Proposal and Abstract for Breakout Session

New York University

Engaging with Diversity in the College Classroom 2017 National Symposium

**Breakout Session:**

**Helping Students Set Best Practices for Creative Writing Workshop**

The two-member panel from Stockton University each teach creative writing but also have personal experience with teaching the following populations: veterans, the disabled, students of color, LGBTQQIP2SAA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, Intersex, Pan-sexual, two-spirited, androgynous, asexual), survivors of sexual assault, and older and returning students. We will offer an exercise to help attendees come up with a pedagogy for allowing *students* to establish best workshopping practices that navigate difference.

**Our breakout session will contain the following content and structure:**

**First Part, Fifteen Minutes: Introduction.** Panelists will briefly remark on the needs in creative writing workshop where students may be writing about difference or very personal experiences. We will then share ways teachers can help students shape workshopping parameters. A resource handout will be distributed that helps instructors ask students: how to address intentionality by addressing writing as a project; how to by-pass responses based on personal likes or dislikes to focus on what a piece of writing does; addressing the ways a piece might be discussed with an eye towards articulating intersections of race, gender or socioeconomic status; to what degree the student writer should be part of the discussion (contrary to the standard established by the Iowa Workshop); how to help students think about trigger warnings, etc.

**Second Part, Twenty Minutes: Collaborative Exercise.** This breakout session will ask participants to collaborate on ways of helping students formulate parameters for workshop. The questions to be distributed on a handout may include: What should students discuss before giving them the task of coming up with workshop best practices that would give them the most space? What would be a good way of structuring and recording the best practices? How do we begin to address respectfully trauma and strong feelings? How do we deal with stories that challenge other people’s values or opinions? What might be the do’s and don’ts of allowing students to establish their own best practices for workshop? When is it better to have safe space and when is it better to address conflicting opinion/bias? What might be a worse case scenario in a diverse classroom and how would you handle it?

**Third Part, Twenty-Five Minutes: Discussion.** The panel and participants will come together again to have a group discussion about their answers, findings, and drafted guidelines. Extra time will be allotted for understanding specifics in the resource handbook and sharing experiences and ideas from the participants about intersectionality, trigger warnings with regards to PTSD, contact zones, and any issues about diversity and workshopping pedagogies that might have been complicated during the collaborative exercise.

**The intellectual merit and educational value:** This breakout session offers time and space to think about a decentered classroom, ways of grappling with vulnerability, personal boundaries, understanding trauma, how to modify or reinvent traditional ways of assessing a text, and strengthening the community within a specific class . The ideas offered in our resource handout will include excerpts from Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality, Mary Louise Pratt’s “Arts of the Contact Zones,” Joe Harris’ “Coming to Terms,” etc. in order to facilitate discussion about how to provide safe spaces but also open and useful craft discussion. We believe by drawing from compositional and post-colonial pedagogies, and a theory that encompasses multiple kinds of difference, participants will gain new perspectives on how to give students agency towards their own work and values.

**Panel Participants:**

Creative Writing Faculty at Stockton University, Galloway NJ

Emily August, poet and scholar, Stockton University; emily.august@stockton.edu

Cynthia Arrieu-King, poet and fiction writer, Stockton University;

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Look for a live HTML version of this document at blogs.stockton.edu/cynthiaking

**Creating an Intersectional Creative Writing Classroom**

The process of instituting and maintaining intersectionality unfolds over the course of an entire semester, and there are several contact points for how this can happen:

**Choosing course texts**

The texts you teach can reflect diversity and difference in a variety of categories. Prioritize the inclusion of historically underrepresented writers and perspectives by choosing no more than one text/reading authored by a straight, cisgender, white male.

**Syllabus verbiage**

We recommend that your syllabi contain a boilerplate statement on diversity and inclusion.

**Assignment intentionality**

Consider creating writing prompts and assignments that will allow or encourage students to explore their identity, or to explore an issue that intersects with the politics of representation.

**Framing the first workshop**

Help the students generate parameters for discussing the work of other students by starting off the semester with bonding exercises. Facilitate a conversation about what they expect in discussions of student work and how to address the situation of being surprised by something that’s different than we’re used to. To build the vocabulary for discussion, step back and talk in a meta way about the function and practice of workshop, and the ideas and biases that readers might bring to discussion. Anonymous examples from fellow or previous students is a good way to practice this: Distribute an anonymous example that’s really challenging, and practice workshopping with “mattresses on the floor”. Be explicit about the workshop as a space where historically underrepresented voices matter. Telling your students that “all perspectives matter” doesn’t make your classroom intersectional; in paralleling “all lives matter” discourse, it risks alienating already marginalized students.

**Student agency**

One of the ultimate goals of a feminist, intersectional classroom is to foster student agency in a way that lets them direct the workshop experience as much as possible.

**Maintaining instructor presence in workshop and discussion**

Even in workshops where effective intersectional space has been created, the instructor might need to jump in and either instigate the workshop conversation, or reframe it at crucial moments. Be sensitive to moments that need an intersectional approach, where only talking about race or gender or class etc doesn’t cover the complexity of a situation. Don’t be afraid to step in and reorient the workshop towards intersectionality. Prioritize the inclusion of historically underrepresented perspectives during workshop and class discussion. Building an intersectional classroom means that giving students agency isn’t the same as letting the most marginalized students drown, or expecting the most marginalized students to step in and fight for their humanity in problematic moments. It means creating a *space* for them to feel free to do so, and jumping in to do so if they choose not to. Often the instructor will need to address a difficult comment or situation directly so that the burden to do so doesn’t fall on the students that are implicitly targeted by the comment or situation. Often this means analyzing an impression or opinion and seeking out where the assumption or stereotype comes from (news, movies, etc.) and how that differs from reality. There should be a balance between instructor-set standards and student-generated guidelines.

**Pedagogical Bibliography on Intersectionality:**

Allison, Dorothy. *Skin: Talking about Sex, Class and Literature.* Firebrand books, 2005.

Bienvenu, MJ. “Queer as Deaf: Intersections,” *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking,* H. Dirksen L. Bauman, Ed., Gallaudet University Press, 2008.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity Politics, and Violence

Against Women of Color*.*” Stanford Law Review, 43:6, 1991.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Sumi Cho, Leslie McCall. “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies:

Theory, Application, and Practice.” Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 38:4, 2013, 785-810.

Husting, Ginna. <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Kimberle-Crenshaw-Instructors_-Guide-1.pdf>,

“Culture in the Classroom” from *Teaching Tolerance* <https://www.tolerance.org/culture-classroom>, 2016.

Harris, Joseph. “Coming to Terms.” *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts.* Utah State

University Press,2006.

Kolb, Rachel. “The Deaf Body in Public Space.” *The New York Times,* 2016.

Porter, Bobbie. “Developing an Intersectional Framework for Racially Inclusive LGBTQ Programming.” *Diversity and Democracy,* 19:1, 2016.

Soria, Krista & Mark Bultmann. “Supporting Working-Class Students in Higher Education.”

*NACADA Journal,* 34:2, 2014.

Young, Iris Marion. “The Five Faces of Oppression.” SUNY Press, 2014.

**Fact sheets/ key concepts in structural racism via World Trust:**

“Structural Racism”

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/fundamentals/core-concepts/structural-racism>

McIntosh, Peggy. “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” with notes for facilitators

<https://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>

**Film/Multimedia:**

“The Danger of a Single Story” Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

“We Should All Be Feminists” Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

“The Urgency of Intersectionality” Kimberle Crenshaw

**Primary Texts for Teaching Intersectionality in the Creative Writing Classroom and Beyond**

**Poetry**

Elizabeth Alexander *The Venus Hottentot* (African American history)

Beth Bachmann *Temper* (feminist) (violence) (family relations)

Aziza Barnes *i be but i ain´t* (African American) (feminism) (bisexuality)

Tamiko Beyer *We Come Elemental* (Asian American) (queer)

Elizabeth Bradfield *Interpretive Work* (feminist) (lesbian/queer identity)

Jericho Brown *The New Testament* (growing up LGBTQ and Black)

Chen Chen *When I Grow Up I Want to be a List of Further Possibilities*

(Asian American) (queer)

Ching-In Chen *The Heart’s Traffic* (Asian American) (queer)

Eduardo C. Corral *Slow Lightning* (queer) (Latinx)

Mai Der Vang *Afterland: Poems* (Hmong) (Asian American) (migration)

Jay Deshpande *Love the Stranger* (Indian-American)

Natalie Diaz *When My Brother was an Aztec* (Native American) (Latinx) (feminism) (activism)

Celeste Gainey *The Gaffer* (queer) (feminist)

Carmen Giminez Smith *Milk and Filth* (Latinx) (feminism)

Hillary Gravendyk *Harm* (illness studies) (feminism)

Joy Harjo *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (Native American) (feminism)

Janice N. Harrington *Even the Hollow My Body Made is Gone* (African American history/family)

Lauren Hunter *Human Achievements* (African American) (feminism)

HG Hegenauer *Sir* (transgender) (queer) (feminism)

Tyehimba Jess *leadbelly* (African American history and identity)

Saeed Jones *Prelude to a Bruise* (Black LGBTQ identity)

Layli Long Soldier *Whereas* (Native American) (feminism)

Audre Lorde *Collected Poems* (African American) (feminist) (LGBTQ identity)

Sally Wen Mao *Mad Honey Symposium* (Asian AMerican) (activism) (feminism)

Shane McCrae In the Language of My Captor (African American) (mixed race)

Gabriel Ojeda-Sague *Oil and Candle* (queer) (Latinx)

Cynthia Dewi Oka *Salvage (*Asian American) (activism) (class)

Tanya Olson *Boyishly* (Latinx) (queer)

Wendy C Ortiz *Bruja* (Latinx) (feminism)

Joseph Rios *Shadowboxing* (Latinx) (class)

*Things that Are More Beautiful Than Beyonce* Morgan Parker (African American) (woman)

*IRL* & *Nature Poem* Tommy Pico (queer) (Native American)

*Citizen* Claudia Rankine (African American) (feminism) (class) (ekphrasis)

Max Ritvo *Seven Revelations* (illness narrative) (masculinity)

Raquel Salas Rivera *Oropel/Tinsel* (Latinx) (queer)

Brenda Shaugnessy *Our Andromeda* (disability) (motherhood) (feminism)

Raena Shirali *Gilt* (Southeast Asian) (feminism)

Warsan Shire *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth* (feminist) (immigration) (world lit)

Christopher “Loma” Soto *Sad Girl Poems* (Latinx) (queer)

Aaron Smith B*lue on Blue Ground/Primer* (queer) (working class)

Danez Smith *Don’t Call Us Dead: Poems* (African American) (queer)

Jennifer Tamayo *You Da One* (Latinx) (feminism)

Monica de la Torres *Talk Shows (*Latinx) (feminism)

Ocean Vuong *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (refugee history) (immigration) (Asian American)

Stacey Waite *Butch Geography* (queer) (feminism)

Jillian Weise  *Amputees Guide to Sex* & *The Book of Goodbyes* (disability) (feminism)

Kit Yan *Queer Heartache* (Asian American queer)

C. Dale Young *The Halo* (African American) (queer)

**Memoir/Essay**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions (*Nigerian woman)

Sherman Alexie *You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me* (Native American)

James Baldwin *Notes on a Native Son* (African-American, queer)

Ta-Nahesi Coates *Between the World and Me* (African American)

Roxane Gay *Hunger* (African-American woman)

*The Argonauts* Maggie Nelson (Queer woman)

Lauren Slater *Lying: A Metaphorical Memoir* (illness narrative)

Zadie Smith *Changing My Mind* (Black British woman)

**Story Collections and Novels**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Americanah*

Mia Alvar *In the Country* (Phillipina woman)

Teju Cole *Every Day is for the Thief* (Nigerian-American)

Viola DiGrado *Hollow Heart* (Italian woman, in translation)

Garth Greenwell *What Belongs to You* (Queer)

Jhumpa Lahiri *Interpreter of Maladies* (Asian-American)

Victor LaValle *The Changeling* (African-American)

Ayana Mathis *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie* (African-American, queer woman)

Lorrie Moore *Self-Help*

Jamaica Kincaid *At the Bottom of the River* (Antiguan-American woman)

Zadie Smith *White Teeth*

Louise Stern *Ishmael and His Sisters (*Deaf woman)

Naomi Williams *Landfalls* (Asian-American woman)

Jeanette Winterson *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (Queer woman)

**Graphic Novels**

*Maus* Art Spiegleman

*Persepolis* Marjane Satrapi

*March* John Lewis, et al

*The Arab of the Future* Riad Sattouf

*Fun Home* Alison Bechdel