

Dear Members of the University Senate,

I am honored to be nominated for the F. Jay Taylor Undergraduate Teaching Award for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Please find below my statement of teaching philosophy addressing not just the importance of undergraduate teaching, but more specifically the importance of undergraduate Liberal Arts teaching at Louisiana Tech. As I am consistently experimenting with my teaching, my philosophy statement includes descriptions of the various ways in which I try to get my students to engage with texts, as well as what they have produced in response to those classroom innovations.

A list of publications and conferences as they relate to my teaching interests and pedagogy follows.

Also included are the my undergraduate courses from the last five years (excluding summers) along with their enrollment, retention rating, and student evaluation rating as well. This is in reverse order beginning with Winter 2020 through Winter 2015.

And if the committee would please accept my apology for this not being on letterhead as I have no access to any right now, I would be very appreciative.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nicole de Fee

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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Think critically.

Write clearly and effectively.

Read closely.

In a nutshell, those are my goals for all of my students. If they can do these three things better at the end of the quarter than when they first walked in, I consider that a success. As my average retention rate is 91.4% over the last nine years that I've been at Louisiana Tech, I feel that this also indicates that my students, by and large, find value in this as well. But that is not all that I want my students to leave my classrooms with. One of the central purposes of undergraduate education broadly, and the humanities specifically, is to challenge students to see beyond their current world view (however broad or narrow it may be). Literature is unequivocally the best way to do this. Research consistently shows that people who read widely have more empathy than those who do not. One of the reasons I pursue what I pursue in my research and teach what I teach is because I am drawn to literature and theory that work toward these ideals.

One of the ways in which I continue to push students to think critically is to teach outside of the cannon and use pop culture to examine the ways in which literature gets to become "literature." I like to think that I continually push the limits as to what constitutes a "text" because I truly believe that everything we encounter in our lives can be read as a text. And I want my students to read their worlds critically. Yes, there is a significant amount about life and literature and culture which we can learn from the canon, but my job, as a professor, and as a human being, is to push those boundaries further and get students to leave their comfort zones (which can ironically include only pursuing the comfort of canonical works). For example, in my upper division and honors classes, one might find Gillian Flynn's 2012 novel *Gone Girl* next to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. Or, one might see Charles Brockden Brown's 18<sup>th</sup> Century novel *Edgar Huntly* next to the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and similarly George Lippard's 1845 novel *Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall* next to Roman Polanski's adaptation of Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*. In the American literature survey class at the 200 level, students will find themselves reading Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" next to Mike Judge's film *Office Space* or contemplating how Roger Corman and Vincent Price help us to have a contemporary understanding of Edgar Allen Poe.

Collaboration is a skill that is widely valued across the disciplines, except that much of the liberal arts seems to be viewed, from both students within and without, as a relatively solitary discipline. I have spent the last couple of years working hard to challenge that in my undergraduate classes. In addition to collaborative group projects, students often have the option to write extended (25+ page) collaborative essays focusing on their research for the class, adding another layer of engagement with research, text, and audience. This past fall, my Honors students took collaboration to a new level. The class of five decided to work as one cohesive group for their presentation and their paper. The students did so much collaborative work that their presentation spanned two class periods during which time they presented their research not only to myself but to Dr. Ruffeth, the Director of the Honors College as well. At the end of the quarter, the group produced a cohesive 50 page portfolio of their research.

Perhaps what I consider to be my greatest innovation in the classroom is not anything that I have actually innovated or created, but rather what I have found the students want to create given the space to do so, and it is the most analog, low key innovation in a world where all things digital are held to the highest standard: it is "The Creative Response." One may ask, "what is innovative about that?" Well, let me explain. What I have found through this particular project is that it gives students

a completely open and extraordinary way in which to engage with a text. One of my students created a piece of pottery—actually working with clay, painting, firing, the entire process—based on Louise Erdrich’s novel *Love Medicine*. I have had other non-art major students interpret texts through other art forms as well—painting, collage, and shadow boxes. One student created a board game based on Edgar Allen Poe’s novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. And those who are more digitally inclined have created movie trailers and film shorts for texts, playlists for the characters, Twitter accounts for Ben Franklin and Arthur Gordon Pym, and Facebook pages based on Hannah Webster Foster’s 18<sup>th</sup> Century novel *The Coquette*. I love seeing how the students see various texts. And I love seeing what is important to them about the literature and *why* those things are important to them.

My end goal, though, is always the same: to invite students to think critically about literature and themselves, write about topics important to them clearly and effectively, and read closely and purposefully.

The following publications and conference presentations represent my research as it relates to my pedagogy and teaching interests.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- “Science Fiction Film and Television in the 1980s and 1990s.” *The Cambridge History of Science Fiction*. Eds. Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link. Cambridge UP. Print.
- “Melville’s Final Frontier.” *Critical Insights: Billy Budd, Sailor*. Ed. Brian Yothers. Salem Press, 2017, pp. 147-158. Print.
- “Transgressing the Border: The Complexities of Colonial Critique in *Typee*.” *Critical Insights: Herman Melville*. Ed. Eric Carl Link. Salem Press, 2013, pp. 82-97. Print.
- “Teaching Naturalism in the Theory Classroom.” *ALN: American Literary Naturalism*, vol. 7, no. 1-2, Fall 2012, pp. 5-8. Print.
- “The Brute Nature of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Herland.” *ALN: American Literary Naturalism*, vol. 6, no. 1-2, Fall 2011, pp. 12-17. Print.

## **CONFERENCES**

- “Deviant Spaces: Sex, Art, and the Home in Frank Norris’ *Vandover and the Brute*.” American Literature Association International Conference, Boston, Massachusetts. May 2019.
- “Melville’s Final Frontier.” COLA Research Symposium, Louisiana Tech University. April 2018.
- “Norris’s Domestic Discomfort in *Vandover, and the Brute*.” American Literature Association International Conference, Boston, Massachusetts. May 2017. (Accepted but unable to present).
- “*Erotic Economy*”: *Domesticity, Desire, and the Women of McTeague*.” American Literature Association International Conference, San Francisco, California. May 2016.
- “From Los Muertos to *The Cabin in the Woods*: Naturalism’s Frontier Anxiety and Monstrous Obsessions.” American Literature Association International Conference, Boston, Massachusetts. May 2015.
- “Grotesque Monstrosities, Technology of the Body, and Norris’s *Vandover and the Brute*.” American Literature Association International Conference, Washington D.C. May 2014.
- “SWARMS! And the Spatial Subversion of Utopia.” Eaton Science Fiction Conference. Riverside, CA. April 2013.
- “Fear, Desire, and Zombie: Undead Literary Naturalism.” American Literature Association International Conference. San Francisco, CA. May 2012.
- “Brute Violence: From *McTeague* to Michael Myers and the Horror of Literary Naturalism.” American Literature Association International Conference, San Francisco, CA. May 2010.

- “‘Because It’s Bigger Than Hip-Hop’: Revolutionary Rhetoric in Early African-American Protest Literature and Rap.” College English Association (CEA) National Conference, Indianapolis, IN. March 2005.
- “Rapper’s Delight—Pop Culture Pedagogy.” Composition and Pedagogy Conference, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. October 2004.
- “Parallel Women; or The Spatial Construction and Experience of the Female Body in Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*.” 5<sup>th</sup> International Postmodernism Conference. Erlangen, Germany. November 2002.

The following represents my undergraduate teaching over the last five years at Louisiana Tech.

Quarter	Course		Enrollment	Retention	Eval Rating
<b>Winter 2020</b>	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	35	94%	4
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	35	88.50%	3.9
	HNRS 204-H01	Foundations of American Civilization	20	95%	3.7
	English 434-001	American Lit Beginnings to 1865	20	100%	4
<b>Fall 2019</b>	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	33	91%	3.7
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	33	85%	4
	English 475-001	The American Gothic	10	100%	4
	English 489-H01	Native American & Chicana American Women Writers	5	100%	4
	English 212-002	Intro to American Literature	35	94%	3.9
<b>Spring 2019</b>	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	34	94%	3.9
	English 436-001	American Lit WWII to Present	26	100%	4
	HNRS 204-H02	Foundations of American Civilization	18	94%	4
	English 101-006	Freshman Composition	25	96%	3.6
	<b>Winter 2019</b>	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	25	97%
English 435-001		American Lit 1865-WWII	25	100%	4
HNRS 204-H01		Foundations of American Civilization	20	100%	3.8
English 101-015		Freshman Composition	26	100%	3.6

<b>Fall 2018</b>	English 212-002	Intro to American Literature	35	80%	3.9
	English 409-001	19th Century American Lit	19	89%	3.7
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	35	94%	3.9
<b>Spring 2018</b>	English 212-005	Intro to American Literature	25	94%	3.9
	English 429-001	20th Century American Fiction	25	92%	4.0
	HNRS 204-H02	Foundations of American Civilization	18	100%	4.0
	English 101-006	Freshman Composition	25	100%	3.6
<b>Winter 2018</b>	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	35	88.5%	4.0
	English 212-005	Intro to American Literature	35	88.5%	3.8
<b>Fall 2017</b>	English 101-008	Freshman Composition	26	100%	3.8
	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	35	97%	4.0
	English 212-002	Intro to American Literature	35	80%	3.8
<b>Spring 2017</b>	English 408-001	American Poetry	17	88%	3.4
	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	36	92%	3.9
	English 212-002	Intro to American Literature	36	91%	3.5
<b>Winter 2017</b>	English 435-001	Am. Lit 1865-WWII	26	100%	3.9
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	35	83%	3.9
	English 212-006	Intro to American Literature	35	86%	3.9
<b>Fall 2016</b>	English 409-001	19th Century American Lit	15	93%	3.8
	English 212-001	Intro to American Literature	35	91%	3.6
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	35	80%	3.9
<b>Spring 2016</b>	English 402-001	Women Writers	16	93%	3.8
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	35	88%	3.8
	English 212-V84	Intro to American Literature	30	83%	3.9
<b>Winter 2016</b>	English 434-001	Beginnings of Am. Lit to 1865	17	75%	3.9

	English 212-005	Intro to American Literature	35	86%	3.9
	English 212-006	Intro to American Literature	35	91%	3.9
<b>Fall 2015</b>	English 212-004	Intro to American Literature	35	83%	3.7
	English 212-005	Intro to American Literature	35	85%	3.6
<b>Spring 2015</b>	English 408-001	American Poetry	16	100%	3.65
	English 212-002	Intro to American Literature	35	91%	3.9
	English 212-003	Intro to American Literature	35	97%	3.8
<b>Winter 2015</b>	English 435-001	Am. Lit 1865-WWII	25	96%	3.8
	English 212-004	Intro to American Literature	35	94%	3.8
	English 212-005	Intro to American Literature	35	86%	3.9

**Thank you again for your time and consideration.**