

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I am not a member of Phi Beta Kappa. I am not a member of Phi Beta Kappa because, as a first-generation traditional college student, no one in my family had heard of the honor society, and so when the invitation arrived, we put the “junk mail” in the trash. This was only one of the times lack of familiarity with the institutions and expectations of higher education affected my path through college and graduate school. Understanding that not all students enter college with the same access to institutional knowledge has been fundamental in shaping my teaching practices.

With my own experiences in mind, as a practice of equity and inclusion I work to build transparency into my courses. I demystify expectations and grading policies through the use of rubrics, check lists, and class discussion, and provide pedagogic rationales and learning outcomes for all of my course policies and assignments. Recent studies show that “what looks like intellectual talent is likely the product of excellent academic preparation from high school and earlier” (Lisa Nunn, *33 Simple Strategies for Faculty* (2019)), and I actively work to avoid unwittingly making assumptions about students’ inherent knowledge of academic practices. Sometimes students reveal themselves as unfamiliar with the practices of the academy—such as a first-year who, upon seeing my title, asked what kind of medicine I practice—but often these gaps in knowledge remain invisible, and so I make a practice of clearly laying out expectations for all students. I apply this practice both the material covered in my classes, as well as in helping students understand how university policies—including student evaluations and General Education requirements—fit into larger structures.

This focus on the systems and infrastructures undergirding knowledge work is something that connects my research practices to my teaching, as is my commitment to building a more inclusive archive of texts. Just as the narrative my research presents on American expatriates in interwar Europe incorporates Claude McKay, Josephine Baker, and Bricktop into a canonically white imaginary, I believe the syllabus has enormous potential as a staging ground for inclusivity. Without exception, I create syllabi that incorporate voices from writers with diverse backgrounds and identities. In courses where the class undertakes research papers, I teach about the “Politics of Citation” through readings by Sara Ahmed and Victor Ray, working with students to make sure their Works Citeds do not replicate the structural inequalities that persist in much scholarship.

Inspired by the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ “Framework for Success,” I view engagement as the most integral “habit of mind” for intellectual growth. My key strategy for promoting engagement is to make my class a space where students have active learning opportunities to encounter and respond to texts in ways unfamiliar or unexpected. Alongside traditional methods of textual analysis, I encourage students to interact with works in other multimodal ways, including creating collaborative digital annotations, presenting textual arguments via images, and writing metacognitive reflections. I have found that students feel empowered and engaged when asked to write for audiences beyond the classroom, and I have drawn on the resources of the Wikipedia Education organization to develop a series of assignments in which students re-mediate their research papers into Wikipedia entries on under-served topics.