Adapted from “Who am I and how am I seen in the classroom?” by Janice Hart, Volker Krause & Bryant Marks, CRLT University of Michigan

Guided Self-Reflection

How am I seen in the classroom?

1. Think about what students will see when you present yourself as their instructor. What will they first notice about you? (You might consider characteristics such as age, gender, race, physical presence, class, intelligence, real world experience, language, religion, sexuality, age, ethnicity, etc.)

2. How do you identify? Does this differ from how your students might perceive you? Are you comfortable with the categories you have identified, or the categories you believe your students might use to identify you? Are there certain categories of identity you hope to avoid?
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How do I want to be seen in the classroom?

1. What strategies will you (could you) use to establish authority in the classroom? How will you align the strategies that are common to your discipline with your own teaching persona?
Establishing Authority in the Classroom: Some Advice from Instructors & Faculty

1. Establish authority in the beginning. Set the tone. Empirical data indicates that students prefer instructors who are both warm and authoritative. It is important to demonstrate that you care about their learning, and conveying a strong presence of leadership in the classroom. Lead with your professional qualifications and your expectations in the beginning of class.

2. Clarify expectations about behavior, assignments, email and advising boundaries. Tell students what topics are good for office hours, when you are available, and when you are not available. I also recommend that you clarify expectations about email – e.g., how frequently you check it, what you expect in terms of appropriate email “netiquette,” and any other expectations you have about email communication.

3. Use dress and demeanor strategically. Dressing professionally shows your students that you take your job seriously. Consider what you wear and how it will be interpreted by your students.

4. Enforce a preferred form of address. Decide how you want students to address you, and make sure they continue to do so throughout the term.

This handout is created by Sara Crider (2012) for use by CRLT at the University of Michigan. It compiles research findings from Pittman (2010), Hirshfield (2010), and Kalla & Wright (2004).
5. **Be selective and intentional about making personal disclosures about life in the classroom.** Decide when and how to talk about your life outside of your teaching persona. Sharing our personal experiences can add to the students' experiences in powerful and meaningful ways. But it is critical to think about what information to share, what risks are involved, and what it adds to your students' learning experience. Make sure that you are protecting yourself and your needs in the process.

6. **Maintain high standards for students.** Students respond to accountability. Don't let students bully you into lowering your expectations. Remember your goals for both your students and yourself.

7. **Convey confidence.** Be assertive. Use eye contact. Stand up straight. Take up space in the room. Speak loudly. Use both verbal and non-verbal cues to engage with students.

8. **Come prepared for EVERY class.** Have a Plan A, Plan B and Plan C. Think about not just what you plan to do, but why you plan to do it. What goals are accomplished? When you are prepared, you are more likely to feel confident.

9. **Reach out for support when you need it.** When something happens, find someone to talk to about it! Consider your department chair, an advisor or peer. CRLT offers confidential meetings with trained consultants – schedule an appointment anytime by emailing crlt@umich.edu

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CASE STUDIES

Case A

Instructions: Read the scenario below, then work with a partner to offer advice on the best response to this scenario.

Instructor Profile: Latina female, pregnant, late 30s (Janel)
Class: Women’s Studies 324 - Childbirth and Culture

Scenario: It is the last week in September and your colleague, Janel, is complaining about her teaching experience. In addition to being exhausted by the work load, she is frustrated by student behavior and poor performance. Despite her best efforts, Janel’s students have made disparaging comments about society’s treatment of mothers and one of her sections had a C average on the first two quizzes. After class one day, Janel overheard a group of male students whispering that she was too “close” to the subject matter of the course to grade objectively.

Janel’s problem is two-fold. She believes that her students are challenging her authority because she is a woman from a marginalized racial group. Although Janel thought that her own pregnancy would be read as a source of credibility, she now fears that she has shared too much personal information so that her students struggle to take her seriously. What should she do next?

Step 1: What stands out to you in this case study? What do you notice about the instructor-student interaction?

Step 2: In regards to issues of authority and credibility, what specific issues, or problems are present? What strategies does the instructor use to address them?

Step 3: Imagine that Janel has come to you and your partner in search of advice on what her next step should be. Jot down a few notes about how you would respond to Janel. You might think about the following questions to guide your response:

What factors are within Janel’s control? What factors are out of her control? What are some proactive steps that Janel could have taken at the beginning of the semester? What strategies could Janel use to bolster her credibility and assert her authority?
CASE STUDIES

Case B

Instructions: Read the scenario below, then work with a partner to offer advice on the best response to this scenario.

Instructor Profile: African American male, early 20s, women’s health activist (Denzel)
Class: Women’s Studies 324 - Childbirth and Culture

Scenario: It is the last week in September and your colleague, Denzel, is complaining about his teaching experience. In addition to being exhausted by the work load, he is frustrated by student behavior and poor performance. Despite his best efforts Denzel’s students have made disparaging comments about society’s treatment of mothers and one of his sections had a C average on the first two quizzes. After class one day, Denzel overheard a group of male students whispering that he was too “close” to the subject matter of the course to grade objectively.

Denzel’s problem is two-fold. He believes that his students are challenging his authority because he is a man from a marginalized racial group. Although Denzel thought that his activism would be read as a source of credibility, he now fears that he has shared too much personal information so that his students struggle to take him seriously. What should he do next?

Step 1: What stands out to you in this case study? What do you notice about the instructor-student interaction?

Step 2: In regards to issues of authority and credibility, what specific issues, or problems are present? What strategies does the instructor use to address them?

Step 3: Imagine that Janel has come to you and your partner in search of advice on what her next step should be. Jot down a few notes about how you would respond to Janel. You might think about the following questions to guide your response:

What factors are within Janel’s control? What factors are out of her control? What are some proactive steps that Janel could have taken at the beginning of the semester? What strategies could Janel use to bolster her credibility and assert her authority?
CASE STUDIES

Case C

Instructions: Read the scenario below, then work with a partner to offer advice on the best response to this scenario.

Instructor Profile: White male, mid 20s, new father, psoriatic arthritis patient* (Mike)
Class: Women’s Studies 324 - Childbirth and Culture
(*Psoriatic arthritis is a chronic disease that has severe, but often invisible, symptoms. Symptoms include joint pain, stiffness, swelling, foot pain, and lower back pain.)

Scenario: It is the last week in September and your colleague, Mike, is complaining about his teaching experience. In addition to being exhausted by the work load, he is frustrated by student behavior and poor performance. Despite his best efforts Mike’s students have made disparaging comments about society’s treatment of mothers and one of his sections had a C average on the first two quizzes. After class one day, Mike overheard a group of male students whispering that he was too “close” to the subject matter of the course to grade objectively.

Mike’s problem is two-fold. He believes that his students are challenging his authority because he is only a couple of years older than most of them. Although Mike thought that the recent birth of his own child would be read as a source of credibility, he now fears that he has shared too much personal information so that his students struggle to take him seriously. What should he do next?

Step 1: What stands out to you in this case study? What do you notice about the instructor-student interaction?

Step 2: In regards to issues of authority and credibility, what specific issues, or problems are present? What strategies does the instructor use to address them?

Step 3: Imagine that Janel has come to you and your partner in search of advice on what her next step should be. Jot down a few notes about how you would respond to Janel. You might think about the following questions to guide your response:

What factors are within Janel’s control? What factors are out of her control? What are some proactive steps that Janel could have taken at the beginning of the semester? What strategies could Janel use to bolster her credibility and assert her authority?