

In my teaching I emphasize that women, people of color, immigrants, postcolonial subjects, and people from economically marginalized backgrounds offer crucial insights into the world and the literature that reflects it. I am committed to facilitating diverse perspectives by promoting respect, openness, and humility about the embedded and particular experiences of students, scholars, and writers.

As a person of South Korean descent who does not speak Korean fluently, I encounter in my own linguistic habits the hegemony of English as a global language. Following the 38th parallel on a map, I encounter the geopolitical infrastructures that create divided knowledge and selective history. Attending to national, historical, and cultural difference has helped me attune myself and others to the politics of representation, cultural norms, and national inclusion. These interests inform my research and teaching in global Anglophone literature; yet even for my classes designed around other topics, I select readings that include historically minor or suppressed viewpoints.

In my research, I study the aesthetics and politics of environmental harm in postcolonial and global Anglophone literature. Recuperating and making visible the suppressed experiences of the global poor foregrounds representations of endurance, survival, and political optimism from within situations that seem to invite only pessimistic reading. In tracking the aesthetic, social, and political work of literary texts and political documents, I attend to overlooked modes agency and the productiveness of disappointing institutions in order to develop wide-reaching and incisive insights into the presents and futures of our polluted and warming planet. I will bring a comparative global Anglophone and environmental justice perspective to the existing strengths of the department.

As a teacher, my goal is not only to enlarge what has counted as the canon but to expose students to how the contexts from which representations come profoundly shape the kinds of narratives that are told, the legitimacy they command, and the perspectives they make visible. When my students read texts from African or Asian authors for instance, they gain access to viewpoints different from their own, learn to see familiar cultural norms as only one among many rather than as universal, and also see how ideas like race, civilization, and gender are not neutral or natural categories. When teaching Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* for example, I encourage students to think about how Achebe embeds his protagonist's masculine identity within a particular Igbo culture whose interpretive rules cannot be assumed but must be learned through our engagement with the text. In doing so, students have the opportunity to compare Achebe's portrayal of African masculinity to performances of gender familiar to them from their own backgrounds, and at the same time to consider how concepts like masculinity are not self-contained but are shaped by culture. In this way my students learn to approach concepts that are familiar in new ways and to see how seemingly neutral categories are historically produced and culturally specific.

Similarly, I encourage my students to approach cultural difference with openness and humility. In *Things Fall Apart*, non-English words remind students of the integrity and alterity of other cultures, which cannot merely be assimilated to preexisting frameworks. In exposing students to many different ethnic and national perspectives, my courses stress the importance of learning about and respecting these viewpoints without assuming that such knowledge makes us total insiders. My teaching and scholarship are always balanced between this tension of advocating for diverse viewpoints and acknowledging that we must not inadvertently speak for those whose standpoints we cannot fully inhabit. Rather, in promoting diverse perspectives I stress the urgency of amplifying voices that have

been historically repressed or dismissed, whether those of women, people of color and immigrants in the United States, or non-Western peoples.

While emphasizing the value of cultural, racial, gendered, and national difference, I also prompt students to think about the alliances, affinities, and coalitions that might be built across inter-national and intra-national divisions. For instance, when I teach classes about literature and the environment, we ask how environmental problems are both local and global. We consider how environmental racism has affected the health and resources of low-income and minority communities in places like Flint, Houston, New Orleans or Los Angeles; and we simultaneously consider how the assumptions that underly environmental racism, namely the expendability of non-white and low-income peoples, are reproduced at a global scale in the worldwide practice of offloading waste to developing countries. We consider how aesthetic and literary texts protest such racism and in this way my classes encourage students to think both about the particularity of situated forms of injustice and grounds that might be built to combat shared injustice.

Encountering this material can be disorienting, but I work to ensure that students can do so in a classroom environment that welcomes their discomfort and their questions. Not only do we take turns leading course discussion to decenter classroom hierarchy, I use a variety of activities to give students access to the material. In the classroom, I seek to prevent a few voices from dominating discussion by including in-class writing, online discussion boards, and small group work. I also hold one-on-one meetings to empower all my students, especially those not comfortable with public speaking, to explore their ideas and perspectives. And, because I recognize that all perspectives, including my own, are limited, I am committed to the ongoing work of listening to and learning from others. At the University of Chicago I attended programs and workshops on topics such as teaching race in canonical Western texts. At the University of Illinois, I have sought additional training in facilitating racial justice and supporting DACA or undocumented students. I intend to continue and expand my commitment to difference, diversity, and advocacy at the University of Illinois.

Finally, I am committed to fostering intellectual community and professional opportunities for early-career scholars and scholars who work on non-canonical texts, authors, or histories. At the University of Illinois, I initiated a junior scholar speaker series for environmental humanities scholars, and I would look forward to recreating this series along with a 20th/21st C or transnational studies workshop. By creating a forum for graduate students, visiting faculty, specialized faculty, non-tenured assistant professors, and tenured faculty to share work in a collegial, constructive and supportive environment, I will create mentoring and professional development opportunities for junior scholars. These kinds of resources are not always available for scholars who occupy vulnerable positions within the academy but are crucial for their success, and for the intellectual vibrancy of the university as well as for academia more widely.