Ways of categorizing “difference”:

- Ethnicity/culture
- Religion or belief system
- Learning style
- "Home language"/dialect
- Mental health
- Family background
- Race
- Subculture
- Hygiene
- Personal history
- Social class
- Age
- Biological sex
- Sexual orientation
- Physical size/body type
- Rural, suburban, urban
- Gender
- Physical health
- Personality type
- Other
- National ability
- Physical ability
- Psychological ability
- National origin
- Region
- Educational preparation
- Native language
- Political affiliation
- Social development
- Physical appearance
- Talents

Some opening questions:

1. What categories of difference have caused you concern or difficulty in your experiences with students?
2. How are you different as a TA, and which of your own “differences” do you think makes an impact on your students?
3. Choose one or two of the above categories and comment on what you’ve noticed about students’ reading, writing, speaking, listening, or other learning skills, when they are in situations where they do not belong to the “mainstream or “majority” of those categories.

Please write about one important concept that you have to make sure your students understand, and write it in a way that you think all of your students would easily comprehend:

Sample concept—types of argumentation and ethical techniques:

Edward Corbett’s *Elements of Reasoning* identifies four common types of argument: definition, cause/effect, evaluation, and proposal. Effective argumentative techniques include: Socratic dialogue, induction (which predicts), deduction (which draws conclusions from facts and evidence), and analogy. Ethical arguments should avoid: hasty generalizations, unrepresentative sampling, faulty comparisons, non sequitur, equivocations, post hoc ergo prompter hoc, falsely honorific or pejorative terms, and shifting criteria.

An assignment in argumentative analysis (the concept of argumentation & techniques is a part of the assignment) :

Listen to conversations, watch TV, listen to a radio program, or look through a newspaper to find one argument that you believe is effective and honest. Then look for another that you believe is ineffective, flawed, or maybe even unethical. (1) Write a summary of the two arguments. (2) Explain which type each argument seems to be (definition, cause/effect, evaluation, proposal). (3) Give specific reasons why you think one argument is ethical, while the other is not. (4) Suggest ways in which each argument is effective and/or might have been presented more effectively.

Your draft should be about 2½-3 typewritten pages (or 500-675 words). You will be reading your draft to a small group of your classmates, who will comment on your draft’s strengths and weaknesses and suggest revisions to help you satisfy the 4 criteria above.
Student's Response: "Two Sides of a Coin"

Persuasion is the ever thirsty leech that sucks blood of human foolishness. Somehow we evolved into prospective fools, destroying our bodies with drugs and alcohol. And we die like fools afraid of what we cannot sense. And those among us who are evil stand on rooftops of bazaars and encourage us to remain half-wits.

Look at me my children. You can see me think. I must exist. I’m flesh and bone and spirit. And when I die I will seize to exist. Fear not hereafter. Live life now. For tomorrow you will die like fools.

And the man with his hanging beard and flowing robes hands down the fire stick and says

Look children, point the stick, release the soul and let loose the days of evil. Fear not death for today it is what we fight and die for.

And I like a fool stood by and agreed with words I thought good. Not realizing I was selling my soul to a man who had already given his to the devil. And all the time the wolf was screaming laughter at my face, he said,

Come with me children. Let us today kill for religion. Let the children run explosives tied to their chests to detonate beneath the tank.

Or better still, let them walk ahead to give the enemy marksman a chance to waist ammunition or to blow up any mine that lies in our way.

And when the battle was over, there were only the dead left. The blood like a dirty ink written on a clean sheet of paper, wanting to be removed. All that remained was the memory and all that stayed was the nightmare to follow. And yet we did not learn, we wasted our tears and swore to revenge the blood with even more the next day.

And what did I fight for, I asked God. It could not have been religion. For religion makes us human, doesn’t it?

No! cried the devil. Let me answer you. After all it was I all along. You fought for land to human adversary. You fought for a new world under my world order.

Yesterday I asked a friend of mine that he suppose one day he got married and in a few years had a child.

I asked him to imagine a child just torn from a womb, unprotected, fragile from a place as unknown to us as afterlife. If their I was to appear before you and ask for your child in exchange of anything and everything he desired would he agree.

He replied no, and yet I said we do it everyday of our lives. Placing value over human life. Today it is worth the price of oil, tomorrow it could be anything. The beauty of human life is its pricelessness and no amount of persuasion should change that.

(476 words)

Some Questions:

1. How do you think the above assignment is helpful to and inclusive of all students?
2. What problems might students who are “different” have reading and understanding the assignment?
3. What do you speculate is different about the student who wrote “Two Sides of a Coin”?
4. How did the student succeed in meeting the instructions to the assignment? Where did the student not succeed?
5. What suggestions would you give, to help the student revise?

Wrap-up:

What did you learn from this workshop that you can use in your work as a TA and in any future teaching roles you play?