

Lesson plan 1
Edward Adelson's Checkerboard Illusion
(approx. 45 minutes)

Learning Objectives:

- Discover flaws of our brain's perception.
- Discuss how these flaws can influence communication between people.
- Reflect on our brain's biases and on the way they may shape media texts we produce.

Terms:

Implicit attitudes, implicit biases, objectivity/subjectivity.

Short Description:

During this lesson students will discover Edward Adelson's checkerboard illusion and discuss what this illusion reveals about our brain's ability to perceive "objective" reality. They will then use this discovery to reflect on the way they communicate with each other, including mediated forms of communication.

Lesson Procedures (length can vary):

10 minutes - Show your students Edward Adelson's checkerboard illusion. Ask them whether they think squares A and B are the same color or different. (a) If your students have computers, you can show the illusion using a projector and then have students work individually or in pairs to check your claim that A and B are the same color. Students can use Paint to cut out square A and B and put them together. (b) If students do not have computers, you can do the same using printouts of the illusion, and scissors.

10 minutes - Ask your students: "What does this illusion tell us about our brain's ability to perceive 'objective' reality?" (Discuss the terms "objectivity" and "subjectivity.")

10 minutes - Ask your students: "How can our brain's biases impact the way we communicate with each other?" (Discuss the terms "implicit attitude," "implicit bias.")

10 minutes - Ask your students: "How can our brain's biases impact media texts we produce?" (Discuss how all media texts - no matter who produced them - reveal biases of people who created them.)

5 minutes - Wrap up.

Note:

Do not forget to acknowledge your own biases! Talk about your own experience with Edward Adelson's checkerboard illusion. Discuss how having biases does not make a person bad (because everybody has biases). Emphasize the importance of not being afraid to acknowledge our biases and subjectivity.

Lesson plan 2
Implicit Association Test
(approx. 45 minutes)

Learning Objectives:

- Discover stereotypes that we have about different social groups.
- Discuss how these stereotypes can influence our actions even if we don't agree with these perceptions.
- Reflect on how these stereotypes manifest themselves in media texts we produce.

Terms:

Stereotypes, implicit bias, social group, categorization.

Short Description:

During this lesson students will take Implicit Association Test and discuss implicit biases/stereotypes that this test reveals (alternatively, they can take the test at home and discuss its results in class). They will talk about our brain's propensity to categorize people, as well as about its advantages (fast reactions) and disadvantages (stereotypes). They will then reflect on the way implicit biases and categorization influence media texts people produce.

Lesson Procedures (length can vary):

10 minutes - Have your students take Implicit Association test (available for free at implicit.harvard.edu - click on PROJECT IMPLICIT SOCIAL ATTITUDES). If you can - set up the test before the class starts so that students have enough time to take it! If taking the test was a home assignment, ask students about their experiences with the test (were they surprised by their results?).

10 minutes - Ask your students: "What did you learn about your perceptions of different social groups?" (Discuss the terms "social groups" and "categorization").

10 minutes - Ask your students: "How may these perceptions influence stories you tell about different people?" (Discuss the terms "stereotype" and "implicit bias.")

10 minutes - Ask your students: "How may these perceptions influence media representations we produce?" (Discuss how all media texts - no matter who produced them - reveal biases of people who created them.)

5 minutes - Wrap up.

Note:

Take different versions of the test at home. Chances are, you will discover that you also have some biases. Make sure to mention that in class. Tell students that having biases is not a problem (it might be unavoidable because this is how our brains work). The problem is when we do not acknowledge our biases and do not reflect on how they can influence our perception and communication (including media texts we produce).