

TEACHING

Teaching Philosophy and Pedagogical Approach

My overall pedagogical approaches to teaching and advising are guided by a transparent commitment to demonstrate *good love*, provide *healthy choices*, and offer students the opportunity for *second chances*. By demonstrating good love I mean that my interactions with students are grounded in a human-centered approach, one that places their humanity before their pedigree, productivity, or performance. Good love also involves embodying culturally-sustaining practices that recognize the unique funds of knowledge with which each student enters the course. Healthy choices builds upon good love in that I am intentional in determining (and re-determining) how each class session and assignment deadline exists in relation to the individual and collective emotional well-being of students in my courses. For instance, I routinely confer with students about how they may be feeling mentally and emotionally at different points in the semester, either in relation to the broader external environment or other classes in which they are enrolled or both. Based on this conferral, portions of the class may be reconfigured to momentarily engage in collective healing practices during critical sociopolitical moments (e.g., after a national tragedy or violent policy decision impacting students and their families) or particularly challenging inflection points across students' coursework within a given semester. By having collectively named and addressed the palpable tension as a community of learners, we are able to move forward without it as a substantive barrier to engaging in the day's lesson and course learning objectives. Lastly, and importantly, second chances present an opportunity for students to make mistakes—in relatively low-stakes environments— and receive constructive feedback in order to improve their performance. A common way this is used in my courses is a clear “revise and resubmit” policy for writing assignments on which a student either receives a low score or feels they

could have submitted better work under different circumstances. This policy has been especially helpful for students in understanding that iteration and revision are critical components of developing the type of strong and rigorous analyses necessary to understand and address intractable problems within higher education and society. Rather than punish them for imperfect skills many are still in the process of developing, I believe helping them understand the ways in which they could be more thorough and effective in communicating their ideas with the use of research evidence is most instructionally useful. In my experience, the aforementioned pedagogical framework—in conjunction with other technical dimensions of teaching (e.g., scaffolding curricula) and advising (e.g., professional development and job market preparation)—engenders an environment in which students and I can share responsibility for achieving our educational goals without sacrificing the social and emotional materiality that makes us full human beings.

Courses in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education

Since arriving in 2020, I have directly contributed to core courses a part of the Center for Higher and Postsecondary Education's master's program Diversity and Social Justice (DSJ) concentration. Namely, I teach *Power, Privilege, and the Politics of Difference in Higher Education* (EDUC 672), which has consistently enrolled more than 30 students each term, some of whom are also from other degree programs in the School of Education as well as elsewhere in the University. This course provides students with a broad survey to examine how systems and relationships of power shape research, policy, and practice in higher education and its social contexts. Additionally, I teach *Race, Racism, and Anti-Blackness in Higher Education* (EDUC 722), which also supports the DSJ masters concentration but also engages students from other programs including Public Policy, Design Science, Engineering Education, Combined Program in Education and Psychology, Joint Program in English and Education, and Educational Studies. This course offers students an opportunity more deeply understand *how* racism

functions in higher education as well as to learn and employ interpretive and analytical strategies informed by anti-colonial/decolonial and anti-racist frameworks, critical theories of race (e.g., hegemonic whiteness, colorblind and post-racism, and racial capitalism), racialized geographies, and other perspectives to critique the field and function of American colleges and universities. I have also previously taught *Activism and Social Movements in College* (EDUC 471/ EDUC 771) as an undergraduate and graduate hybrid course, which provides students an understanding of the empirical, historical, practical, and theoretical foundations of organized resistance in the context of contemporary contestations with power and today's volatile sociopolitical terrain. Lastly, I have served as the instructor of record for a multiple independent studies at the masters and doctoral levels to support students' interests in deepening their understanding of contemporary issues within the field. Below, I explore each course and the structure of the independent studies in greater detail.

Activism and Social Movements in College

Activism and Social Movements in College focuses on noteworthy events and social movements during the 20th and early 21st centuries (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, Gay Liberation Movement, Ethnic Studies Movement, Black Lives Matter Movement, and Undocumented Students Movement) that have intersected with activism in higher and postsecondary education contexts. Both the historical and spatial relationships across movements as well as the issues/grievances around which these movements coalesced are explored through course texts that include academic articles, essays, books, news media, television, and film. Additionally, the course is concerned with increasing students' theoretical and conceptual understanding of *how* activism and social movements develop from sociological, political, and critical media studies perspectives. Particular attention is paid to the role of media, both traditional and digital, in shaping issue narratives, movement frames, and as an important dimension of movement strategies and tactics (e.g., protest as nonviolent civil disobedience).

Through co- and extra-curricular activities connected to assigned texts, students enrolled in the course also observe and participate in political activities on-campus as well as those in the communities within which the university is situated. This requires students to engage with the subject of the course as a material object in real-time and apply what is learned during the course in their developing political praxis as new or experienced educational equity advocates and community organizers.

Power, Privilege, and the Politics of Difference in Higher Education

Contemporary educational environments arguably present us with greater challenges related to power, diversity, and equity than in any other time in U.S. history. Others might say that the challenges facing our educational system today are essentially the same tensions with which it has unsuccessfully struggled for the last century. Therefore, *Power, Privilege, and the Politics of Difference in Higher Education* aims to provide students with an opportunity to explore those tensions through the range of dimensions in which problems of “diversity” manifest among students, faculty and staff in today’s postsecondary educational environments. The course thinks of the interaction of diversity and learning as not only involving the differences that students bring to learning environments, but also the ways we as educators respond to those differences in the context of policies, systems, histories, structures and legislation. The course examines educational access and equity in the contexts of culture, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, ability, and gender—viewing these contexts through inter-relationships among divisions of labor, class structures, power relationships, group marginalization, cultural images, residential patterns, health, family life, employment, education, and values. In addition to the challenges related to diversity, students also explore aspects of diversity as potential assets in creating rich and productive learning environments.

In addition to research and theory, the goals of this course address three specific problems of practice: the disparate outcomes experienced by different groups as they engage our educational institutions; individual and institutional reactions to (and interactions with) the increasing diversity of our educational environments, among college students and in the postsecondary workforce, and; the common difficulty in having meaningful conversations across sociopolitical difference. Altogether these problems of practice center around individuals' and institutions' core values as they relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as the difference between that to which we aspire and what *actually* happens in educational environments. These problems of practice are directly explored through collaborative case studies (see Figure 1.). In diverse teams, students work together to apply the knowledge they gain from course readings and discussion to frame and analyze the problem as well as generate and propose possible solutions to contemporary contemporary issues of power and privilege in higher education.

Figure 1. EDUC 672 Collaborative Case Study Example, Fall 2022

EDUC 672

CAPITALISM, CLASS, & SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Team 1 Case Presentation

INTRODUCTION

The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) recently released a report on 'Student List' policy changes that could significantly impact equity in college recruitment.

"The [pandemic-driven] surge in test-optional policies could persuade more people — especially low-income and minority students — to opt out of testing, meaning colleges might not be able to find them."

Hoover (2022)

THE PROBLEM

Student Lists are the main tool that universities use to build their pool of potential applicants, but inequalities exist in Student Lists in a variety of ways:

- Geo-demographic categories
- Assumptions about meritocracy
- Standardized tests & test optional policies
- Capitalism

How might this impact students marginalized by class and/or race?

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

- Student lists generate **Leads/Prospects**, and so affect the diversity of the pool of talent that applies and matriculates to the school.
- **Hawell et al. (2020)** indicates that students who are contacted via this student list/student search process are:
 - 23% more likely (23%) to apply
 - 20 more likely to enroll
- **Langston (1988)**: "Class affects what we perceive — and what we have available to us — as choices. Upon graduation from high school, I was awarded a scholarship to attend any college, private or public, in the state of California. Yet it never occurred to me or my family that it made any difference which college you went to."

Leads/Prospects
Inquiries
Applicants
Enrolled Applicants (23% more likely)
Enrolled Applicants (20 more likely)
Enrolled Students

Case study slides from a presentation in which students used critical perspectives on capitalism, class, and socioeconomic status to examine how universities' use of student lists as recruiting tools to perpetuate inequitable access to higher education.

Race, Racism, and Anti-Blackness in Higher Education

Race, Racism, and Anti-Blackness in Higher Education offers students an opportunity more deeply understand how race and racism function in higher education and its social contexts. Through theoretical grounding in anti-colonial/decolonial and anti-racist frameworks, critical theories of race (e.g., hegemonic whiteness, colorblind and post-racism, and racial capitalism), racialized geographies, and other critical perspectives, students develop analyses to interrogate colleges and universities as racialized organizations, racialized policymaking in higher education, and racial inequities in postsecondary teaching and learning.

This course concerns itself with not *if*, but *what, when, where, why* and *how* racism persists as well as *who* the arbiters of interpersonal, systemic, structural, and institutional racism are. While this implicitly attends to many, if not most, white individual and institutional beneficiaries of racism, it also alludes to the ways racism and anti-Blackness are internalized and perpetuated by racially minoritized people and the organizations of which they are a part. Particular attention is paid to historical, legal, sociological, anthropological, and Black feminist perspectives on race, ethnicity, racial formation, stratification, and socialization in higher and postsecondary contexts.

As one of few School of Education courses, and one of several offered across the university, with an explicit focus on racism and anti-Blackness, this course has drawn enrollment from across degree level (i.e., masters and doctoral) as well as degree programs. For this reason, as well as student advocacy following their completion of the course, students from various institutional locations to include students enrolled in the Masters of Public Policy at the Ford School as well as doctoral students enrolled in the Joint Program in English and Education, the Combined Program in Education and Psychology, Design Science, and Mechanical Engineering have all joined CSHPE students in taking the course since it began being offered during the Winter 2021 semester.

Independent Studies in Higher Education

To support students' increasing interests in critical approaches to the study of higher education, and to fill current curricular gaps, I have served as the instructor for several independent study courses. In my first year teaching this included the creation of a focused doctoral independent study entitled *Campus Policing* and a masters-level independent study on *LGBTQ Issues in Higher Education*, the latter of which served as an antecedent for the current CSHPE course taught by an adjunct instructor. This academic year, I have supported five (5) masters students and three (3) doctoral students in independent studies with individual foci to include *Civic and Service-Learning in College*, *African American Women in Higher Education*, *Explorations of Quare and Racial Battle Fatigue Among Trans and Nonbinary College Students*, *Comparative Study of Higher Education in South Asia*, *Servingness at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)*, *Manifestations of Racial Neoliberalism at Historically White Institutions*, *Race and White Institutional Presence in the Study of Higher Education*, and several other diversity and social justice themed plans of study. I generally met/meet with students in one-hour, bi-weekly (sometimes more frequently) sessions to discuss their topics, co-develop reading lists, determine course deliverables, troubleshoot problems of practice and discuss their ongoing interpretations of the material. During semesters in which multiple students were enrolled in the same section, I also hosted monthly one-hour meetings for students to reflect and learn from each other's ongoing study in ways similar to a seminar.

Evaluation of Teaching and Quality of Instruction

According to student evaluations of my teaching, each administration of the aforementioned courses¹ was well-received and delivered in ways that resonated with students enrolled (see

¹ Student evaluations are not administered for Independent Study courses. However, I perceive the consistent request from students to enroll in an Independent Study with me as evidence and affirmation of their trust and appreciation of my pedagogical practices.

Table 1). Most notably, the reported median scores for my courses have consistently been above school/college and university-wide medians. Full copies of the Office of the Registrar teaching evaluations for each course have been provided as supporting documentation appended to this dossier. Additionally, students also reported overwhelmingly favorable comments about my instruction in open-ended responses (see Table 2.).

Table 1. Student Evaluations of Teaching, Fall 2020-Fall 2022

Course #	Course Title	Term	N	n	Q1	Q2	Q217	Q4
EDUC 771a	Power, Privilege, and the Politics of Difference in Higher Education	FA20	35	28	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
EDUC 771b	Race, Racism, and Anti-Blackness in Higher Education	WN21	22	18	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.9
EDUC 771c EDUC 471	Activism and Social Movements in College	WN21	18	11	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9
EDUC 770	Independent Study, Higher and Continuing Education	WN21	3	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
EDUC 672	Power, Privilege, and the Politics of Difference in Higher Education	FA22	33	28	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9

- Q1. Overall, this was an excellent course.
 Q2. Overall, the course instructor was an excellent teacher.
 Q217. The course instructor treated students with respect.
 Q4. I had a strong desire to take this course.

Response values are median scores calculated on a five-point scale from survey data in the term the course was administered.

Table 2. Student Comments on Quality of Instruction, Fall 2020-Fall 2022

Course	Term	Comments on the Quality of Instruction
EDUC 771a	FA20	<i>Dr. Davis is truly knowledgeable about the subjects that he teaches and makes these topics accessible to everyone in the class, regardless of previous knowledge/comfort levels we come into the class with. The assignments help us to dive deeper into what we are learning in the classroom and also help us to make connections to our personal and professional lives. He is also very approachable and willing to help you understand the material and your assignments if you are confused. This is easily one of the best experiences I have had with an instructor.</i>

Course	Term	Comments on the Quality of Instruction
EDUC 771b	WN21	<p><i>I cannot say enough positive things about Dr. Davis. His expertise in the areas of race, racism, and anti-Blackness in higher education, as well as organizational structures, barriers and more for students, staff, faculty, and every constituent in the higher education community was incredible. I felt inspired by his work, comforted by his grace-giving when the semester's workload was getting heavy, and never once felt uneasy in his presence. Dr. Davis is a professor I hope to one day emulate in my own teaching, and an individual I hope to remain in contact with long after my time at Michigan. From his knowledge to his teaching methods, CSHPE and Michigan are beyond lucky to have Dr. Davis.</i></p> <p>***</p> <p><i>Dr. Davis has been the most supportive instructor I have had in academia. He allows students to show up however they need to, which was so important during this time. The content of the class was so important and he was always able to give space for what was happening in the world.</i></p>
EDUC 471 EDUC 771c	WN21	<p><i>Dr. Davis is a phenomenal professor. He brought a unique perspective to this course from professional, personal, and research experience. He also genuinely showed care for all students that has been rare in my higher ed career.</i></p> <p>***</p> <p><i>Dr. Davis is an excellent professor who is knowledgeable in higher education and many other areas. Dr. Davis' commitment to liberation is evident and consistent. He cares for his students and is always willing to support and offer guidance. He is a gift to humanity and this university.</i></p>
EDUC 672	FA22	<p><i>Representation matters and should reflect in the student body, faculty, and staff of any institution that is predominate of a privileged race. Dr. Davis is incisive, has a brilliant way of thinking and communicating, and brings a perspective that is thoughtfully conveyed throughout his class.</i></p> <p>***</p> <p><i>This was one of the most well-structured, well-organized, and educational courses I've taken in the SOE. Dr. Davis is both a content expert and an expert instructor able to teach in a way that is clear, engaging, and supports students toward greater understanding. I feel that this was one of the most important and meaningful courses of my Master's program.</i></p>

Contributions to Mentoring and Advising

In a formal capacity, I am currently support seventeen (N=18) doctoral students at the University of Michigan (n=15) and elsewhere (n=3) as an advisor, committee member, or committee chair (see Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5). This includes currently serving on seven (7) dissertation committees at the University, two (2) of which I also serve as chair to include a dissertation in Design Science in the College of Engineering. I am also a member on one (1)

committee in the Department of Sociology, another in the Department of Educational Studies, and a third in the Combined Program in Education and Psychology. Lastly, I serve as an outside committee member on three (3) dissertation committees for students at other institutions.

Lastly, I currently or have previously served on three (3) qualifying exam committees, two of which I am currently serving as chair.

Table 3. CSHPE Doctoral Advising and Dissertation Service by Status

Student	Program	Admit Year	Status	Role
Angie Kim	Higher Education	2021	Pre-Candidacy	Advisor
Amber Williams ¹	Higher Education, Social Work	2020	Qualifying	Advisor
Brandy Jones	Higher Education	2022	Pre-Candidacy	Advisor
Cassandra Arroyo ²	Higher Education	2020	Qualifying	Advisor
Jarell Skinner-Roy	Higher Education	2020	Qualifying	Chair
Kati Lebioda	Higher Education	2019	Candidate	Member
Laura Lee Smith	Higher Education	2020	Qualifying	Chair
Liz Jones	Higher Education	2019	Candidate	Reader
Taylor Lewis	Higher Education	2021	Pre-Candidacy	Advisor
Yvonne Garcia	Higher Education	2018	Candidate	Chair

¹ Assuming role of committee member at the conclusion of Winter 2023 term.

² Assuming the role of chair at the conclusion of Winter 2023 term.

Table 4. U-M Doctoral Advising and Dissertation Service by Status

Student	Program	Admit Year	Status	Role
Aya Waller-Bey	Sociology	2019	Candidate	Member
Gabrielle Bernal	Educational Studies	2019	Candidate	Member
Aaron Bush	Education and English	2021	Pre-Candidacy	Reader
Kaylla Cantilina	Design Science	2018	Candidate	Chair
Rebeca Maxon	Education and Psychology	2019	Candidate	Member

Table 5. Extra-Institutional Doctoral Advising and Dissertation Service by Status

Student	Program	Institution	Status	Role
Brenda Wadley	Higher Education	University of Arizona	Candidate	Member
Janay M. Watts	Interdisciplinary Studies	University of Pennsylvania	Candidate	Member
Mai H. Vang	Higher Education	UMass, Boston	Candidate	Member
Victoria Alexander	Higher Education	University of Maryland	Candidate	Member

I also supervise three (3) masters-level research assistants and six (6) Graduate Student Research Assistants (GSRAs) in my lab, with several of whom I have collaborated (or am collaborating) on publications for academic and public venues (i.e., Arroyo, Jones, and Skinner-Roy). Further, I have supported five CSHPE doctoral students in securing internal grant funding through Anti-Racism Collaborative's Graduate Research Grant (i.e., Garcia, Lewis, and Kim) and the School of Education's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, Justice and Equity's and Racism and Social Justice Institute's Anti-Racism Research Mini-Grant program (i.e., Arroyo and Skinner-Roy). I also recently introduced and supported an advisee's (i.e., Jones) application whose research focuses on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) for a competitive, non-residential graduate fellowship at the Center for HBCU Research, Leadership, and Policy at historically-Black Howard University, which she was ultimately awarded. And, finally, from 2020-2022 I served as a faculty mentor for Dr. Sy Stokes as a postdoctoral fellow in the National Center for Institutional Diversity. This relationship resulted in his successful job placement in a research executive position, a peer-reviewed journal publication, and securing a research several collaborative research contracts.