Diversity Statement

I strongly believe higher education should stimulate more nuanced and creative modes of problem-solving that prioritize engaging with opinions and experiences vastly different from one's own background. However to do this we, as a teachers and civic actors, should approach inclusion first as a self-reflective imperative. As a lesbian woman, I have firsthand experience of how easily students can pick up on and become demoralized by the implicit judgements that relegate certain experiences and backgrounds as belonging to the outer periphery of intellectual inquiry. At the same time, I know my experience is also that of an educated and privileged white woman. In my reading practices, I diligently seek out and read authors such as Tressie McMillan Cottom, Roxane Gay, Brittney Cooper, Sara Ahmed, bell hooks, Ijeoma Oluo, etc., that help me to confront how my experience of the academy and its barriers differs from others.

What I have learned to acknowledge is that an institution can be both diverse and non-inclusive. Diversity is the fact of variance; inclusion requires attention to structural issues in the discipline, the academic culture, and specific institutions that continue to marginalize those with diverse backgrounds. I am committed to fostering policies and practices that increase accessibility and student success rates for traditionally underrepresented persons such as those with disabilities, LGBTQ students, and those of diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In pursuit of these goals, my primary principles as an instructor are to 1) convey accessible and transparent course expectations to students 2) design my courses to reflect diverse perspectives 3) work to host events, forums, and workshops that prioritize the contributions of marginalized voices.

I utilize a variety of exercises designed to convey accessible and transparent course expectations so that students from all levels of preparation know how to fulfill course objectives. For example, many students in my Introduction to International Relations sections had no prior experience in political science or college instruction. To convey the specific learning goals for course reading assignments, I created an optional note-taking template for students and gave a 15-minute tutorial on how to use it. So that students and I were able to gauge areas for improvement early on, I employed a series of small ungraded assessments, like short "note-card" quizzes, asking students to submit questions ahead of section, and assigning students rotating discussion section roles. Similarly, feelings of isolation from nonminority peers and a discomfort with seeking help from faculty mentors is a well-documented barrier for students who are struggling to navigate the "unwritten rules" of college and form navigational capital. To provide an inclusive environment, I utilize assignments that emphasize collaborative learning-by-doing rather than isolated work, such as group projects. For paper assignments, I require students to either submit a précis and/or meet me during office hours to discuss their topic. These frequent low-stakes activities cultivate core academic skills that students can bring to graded assessments, and additionally aid in developing student's meta-cognition, or their ability to self-assess their level of preparation.

Historically, the boundaries of "politics" were demarcated through exclusionary dichotomies of public/private, rational/irrational, mind/body, masculine/feminine, west/rest, which is easily reproduced in syllabuses. I design my courses to reflect the vast perspectives surrounding core themes in politics. Facilitating this requires prioritizing the contributions of women, people of color, and scholars from the global south to the study of politics. Throughout all of my courses, the voices of feminist, post-colonial, critical, and queer frameworks and authors are integrated within each module. In this manner, I ensure that that these voices are not cast as

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peripheral or on the margins of the field's debates, but are central to understanding the stakes and consequences of how social science research is framed and conducted.

Finally, succeeding at inclusion requires creating space for community discourse. At Northwestern, I have devoted considerable time and gained experience in fostering public and community reflection issues of justice and inequality: organizing events, workshops, and conferences both inside and beyond my field's confines, engaging with lawyers, journalists, visual media artists, and scholars from a multitude of disciplines to support events on the Muslim American community's experience under FBI surveillance, islamophobia in the media, and the struggles of minority communities under conditions of religious intolerance. This an extension of my research, which is driven by my concern with the processes of racialization, securitization, and exclusion many marginalized and/or suspect communities face. As an ally to practitioners, communities, and other researchers on the front lines of these issues, I acknowledge that often times the greatest contribution I can make is not my own voice, but my ability to create a platform for others.

These commitments reflect my goal to stimulate individual and community reflection on our role as adults with a shared stake in political, socio-economic, and cultural issues.