

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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As a member of a diverse society, my own life has naturally been marked by encounters with people of all different genders, sexualities, ethnicities, backgrounds, and levels of ability. Although these personal encounters with diversity have been numerous, in my professional capacity three aspects of my training have particularly influenced the way that I address diversity in my teaching: my fluency in Spanish, the global focus of my graduate program, and the training I received as a part of my doctoral emphasis in Feminist Studies.

As an English-Spanish bilingual, issues of language guide my interactions with both ESL and monolingual students. During my undergraduate work, I double majored in both Theatre Arts and Spanish, a dual major that not only exposed me to the theatrical traditions and histories of Spain and Latin America but also has aided me in understanding the challenges faced by my bilingual students, who may often do double duty in college as they complete rigorous analytical work in a second language. In order to help students who face these challenges, I set aside time to work one-on-one with any student whose first essay shows substantial confusion over the spelling and grammatical conventions of English. In these one-on-one training sessions, I draw upon skill sets I developed working with students at my undergraduate job as a Spanish tutor with a focus on essay writing. Speaking a second language, in combination with doing academic work in the fields of translation and adaptation theory, has also brought to the forefront of my teaching issues of translation, which can often be invisible to monolingual students who read all the plays of the world in fluent English editions. In order to make students aware of the nuances and uncertainties put into play by translation, I have adopted the uncommon practice of allowing my students to read translated plays in whatever edition they see fit rather than assigning a specific translation. As a consequence, issues of difference and nuance surface more often in the course of class discussions as different translations spawn different understandings of a text. This helps students to understand the ways in which their perceptions are shaped by language, and gives them an awareness of the power of the translator—an awareness which may become relevant to their future roles as the directors and producers of translated plays. This practice also has the added bonus of allowing students who may be under financial duress to save money by selecting the least expensive translation of a given text in lieu of buying a specific required edition from the university bookstore.

Diversity has as much bearing on my course design as on my student policies. During my graduate study, I had the opportunity to both learn and teach in a department with a focus on global theater. As a graduate student, I took seminars on East Asian theater and performance, Latino theater, and intercultural theater with a focus on Africa. As a teaching assistant, I taught sections of courses on both Europe and the theaters of Africa and the Caribbean. As a theater artist, I got the opportunity to work in a department that modeled diversity in its mainstage season by including works like Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* in addition to the more conventional fare of Shakespeare and Goldhill, and which consistently found ways to showcase the talents of its minority students in both. These experiences not only gave me a grounding in global

theatrical traditions beyond the traditional focus on the West, but also reinforced for me the necessity of incorporating these traditions into the mainline of the curriculum. Even when diversity is a priority, it can be all too easy to “ghettoize” non-Western theater by having special (optional) courses on, for example, African-American theater or theaters of Asia while reproducing the Western canon in the example texts chosen for required, skill-focused classes like directing or dramaturgy. Such course structures can easily reinforce the idea that Western texts are the norm and create feedback loops in which only students who are already interested in “diverse” or “non-standard” offerings are exposed to these traditions. In order to push back against this trend, I design my course syllabi in skill-focused or thematic classes to feature examples drawn from diverse times, locations, cultures, and viewpoints. For example, in the special topics course I taught on ghosting in the theater last fall, I assigned numerous global works including a kabuki play, a contemporary Ghanaian drama, and an experimental Peruvian piece alongside more traditional offerings like Ibsen’s *Ghosts* or Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson*. This course is not specifically a world theater or theater history class, but rather a conceptual class focused around the operations of memory and theatrical recycling and built upon examples of ghost stories which appeal to a wide variety of students—students who find the diversity of their own backgrounds and interests reflected in the variety of readings on offer. By exposing students to variety in every possible context, I aim not only to include those students who do not feel represented by the Western canon but also to raise awareness of the wide scope of world theatrical traditions among those students who do.

Finally, as a scholar whose work focuses on gender, I draw on the training I received during my doctoral emphasis in Feminist Studies in my teaching and directing as well as my research. My own scholarly work consists largely of deconstructing gender norms as they are represented in different theatrical works across time and culture, and my focus on issues of representation and gender forms a major angle of approach for me in the way I teach theater history and play analysis. In my selection of readings, I try to include a balance of both male and female playwrights, and to introduce queer perspectives wherever possible. Because most undergraduate students have not yet been exposed to the notion of gender, sexuality, and race as social constructs, I make explanations of cultural construction and its mutually reinforcing relationship with representation a core component of my lectures and discussions in virtually every class I teach. My intro to acting class, for example, includes a series of exercises in cross-casting, training students to read and reproduce the ways in which gender is enacted through gestures that anyone, male or female, can deploy onstage. My dramatic literature course addresses the ghettoization of playwrights along race and gender lines within anthologies and the traditional canons they both reinforce and construct, using omission as a starting point for discussion. Because gender is omnipresent in the lives of each and every student, albeit in different ways, making students aware of the views and actions they hold which contribute to the maintenance of gender not only includes students who may otherwise feel overlooked, but also helps all students engage critically with issues of identity politics and privilege which are as essential to their daily lives as to their work as theater artists.

In each of these ways, my approaches to teaching theater are designed to both include a diverse array of students and educate all students about diversity and inclusion, raising awareness of those concepts which can be all too easily overlooked in dominant or traditional schemes.