

**Inclusive Learning:
Studying Race at WCSU**

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...and more!

The Handout

March [2021]



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1 Inclusive Learning: Studying Race at WCSU

Lizzie Hinds, Litchfield ARM



To many, February is about hearts, candy, and crushes, but one cannot overlook the importance of February as Black History Month. The United States takes the month as an opportunity to celebrate, honor, and respect the men and women of color that have shaped the past. Black History Month serves not only as a month of acknowledgement, but also as a month of learning. For students at Western Connecticut State University, there are several opportunities to extend Black History Month from the twenty-eight days of February to the duration of a semester, or more.

Why should I study African American culture, black culture, and/or race?

Whether studying American history or

contemporary culture, learning about race is of great importance. The United States has an extensive background and historical record relating to it, and as the living future of the country, many students find it essential to understand this background. In politics, one might inquire about laws or lawmakers as they relate to black history. In social work, one might inquire about the impact faced by the black population. In science and art, one might inquire about the influence of African American culture on the vast periods of history and advancement. Whether it be understanding Dr. Patricia Bath's medical advancements in ophthalmology or Barack Obama's terms as the first president of color, there is information to be obtained in every core aspect of education.

At the core of this learning is inclusivity and equality. Western stands for both of these, and incorporating these crucial subjects in classes exemplifies the university's dynamic of inclusive learning. Students have several opportunities inside and outside of the classroom to expand upon their knowledge.

How can I learn about Race and Black History at Western?

Western Connecticut State University offers multiple courses to students in various departments centered on these subjects, spanning from the Sociology department to African American Study specific courses. These courses include, but are not limited to:

- SOC 101 Social Problems
- SOC 200 Concepts of Race and Racism
- SOC/ANT/AAS 212 Peoples & Cultures of Africa
- AAS/NWC 109 Equatorial African Cultures
- AAS/NWC 113 Southern African Cultures

In addition to these courses, the following are also offered periodically:

- AAS/HIS 219 African-American History and Culture
- AAS/GEO 251 Africa: A Regional Study
- AAS/HIS 284 Africa: From Antiquity to Colonialism
- AAS/HIS 285 Modern Africa
- AAS 350 Topics in African-American Studies

These courses specialize in the study of race and African American culture, but

inclusive learning does not end there. Departments including Anthropology and Political Science also touch on these subjects in various courses. History classes offer insight into the Civil Rights Movement and the contemporary, ongoing movements within the United States. What does this mean? Even outside of courses specific to this inclusive learning, inclusive learning occurs.

Outside of the classroom, inclusive learning is all around us. Not only does Western have an incredible Black Students Union that hosts popular events like Paint & Sips, but both campuses are filled with the voices of students who can educate by example alone. In total, there are courses, clubs, and classmates that make Western apt for inclusive learning year-round. As extra consideration is taken in the one month each year, students are continually reminded that their consideration can become part of their daily lives.

What else should I know?

Race, racism, and culture can all be difficult topics to discuss. As students endeavor to dig into these subjects, it is important to know that education is not just facts. It is conversation, it is language, it is experiences. As social media floods students' phones with bold headlines, varying opinions, and countless sources, there is an underlying truth central to our population. Western stands for respect, inclusivity, equality, and education. Whether in the classroom of an anthropology professor, an art professor, or a sociology professor, that remains unchanged. So, let the inclusive learning continue into this month, and the next, and for many more to come.

2

Saint Patrick's Day

Caitlyn Archambault, Centennial ARM



St. Patrick's Day – the holiday we all know and love. It doesn't matter if you are of Irish descent or not, but we all have put on our green shirts to enjoy the parades, the food, and the crazy amount of drinking many people do. St. Patrick's Day is one of the biggest celebrations for my family. We are of Irish descent and for me, it was the one day of the year my grandmother was the proudest. She woke up early and started cooking – the potatoes, the cabbage, the corned beef, and the rolls. Honestly, the best dinner we have all year. Also, DO NOT forget to wear green.

Well, now that you know a little more about me and my family's traditions, where did these come from? As far as we know they have been passed down through the centuries, but is this true? Well, no need to worry and wonder anymore, because I did the work for you!

St. Patrick, aka Maewyn Succat, Patricius, Magonus, Succets, or Cothirthiacus; was born in Banna Venta Berniae, in Roman Britain, around the late 300s AD. He was the son of a deacon in the early Christian church. At the age of 16 he was captured by the Irish and was enslaved in the

faith to Ireland. (Although like most missionaries, he was not accepted by the people of Ireland). He was forced to move to a small island, where he started to convert the people, eventually spreading his ministry to form over 300 churches, and he became known as St. Patrick.

Originally, St. Patrick was a religious shepherd for 6 years. During these 6 years was when he finally found his faith in God. After escaping, getting captured by the French and released again, he continued on his journey of faith. In his late 20s he claimed he had a vision from God that he was to return to Ireland. The people of Ireland would go to church in the morning, to celebrate the works of St. Patrick and hold small feasts in the afternoon, consisting of ham and cabbage. For centuries, drinking was not allowed on St. Patrick's Day, due to the fact that it was a holy day.

So where exactly did all of our traditions come from? Well, they are all American made. Some sources will say that the first parades were in Boston or New York, but the first known parade on St. Patrick's Day in America was in what's now St. Augustine, Florida. Although at the time

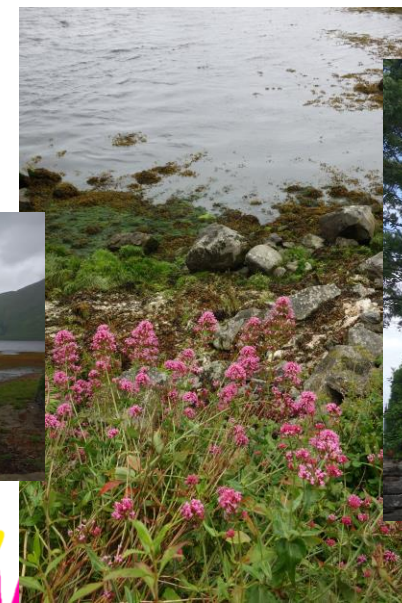
a Spanish dominated city, it is likely that they celebrated because they had an Irish priest. The parades that started in Boston and New York were due to homesick soldiers fighting for the British. They marched their way through the cities and to the local pubs for small feasts. After the potato famine of 1845, when Irish Catholics flooded America, the parades continued to show strength of numbers, and these people assimilated to the Irish American traditions of St. Patrick's Day. Even our traditions of corned beef and cabbage are American made, as it was cheaper for corned beef than ham. Women in lower Manhattan would go down to the port after ships returned from the tea trade in China hoping to buy the left-over salted beef that they could get for a penny a pound.

The only icon of St. Patrick's Day that we have kept up to current time is the shamrock. St. Patrick used it to teach the holy trinity to the people of Ireland, since they already used powers of three and the shamrocks had three leaves themselves. The tradition of wearing green came after the Irish Rebellion in 1798; before then, the color associated with St. Patrick was blue.

Our Modern Irish American Traditions are currently celebrated exactly as we do all over the world today. When did they change? Ireland adopted our traditions after the invention of the television, and they could see all the fun the Americans were having. In 1996, Ireland started their multiday St. Patrick's Day festival.

Although all our traditions do not have the same origin of the original festivities of St. Patrick's Day, I am still proud to know where all our traditions originated. I love the traditions we do have. Enjoy your festivities, stay safe. Erin go Bragh.

- <https://www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day/history-of-st-patricks-day>
- <https://www.history.com/news/st-patricks-day-origins-america>
- <https://lifehacker.com/the-real-history-of-st-patrick-s-day-1793354674#:~:text=St.%20Paddy%E2%80%99s%20Day%20started%20as%20a%20religious%20celebration,was%20believed%20to%20be%20March%2017,%20461%20AD.>



3 Plan a Productive Summer

Tamia Scott, Grasso ARM



School can be fairly stressful, so having time to relax and focus on yourself is great. However, you shouldn't want summer to pass you by. Having a few ideas for when the warm weather gets here would be optimal. I have made a list of things that I think some of you would enjoy. Whether you do any of these is entirely up to you. You can also just try to enjoy the feeling of taking a break.

- 1. Learn a new language.** Learning a new language is something that we all say that we want to do, however, it is something we never actually take the time out for. Summers are a great time to follow your heart and do things that you have long been dreaming of. Whether the language you want to learn is French, Spanish, German, Chinese or even Greek, stop thinking about it and just get down to it. You can learn it online or download the Duolingo app.
- 2. Try to get fit through exercise and a healthy diet.** Most people use summers to work out and get fit. In this day and age, no one can afford to be unhealthy or they will certainly not be able to make it through the day without feeling too drained. Initially, some people might find exercising very tough on their body. However, over time they will know that it helps. In addition to this, you could also use the time to implement a new healthy diet which could help you have a healthy body and a happy life.
- 3. Give back to your community.** Instead of focusing on yourself this summer, it would mean so much more when you go a step further to be generous with your time and energy when it comes to helping others who have no one. There are so many people in our very own community who could be struggling with so many kinds of problems but have no shoulder to cry on. In your little way, you could be that person who does his or her little bit to help those who are less fortunate than you.
- 4. Take up a project.** Taking up a project of any kind could give you some purpose so that you end up doing some productive activities with your time. The project could be building a treehouse, painting a portrait, or even setting up a vlog. Doing things like this could help you find your talents, and you never know you might find your career field in this way!
- 5. Go on a vacation.** Going on vacation is great to get away and de-stress yourself during the summer. Instead of being cooped up in your house, you could go on vacation alone or with your entire family. Travelling is indeed an enriching experience and the thrill of trying out a new dish or encountering breathtaking scenery is indeed priceless. In addition to learning a lot of new things about various cultures, you will also be able to spend quality time with loved ones.

- 6. Get to know your own city.** If you prefer not to take a vacation you could spend your time getting to know your city better. While working or schooling, you might never have the time to go and explore the neighborhood in which you reside. You might look at a lot of things on your way to and from work; however, you do not usually see them. The best way to explore a place is walking or, you could always use public means of transport or even your car!
- 7. Use this time to get to know yourself better.** The summer break is a great time to get in touch with your inner self and get to know yourself a little better. During school time or even during workdays you might not get the time to spend quiet moments engrossed in your own thoughts. However, during summer, instead of being caught up in a whirlwind of the activity or even spending countless hours in front of the television or computer, the most productive thing to do would be finding yourself.
- 8. Take up a summer internship.** One of the most productive ways to spend your summer would surely be taking up an internship with some reputed company. No matter how little the pay is, or even if you work for free, you should take it up just for the mere experience of it. This is how most people find out where their passions are. Even though we might be interested in something, we might not necessarily have the aptitude for it. Doing an internship lets you know where your strengths truly lie.
- 9. Think about your future goals.** Living in the present and making the most of it is important, yet at the same time it is wise to think ahead in terms of your plans and goals. It is not that you ought to have your full life chalked out before you because it is never possible to know what life might throw at you. Still, you might want to spend some of your time thinking about which direction you would like to head out to in the future and what are the options open for you.



4

From the Pandemic and Beyond...

Sam Cross, Newbury ARM



How do you plan on sticking to your newly found routines and hobbies after the pandemic is over?

Since we have all been in lockdown for a full year now, some of us were lucky enough to pick up some new hobbies! Some of us got to really hone in on a few skills, and some of us breezed through Netflix and Hulu’s new TV shows and movies. Our work and school schedules are still quite flexible as the vaccines are rolling out in Connecticut. Once the pandemic is over though, are you going to revert to your old ways?

Say, for example, you were a person who used to eat out a lot in the time before Covid. During quarantine, you learned how to cook homemade meals and really focused on different flavor palates and how they fit in together. Once the restrictions are lifted, are you going to start going out for food again? It is important to stick to the new habits and ways of life which you picked up during quarantine that help to better your physical and mental health once we can resume social gatherings.

Forming habits is a lot easier than we would originally expect. For example, the way you make your coffee or tea in the morning is a habit. You know exactly how much sugar or cream you want and how to operate the coffeemaker of your choice. Driving a car is also habit memory. We know we have to unlock the doors, put the keys in the ignition, turn the keys, and which pedal to use when we need to stop or when we need to drive. However, habit memory can be very stubborn to modify because it is resistant to change.

Habits are a part of a learning system, so you need to allow your brain some time before it can start to commit to something and that act starts to feel automatic. Psychologist Wendy Wood says, “...There's not a single number of repetitions that you have to do in order to form a habit. That said, there are data suggesting that a simple healthy behavior like taking a walk after dinner or eating fruit with your lunch – that those kinds of simple behaviors can take maybe two months, three months to start to become a habit in the sense that they start to feel automatic (Wood, 2021).”

This information may be discouraging, but it’s important to remember that the hardest goals we set for ourselves are often the most important ones. It is important to take care of our health from the inside during this pandemic, too, because when cortisol (the stress hormone) enters your blood stream, immune and digestion functions stop so the body can focus on bringing the stress response system and body back to homeostasis. Putting down your phone and running outside, sitting down to meditate, strapping on your skates, or pushing your skateboard around is going to do you a world of good, just like wearing your mask and washing your hands. The things you’ve picked up during quarantine are obviously giving you a release in some form, so it’s important to stick to them even when your schedule fills back up with concerts, meetings, business trips, classes, and tests.

Wood, W. (2021, January). *Speaking of Psychology: How the science of habits can help us keep our New Year’s resolutions, with Wendy Wood, PhD.* American Psychological Association.
<https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/behavioral-habits>



What Time is Your Best Time?

Sara Slaiby, Centennial ARM



In college, it is a fair assumption to make that every college student runs on their own set schedule. Whether you choose to have morning classes, afternoon or even night classes, can be dependent on what time of day you are most productive. If you participate in clubs, sports, or other extracurricular activities, this may also impact what time of day you are most productive.

If you are unsure of how to identify your most productive time of day, I challenge you to take a look at your typical daily routine. When looking at the activities that you perform every day, you may be able to categorize the activities into one of three categories. The first category would be your highest priority tasks, these tasks are the ones that you are sure to do every day and look forward to doing. Some examples of high priority tasks may be going to the gym, going out to eat, seeing your friends, etc. The

second category would be your moderate tasks, or the tasks that you need to do every day, which may or may not be a burden some days. Examples of moderate tasks may be doing homework, going to work, etc. Finally, the third and most dreaded category would be your low priority tasks. Low priority tasks are different things that you may dread doing, procrastinate, or put off all together. They are the type of tasks that you find yourself avoiding.

Once you have prioritized all of your daily routine tasks, see if there is a pattern regarding when you schedule each category's tasks throughout the day. If you find a trend of high priority tasks early in the morning, you can assume that you are most productive in early mornings; vice versa with any other time of day.

Do your **most important work** when you are **most productive**



If you are unable to see a common trend, and you frequently perform different activities of varying categories throughout each day, then I encourage you to keep a journal or record throughout your day. When you are feeling most energized, or complete an important task, jot it down in your journal. After one month of utilizing your journal, take a look at the times when you felt extra energized or completed important tasks. If there is a central theme, you can assume that specific time range is your most

productive time of day.

With the knowledge of your own individualized productive time of day, I invite you to utilize this time to your full advantage. If you have an important assignment due, or important goal that needs to be met, schedule said task in that time frame, or set up said meeting during your productive hours. In doing so, you will enhance the outcome of the task, and utilize your productivity to its fullest potential.



Save Money and Support the Community

Gabby Christofor, Pinney ARM



Thrift shopping has become increasingly popular throughout the last decade. Ever since the single “Thrift Shop” went viral, some people started thrifting shopping as a “trendy” thing to do. However, once people started, many of them discovered they loved it.

It was easy to attribute the thought of thrift stores with the most popular store: Goodwill. However, there are countless thrift shops around the state, and especially in the Danbury area. I will discuss the benefits of second-hand shopping while giving you suggestions of where to shop in the Danbury area based

on who/what that particular store supports.

Let’s start with the basics: second-hand shopping. Environmentally-friendly options have grown to be popular around the U.S., starting with metal straws and the slogan, “save the turtles!” Any step in the direction of environmental consciousness is a step in the right direction, but there is much more we can do as a nation to ensure that we take care of Mother Earth. If you want an easy way to save money while decreasing your environmental footprint, thrift shopping is the way for you.

Fast fashion is not only bad for the environment, but it involves exploiting workers that are usually overseas. They work all day in awful conditions while making clothing from cheap supplies and hardly receiving any pay. Not only is fast fashion an environmental issue, it is a human rights issue. Doing research into the harms of fast fashion is extremely eye-opening and you will never want to step foot in a store like Forever 21 again. To give you some other options, I will list some options near or in Danbury and what each organization supports.

The obvious option for thrift shopping is Goodwill. Goodwill is all around CT, but the closest are in Danbury and Brookfield. After reading Goodwill’s Impact Report for 2019, they stated that they saved 26.3 million pounds of material from going into landfills by reselling them or recycling the fabrics. In 2019, Goodwill also invested \$37,347,924 back into communities through financial assistance programs and contracts.

My favorite off-campus find is called Ridgefield Thrift Shop. Their schedule is a little inconvenient because they are only open Wednesdays and Saturdays 12-4pm. The reason they have such limited hours is because their staff consists of only local volunteers. That’s not even the best part. The greatest thing is that all the revenue made on those two days goes directly to charity. From the money they made last year in 2020, they were able to donate \$750,000 as grants to 92 local non-profits. They also award scholarships to high schoolers in the community of \$3,000 each.



Continued on next page

Not only is fast fashion an environmental issue, it is a human rights issue. Doing research into the harms of fast fashion is extremely eye-opening and you will never want to step foot in a [mall] store again.

On route from Midtown to Westside or vice versa, you may have passed the First Congregational Church that has a thrift shop in the back. They are open on the weekends and are staffed by volunteers as well. They have volunteers that speak multiple languages, so all are welcome. Their goal is to bring affordable fashion and collectors' items to the Danbury community.

Some other shops to check out around Danbury include thrift shops and consignment stores such as Savers, the Salvation Army, Deer Hill Thrift Shop, Plato's Closet, the Hunt, Bring n' Buy, and Warehouse Thrift. If you're interested in others, simply google, "thrift shops near me," and have fun trying them out. Don't forget to also check out estate sales. They are less common and sometimes take seeking out, but they will showcase the most unique items for a cheap price.

Saving the environment, supporting worker's rights, and saving money has never been as easy as it is now with thrift shopping. Making this small change can make a huge difference, and engaging in the process is so fun, too! Happy exploring!

Links used to find info on local stores:

<https://discovergoodwill.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2019-By-the-numbers-Impact-AM5-11-5-2020.pdf>

<https://serc.berkeley.edu/why-thrifting-is-good-for-the-planet-not-just-your-wallet/>

<https://www.ridgefieldthriftshop.com/scholarships>

<http://www.danburychurch.org/content/thrift-shop-outreach-program>



The No-Brainer Guide to Asking for Help

Audrey Redpath, Pinney ARM



I am a big proponent of asking for help, particularly while you're in college and in a constant state of learning and making mistakes. But that doesn't mean you should be asking for help aimlessly! You should always be putting in the work before you reach out for someone to help you, and you should be prepared to explain your issue beyond the typical "I just don't understand," or "I can't figure it out." In the business world, some highly productive people swear by what they call the **15 minute rule**.

Here it is in brief: when you're struggling and at the edge of giving up, force yourself to try for 15 more minutes. Notice what you're struggling on during those 15 minutes of studying, writing, or practice testing and take notes on what you don't understand or can't figure it out. The constraint helps you give it your all, because you know that after that 15 minute period passes you're free, and being mindful allows you to notice things about the way you're working you might not have otherwise noticed. Armed with that information, you'll be able to explain your situation to your professor or a mentor in a way that helps them help you.

After that, contact your professor, a tutor, one of your ARMs, or someone else in your class you trust. Then you can explain the wall you're hitting in detail, giving your mentor the best chance to guide you through what you don't understand. You can use the template to the right for a self reflection to bring to your professor or mentor meetings.

I want to encourage you to reach out to your professors for help and guidance like this throughout the semester, even if you aren't close with them. Sometimes a single, productive conversation with a professor during office hours can be the perfect setup for you to correct a

15 Minute Rule Review

Topic: Describe in quick detail the subject or project you were working on when you hit a wall.

Problem: Break down where you started struggling and, to the best of your ability, describe what is stopping you from progressing or feeling confident in your understanding.

Misc. Notes: Include anything relevant that should be noted, like: related concepts you **DO** understand, terms you need clarification on, or observations that stand out to you while you attempted to study, solve, or write.

misunderstanding, focus on something specific in your studying, and succeed at a test or a project. Just like the tutoring centers on campus, it's your choice to utilize what's available to you while you're making it through your classes. You're paying for all these resources with your tuition and fees, and you can take advantage of them to improve your grades and understanding.



There's some excitement in the air in HRL this spring!

Returning students – there's only a few days left to pay your housing deposit for the fall. (Due date: March 20th)

After your deposit has been paid (at least 12 hours after), go to www.wcsu.edu/housing/forms-2/ and find the **WCSU Housing Portal** (top left corner). Select the button, and you will find your application and can fill it out along with your contract on our new system.

Once your application is completed and submitted, look again on the **Housing Portal** for the Roommate Selection tab on the left. You can request your roommates there – but ONLY if they've also paid their deposit and completed their application.

All this is due by March 21st in order to be able to select your room during the week of March 29th!

Just a reminder that the

Housing & Residence Life Offices

are now in Pinney Hall, suites C21 and C24.

Our phone numbers are the same, but you'll need to come to the Westside to see us!



Want to know more about campus resources and other advice to improve your academic life? You can check it all out on Gab & GROW, a podcast you can find here:

www.wcsu.edu/houaing/gab-grow/



About *The Handout*

The Handout is a product of the Department of Housing & Residence Life at Western Connecticut State University. There are 6 editions each year, 3 in the fall semester and 3 in the spring semester.

The ideas for and execution of the articles are the work of the Academic Resource Mentors, or ARMs, who provide academic coaching and resource referral to all members of the WCSU residence community.