

Teaching Statement

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My teaching philosophy centers on the word “access.” Access to the institution for students is central to the lines of inquiry I pursue as a teacher-scholar. In her book, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Sara Ahmed asserts that legislating for access and diversity does not mean these aims are achieved through laws alone. Regulations are the starting point, not the end game. The real questions are whether the institution is prepared to support retention and success beyond access, and inclusion beyond diversity. While points of entry are crucial, the remainder of the iceberg is addressed in changes at the level of pedagogy and culturally conscious and relevant curriculum design.

My efforts toward diversity in the classroom move beyond a sole focus on the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of students occupying our course seats. Diversity should also include rigorous attention to what is being taught as thematic focuses, texts, methods of analysis, and genres of writing, and what sort of flexibility I maintain as a teacher to recognize room for growth and change within my own practice. I believe in thinking introspectively about my own teacher subjectivities in the classroom, and I use this self-reflection to inform my philosophical approaches to teaching that respects the varying contexts of my students. I believe that if I am reflective, aware, and transparent with my students about my own situatedness in the classroom space, I can in turn assist students in identifying and constructively engaging their own subjectivities in relation to course topics and texts.

In the classroom—whether I am leading a first-year introductory class with 150 students, or a graduate seminar with eight students—I believe in creating a space that builds community and encourages interaction. I believe in the circle as a spatial configuration that invites personal interaction among all classroom participants, myself included. As an instructor, I join our classroom circle in recognition of my students’ own funds of knowledge, and believe but also verbally communicate to my students that our learning process includes growth for both them as students and me as the teacher. I craft assignments that encourage students to locate themselves in the text so that our discussions represent students’ own varied and diverse ways of knowing. I frequently make use of visual media and social media platforms, as I believe the inclusion of these visual texts and communication modalities provide accessible, student-centered, popular culture approaches to contemporary social issues. In turn, students are asked to reflect on and compose assignments that adhere to departmental and program standards, while engaging in social issues that relate to their own diverse lives and experiences as college students. Specific course projects include ethnographic interviews, composing narrative-informed counterstories, and digital projects in which students present their findings as multimodal representations of their data.

In all, my career trajectory as a teacher-scholar involves promoting coalition building among students and myself in the classroom. I see this critical approach as a way to increase access, retention, and participation of diverse groups in our universities. As an ever-learning and -growing teacher-scholar, my pedagogy and career are focused on serving the student population of our university and providing opportunities for diverse and underrepresented groups to gain access to education and civic participation in a democratic society.