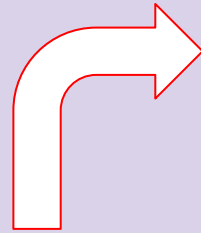


Reading bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress*

"The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom" - hooks



"In the classes I teach, I have students write short paragraphs that they read aloud so that we all have a chance to hear unique perspectives and we are all given an opportunity to pause and listen to one another. Just the physical experience of hearing, of listening intently, to each particular voice strengthens our capacity to learn together" - hooks

Teaching to Transgress: A Critical Pedagogy Reading Group (Spring)

Led by Suzanne Paszkowski

Take a deep dive into a seminal work of critical pedagogy in this facilitated reading group led by Bok Pedagogy Fellow [Suzanne Paszkowski](#). Over six sessions occurring bi-weekly, we will read bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* [\[link\]](#), which probes issues of power, knowledge, and freedom in pedagogy. bell hooks is a Black American author, professor, feminist, and social activist, and her work over the past 50 years has been critical in understanding the intersection of race, class, gender, and power. We will use a close reading of the text as a springboard for discussing various pedagogical issues, sharing experiences, and brainstorming practical strategies. The reading group is designed for GSAS PhD students who are interested in exploring issues of power in the classroom, considering ways to create an inclusive classroom, or engaging deeply with a single text in a community of peers.

"In my own experience, I encounter fewer and fewer academics from working-class backgrounds. Our absence is no doubt related to the way class politics and class struggle shapes who will receive graduate degrees in our society. However, constructively confronting issues of class is not simply a task for those of us who came from working-class and poor backgrounds; it is a challenge for all" - hooks



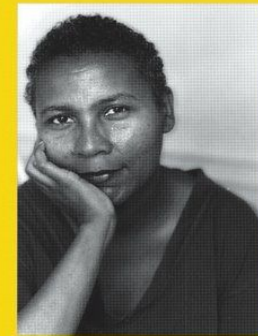
*"After reading *Teaching to Transgress* I am once again struck by bell hooks's never-ending, unquiet intellectual energy, an energy that makes her radical and loving."*

—Paulo Freire

In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks—writer, teacher, and insurgent black intellectual—writes about a new kind of education, *education as the practice of freedom*. Teaching students to "transgress" against racial, sexual, and class boundaries in order to achieve the gift of freedom is, for hooks, the teacher's most important goal.

bell hooks speaks to the heart of education today: how can we rethink teaching practices in the age of multiculturalism? What do we do about teachers who do not want to teach, and students who do not want to learn? How should we deal with racism and sexism in the classroom?

Full of passion and politics, *Teaching to Transgress* combines a practical knowledge of the classroom with a deeply felt connection to the world of emotions and feelings. This is the rare book about teachers and students that dares to raise critical questions about eros and rage, grief and reconciliation, and the future of teaching itself.



*"To educate as the practice of freedom," writes bell hooks, "is a way of teaching that anyone can learn." *Teaching to Transgress* is the record of one gifted teacher's struggle to make classrooms work.*

bell hooks is Distinguished Professor of English at City College in New York. She is the author of many books, most recently *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, also published by Routledge.

Strategies

- Be clear about your goals, even as they may (and probably will) change
- Be creative--you never know what you might be able to do at the Bok Center!
- Know your limits--there's only so much a single PF or TF can do. So also...
- Work in solidarity with others, in your department and around the university (here's a link to join the union--a concrete way to work in solidarity with others here at Harvard: <https://harvardgradunion.org/join/>)
- Be critically reflexive when it comes to teaching, and also when it comes to living
- Read hooks! Read as much as you can!



Teaching to Transgress

Education as the Practice of Freedom



bell hooks