

## Diversity Statement

Dan Melzer

My approach to diversity in my scholarship, teaching, and administrative work is informed by my experience teaching for over two decades with linguistically diverse students in California, the Writing Studies scholarship that argues for the value of linguistic pluralism in writing classrooms, and my own research applying theories of white privilege, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Critical Systems Theory to writing program administration.

The multiliteracies framework of the New London Group has influenced my approach to linguistic and cultural diversity. The New London Group argues that in the context of 21st century globalized literacies, linguistic diversity and the ability to cross linguistic borders is an asset. The New London Group argues against imposing a single, monolingual standard, and instead encourages teachers to draw on our students' linguistic pluralism with an expansive conception of literacies. Multiliteracies has much in common with the translingual approach of Bruce Horner et al. which sees language difference not as a barrier to overcome but a resource to tap into. I am also influenced by anti-racist Writing Studies scholars (Inoue, Ashante Young, Villanueva, Baker-Bell) and the culturally responsive pedagogy movement in education that encourages teachers to draw on students' diverse cultural and language traditions in the classroom (Moll, Ladson-Billings, Ogbu). To enact these multiliterate, translingual, anti-racist, and culturally responsive pedagogies in my classroom, I ask students to critically self-reflect on their literacy histories, connect and contrast their home discourse communities with academic discourse communities, and both understand and interrogate the conventions of academic discourse. In my FYC courses we read diverse perspectives from a variety of rhetorical traditions: Paulo Freire on critical literacy, the Conference on College Composition and Communications' statement on Students' Rights to their Own Language, Gloria Anzaldúa on the silencing of marginalized voices, Vershawn Ashanti Young on respecting diverse dialects, and the video Writing Across Borders on contrastive rhetorics across cultures. I expect students to exhibit linguistic and discourse agility and write for a range of discourse communities, which might include academic or professional audiences, peer audiences, family or friends, or communities that students are already members of or wish to join.

In my writing program administration, I have worked to support linguistic diversity and critique white/settler privilege by developing alternatives to deficit-model remediation courses, challenging the use of timed-writing exams, and creating anti-racist policies. As the director of a FYC program with a diverse student population made up of indigenous, international, and multilingual Generation 1.5 students, I worked with the FYC teachers to create the following program statement on diversity:

*The First-Year Composition program is committed to fostering a classroom environment that's safe and intellectually challenging for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, documentation status, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, or religion. At UC Davis we're fortunate to find ourselves in diverse classrooms that include a range of linguistic backgrounds. This learning environment reflects the globalized nature of communication in today's world and the language diversity of California and the United States. The First-Year Composition program understands that academic language acquisition takes many years, and that there is not a single, "correct" English but rather language varieties within the U.S as well as different dialects of global*

*Englishes. The First-Year Composition program recognizes that language standardization involves issues of politics and power, and we believe in both providing students access to the dialect of American academic English and a student's right to their own language.*

An area of scholarship related to linguistic and cultural diversity, the concept of white privilege, is critical for me to be aware of as a cis male who is a member of an ethnic group that experiences privilege. I am especially focused on scholarship on white privilege and teaching and writing about academic discourse (Condon, Giroux, Grimm). In my own research into writing center tutors' "white talk" about academic discourse, I found that white tutors were far more likely than BIPOC tutors to think of American academic discourse as a neutral standard and a better way of communicating than other discourses. My reading of white privilege scholarship has helped me become more aware of implicit biases and systemic racism that can manifest itself in the way we assess students' writing (timed tests disproportionately placing BIPOC students into remedial coursework), the way we respond to and evaluate students (unconscious biases that prevent us from regarding the writing of BIPOC students as highly as we regard the writing of white students), and classroom management (failing to confront racism in class discussions or in student writing). I have often addressed these issues of white privilege in my scholarship, whether it was my research on white talk in the writing center, my Critical Discourse Analysis of the language of timed testing and remediation in California, or my application of Critical Systems Theory to writing programs in articles and in my co-authored book *Sustainable WAC*. As an able-bodied, cis male and a member of an ethnic group that experiences white privilege, I need to be especially aware of ways that my attitudes toward women, BIPOC students, LGBTQ students, students who have disabilities, and students who intersect with more than one of these identities have been shaped by systemic racism, sexism, and ableism. I am also conscious and critical of participation in settler colonialism and apartheid of my own ethnic group toward the Palestinian people, and I participate in political activism with groups promoting peace and justice in the Middle East (Jewish Voice for Peace, Sacramento Regional Coalition for Palestine Rights, Council on American-Islamic Relations California). I make a concerted effort to do anti-racist ally work beyond but related to the linguistic justice work I do in my professional life. I have done ally work with Black Lives Matter Sacramento, Color of Change, Black Voters Matter, and Movement Labs. Antiracism and linguistic justice shapes my teaching, scholarship, and political activism.