

## Teaching Statement

As an undergraduate, I appreciated the opportunities to have my views challenged in the classroom but I also longed for the rare opportunities to engage with professors with whom I racially and politically identify. Those opportunities opened up various faculty mentoring avenues which led me to pursue a graduate degree in Sociology. I see my role in the classroom as creating this type of environment in which students feel comfortable discussing complex issues pertaining to race, citizenship, class, and gender while making arguments based in theory and praxis.

As a teacher, my goal is for students to understand sociological theories by relating it to their own lives and by learning from each other. In the *Voices in Public Policy* course I have taught in Spanish and as a teaching assistant in *Nations, Regions, and the Global Economy*, students bring in their real-world experiences, or the lack thereof, to develop personal connections to theoretical concepts. I begin by telling the students my personal connection to the topics to be discussed and then facilitate the sharing of any experiences and/or personal connections they may also have. In these courses and in courses I have guest lectured, students also comment that they enjoy reading/listening to oral histories of immigrants through the [New Roots/Nuevas Raíces](#) collection housed at UNC-Chapel Hill, analyzing themes depicted in a mural activity created by farmworker youth, and finding their own data to answer questions of who is represented within our political processes and how do we “solve” complex immigration challenges. The students recognize that although we are studying institutions, theoretical concepts, and global policies, they should hear and understand these concepts through the voices and stories of those most impacted. These instructional materials and popular education techniques provide alternative routes for students who may not be currently enrolled in experiential learning opportunities like service-learning courses—my preferred class method—which offer unique opportunities for students to both learn with local communities and to connect those experiences to materials taught in class.

I also challenge my students to apply what they have learned in the classroom into their real-world interactions. This is ultimately easier in experiential/service-learning courses or internships where that is expected of the students. For example, during my time as the teaching assistant for Dr. Hannah Gill’s course [Latin American Migrant Perspectives: Ethnography and Action](#), I was able to incorporate practices from my participation in the Service-Learning Faculty Fellow Program as well as an independent study with Dr. Betsy Alden, a pioneer of service-learning at Duke University, to enhance the student’s service-learning experiences. This was specifically useful in the past three years when I’ve co-led the student’s trip to Mexico. There, I lead reflection sections focused on their experiences in rural communities impacted both by economic challenges and high rates of out-migration. For many students, this trip ultimately changed their thoughts on voluntary and involuntary migration, and they were able to gain a better understanding of our complex immigration system—an understanding many of them use when they enter into an immigration related field after graduation.

I have utilized these teaching experiences as a learning process for both the students and myself, especially when discussing crimmigration and migration control on a global scale. The criminalization of immigration law and procedure is typically new to students, and relatively new in the field of Sociology, but I begin by relating it to two areas that they are more familiar with: immigration and mass incarceration. Most students recognize that these two areas are in dire need of reform but it is in the intersection of criminalizing immigration law and procedure where they recognize the limitations to reform one without considering reforming the other. Although we struggle to find feasible solutions to address these challenges, we do succeed in working through

the complexities. In these sessions, students are expected to leave with a basic understanding of both the criminal justice system and the immigration system along with the places where they [intersect](#). I assess this through written reflection assignments and group discussions in both small and large learning environments. Allowing ample time during each class session for questions provides the students with an opportunity to respond directly to their classmate's concerns but also highlights the areas in which I did not provide clear instruction. To that end, I provide the students with follow-up responses after each class session along with all the materials I present in class.

I also employ methods of reflection and co-creation when teaching about qualitative methodology. Recently, I was able to do so in an intensive 6-week program called [Story+](#) through the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute. Throughout this program, I mentored three undergraduates through qualitative, humanities-based research and trained them in qualitative analysis and digital storytelling tools to produce a policy memo for a statewide progressive research and advocacy organization. Although the ultimate product was a written report, by exposing them to digital storytelling tools like the publicly available resources featured in [Knightlab](#)—a collection of tools for better storytelling and data visualization—they are better prepared to consider the needs of different audiences as they continue their studies and careers in public policy. Overwhelmingly, these students improved their skills in the following arenas: ability to connect my academic experiences to broader social issues, storytelling techniques, and web-based and multimedia tools. Students strongly agreed that I was an effective mentor, available when needed, provided enough direction to guide the team, and allowed the undergraduate students to take the lead in shaping the project (additional feedback available upon request).

I have guest lectured for a variety of courses, including Nations, Regions, and the Global Economy; Introduction to Environmental Racism, Comparative Race and Ethnicity, Introduction to Sociology, Latin American Migrant Perspectives: Ethnography and Action; and Issues of Education and Immigration. Therefore, I am prepared to teach courses on *Introduction to Sociology*, *Social Problems*, *Citizenship in the United States*; *Crimmigration from a Sociological Perspective*; *Migration Control from a Global Perspective*, *Contemporary Race Theory*; *Critical Race Theory*; *Race and Ethnic Relations*; *Law & Society*; and qualitative courses focused on: interviewing techniques, content analysis, and archival research. Similarly, I have ample experience in service-learning/experiential learning environments and incorporating new digital technology.