

# Creating Community Agreements Collaboratively with Online Students: Reasons, Anti-Racist Considerations, and Logistics in Adobe Connect

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*In this chapter, we share how to use Adobe Connect's tools to collaborate with students to create community agreements for the course. Community agreements are also known as group norms, class rules, etc. We also discuss reasons for creating community agreements with online students, and anti-racist considerations.*

## Teaching and Learning Goal

The goals of creating community agreements collaboratively with students include:

- Taking initial steps to create an inclusive and “brave space” rather than “safe space” (Barrett, 2010; Arao & Clemens, 2013) in which students feel encouraged to risk participating during class
- Empowering students to have a voice in creating the classroom environment, which is a trauma-informed approach to teaching (Carello, 2018; Quiros, 2022) and is important to do when teaching online (Marquart et al, 2020)
- Creating agreements to reference when classroom conflicts occur (Ortega et al, 2018; Ortega & Marquart, 2016)
- Making expectations explicit around online-specific issues such as whether or when webcam presence will be required of students (Marquart & Russell, 2020; Marquart et al, 2021b), or whether adult students joining class from home are discouraged from drinking alcohol or using substances during class (Marquart et al, 2021a)
- Offering students and the teaching team an initial space to acknowledge the importance of social location in our participation, interactions and dynamics, and to unpack any implicit bias in the community agreements themselves (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014)

## Activity and Results

Creating community agreements collaboratively with students is part of our standard approach to teaching, whether teaching in person, online, or in a hyflex format (Marquart & Verdooner, 2020). In an Adobe Connect virtual classroom, the built-in tools help all students participate in this process.

There are many ways to create community agreements with your students. For example, in a physical classroom, an instructor might simply ask students to call out ideas while the instructor writes on the chalkboard; in an online classroom, the same instructor might ask students to call out ideas on mic while the instructor types into a note pod. Here is one example of creating community agreements as a group, using a circle process (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010; Pranis, 2015), and we share other examples later in this chapter:

1. Invite students to write down two values they want to bring to our classroom space (i.e. open, reflective). Each student and teaching team member shares and the values are gathered in a Notes pod to be revisited at the beginning of each class.
2. Based on the values, ask students to create guidelines that help embody these values (i.e. speak from your own experience, accept feedback). Each student and teaching team member again shares and the guidelines are gathered in Notes pod to be revisited at the beginning of each class.
3. The process of feedback and discussion then begins with each person having space to offer their thoughts or to pass if they are happy and satisfied with the community agreements.
4. At the beginning of each class the values and guidelines are revisited with space to add/change, to reflect on a value or guideline we are struggling with and want to hold ourselves accountable to, and/or to name a value or guideline that especially resonates that day and that we strive to embody.

## Why create community agreements with online students

When asking students to participate in class, we are asking them to take the risk of being vulnerable in front of others. It can feel vulnerable for students to speak in public, admit they don't know the answer, make a mistake and be wrong in front of their peers, get an answer correct and worry about accusations of being a sycophant, express an opinion or share a personal experience and feel judged, or experience conflict if someone disagrees with what they've said. On top of that, we ask students to undergo this vulnerability in front of the instructor who has power over them and a group of peers that may include competitors, friends, frenemies, or other complicated relationships.

In addition, for online students, the prevalence of online harassment may influence their feelings of vulnerability about participation in online courses. According to a Pew Research Center survey, in 2017 41% of Americans had experienced online harassment, 66% had witnessed online harassment, 27% had chosen not to post something online after witnessing online harassment, and 8% felt anxiety after witnessing online harassment (Duggan, 2017). Witnessing or being targeted by online public shaming and ostracizing, or "cancel culture," may also cause feelings of anxiety (Ortega, 2022). These experiences in public virtual spaces have the potential to impact how students feel about participating in private virtual spaces like online courses.

Community agreements, therefore, are an essential element of supporting students to take the risk of participating in online classes.

In addition, engaging in a process of developing community agreements also engages students in a process of transparency. Systemic white supremacy is woven into the cultural fabric of educational settings (Schultz, 2019), which creates learning environments with unspoken and assumed normative behaviors and expectations for students and faculty alike. Creating community agreements serves to uproot the oppression of these unspoken norms by making explicit a set of cultural norms that reflect the bodies, minds, experiences, and histories of those present in the learning space. Engaging with a community agreements process aligns with anti-racist pedagogy and a trauma-informed classroom approach that values transparency and choice for all learners.

An example of the rationale to share with students prior to engaging with a Community Agreements activity is provided below (**Image 1**). This content is facilitated by chapter co-author Professor Ortega in online social work courses as a key practice in transparent facilitation.

**Image 1:** Screenshot of a slide from Professor Ortega's Spring 2019 online course, introducing the activity of creating community agreements.

**Image 1 Alt-Text:** This slide says "Community Agreements" along the left side. The body of the slide says "Rationale for Community Agreements: 1. Sets clear expectations and boundaries for interpersonal exchange; 2. Supports insight development and inward processing; 3. Directly challenges white supremacy and class supremacy which operate often through covert, unspoken, implicit social contracts within oppressive institutions." At the bottom of the slide, it says "Making the implicit-explicit."

# Community Agreements

## Rationale for Community Agreements:

1. Sets clear expectations and boundaries for interpersonal exchange
2. Supports insight development and inward processing
3. Directly challenges white supremacy and class supremacy which operate often through covert, unspoken, implicit social contracts within oppressive institutions.

Making the implicit- explicit.

## Incorporating expectations around technology into the community agreements

Creating community agreements can also be an excellent opportunity to establish course norms and expectations specifically about technology, and to set the intention for your time together as it relates to certain technical components of the class. Using collective decision making in this way can invite students to consider and discuss the impact of technology on the online classroom community. Some questions to consider with your online students may include:

- What is the expectation for the typed chat? Can students discuss anything at any time during class, or are there parameters to follow? When students should private-message the instructional team? How does chat participation factor into class participation grading? Are typos ok?
- What is the class webcam policy? When will students be required to come on camera, if at all? As a note, the authors strongly recommend making intermittent student webcam use optional and being intentional about any optional webcam use (Marquart et al, 2021b; Marquart, 2022).
- What is the expectation for the instructional team regarding visiting breakout rooms? Should the instructional team visit all the groups or only enter the breakout rooms when invited? When visiting a room, should the instructional team interrupt in order to engage in the conversation, or observe silently?
- When a student steps away during class, should they let the class know? If yes, how? Should they use the stepped-away icon, type into chat, or other?

## Technical Details and Steps

Below, this chapter includes three examples of how the authors have created community agreements with their students in Adobe Connect.

### Variation 1: Create agreements as a whole-group activity

One helpful feature of Adobe Connect is the ability to create layouts that persist in the room from week to week. This means that we can create a Community Agreements layout to use every week (**Images 2 & 3**). The layout used in this approach includes:

- a Video pod to show the instructor on webcam
- an Attendees pod to be able to visually affirm, using status icons, that everyone agrees to follow the agreements
- a Share pod to show the slides with the activity instructions
- a Notes pod to create the agreements collaboratively
- a Chat pod that is set up to be the largest item in the room, in order to encourage active participation in the chat

## Variation 1: Creating the community agreements during the first class

**Step 1:** To create the agreements, the instructor asks all students to type their proposed agreements into the Chat pod.

**Step 2:** As the students type, the instructor copy-pastes the text from the chat into the Notes pod, and groups similar concepts together. This ensures that the community agreements will include the exact wording students proposed, to validate the students' ideas.

**Step 3:** Once all the proposed agreements have been copy-pasted into the Notes pod, the instructor gives everyone time to read them, ask clarifying questions, respond to questions, and generally discuss. This can happen fully in the chat, or the instructor may encourage students to speak on mic. If needed, additional agreements may be added to the Notes pod as part of this process.

The instructor may ask clarifying questions as well, and may ask questions that prompt students to add more agreements if an important concept is missing. For example, the instructor may ask "How would you like us to handle it when a conflict arises in class, or a microaggression occurs?" or suggest "If a microaggression occurs, I've found it helpful to use the NAME Steps model to address it; would that work for this class?" (McInroy et al, 2019; Byers et al, 2019). The instructor may also prompt students to rephrase agreements that need tweaking. For example, the instructor may say, "I see that we've got 'safe space' here. Would it work to replace that with 'brave space'?" (Barrett, 2010; Arao & Clemens, 2013).

**Step 4:** Once students have finished asking questions, the instructor gives students time to review the final agreements, and asks them to use the green thumbs up agree status icon to indicate that they commit to following the community agreements throughout the course. If a student doesn't respond, the instructor can check to see whether they're having technical difficulties. Once the whole class has committed to following the community agreements, this concludes the creation of the agreements.

In our experience, all of our students across years of teaching have agreed to follow the community agreements we have created together. However, the reader may be worried about what happens if a student doesn't agree. In such a case, the instructor could pause the discussion, let the class know that the process of creating the agreements will be on hold until the following class session, and follow up with the student to discuss their concerns about the community agreements as drafted and what would be needed during the next class for them to commit to following the agreements.

## Variation 1: Example community agreements

The following are examples of community agreements created using this method. They come from the Institute on Pedagogy and Technology for Online Courses (Báez et al, 2019). In Summer 2022, this institute had about 50 participants, who attended class on either Tuesday evenings or Friday afternoons, with the same instructors for either day. It is interesting to compare and contrast the agreements created by two groups taking the same class during the same summer. Note that typos are left in as-is, as they reflect the informality of participants typing into chat.

Tuesday class:

- mutual respect // respect all opinions // respectful consideration of everyone's opinions // Mutual Respect // Respect for different opinions // mutual respect // being respectful and empathetic // Respect for different abilities ie (skills, having a disability) // Courteous of others // Modeling social work ethics and values // Understanding that we have different ways of understanding // Grace // Be kind and compassionate
- Don't yuk my yum // Understanding our taste can be different we are all entitled to our opinion because it is ok for me it might not be ok for others but that is also fine // I like it but don't hate on it because you do not like it // Not calling out but calling in
- active brainstorming and collaboration
- step up/step back // Making sure we speak up but also listen // just listen // Avoid interrupting
- be mindful of How to discuss conflicting opinions and follow-up when an individual might be hurt -- address microaggressions and conflict in a brave and supportive way
- confidentiality - whatever is said here, stays here
- Being ok with a lack of closure on course topics // It's okay to agree to disagree // Be aware of time.
- stay present during our time together // take care of yourself (ie need to go to bathroom, grab sip of water)
- Humility towards learning // Being curious // Be open to learning new things // Be curious while not being judgmental of others. // No one knows everything - together we know a lot. // Don't be afraid to ask questions - others may have the same ones
- Challenge assumptions // Practice self-inquiry as much as external inquiry // Speak from your own experience
- taking holistic perspectives to problems
- having some fun // Learning should be fun! // learning being fun.
- No matter you're intention, you're responsible for your impact // We can't be articulate all the time // Speaking plainly is allowed and encouraged.

Friday class:

- Be respectful of others opinions even if you disagree, do so respectfully. // Use I statements. When giving feedback, be direct and offer suggestions. // Keep an open mind and receive all ideas with respect. // Challenge the idea, not the person // Try not to get caught up in the politics of niceness. Be OK with asking questions if something is curious to us, or doesn't sit well. // Correct with care, assume good intent // Be conscious of intent vs impact // open to feedback
- Listen to understand. // Active listening // Listen = silent - in order to truly listen - we have to stop our minds from wanting to say the next thing. We have to be silent and listen to others. Listen to understand // practice mindfulness... often what the other person says prompts other thoughts that may take us away from present
- Be mindful of others' time to speak if you have spoken recently or several times. // Make space for all voices. // Notice power dynamics // Be mindful of power dynamics and the dynamics of taking up space during conversations. Making space for less talkative voices. // aware of our positionality, compassion // Step up and Step back as needed // Equity
- Avoid making assumptions
- Speak from experience and avoid generalizing
- We are here to learn from our instructors and colleagues. // Be curious and open // Curiosity instead of judgement // Engage with cultural humility and move with compassion. Assume the best of and from each other. // Be understanding of different levels of experience (both the tech aspect of the online class, and where we all are in our professional development journey) \ Be patient with yourself and others // Apply what we're learning from readings and discussions.
- Stay accountable for showing up. It is so easy to get distracted on line. So checking in before to see what we need to do to remain focused // Be on time. In case of an emergency, e-mail the teaching team.
- Recognize everyone's inherent value
- [added in a subsequent week] Chat to show positive support for your peers. :)
- [added in a subsequent week] What is said here, stays here in terms of authors/speakers
- [added in a subsequent week] Its ok not to be perfect

## Variation 1: Recommitting to the community agreements each week

Each week, near the start of class, the instructor gives the class a chance to add to or edit the community agreements, and then asks everyone to recommit to following them.

**Step 1:** In the same Community Agreements layout each week (**Image 3**), the instructor gives students some time to review the community agreements, and asks if anyone has something to add, clarify, or edit. This is usually a quick process, but sometimes a discussion comes up that improves the existing agreements.

**Step 2:** Once students have finished asking questions or proposing additions/edits, the instructor asks the class to use the green thumbs up status icon to indicate that they recommit to following the agreements. Once everyone has put up a green thumbs up status icon, this concludes the recommitment to the agreements.

### Variation 1: Using the community agreements when an issue or conflict arises during class

If an issue or conflict arises during class, it can be helpful to move to the Community Agreements layout (**Image 3**) as a reminder of the class's agreements. The agreements can frame the instructor's approach to addressing the issue or conflict.

### Variation 1: Using the community agreements when grading class participation or asynchronous discussion forums

For those who grade class participation, it can be helpful to include following the community agreements as one of the requirements in a grading rubric; it can also be helpful to include following them as a requirement for asynchronous discussion forums. This can help hold students accountable to their commitment to follow the agreements, and as it is rare for students not to follow the agreements, this creates a reward for doing so.

### Variation 1: Posting the community agreements within breakout rooms

When setting up the layouts for activities in breakout rooms, it is helpful to include an image of the community agreements as a reminder for the groups.

### Variation 2: Create agreements in small groups first, and then come together to complete them with the whole group

In online courses, it can be supportive to vary the means of classroom engagement (Tanis, 2020), and this can include offering multiple modes of student engagement while creating the community agreements.

Adobe Connect breakout rooms allow students to meet in a smaller group arrangement. These breakout groups can be created randomly or can be created with additional considerations regarding gender and racial parity. If you are a professor who has previously facilitated racial affinity based groups, you may also arrange breakouts in this way to support race-alike spaces for deeper dialogue. Regardless of how you decide to design your breakout sessions, these smaller groups enable longer speaking times for each student (more mic time), as well as a collaborative process between students as they determine their contributions to the community agreements.

### Variation 2: Creating the community agreements during the first class

#### **Before class:**

**Step 1:** The instructor prepares for class by creating the number of breakout rooms based on the number of preferred students in each group. For example, in a class of 25 students a professor may wish to create 5 breakouts in advance so that each has 5 students.

**Step 2:** After creating the breakout rooms, the instructor sets the rooms up, including placing a Notes pod in each breakout room with instructions for students to work together to discuss their past experiences with building community agreements in other groups and to share what has gone well, and what has been challenging (**Image 4**).

#### **During class:**

**Step 3:** The instructor tells the class their rationale for the use of community agreements as well as the use of breakout groups to discuss community agreements, and sets a timeframe for the small group process.

**Step 4:** When the breakout activity is over, the instructor asks students to respond to a "Contributions to the community agreements" Poll. The instructor gives students some time to respond with their breakout group contributions, and to then reflect on what they observe in the final Poll results once the instructor has broadcast the responses (**Image 5**).

**Step 5:** The instructor asks for feedback from students on microphone, video or in the chat pod regarding the contents of the agreements. Suggested prompts for dialogue include:

- Are there any statements here that you feel require additional discussion and consideration before including?
- Are there statements here that you feel are particularly powerful for you to consider given your social identities?
- Are there particular statements here that you would particularly like to commit to as a part of your own learning process?  
You may wish to not share this, or to share privately with a peer in the class.
- What would you need to change in this list to feel certain about co-signing the agreements?

**Step 6:** The instructor either copies Poll results onto a Notes pod within Adobe Connect to save, or takes a screengrab of the Poll results to save for future use. The Notes pod or screengrab can then be used to create a separate PDF or file to be shared for student use, and as a weekly in-class reminder of the group's agreements.

**Step 7:** The instructor may wish to facilitate a brief discussion about the community agreements that were brainstormed, providing the option for students to suggest changes or additions before closing the activity. The instructor closes out the activity by asking students to provide a thumbs up agree status icon to denote "I co-sign these community agreements." In addition, the instructor notes that the agreements will be reviewed in the next class session and are a working document that can be shifted, edited, and added to at any time during the semester.

#### **After class:**

**Step 8:** The instructor pastes the community agreements into a slide for use in future classes. This slide can be displayed at the beginning of class, either as an on-going component of the slides used for facilitation each week, or as a PDF that students can download using Adobe Connect's File Share tool.

## Variation 2: Example community agreements

The following are examples of community agreements created using this method during Spring 2021 with an online course. This course had 28 students present and the final agreements represent the process steps of Variation #2 described above.

Spring 2021 Community Agreements:

- Respect each other's own experiences and views
- Call people "in" not "out" to facilitate learning
- Try it on
- Do your best to hold yourself accountable
- Place pronouns next to your name
- Don't question someone's lived experience
- Commitment to self-awareness and self-reflection
- Try to remain kind and thoughtful in all communication
- Have open minds and hearts
- Honor other's experiences
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
- Intent vs. impact matters here
- What is said here- stays here
- Sway in, sway out: be mindful of mic time
- Honor each other's vulnerability
- Take space, make space
- Use "I" statements
- Do not take anyone or anything for granted

## Variation 3: Request community agreement suggestions before class and use this as a starting point to create agreements together

A third variation for creating community agreements is to invite your students to email you suggestions of proposed community agreements prior to the first day of class and use these responses to start the in-class group discussion. This variation has the advantage of including the perspectives of students who might want time to think about their suggestions, who might want to share their suggestions privately with the instructor, or who might feel inhibited about sharing their ideas with classmates who are strangers on the first day of class. A disadvantage is that students may be less likely to respond to email before the class has begun, resulting in a starting set of agreements that don't reflect all of the students.



To create community agreements in this way, consider the following steps:

**Step 1:** Request community agreement suggestions before the first day of class. This could be done via individual emails, a group email to the class, or as part of a welcome/general announcement on Canvas (or another learning management system). When you make this request, you may want to explain how their responses will be used, whether their responses will be anonymously shared, and that proposing community agreements is optional. Consider sending this message approximately one week before the first class and follow-up with a reminder 2-3 days before class.

**Step 2:** Compile the students' responses onto a slide, to be shared as part of the in-class discussion. It may be helpful to clearly state somewhere on the slide that these are initial suggestions that you will discuss and develop further together.

**Step 3:** Introduce the in-class activity in which you will create community agreements together. Share the slide with the collected proposed agreements as a starting point for the discussion. See Variations 1 and 2 above for recommendations and considerations on how to facilitate the in-class discussion.

## For all variations: Critical considerations for addressing white supremacy while co-creating community agreements

1. **Understand white supremacy and how it shows up in the classroom.** White supremacy, as defined by activist scholar Elizabeth Martinez (2004), is the systemic "exploitation and oppression of people of color by white people to maintain a system of wealth, power, and privilege." Instructors should understand how white supremacy can show up in the learning environment, land-based and online, to ensure authentic cultivation of inclusive spaces. It is critical to note that white supremacy doesn't always manifest as racial slurs or other obviously racist gestures or occurrences. Although the legacy of this ideology benefits white people, it can also devalue white people in certain instances, thus making it challenging to detect and address.

Here are some examples of how white supremacy manifests in online classrooms, as adapted from Okun's (2010) scholarship on white supremacist culture in organizations:

- o **1) Perfectionism.** Ex: Penalizing students whose technology malfunctions prohibit them from fully participating in a class activity.
  - o **2) Sense of Urgency.** Ex: dismissing a student who explains they had to interpret for a family member who doesn't speak English and, thus, were a few minutes late to class.
  - o **3) Defensiveness.** Ex: Immediately defending yourself without actively listening to a student's report of how they believe white supremacy shows up in your classroom.
  - o **4) Quantity Over Quality.** Ex: Students are assessed based on the number of times they contribute to small group breakout discussions in class as opposed to the quality of their contribution.
  - o **5) Worship of the Written Word.** Ex: Course assignments are only limited to written papers that conform to traditional writing conventions. This practice excludes other culturally grounded ways students can convey their comprehension of the knowledge imparted in the course.
  - o **6) Only One Right Way.** Ex: Not accepting qualitative, culturally informed ways of knowing and knowledge production as valid sources in student assignments.
  - o **7) Paternalism.** Ex: Deciding not to co-create community agreements with your students.
  - o **8) Power Hoarding.** Ex: Prioritizing the contributions of white students over students of color.
  - o **9) Fear of Open Conflict.** Ex: A student raises concerns within a class session about their marginalization as a student of color in the class. The instructor isn't comfortable managing conflict so asks the student not to "disrupt" class and address the issue outside of class time.
2. **Acknowledge and address any of your own implicit biases,** internalized white supremacy, and oppressive ideologies. Before addressing any bias that may arise from students, the instructor should commit themselves to actively identifying and deconstructing any internalized white supremacy and oppressive ideologies (Bussey et al., 2021; Kendi, 2019). This ongoing process of reflection will sharpen the instructor's capacity for recognizing and addressing any biases that arise among students while developing community agreements.



3. **Allow students to voice their concerns about any of the suggested community agreements if they'd like to.** At least one student may voice their concerns about any potentially biased community agreements (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013). It is imperative for students, particularly those of marginalized identities, to have the opportunity to articulate their experiences of white supremacy and oppression in this process if they choose to. A discussion of concerns will help students better understand how these structural systems play out in the classroom.

4. **Identify any concerning suggested community agreements if none of your students articulate their concerns.** Students of marginalized identities may choose not to vocalize their concerns about potentially biased community agreements as a protective factor. This reticence may be due to myriad possible reasons, such as unfamiliarity with their classmates, concerns about retaliation for raising uncomfortable topics in the course (or entire academic program), and racial battle fatigue, which is the emotional and mental fatigue Black people and People of Color experience as a result of anticipating and experiencing racial microaggressions (Smith, 2009).

If this occurs, the instructor should identify the problematic community agreement(s) and explain why it appears to be rooted in white supremacy and other forms of oppression. For example, while co-creating community agreements a white student suggests the following community agreement, "Students of color will call out any white students who says or does anything perceived to be racist." The instructor explains that this agreement places a degree of emotional, intellectual, and often trauma-inducing responsibility on students of color who are already, by racial identity, victimized by white supremacy, and reinforces a white supremacist power dynamic that relieves white students of recognizing and accepting responsibility for harmful behavior. The instructor suggests editing the proposed agreement to "we will address microaggressions or macroaggressions that occur during class" and invites the class's feedback on this proposed edit.

5. **Challenge a student's oppressive thinking without judgment.** Students who suggest at least one community agreement that's informed by white supremacy may need support in understanding why their contribution may be problematic. Moving the conversation to a structural analysis from an individual one can help the student understand the broader implications of white supremacy and how it shows up interpersonally (Schultz, 2019). Instructors are encouraged to share and discuss the list in #1 above about how white supremacy shows up in the classroom, to expand students' understanding of how well-intended community agreements may actually conform to white supremacist conventions.

6. **Be prepared to facilitate a nuanced conversation.** Students might not be able to engage in nuanced discussions about white supremacy for a number of reasons (Smalling, 2020). For example, they might not have participated in intimate, vulnerable conversations before; they may feel self-conscious or uncomfortable doing so; or they might not have a keen understanding of the intricacies of white supremacy, which is necessary to understand its structural and interpersonal implications. Reflect on your comfort level in facilitating these conversations, and seek support and insight from trainings, readings, peers, or colleagues if necessary.

As a note, white faculty should be mindful when seeking support from colleagues of color, particularly when asking for free labor. It can be mentally and emotionally taxing to support or teach white colleagues about racism and oppression. Remain open to the possibility that your colleague of color may decline the opportunity to support you in this way or ask to speak about it at another time. Understand that this is most likely a protective measure to minimize their risk of mental and emotional exhaustion. We also recommend the following books by anti-racism scholars and writers:

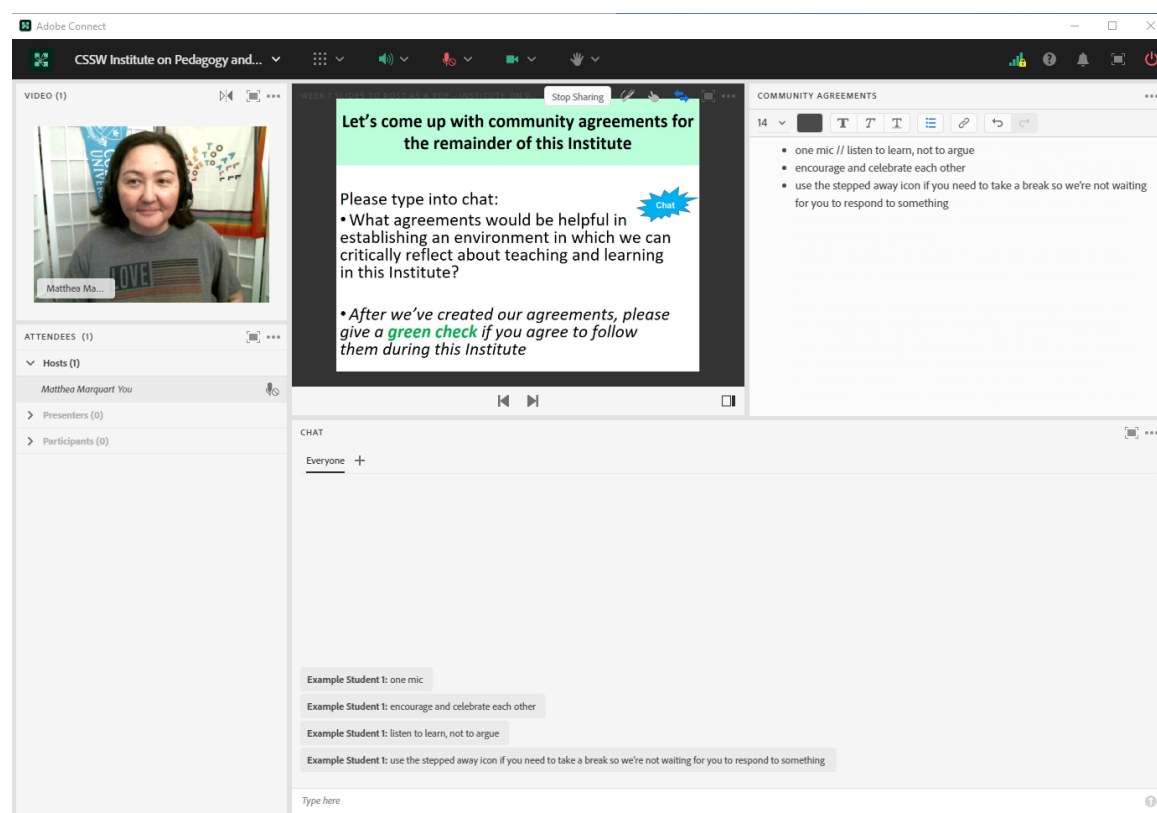
- How to Be an Antiracist, by Dr. Ibram Kendi
- Be Antiracist: A Journal for Reflection, Awareness, and Action, by Dr. Ibram Kendi
- So You Want to Talk About Race, by Ijeoma Oluo
- Me and White Supremacy, by Layla F. Saad
- But I Don't See You as Asian: Curating Conversations About Race, by Bruce Reyes-Chow
- My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies, by Resmaa Menakem

7. **Understand that students may indicate their concern about a community agreement in other ways.** Students may reach out to the instructor after class to discuss their concerns about particular community agreements. They may have been hesitant to voice their concern in class due to the reasons stated above in point #4. Validate their concerns about speaking up in class and offer to introduce their concern anonymously in the next class session when you revisit the community agreements as a class (Ortega & Marquart, 2016; Shedrick & Marquart, 2020).

## What this looked like in Adobe Connect

**Image 2:** The Community Agreements layout during the first class session included a slide with instructions to type proposed agreements into the chat, and a Notes pod where agreements were copy-pasted from the chat, with related proposed agreements grouped together. The Chat pod is large so as to encourage participation. The person on webcam is one of the chapter authors. Adobe product screenshot(s) reprinted with permission from Adobe.

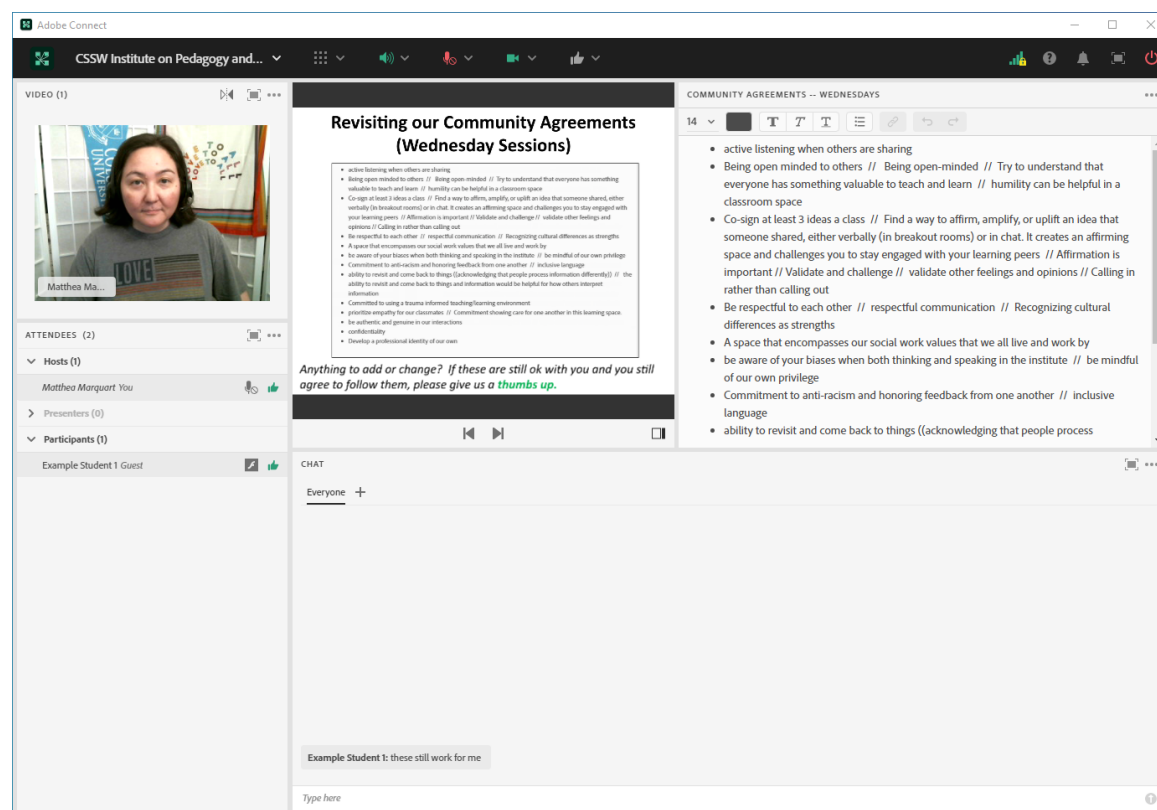
**Image 2 Alt-Text:** In this screengrab of an Adobe Connect classroom, the instructor is on webcam in a Video pod in the far left, with the Attendees pod below. The remainder of the screen is divided horizontally, with a slide and Notes pod sharing the top half and a Chat pod taking up the full bottom half. The slide is titled “Let’s come up with community agreements for the remainder of this Institute.” It includes the instructions: “Please type into chat: What agreements would be helpful in establishing an environment in which we can critically reflect about teaching and learning in this Institute?” The final instruction reads “After we’ve created our agreements, please give a green check if you agree to follow them during this Institute.” The Notes pod in this image demonstrates what the start of this process would look like during class. It displays text that’s been copy-pasted from the chat, from comments typed by “Example Student 1.” The Notes pod is titled “Community Agreements” and has three bullet points. The first says “one mic // listen to learn, not to argue.” The double slash indicates that “one mic” and “listen to learn, not to argue” were separate comments in the chat that have been grouped together because they are related. The second bullet point says “encourage and celebrate each other.” The third says “use the stepped away icon if you need to take a break so we’re not waiting for you to respond to something.”



**Image 3:** The Community Agreements layout during subsequent weeks of class included a slide with a screengrab of the community agreements and the original Notes pod where the community agreements were housed, so that they could be edited if needed. The slide included the instruction to either type additional proposed agreements or proposed edits into the chat, and then use the status icon options to put up a thumbs up agree status icon to demonstrate a recommitment to follow the community agreements. The person on webcam is one of the chapter authors. Adobe product screenshot(s) reprinted with permission from Adobe.

**Image 3 Alt-Text:** This is a screengrab of an Adobe Connect classroom showing the same layout as Image 1, with four key differences. The first difference is that there is a different slide with instructions, reflecting that it's a different week of the class so the class is recommitting to the community agreements rather than creating them. The second difference is that the Notes

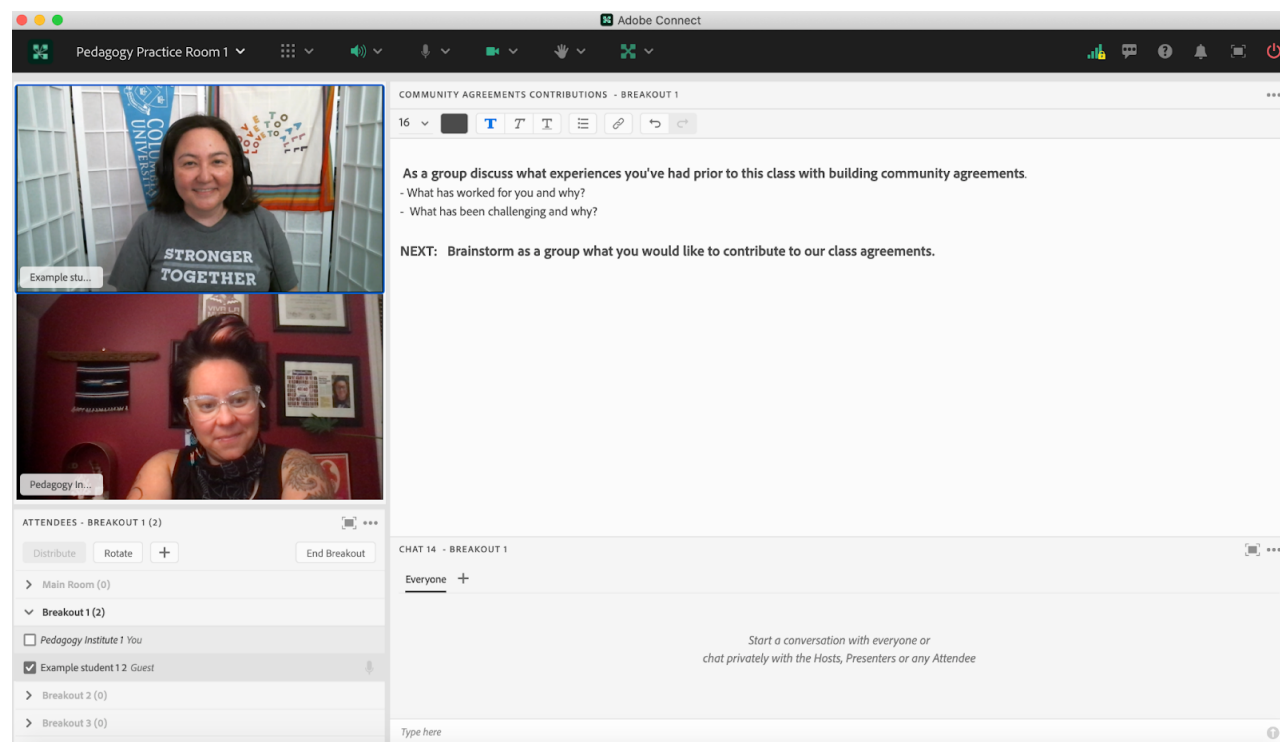
pod is full, reflecting that it includes the full list of the class's community agreements. The third difference from Image 1 is that in the chat pod, Example Student 1 has typed "these still work for me." The final difference is that the Attendees pod reflects that the instructor and Example Student 1 have put up green thumbs-up status icons to indicate that they agree to follow the community agreements. The full text of the slide includes the header "Revisiting our Community Agreements (Wednesday sessions)" and an instruction that says "Anything to add or change? If these are still ok with you and you still agree to follow them, please give us a thumbs up." The slide includes an image of the community agreements, which are also visible on the Notes pod. They include "active listening when others are sharing; Being open minded to others // Being open-minded // Try to understand that everyone has something valuable to teach and learn // humility can be helpful in a classroom space; Co-sign at least 3 ideas a class // Find a way to affirm, amplify, or uplift an idea that someone shared, either verbally (in breakout rooms) or in chat. It creates an affirming space and challenges you to stay engaged with your learning peers // Affirmation is important // Validate and challenge // validate other feelings and opinions // Calling in rather than calling out; Be respectful to each other // respectful communication // Recognizing cultural differences as strengths // A space that encompasses our social work values that we all live and work by // be aware of your biases when both thinking and speaking in the institute // be mindful of our own privilege // Commitment to anti-racism and honoring feedback from one another // inclusive language; ability to revisit and come back to things // acknowledging that people process information differently."



**Image 4:** The Community Agreements breakout room layout used during the breakout groups included a chat pod and also a Notes pod in the center of the layout. The Notes pod (formatted in advance of the class) asks students to discuss as a group what experiences they've had with building community agreements. Secondly, the Notes pod cues students to engage with each other about what was challenging in their previous experiences, and what has worked for them about using community agreements. Lastly, students are asked to document their brainstorm of specific agreements they would like to contribute to the larger class list of agreements that will be formed. Using the Notes pod allows the breakout groups to document their dialogue and bring these ideas back to the larger classroom after the breakouts are closed. The chat pod is available for students to chat if there are any technical difficulties with microphone or camera access, and encourages varied forms of communication for group members. The people on webcam are two of the chapter authors. Adobe product screenshot(s) reprinted with permission from Adobe.

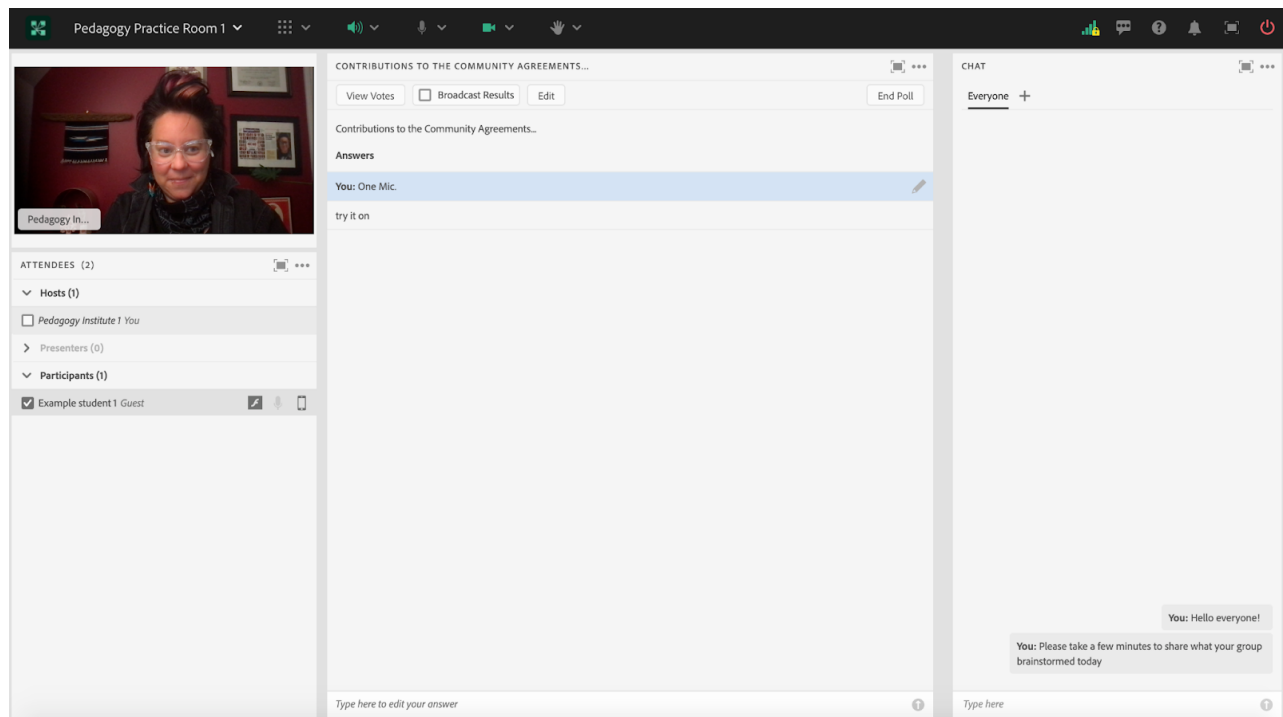
**Image 4 Alt-Text:** This image demonstrates how the Adobe Connect breakout room for this activity would appear to students. In this screengrab, two example students are on webcam in a Video pod in the far left upper corner, with an attendees pod below. The remainder of the screen includes a large Notes pod on the top two-thirds of the layout and a Chat pod below. On the Notes

pod are written instructions stating “As a group discuss what experiences you’ve had prior to this class with building community agreements.” Below this are two additional questions: “What has worked for you and why? What has been challenging and why?” The final instruction reads “NEXT: Brainstorm as a group what you would like to contribute to our class agreements.”



**Image 5:** This layout, used after the breakout groups ended and students returned to the whole-group classroom, centers a Poll and a chat pod. The Poll asks students to take time to share the contributions to the community agreements that they brainstormed in the small breakout groups. After that, the professor will use the “Broadcast Results” option to make the Poll results visible to everyone in the class, and tell the students to review the results. The person on webcam is one of the chapter authors. Adobe product screenshot(s) reprinted with permission from Adobe.

**Image 5 Alt-Text:** In this screengrab of an Adobe Connect classroom, the professor is on webcam in a Video pod in the far left quarter of the room, with an attendees pod below. The remainder of the screen is divided vertically, with a large Poll in the center taking up almost half of the space in the room, and a vertical Chat pod taking up the right quarter of the screen. The Poll says “Contributions to the Community Agreements.” There are two Poll responses so far: “One Mic” and “try it on.” The chat pod on the right does not contain any student contributions yet, however the professor has written “Hello everyone! Please take a few minutes to share what your group brainstormed today.” These written instructions support what was verbally shared as well.



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