Teaching Tool: Ubuntu Epistemology

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Introduction

This Teaching Tool is intended to support educators working with Velicia Hawkins-Moore's commentary "Dismantling White Supremacy: The Role of Ubuntu Epistemology and US Universities," featured in *NEOS* Issue 13, Volume 1 (2021).

Have the class read Moore-Toliver's commentary in advance.

Writing Prompt

Start with a 10- to 15-minute writing prompt to get the class thinking. The writing prompt will be for the students' eyes only to start engaging with the concepts and to facilitate discussion later on.

Hawkins tells us that Ubuntu translates to "A person is a person through their relationship to others" or "I am because you/we are" (2021). What does this mean to you? How do you think you could apply this epistemology in your everyday life? What do you think is significant about Ubuntu epistemology being rooted in humanness?

Video Viewing

Next, show one or two videos that give more information on the meaning of Ubuntu.
Video Option 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UojwMiRpNM
Video Option 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ld--_YzdnYw

Small Group Discussions

Next, put students into small groups to discuss questions. Once they have had a chance to discuss, have them come back to the large group and allow time for the whole class to talk and bring their main ideas forward. Consider asking some or all of the following questions:
- How do we see Ubuntu epistemology applied in the commentary to empower Black youth?
- What do you think it means to decenter whiteness?
- What could decentering whiteness look like in action and how can Ubuntu epistemology aid in decentering whiteness?
- What is the importance of learning and knowing other cultures' epistemologies? How does this serve to disrupt dominant ideologies and decenter whiteness?
- How can you apply Ubuntu to your everyday life and interactions?

Assignment

Give an assignment for the students to portray their knowledge in a creative way. For example, they could create a zine, an infographic, a song, a video, a piece of art, a story, a poster, etc. Below is an example of a poster:

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