Diversity and Inclusion Grant Final Report
College Writing Program
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2018-2019

Introduction

Anti-racist pedagogy has been discussed in educational literature since at least the mid-2000s (see Kandaswamy; Kishimoto). The current interest in the topic seems to correspond to increased public scrutiny of race-related events, beginning with the government response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005; the deaths of Trayvon Martin, in Sanford, Florida in 2012 and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2013, and the subsequent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement; and continuing through the Emanuel Baptist Church shooting in 2015, which sparked movements to remove Confederate and other white supremacist monuments, names, and legacy from public spaces.

Race and writing programs has been a continual topic of conversation since about 2011 and now dominates written and conference conversations in the field. Anti-ableist and anti-sexist moves--if not pedagogy--may be found prior to the turn of the century, but intersectional approaches to theory and practice, as well as within mainstream culture, have pushed these into focus in recent years alongside anti-racist pedagogy. All of the recent literature on anti-racist, anti-ableist, and anti-sexist pedagogy and policy emphasizes *action* over naming or theorizing. Our project heeds this call to act, immediately.

Although anti-racist pedagogy has been studied for more than a decade, Asao Inoue was the first writing studies scholar to popularize this idea in presentations, articles, and a book on anti-racist writing assessment (which is related, but different from, anti-racist *pedagogy*). Inoue's work is seminal. However, we find him to be problematic on several levels: his emphasis on certain forms of classroom labor are ableist, for one, and his erasure of feminist approaches to and women writing about this topic is another. Still, Inoue is currently considered the voice of anti-racist work in writing studies, primarily because of his assertion that "We can find racist effects in just about every writing program in the country. We live in a racist society, one that recreates well-known, well-understood, racial hierarchies in populations based on things like judgments of student writing that use a local Standardized Edited American English (SEAE) with populations of people who do not use that discourse on a daily basis--judging apples by the standards of oranges" (6). Because racism exists in our programs, Inoue argues, all writing program administrators (WPAs) and writing faculty should be engaged in anti-racist projects.

Several prominent writing studies scholars have recently issued strong calls for immediate action. Genevieve Garcia de Mueller is one of the most prominent; in multiple articles published in 2016 and 2017, Garcia de Mueller points out that the WPA position is one of activism. WPAs "hold a great deal of power to effect change in writing program curricula due to their ability to dictate what happens in terms of pedagogical training, faculty development, assessment practices, and student support"

(Garcia de Mueller and Ruiz 20). However, as Garcia de Mueller and Iris Ruiz found in a study, white WPAs--which make up the majority of WPAs--are less likely or equipped to pay attention to race in the key areas (listed above) of writing program administration:

> This failure to connect race to the composing process, practices, and the assessments thereof has had dire consequences for students of color because these tropes reduce them to metaphors that connote deficits rather than assets. Race needs to be named, interrogated, discussed, and "demetaphored" in ways that are specific, explicit, and additive. (21)

Garcia de Mueller and Ruiz assert that this must be attended to--and we agree. This research was the catalyst for our grant proposal to interrogate privilege inherent—and inherited, as we believed and, indeed, found—in our writing courses.

A year ago, we proposed a project that would
- use established self-study methodologies to inquire about ways racism, ableism, sexism, and classism may implicitly or explicitly be present in the structure--curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and hiring practices--of the College Writing Program at Elon;
- identify ways to rectify any of these areas, including through faculty development, policy creation, and curricular revision, using evidence-based practices from the field of writing studies and a model for cross-cultural composition piloted in select ENG 110 courses;
- implement some of the ways identified (recognizing that this may be a longer-term project than the initial grant allows for);
- assess the outcomes of the inquiry and subsequent intervention; and
- develop and publish for future College Writing Program administrators and faculty a procedure for future investigations of the structure of the program.

At the time, we and the CATL committee that awarded the grant noted the "big-ness" and boldness of our proposal--the "too much-ness" of it, to use the terminology of one of our sources (Beth Godbee points out that it is the large scale intervention of "too-much" that enables real pedagogical change). In this report, we will demonstrate the path, or paths, our project took once we undertook it. What you will see is that some of our intended activities, such as identifying specific activities or interventions for the writing program, were far too narrowly defined to be achieved, while others inspired us to expand our work beyond the boundaries of not only the program, but the campus in ways that we found transformative and essential to doing some of the work we initially set out to do.

Essentially, we have initiated a new community of practice (Wenger) or, rather, a *community of transformation*: a community that creates and fosters innovative spaces that envision a new future (Kezar, Gehrke, and Bernstein-Sierra). As Adrianna Kezar, Sean Gehrke, and Samantha Bernstein-Sierra point out in "Communities of Transformation: Creating Changes to Deeply Entrenched Issues," communities of practice "tend to improve work within existing practices, [while] communities of transformation are aimed at embedding innovative/transformational practices within departments and institutions. Transformational practice breaks with current practice by **challenging and altering underlying values**" (2, emphasis added). Communities of transformation involve a change not only in practice, but in consciousness, and they provide space for observing and living new values (22). In the following pages, we list and explain the activities we have engaged in this year, and we offer some recommendations for other faculty who want to engage in similar work.

Activities

During the course of the 2018-2019 Academic Year, we completed the following DIG activities:

- Reading & Reflecting
- DIG Discussions
- Anti-Racist Pedagogy Reading Circle
- Program Document Coding
- Racial Equity Institute Workshop
- Anti-Racist Pedagogy Library

Reading & Reflecting

From the outset of this grant, we have been collecting, reading, and reflecting upon critical texts--especially those offering new perspectives on anti-racist and feminist thought. We were careful to extend our reading and reflection to interrogate privilege and resist racist, ableist, and classist norms. We read academic texts including peer-reviewed journal articles from writing studies, scholarship of teaching and learning, and other fields; essential texts such as bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress* and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* We read academic texts, blog posts, and social media posts, as well as shared classroom experiences, podcasts, and news media--the best of which we share in our reading recommendations.

DIG Discussions

We met regularly (typically every week) during the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 semesters. These meetings turned into extended conversations where we shared what was on our mind: articles we read, experiences in our classrooms, departmental dynamics, conversations in the field of writing studies, and more. These conversations created an open environment where we could share our vulnerability, teaching ideas, and questions as we embrace this critical pedagogy work.

Anti-Racist Pedagogy Reading Circle

As three white women doing anti-racist work, we never wanted to embark on this work as experts doing research and sharing our findings. Instead, we immediately wanted to create a culture of learning and sharing within our community. In Fall 2018 we held three open reading discussions where we invited Elon faculty and staff to join us in reading and discussing core texts:

September: Chapter One, "Institutional Life," from Sarah Ahmed's *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*

October: Priya Kandaswamy's "Beyond Colorblindness and Multiculturalism: Rethinking Anti-Racist Pedagogy in the University Classroom," and Kyoko Kishimoto's "Anti-Racist Pedagogy: From Faculty's Self-Reflection to Organizing within and beyond the Classroom."

November: NCTE Statement on Anti-Racism to Support Teaching and Learning (http://www2.ncte.org/statement/antiracisminteaching/) and a selection from bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress.*

Across the three reading groups, faculty from English, Education, Philosophy, and a librarian attended, while others faculty, staff and administrators expressed interest and received readings, even though they could not join. Scheduling was a challenge, but we created a community of practice among Elon faculty, librarians, and student affairs professionals to engage with anti-racist pedagogy.

Program Document Coding

In Spring 2019, we began a critical examination of the Elon writing program's outcomes for first-year writing, as well as the Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0). We use the tools and perspectives gained through our reading to critically analyze these documents using critical discourse analysis (CDA).
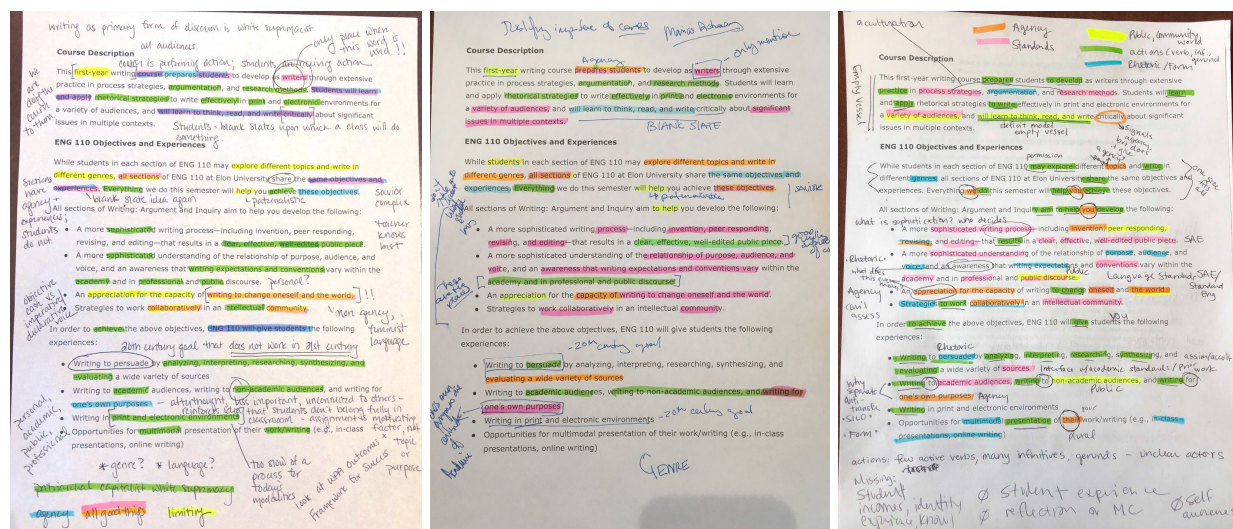
Each of us read in different ways based upon our training and experiences, but this activity initiated an important conversation about the tone, audience, goals, and language choices of our program outcomes. It also helped us develop our "noticing" skills--moving from reading and reflecting to deploying our learning.

Next, we began to develop a system we could all use to code the WPA Outcomes Statement, and held a preliminary coding session. We have not yet normed our coding (or figured out the ultimate goal of this coding--is it for noticing and changing our program, or going beyond to initiate change in the broader field?), but these coding exercises are moving us from theory to practice.

Racial Equity Institute Workshop: Phase 1

The REI Phase One training is a two-day workshop that: "presents a historical, cultural, structural and institutional analysis" of racism, bigotry, and bias. Because it is a community-based workshop, we decided to each attend the workshop in our home communities (Durham for Margaret, Alamance County for Jennifer, and Greensboro for Paula). After attending the Phase 1 workshop, alumni are invited to return to observe and continue reflecting upon future Phase 1 workshops before moving to Phase 2. Because this DIG project is long-terms, we plan to attend at least one more Phase 1 workshop together and attend Phase 2 by the end of AY 2019-2020.

Anti-Racist Pedagogy Library

During this project, we have curated a list of books and other print resources that have been important to our learning process. We are using the $500 grant supply award to purchase a copy of these resources to be held in an English Department library. Additionally, we are providing that list to Patrick Rudd, the English liaison at Belk Library, and to the CATL library to purchase for the broader university community. This list is provided in Appendix A.

Recommendations for Faculty: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Praxis

> *Anti-racist pedagogy is not a ready-made product that professors can simply apply to their courses, but rather is a process that begins with faculty as individuals, and continues as they apply the anti-racist analysis into the course content, pedagogy, and their activities and interactions beyond the classroom.*
>
> -Kishimoto, Kyoko. "Anti-Racist Pedagogy: From Faculty's Self-Reflection to Organizing within and beyond the Classroom."

These recommendations are based on the work of three faculty in the writing program over the course of 2018-2019. We are three white women, cis, straight, and relatively able-bodied, and we realize that our positionality gives us access to do this work. We did not invent this work or methodology. We simply followed systems for developing anti-racist pedagogy and praxis outlined by people of color. While we each believe that we are still at the beginning of this work, the basic steps outlined here are **reading, reflection, discussion, praxis.**

Reading

Unsurprisingly for an academic enterprise, reading, and the research and curation that go along with reading, was a crucial and iterative process. We recommend developing a reading list on your own, and including disciplinary and extra-disciplinary sources. Finding disciplinary and extra-disciplinary sources on anti-racist pedagogy took time, but during that time we gained a deeper understanding of the work and our discipline's relationship to it. We also recommend including popular readings on race in the reading list.

Because the research process is part of the work, we don't include an extensive set of recommended readings (our project's [dynamic reading list is available here](#)); however, we have listed a few that have been instrumental.

HIghly recommended readings on anti-racist pedagogy:

> Kishimoto, Kyoko. "Anti-Racist Pedagogy: From Faculty's Self-Reflection to Organizing within and beyond the Classroom." *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 21, no. 4, Taylor & Francis, 2018, pp. 540–54, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248824.

> Kandaswamy, Priya. "Beyond Colorblindness and Multiculturalism: Rethinking Anti-Racist Pedagogy in the University Classroom." Radical Teacher, no. 80, Center for Critical Education of NY, 2007, p. 6, http://search.proquest.com/openview/5fa4483ff97652301d935ea0ff8f6eb3/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=46720

Ahmed, Sara. On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life. Duke University Press, 2012

hooks, bell. Teaching to Transgress: Education As the Practice of Freedom. Routledge, 1994.

Popular texts on race:

Oluo, Ijeoma. *So You Want to Talk About Race?* Seal Press, 2018.

DiAngelo, Robin and Michael Eric Dyson. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

Podcast: Seeing White https://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/

Reflection

Reflection is the signature strategy for beginning this work. Kishimoto (above) and many others point to the importance of faculty reflecting on our identity, our social position(s), and the ways in which race intersects with our social position, with our power within our institutions, our disciplines, and our in our classrooms. This self-research and self-analysis happens in concert with reading, and discussion and community building, and leads to praxis. But most importantly, one can not do anti-racist work until we analyze ourselves and our positions.

One thing that we recognize, through doing this, is that reflecting is hard, takes time, and is, like reading, recursive. We began our more formal reflection by writing in response to readings; authors offer frames for analysis. As faculty who teach reading and reflection techniques, we relied on those. *What are we noticing? What is the author asking us to consider? What happens when we consider these things?*

Caught up in this process is failure. We fail to be anti-racist, all the time. We fail to be transparent about the ways we use our own authority, we fail to interrogate inherited disciplinary norms, we fail to hold systems of power accountable. Acknowledging this is part of a reflection process in which we continue to discover the blind-spots we have because of our many privileged statuses.

As we began to be able to articulate our positionality more clearly, and to understand our social power, we were able to turn our reflections to our classrooms, to our programs, and to our institutions.

Discussion

We have discovered that this work works best when done in community and in conversation. Two primary spaces of focusing on this work were our grant group (whose membership was small and fixed) and our reading circles (whose membership was larger and dynamic).

Small group discussion

This was the three of us. A [number](#) of [racial equity groups](#) use [racial-identity-based caucusing](#) strategies to do anti-racism work, primarily because in a racialized society. While we did not initially apply for this grant and do this work because we are three white women, having space to discuss these issues with people with whom we shared positionality has been incredibly useful to us. We met weekly for informal discussion and feedback. This allowed us to consistently notice and report the ways in which our reading and reflection connected to our experiences in the classroom and on the campus. This constant noticing was another form of reflection.

Larger group discussion
Our reading circle included faculty we invited who had shown interest in anti-racist pedagogy. This group met less frequently and had a more formal structure.

In addition to the two structured spaces of discussion, this work has led us to seek out spaces within the institution where people are talking about race and equity and to raise these issues in spaces where people may not have been raising them. We are building community for ourselves around and through these issues, as well as connecting to spaces we might not have before.

Praxis

As Kishimoto says in the epigraph, this work is not a "ready-made product", or as one of the members of our reading circle noted, it isn't "tips for better teaching" when most of us want just that: concrete strategies for being better teachers. Instead, this work is a constant process of anti-racist self-analysis which over time can transform the way we view our students, our course content, and ways we teach, how we see ourselves in the institution.

As individual instructors, this has meant analyzing, changing, and evaluating everything in our classes from our course readings to our assignments to the way we grade and more. It has changed the kinds of courses we propose to teach in the future and the kinds of research and service we want to do. It has profoundly changed how we mentor students and other faculty.

It has also changed the ways we want to interact with the broader institution: which service roles to take on, which initiatives to support, which events to attend, and which voices to amplify. These decisions are also anti-racist praxis.

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Appendix A:

Anti-Racist Pedagogy, Equity, and Research Reading List

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