

Diversity Statement

My dedication to diversity in the classroom is made manifest through my efforts to listen and to teach listening both through discussion and example. I recognize that we live in a period when race, gender, and political conflicts are especially critical sources of both strength and pain, cooperation and division. In my courses we reflect on current political events, including inescapable issues of privilege and oppression. My students are not only encouraged to become familiar with a topic through reviewing scholarly literature but also to express an informed opinion and address counterarguments. Through the incorporation of personal and cultural narratives students strengthen logical arguments with appeals to character and credibility as well as to emotion. The texts that we read and my approach to classroom conversation encourage diversity of voices in the classroom and address issues of diversity in our environment.

The voices that inform my teaching represent a balance of perspectives, and this is reflected in all aspects of my course. Students learn about the power of rhetoric and writing through vital messages from a diverse range of authors. My own research into critical pedagogy and theories of rhetorical listening informs the pedagogical framework in which students consider these multiple voices. For example, invitation of various dialects and etymological questions into classroom discussion encourages students' and my own awareness of the ongoing conflict between widespread trends in language cultures within America and the slow-to-change expectations of Standard Written English. Students are tasked both with learning to read and compose in Standard Written English, because that is currently the language in which the professional world currently speaks to itself on an international scale, and with challenging imperialism in Standard Written English with the expression of their own dialects and language cultures.

When teaching Technical Writing, I prompt students to consider the notion of audience involved. Do they, as an audience, ever feel underrepresented, misrepresented, or outright ignored by technical writing? How would they like to see this situation change? How do they feel they can be invited to comfortably and productively become more involved in the composition of technical documents which might consider them as an audience? This question prompts enlightening, thoughtful responses from audiences traditionally recognized as minorities as well as many audiences whom I had not already recognized were underrepresented, misrepresented, or ignored. Each student's response to this prompt opens up a dialogue in which we can explore these rhetorical situations, and this dialogue takes place in a setting where all students can interact in the conversation. Beyond recognition of audiences in need of greater involvement in the composition process, students who do not feel underrepresented, misrepresented, or ignored frequently recognize this outright and often go on to demonstrably consider their relative status in society. They often go on to consider what it is like to be on the other side of the divide which becomes apparent in these conversations, between the represented and the underrepresented.

My desire to help students extends equally to each of my students at all times. I am dedicated to each student's success and demonstrate my dedication accordingly. During and outside of class, I make it a point to be available as much as necessary to provide all students with the support they need to feel confident and be successful. Furthermore, I maintain an egalitarian structure in my classroom that consistently recognizes and invites minority voices to join the conversation, hones the conversation to make it both more respectful and more productive, and invites others to critically listen to that conversation in a way that reflects both on the content and on themselves.