with their students. This can be especially useful in large courses or online courses, which can at times feel impersonal. Hearing someone's voice, as opposed to seeing words on the page, reminds us that there is a body behind the words. According to feminist philosopher Cavarero (2005), "the act of speaking is relational: what it communicates, first and foremost, beyond the specific content that the words communicate, is the acoustic, empirical, material relationality of singular voices" (p. 13, as qtd. In Fancher & Mehler 2018)." In other words, connection in the classroom depends not just on the message you send to students, but also on how you send that message.

It works the other way around, too: when listening to students' podcasts, instructors have an easier time seeing their students as whole, embodied people. While reflecting on a class podcasting assignment, writing instructors Cushman and

Kelly (2018) explain that listening to their students' voices helped them to be more aware of their students' embodiment: "It sounds really odd, or seemingly obvious, to say that our students are and have bodies in our classrooms. But the podcast project pushes me to be more aware of this, to pay better attention and to listen differently than I might otherwise have."

Podcasting is empowering

Finally, students can learn about, and enact, social justice through creating a podcast themselves. In preparing a podcast, students can learn in depth about social justice issues. A podcasting assignment can push students to network with each other and with community members in new ways (Fancher & Mehler, 2018). While a conventional paper or project may have the instructor as the sole audience, with a podcast, students get practice making content accessible, inclusive, and helpful for a much broader audience. Not to mention, as podcasters, students can come to see themselves as creators of knowledge who have perspectives that are worth sharing with the world. For instance, Fox and Ebada (2022) describe how women in Egypt used podcasting as a tool for storytelling and feminist activism. Meanwhile, the podcasters exercised agency and leadership through the process of making the podcasts.

How do I start?

When used intentionally and thoughtfully, podcasts have a clear role to play in social-justice oriented teaching. So how do you start? There are many ways to incorporate podcasts into the classroom, no matter your level of experience. It may help to hear specific examples of how other instructors have done it successfully. Three professors at Minnesota State University, Mankato, demonstrate three different ways to engage with podcasts. And in order to model these benefits and possibilities of podcasting as a medium, you will hear their stories as a series of podcast interviews. In the interviews, you will also hear directly from students who listened to podcasts as course material or created their own podcast with a global reach.

Interviews

- Interview 1: Students listen to podcasts for social justice in the classroom

– Dr. Yalda Hamidi, Ava Corey-Gruenes, Dominik Drabent, Alexander Nellis

- Interview 2: An instructor creates podcasts for social justice in the classroom
 - Dr. Dani Scott
- Interview 3: Students create podcasts for social justice in the classroom
 - Dr. Laura Harrison, Tahmina Sobat

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