

Positionality Statement

When we work in academia, we bring our whole selves to interpersonal contexts of teaching and researching, and depending on biases that others hold, or those we hold ourselves, opportunities can be given or withheld. The intersecting and layered parts of my identity deeply inform my approach to DEI-informed Dialogic Pedagogy. As a member of the queer community and a woman in North America, I am acutely aware of the historical inequities that people like me have faced (and are still facing to this day), and the work that has had to happen to get us where we are today. Work that I know is essential for myself, as a femme scholar in academia, to carry forward in both my academic and pedagogical pursuits. In service of these pursuits, I consider my position as a white woman and a scholar, and how both grant me certain privileges. As a white woman, I inhabit spaces where, often, my race goes unnoticed and unquestioned. I am able to move through life with a sense of ease and safety that some of my peers and students may not get to feel in the same spaces. As an academic, I wield my power of influence, my academic voice is buttressed by my position in the academy. I am committed to leveraging my position in order to create more opportunities for students who are not afforded such privileges.

While parts of my identity have granted me easier access to my pursuits, my experiences with queerness, womanhood, and fat activism remind me of the obstacles that litter young scholars' paths to success. The liberatory ethics associated with feminism, queer thought, and body positivity movements have all deeply informed my teaching practices. These perspectives invite me to pay close attention to whose voices take precedence in a dialogue and grander "Big-D" Discourses, and whose stories fall to the wayside. In the classroom, this means I do my best to get my students to draw upon their own lived experiences and situate themselves as empowered experts of their own identities, situations. At the same time, I also invite my students to confront their own biases and begin to untangle some of the threads of interwoven hegemonic ideologies that pervade our current knowledge tapestries.

Through teaching heavy subjects that can be difficult for some students to discuss, I have learned that a gentle "calling in" can make a world of difference for a student who is speaking from a potentially harmful place of power. I once facilitated a class discussion about Cultural Appropriation where one student took a position that the rest of the class was clearly uncomfortable with. The beautiful moment that we all shared was gently disassembling the misinformed notions at the core of this student's opinion and working through them to eventually find consensus. Teaching isn't always about being right or wrong, but it is crucial (more now than ever with the ever widening divide in our political landscape) to bridge the gap between what we think we know about the world and how we could see the world given a different context and perspective.

I have, in the past, gotten student feedback calling my teaching "too political". Though, at first, I saw this as a problem in need of a solution, I now think that this is a reflection of my ethical commitments coming through in my teaching. I am committed to pointing out inequities where I see them, I am committed to ensuring that every student feels safe in my classes, I do my best to subvert the flow of toxic ideologies in my classes and rebalance the master discourses that are always in the room with us. Through these practices, I hope to set a good example for the young scholars I have been entrusted with to shape.