

Humanities & Social Sciences Case Study: “Of Course I Have Favorites”

Step 1: Read your assigned case:

- HUMANITIES odd numbered groups: “Of Course I Have Favorites”
- HUMANITIES even numbered groups: “Whose Idea Is It, Really?”

Step 2: Discuss your case.

Step 3: Be ready to share one key insight of your own.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a framework for creating psychological safety.
- Clarify roles as teacher and role model in education mentees about ethics.
- Manage the power dynamic inherent in the mentoring relationship.
- Articulate ethical issues that need to be discussed with mentees.

CASE NARRATIVE:

You have a Teaching Assistant, Glenn. A group of undergraduate students just met with you, worried that they’re going to fail the class. After listening to them and meeting with other students, you are forced to conclude that Glenn is focusing attention on more dedicated students by calling on them, praising their ideas, and how assignments are graded.

When you meet with Glenn to discuss what’s happening, Glenn says, “Of course I focus on them. When I was an undergraduate student, that’s how our faculty treated us and when I look at faculty here, I see them doing the same thing. Some students understand the ideas in this class. It’s not my fault others just aren’t smart enough or engaged as they should be. In fact, they’ll be better off if I give them a bad grade because then they can go off and find a better major.”

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What courses of action are possible? Which ones are preferable? Why?
- What, if anything, could have been done to prevent the situation?
- How can a mentor’s reaction to unexpected news motivate or influence a mentee to make good or bad ethical choices?