

Best Practices Building Ethical Pedagogies

These best practices can be helpful strategies for educators and facilitators when taking on “ethical dilemmas” in the classroom. We define an “ethical dilemma” as a situation where we are faced with having to negotiate between different viewpoints and moral positions. They often touch on the very belief systems that define our lives— from our political stance, to our identities, to our beliefs of right and wrong. Sometimes, there is no one correct way of engaging these dilemmas as they come up, but if done well they can be key vehicles for deep and critical learning.

These best practices are distilled from a discussion of graduate students and faculty at the *Building Ethical Pedagogies* workshop on April 6, 2012 in the UW Geography Department.

Best Practices:

- Take on ethical dilemmas deliberately through the content of the curriculum as an opportunity for critical reflection and engagement
- Set up a safe learning environment by collectively setting a “covenant of agreements” (principles and ground rules for discussion). The class can read an article together to prepare for that conversation, such as *The Seminar* by Michael Khan.
- Prepare students by anticipating that ethical dilemmas will inevitably come up, but it’s how we engage with them that matters most.
- Have a list of “back-pocket” questions beforehand to help students question their assumptions (ex. what would you need to know to substantiate that claim?)
- Deliberately make space for different perspectives through the structure of the conversation
- Make the moment last longer than that moment by acknowledging it and making explicit that the you will continue the conversation at a later point, when you’ve had time to think about it.
- Make an effort to use inclusive language (ex. using “we” when discussing groups often “othered” or “she” or “they” when often assumed as male)

The committee welcomes additions and revisions to this document.