

Cara Marta Messina

Diversity Statement

Diversity is not just the inclusion of diverse bodies. To be diverse means a paradigm shift in knowledge hierarchy, recognizing diverse knowledges as important and making accessible impenetrable, tacit knowledges. My research, teaching, service, and administrative approaches are based on the interconnection of justice, feminism and access.

My teaching prioritizes empowering learners to become critical consumers and composers and empower themselves to transform their communities, professions, and cultures towards justice. I incorporate *critical digital* pedagogy; I apply critical perspectives found in the traditions of Paulo Freire and Black feminists such as bell hooks to digital environments and data by having learners engage with the political, social, and cultural implications at every level of the technological stack and digital composing practices. Through my pedagogy, learners develop their research practices, become more aware of genres and rhetorical practices, and learn applicable professional skills including programming and data collection. I provide students with specific tools they need – like understanding genre conventions and ideologies, developing genre and audience awareness, navigating digital constraints and affordances, and learning and practicing research methods – to transform their cultures.

This pedagogy extends past my classroom, as I integrate it in my research. My dissertation centers fan writers who explicitly address and critique systemic issues of representations of race, gender, and sexuality in the media they love. These fans explore identity performance and representation through their writing, as they write about the struggles and joys of under-represented, non-normative, or counter-normative identities. The perspectives of critical fans, or fans who actively critique systems of oppression such as racism or heteronormativity, are central to my work. I emphasize the importance of speaking and collaborating *with* fans and community members, providing resources for them to either learn or continue their advocacy journeys. For instance, I provide extensive documentation about the process of creating a digital dissertation and analyzing data using Python. Because this dissertation is public, I aim to make these findings and practices accessible for fans, researchers, and teachers. My digital dissertation emphasizes the importance of knowledge access and reimagines the types of knowledges we value.

My investment in access and providing methods for others to speak back also carries across other areas of my scholarship. I am currently co-editing a special issue in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, the leading open-access Digital Humanities journal, on Black Digital Humanities for rising scholars. My co-editors and I aim to carve out disciplinary space for Black scholars and scholars who center Black studies in DH. I have also worked on multiple projects, such as the Women Writer's Vector Toolkit, where I have written extensive documentation and teaching materials to make the project materials and back-end choices accessible. These instances in my research demonstrate a commitment to the access of knowledge, but also the importance in carving out spaces for scholars and community members — especially people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ folks — to center their voices, perspectives, and knowledges.

As the Assistant Director of the Writing Program (WP) at Northeastern University, the WP Director and I chose the 2020-2021 WP theme to be anti-racism. To practice this year's theme, I am collaborating with members of the WP Committee to recruit anti-racist scholars to speak; create a list of anti-racist readings for both faculty development and teaching; develop infographics on anti-racist teaching and administration; assess instructor syllabi for anti-racist language, policies, and readings; and reimagine the WP Learning Goals to continue enforcing anti-racist pedagogies in the program's future. Beyond these activities, administration work, for me, means *investing* in anti-racism and social justice by providing monetary and structural support through hiring practices, learning goals, and faculty development.

My commitments extend beyond program concerns to the lived conditions and experiences of community members; I prioritize community-building, systematic support, and access. I co-organized several conferences committed to equity, including Design for Diversity's forums and Northeastern's annual English Graduate Student Conference. For instance, using funds to bring in particular scholars, especially scholars of color who may be overlooked or not paid for their labor. I also created the [Graduate Student Welfare Advocacy Group](#) (GSWAG) in 2019. GSWAG contains both English department faculty and graduate students who are invested in developing policies and providing support for graduate students.

At the [REDACTED], I will continue pursuing my commitment to justice and equities. Rupturing knowledge hierarchies means both providing spaces for learners to develop skills as well as empowering them to challenge professionalization, data, and hegemony. My goal is to empower everyone to become responsible consumers and composers of digital technologies, media, and genres.