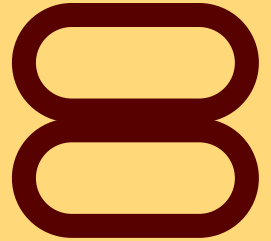
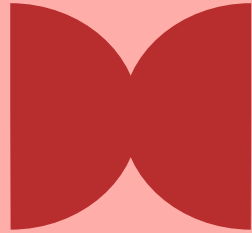


# Breaking Out of the Culture Box: An Exploration of Critical Approaches to Language Teaching for the Unsure and Hesitant



Presented by Carol Jenkins and Katherine Kerschen

AATG DEI Committee Workshop

October 1, 2026

# Introductions



**Dr. Katherine Kerschen**

Lecturer in German  
WashU

PhD in German Applied  
Linguistics and Language  
Science from the  
Pennsylvania State  
University



**Dr. Carol Jenkins**

Lecturer in German  
WashU

PhD in Germanic Languages  
and Literatures from  
Washington University in St.  
Louis

# Opening question:

What is one thing you're dissatisfied with in your current materials/textbook regarding culture and/or inclusivity?

*Hard to stay in target language and talk about culture in the beginning levels*

*Textbooks tend to generalize*

*Textbooks that try to do better on adversity sometimes throw in too many voices with no sense of how to sort them out*

*Low diversity among students enrolled in German (compared to French and Spanish)*

# Outline

1

Overview of Guidebook

The background of its creation  
and our goals for its use

2

Experience with critical  
pedagogies

Padlet: gathering information  
about previous experiences

3

Sample lesson plan

Walk-through of a lesson plan  
from a textbook that was  
re-worked using a Social  
Justice Lesson Plan template

4

Tweaking existing  
materials

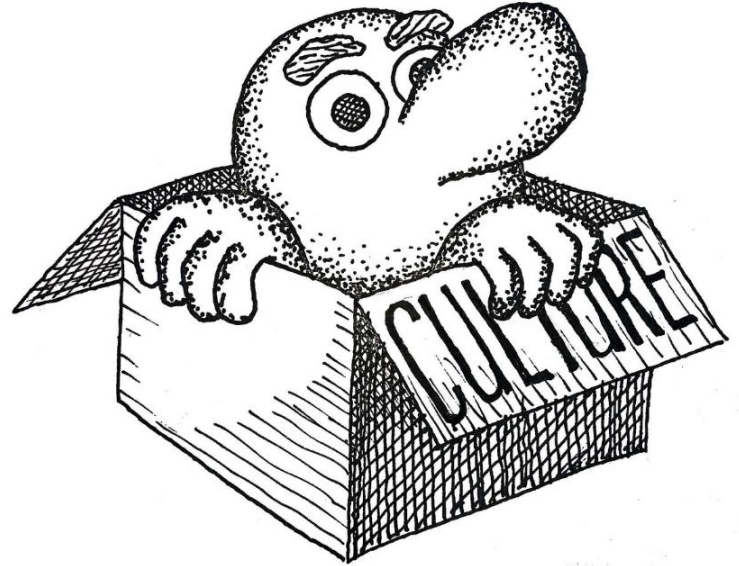
Breakout rooms: brainstorming  
small changes to make to  
existing lessons

# Background

Why did we create this guidebook?

<https://wustl.pressbooks.pub/breakingculturebox>

(see “Our Starting Point”)



Artwork credit: Doug Lillesve

# Experiences with critical pedagogies



[https://padlet.com/kkerschen/critical\\_pedagogies](https://padlet.com/kkerschen/critical_pedagogies)

What are your experiences with critical pedagogies? Have you tried any before? If not, what has prevented you?

*Knowledge, experience, and time are limiting factors*

*I'm a first-year teacher and not familiar with critical pedagogies yet*

*At the middle school level it's hard to get below the surface*

*I've participated in a workshop and developed materials that way*

*Try to advance critical language awareness through asking how language is used and encouraging self-reflection*

# The Guidebook

## Breaking Out of the Culture Box

An Exploration of Critical Approaches to Language Teaching for the Unsure and Hesitant

by Katherine Kerschen and Carol Jenkins

This short guidebook introduces the reader to critical pedagogy in foreign language education as a logical extension of the liberal arts' core mission to encourage the analysis of (social) problems in order to arrive at just solutions. We present six common approaches, noting any possible difficulties of implementation, and demonstrate how a sample lesson plan would change from one approach to another. In addition we discuss the challenges of addressing exclusionary culture at the curricular level, as well as highlighting the feasibility and necessity of doing so.

 Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial

### Acknowledgements

#### I. Introduction

+

#### II. Our Starting Point

+

#### III. Desired Outcomes

Small changes are worth doing.

#### IV. Introduction to Critical Pedagogies

+

#### V. Examples of Exclusionary Culture

#### VI. How to Address Exclusion in Your Teaching

+

#### VII. Summary and Conclusion

### Resources

### Bibliography

#### The take-away:

The overarching goal of critical pedagogies is to develop a mindset of **criticality** in your students and yourself. And this can be achieved incrementally.



# Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson on Jewish life in Vienna

Part of a unit on Vienna (*Impuls Deutsch 1*)

Re-worked with a social justice focus during a workshop at CARLA (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition)

## **Lesson Plan**

<https://wustl.pressbooks.pub/breakingculturebox/chapter/lesson-planning/>

## **CARLA Social Justice Planning Template**

<https://carla.umn.edu/socialjustice/templates>



# Tweaking existing materials

What adjustments could you make to an existing lesson to bring in elements of critical pedagogy?

## Inclusive Pedagogy

### Student self-assessment of participation

- Students set personal goals for participation and engagement
- Evaluate themselves at mid-term and end-of-semester based on their personal criteria



## Literacy-Based Pedagogy

### "Gedicht am Freitag"

- Short poem every Friday in German 1010
- Identify known words
- Discuss topic and tone



Tweaking existing materials

# Time for breakout rooms!



# What ideas did you generate in your breakout rooms?

10

MINS

Find a resource you can rely on (suggestion: KIKA) and keep returning to that. No need for a new resource every time

Local (to Germany/Austria/Switzerland) non-profits and initiatives can provide decentering materials and resources

<https://colonial-local.ch/schokolade/>

<https://www.berlin-postkolonial.de/en/>

Thank you!

