

Ensure Your Course Visually Reflects a Diverse Society

It is best practice for online courses to include digital resources to help make the courses engaging and visually appealing (Nilson & Goodson, 2018). Curating the digital media (e.g., visual images, videos, web pages) for your course is an opportunity to expose students to and promote their thinking about the beauty and complexity of our diverse nation and world.

Here are some practices to consider when choosing visuals for your course.

Examine Your Course

Critically examine your course from multiple viewpoints to include materials that accurately represent various perspectives (consider gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, sexuality, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, ability, linguistic background, etc.). A sense of belonging to a community is absolutely essential for the trust and relationships that make learning possible. When students see people who look like them represented in your materials, they feel that they belong and put in more effort. If your students feel out of place, they are much less likely to give their maximum effort.

Online courses are more likely to be even more diverse than face-to-face classes, as they often include students who are coming back to school after being out of the classroom for a long time, students who have other responsibilities, or students who have different perspectives on the world because they've had children or have spent time working. To more effectively motivate your students, they should see themselves represented in your materials.

Be Mindful of Stereotypes

When choosing photos, illustrations, or videos of people, avoid images that reinforce stereotypes and seek images that broaden students' ideas about other people or places. For example,

- If you are showing images of doctors or scientists, try to find women and people of color fulfilling those roles.
- If you are showing a woman, a person of color, a person with a disability, a person wearing religious apparel, or an immigrant, ask yourself if there are any stereotypes being reinforced with that image (e.g., if you want to show visuals related to poverty, make sure that not all the images reflect people of color).

Seek Out Images That Reflect Diversity

When choosing visual materials, be intentional about representing a wide variety of cultural perspectives. For example,

- Use video clips that show life and culture in other countries.
- Look for images that include people with disabilities in different work contexts.
- Include images of families that represent diverse family structures.

Source

Nilson, L. B., & Goodson, L. A. (2018). *Online teaching at its best: Merging instructional design with teaching and learning research*. Jossey-Bass.