



-Newsletter for the WAC Program at York College-

November 2023

In this issue:

- Introducing New WAC Admins
- Welcome New WAC Fellows - *Andrew Fan*
- Implementing Anti-racist Pedagogy: Our Experiences – WAC Fellows

Introducing New WAC Admins!

We would like to give a warm welcome to our new WAC leadership for the 2023-4 academic year!

Heather Robinson is happy to have taken on the role of WAC Coordinator for WI courses and assessment for the 2023-4 academic year. Heather has been a member of the English Department at York since 2007, and has held many roles in the English Department and on campus. Most of these roles have been writing-focused and so she's happy to be gaining a new perspective on writing at York. She is currently also the Writing Program Director, and chairs the English department assessment committee, and teaches and researches across the fields of applied linguistics,

academic writing, and critical literary theory, trying to bring all these areas into conversation with each other but not to stretch the friendship too far.

Shoba Parasram is currently a Lecturer in the English Department and the Assistant WAC coordinator. She is also on the Student Writing Workshop (SWW) Promotion Committee, which aims to promote the SWW class to increase enrollment. She plans on taking on the role of WAC Coordinator in Fall 2024. Shoba has been with York for about 20 years, first as a student, then an English tutor, then an Adjunct Lecturer, and now a full-time Lecturer. She truly values writing as a mode of discovery – of the self, the world, complex ideas, one's thinking process, everything! She is excited to take on this new role to help make writing more present in the lives of York students so they can reap all of the wonderful benefits.

Raquel Coy is currently a Lecturer in the English Department, the WAC Fellows Coordinator, and member of the Writing Intensive Advisory Committee. She is a CUNY alum with experience working in a variety of higher education spheres: writing center spaces, college remedial classes, departmental and interdepartmental committees, and freshman composition courses. Her education is largely centered in Composition and Rhetoric, though she has cultivated a great respect for the multifaceted role of the professor: educator, researcher, mentor, and community worker.

Welcome to our New WAC Fellows!

For our current academic year, we have 3 new WAC fellows and 1 returning. In lieu of a physical introduction at York, here are their bios. Remember that they are available for consultation and can help you develop a successful WI syllabus or strategies for your class. If you're interested in working with a fellow, reach out to the WAC Fellows Coordinator Raquel Coy at rcoy@york.cuny.edu.



Ibtisam Ammouri is a PhD candidate in the Linguistics program at the CUNY Graduate Center. She has conducted research on the Syntax-Semantics interface and is now focusing on Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning. She has taught Linguistics courses at Lehman College and LaGuardia Community College, and Arabic courses at Columbia University. In addition, she has worked as a writing tutor at the CUNY School of Professional Studies. Ibtisam holds a Master's degree in Linguistics from Tel Aviv University, and speaks Arabic and Hebrew in addition to English.



Fabián Escalona is a doctoral candidate in Theatre and Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center. His dissertation surveys the circulation of theatre and performance in the Latin American Southern Cone during the late colonial/early republican transitional era. He has taught courses in Theatre History, Art History, Human Rights and Oral Interpretation in New York and Santiago, Chile. He also has been a Writing Across Curriculum fellow at CUNY School of Professional Studies and is a Communication fellow at the Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute, Baruch College, CUNY. In that institute he is also a facilitator of the Inclusive and Antiracist Pedagogy Seminar, for the college's faculty. As a former theatre critic, he collaborated with theatre journals and magazines in the US, Chile, and France. With a background in Art History and Theory, as well as Latin American Studies, his research interests focus on Latin American Theatre and Performance, Human Rights, and Postcolonial Studies.



Andrew Fan is a PhD graduate student in Comparative Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center. His research centers on theories of reading and aesthetic reception in 19th and 20th century poetry and novels, with a particular focus on narrative breaks, lapses, omissions, and silences. He holds a BA in Group Language from Occidental College. He has taught First-Year Composition and Great Works of Literature at Baruch College, CUNY.



Alex Viteri is a Berlin-based Andean performer and scholar. Viteri is a member of the dance collective MaCA and an ongoing collaborator of the choreographers Juliana Piquero and Marion Budwig. In 2019, they premiered “Fan de Ellas” at the Theater Sophiensaele. Viteri also performed for various iterations of “Apparitions sur le récif ” ICI CCN, Montpellier (2021), and 3bisF, Aix en Provence (2022). In 2021&22, they co-hosted the forum “About Dance” at Lake Studios, Berlin. From 2019 to 2022, they were granted The Saison Foundation Air Partnership, Japan. In September 2022, MaCA premiered its newest work at Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale. Viteri received a DIS-TANZ-SOLO and RechercheStipendium from the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media and is an associate artist at BAS, UdK. They are currently writing their Ph.D. dissertation on the authentic ways mountains, plants, and other living organisms participate in a dance’s meaning-making and composition at CUNY and teaches at York College.

Implementing Anti-racist Pedagogy: Our Experiences

The WAC Fellows

The call for anti-racist teaching as a vector for social justice in education has been increasingly heard in the last decade or so. In answering this call, educators have had to consider race and anti-racism not only as instructional content but given racism’s structural, systemic, and institutional nature, have had to contemplate anti-racism efforts in the wider scope of their own teaching practices. As Kyoko Kishimoto articulates, in an article seeking to define the term ([link to the article found in bibliography below](#)), anti-racist pedagogy is not limited to the formal teaching of or about race, but also encompasses all facets of academic environments: institutional, disciplinary, professional, and communal.

Anti-racist pedagogy is not about simply incorporating racial content into courses, curriculum, and discipline. It is also about how one teaches, even in courses where race is not the subject matter. It begins with the faculty’s awareness and self-reflection of their social position and leads to the application of this analysis not just in their teaching, but also in their discipline, research, and departmental, university, and community work.

In other words, anti-racist pedagogy is an organizing effort for institutional and social change that is much broader than teaching in the classroom.

The WAC Fellows have been asked to think about how we have incorporated anti-racist pedagogy in our own classrooms and below you will find some of our reflections on the subject. Given the variety of our disciplinary backgrounds, we hope that you will find some concrete examples of anti-racist pedagogy in action. If you are interested in seeing further engagement from WAC on the topic, please let us know by reaching out to WAC Coordinator Raquel Coy at rcoy@york.cuny.edu.

Andrew Fan: I've taught a course called "Great Works of Literature" for several semesters. Traditionally, many general education literature courses at the college-level are surveys, meaning that the reading lists cover one or more "national" traditions or similar theme. These latter traditions, as one might suspect, are almost always European. Although my department encourages the inclusion of a wider range of texts than the Eurocentric ones traditionally taught, the issue of teaching a canon remains problematic even if we reach outside of the usual suspects. In this respect, I would say the most challenging aspect is putting together a syllabus that can both cover the "canon" (Western & non-Western) as well as encourage students to question the category of a "great work." Teaching diverse classrooms does, I believe, entail a responsibility on the pedagogue's part to avoid an assimilationist attitude while at the same time ensuring students are properly equipped to interface with the cultural coordinates valued by our society. Therefore, for my "Great Works" courses, I want to highlight to my students the contingent cultural processes that result in some works being considered "great" and what such a valuation might mean. I've noticed that many of my students often take "greatness" to be an attribute inherent in works of art, but in the context of decentering knowledge and cultural authority I try to guide students toward questioning how certain literary works become great, why such a category is necessary, and who or which communities it serves. These are difficult questions that require a lot of time to unpack, so in class discussions I'll try to either elevate these questions through a relevant reading, i.e. Italo Calvino's essay "Why Read the Classics?," or bring up these themes implicitly (in a metacognitive way) by asking why we're reading the titles we're reading. I've also endeavored to have students express their own cultural knowledge as relevant to course material; for instance, when teaching love poems from Antiquity/medieval Europe & the Middle East I ask students to pair a poem from the syllabus with a love song of their choosing. This way, the class not only becomes much more participatory but also, hopefully, it provides an opportunity to ground these issues in a personal and meaningful way for my students.

Alex Viteri: I once asked students to build our Theater History Class III syllabus collectively. I brought three theater history textbooks to introduce them to various approaches-- we pointed out recurrent names, looked at the textbook's strategies to organize the materials, and brainstormed on what was missing. We discussed the editors' standpoint and drew out the textbooks' biases. I remember their urge for characters and stories that were closer to their experiences of the world. Most of them didn't see themselves reflected in the syllabus. We then identified themes they wished to be included and organized to find relevant plays for all the class to read during the semester. They got excited about exploring themes like climate change, social justice, colonization, and artificial intelligence--this was my last class before the pandemic, once upon a time when these topics weren't as trendy as today. They were ahead. We narrowed our collective historical and geographical scope--a challenge!-- and split the course into smaller groups. I used this as a chance to guide them in finding reliable archives and thinking critically about the information they encountered. We looked at the series [Theater CrashCourse](#), went through the [Alternative Canon](#), listened to podcasts on Theatre History [@Howlround Commons](#), went into the Library Research Guides, and dug into other [Open Educational Resources](#).

Also, we agreed on how to engage with knowledge outside the university setting. They reached out to people in their communities, interviewed, and listened to their elders. Have they ever gone to the theater? What did they see? Was there a play that stayed with them--perhaps a movie based on a play?

Our syllabus continued in construction throughout the semester; each time we read a script--we also took some suggestions from the initial textbooks-- we discussed its relevance to be included in our syllabus. In our best days, the class became an editorial room with the agency to shape history--at least, temporally.

These days, I teach at the Arts University in Berlin. As part of the co-facilitated seminar The Dripping Web with Cory Tamler, we proposed potlucks to share meals and thoughts. We made space for the hard conversations that are otherwise banned throughout public German institutions and finished class early so people could join the demo. We recognize the need for an anti-colonialist pedagogy and commit to listening, facilitating, and encouraging spaces for dialogue with honesty, solidarity, empathy, and care.

Bibliography/Additional Resources:

[The WAC Reader: Research for the Classroom and Beyond](#)- Hostos Community College WAC/RAC

The February 2023 issue of The WAC Reader explores antiracist pedagogy in tandem with linguistic justice. The Reader features an interview with Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young, "Teaching Writing After George Floyd," which touches on the possibilities opened up by code-switching within language learning and the racist expectations of code-switching beyond the classroom. In another article, "Enacting Linguistic Justice: Transnational Scholars as Advocates for Social Change," Ligia A. Mihut positions the

pedagogical practices of transnational writing scholars as model enactments of linguistic justice.

Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom – Kyoko Kishimoto

Kyoko Kishimoto, a professor of Ethnic Studies at St. Cloud State University, published this very useful, and often cited, essay that includes a useful literature review of several lines of thought around “anti-racist pedagogy” and attempts to define the concept as it applies to classroom instruction as well as within the educational-professional sphere.

Anti-Racism and BlackLivesMatter Resources – York College Library

A library and reading guide put together by the York College Library. Includes a range of material from syllabi, key informative/theoretical texts, to documentary videos and research collections. A useful resource for learning more about anti-racism, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement, as a whole.

Code Switch – National Public Radio

A podcast that covers the intersections of race and a wide array of different aspects of American popular culture and society, produced by National Public Radio (NPR). The program offers interviews with leading figures and scholars on racism/anti-racism, think pieces, among other thought-provoking perspectives on race as an inescapable facet of contemporary life.

Freedom Within Reach: Palestine Action Toolkit – Palestinian Feminist Collective

An informative resource for educators and activists who seek a Palestinian-specific point of view on historical and systemic racial/ethnic/religious biases. The toolkit also provides an example of how anti-racism efforts can become intersectional as the Palestinian Feminist Collective presents Palestinian social justice as a not solely an anti-racist cause but as a feminist one as well.

Resources for Teaching About Race and Racism With the New York Times – The New York Times

A compendium of lesson plans, educational videos, graphs, and writing prompts that deals with the teaching of race/racism in classrooms. Much of the material offered here is introductory but forms a great starting point to those unfamiliar with anti-racist pedagogy. The intended audience also ranges from K-12 to college level students and is thus flexible for different teaching scenarios.

Transformative Learning in the Humanities – City University of New York

A grant supported initiative at CUNY focused on training faculty and facilitating equitable, creative, and student-pedagogies, specifically within a humanities context. Their webpage includes an extensive list of resources on anti-racism and specific strategies for working toward incorporating a more anti-racist stance in classroom teaching.

[Antiracism in the Contemporary University](#) – Los Angeles Review of Books

An essay series published by the LA Review of Books that interrogates and ruminates on the role racism has played in the institutional history and present of the university while also offering ways to imagine the possibilities of an antiracist future.