

Kara Olson

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Curriculum Vitae

Education

Master of Fine Arts (Poetry)

Warren Wilson College, Swannanoa, NC 28815

Sixty Semester Hour Independent Study /

Academic Terminal Degree

Including Over Sixty Writer Reading List

Degree Essay, Thesis Manuscript, Teaching Practicum, Public Reading

Thesis Advisor: Rick Barot

Bachelor of Arts

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN 55455

Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature

Women's Studies Minor

Dean's List

Teaching Philosophy

My personal teaching philosophy has five pillars:

I use **student-centered strategies** to facilitate students learning about themselves. My Reading Circle curriculum is at the core of this strategy. When we pay attention to what students have to say, I believe it improves their writing and self-worth. Student-driven planning is also inherent to this approach. I listen to my students, not only to affirm their presence in the room, but to incorporate their feedback by having them help co-create our curriculum.

An **equity-focused lens** is crucial to my instruction. I differentiate my approach, depending on each student's needs and unique educational journeys, while applying a high standard. I'm a warm-demander in the classroom. I'm a flexible instructor who allows for a variety of pathways to meet our course outcomes and who showers her students with affirmation; yet I challenge my students through several revision processes and emphasize the practicality of the skillsets they're acquiring. A large part of my process involves listening to their non-academic and emotional concerns or barriers so we can build a sense of belonging and trust with each other. My many years of being an advocate for underrepresented identities helps me model cultural humility and self-reflection on our social positionalities in the classroom. For instance, at every turn I'm checking myself to see that I refrain from asking students of color to assimilate to a white culture of education. I ground the space and use our Reading Circles as a way to facilitate bonds between students so they can advocate for each other.

Orienting my students around a **spirit of inquiry** as writers and critically engaged community brings me great joy. This approach comes from the center of my soul. I'm a poet by craft, and I'm wired to ask questions of the world, to probe its complexities. This outlook naturally impacts my students' outlook. I focus on introspective methods and assignments—like life-turning-point narratives, news literacy analysis, and exploratory research—to help students form inquiries that invite multiple perspectives, engage a range of sources, and put forth an evidenced and contextualized theme or argument. Contemplative methods, like mindfulness breathing, increase their attention, deepen our learning, and our ability to sit in curiosity and complexity. We follow ground rules, like committing to leaning in when we disagree and not speaking for perspectives outside our lived experiences. I hold myself to these same ethics and employ an inquiry-based mode of teaching. I pose questions, gather evidence, use live, on-the-spot assessment and student feedback to improve my curriculum.

Like many of my English Department colleagues, I rely on a **process approach** in my writing classrooms. From day one, I model that writing is developmental and that it takes several drafts. Students engage in informal reflections in the classroom (or in the discussion threads online) to brainstorm and/or draft chunks of their essays before completing a draft. They bring rough drafts to our Reading Circles, read their drafts aloud, receive verbal peer feedback, and verbally state back to the circle their revision plan. At the end of the session, they receive a written rough

draft grade from me. By the time they turn their draft into D2L, they've already made substantial revisions. Still, they have the option to revise their drafts again after receiving additional feedback on D2L with my Earned Points So Far/Affirmative Grading system. I normalize the "rough" (failures) part of drafting while offering unlimited revisions.

I engage my students through **active learning**. The Reading Circles provide an environment where students learn about writing in their context of workshopping. By the end of our circles, they've heard twenty-five essays read aloud. The act of immersing themselves in this process is transformative. Additionally, I employ a "work-in-class" andragogy. All texts assigned as part of our coursework are read aloud together in class. We do most of the informal reflection homework in class, so the only work they have to do outside of class is craft and revise their essays. I move around the room when students are working in class and provide one-on-one guidance. Communal learning strategies include triads where mini-listening/telling circles cultivate memory skills, pair-shares allow for oral debriefs after reading difficult texts, and large group work, where students generate our discussion questions.

Ultimately, my philosophy is informed by affirming that everyone in my classroom has a soul and divine imagination. We all carry histories inside our bodies, and we all have stories to tell. I'm continually adapting new approaches like trauma-informed embodied learning and storytelling to make sure I'm connecting with my students and equipping them for future writing tasks.

Teaching Experience, 2013-Present

NHCC = North Hennepin Community College, 2014-present (unlimited full-time faculty)

ARCC = Anoka Ramsey Community College, 2019-present (adjunct faculty)

SCU = Saint Catherine University, 2014-2016 (adjunct lecturer)

Red Wing Correctional Facility = Red Wing, MN, 2013 (creative writing instructor)

WWC = MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College, 2013 (teaching practicum)

Course materials and student evaluations available upon request.

Creative Writing Courses

2030 – Writing Poetry, NHCC

An introductory course that provides students an opportunity to practice the craft of writing and analyzing poetry

2241 – Introduction to Creative Writing, ARCC

An introductory course that provides students an opportunity to practice the craft of writing fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry

Poems of Place: Iconography & Tone, WWC

Delivered a lecture on poems of place and facilitated a discussion on place as a way to explore common conflicts found in literature; focused on imagery as a means to establish tone

Introduction to Poetry, Red Wing Correctional Facility

Presented a class on "Poetic Voice"; introduced students to craft elements, critical thinking skills, and an awareness of "otherness" through a guided reading of two model texts

Composition Courses

1202 - College Writing II, NHCC

Research writing for degree-seeking students

1201 - College Writing I, NHCC

First-year college reading and writing, with an emphasis on rhetorical and critical thinking skills

The Reflective Woman, SCU

First-year college reading and writing, with an emphasis on composing a life, searching for truths, and working toward community and justice

Developmental Courses

1200 – Gateway College Writing, NHCC
First-year college reading and writing for Accelerated English

990 - Gateway Composition, NHCC
A supplemental class to Gateway College Writing, limited to 10 students

950 - Preparation for College Writing II, NHCC
A pre-college class focusing on essay writing strategies

Other

1940 - Technical Writing, NHCC
An introductory online class focusing on technical communication

1140 - Professional Writing, NHCC
An introductory online class focusing on professional communication

Current College Service

SEED Facilitator (Seeking Educational Equity & Diversity), NHCC
Train a faculty/staff year-long cohort of ten on racism, sexism, and homophobia in classroom and workplace settings

Equity and Diversity Inclusion Committee Member, NHCC
Serve as MSCF's faculty representative on a large committee that works to bridge the gap between different cultures and create an understanding of appreciation for others and self

Equity Advocates Facilitator, NHCC
Facilitate equity discussion with a cohort of SEED alumni and organize action oriented justice work on campus

Scholarship Teaching Assessment and Research (STaR) Practicum Team Role, NHCC
Serve as faculty equity consultant for STaR Coordinator as training materials are created and offered

Past College Service

TRIO English Faculty, NHCC
Served as NHCC's English Department TRIO faculty offering a TRIO ENGL 990/1200/1201 (Gateway Composition & College Writing I) each academic year

Scholarship Teaching Assessment and Research (STaR) Executive Team Equity Training Role, NHCC

Co-trained (with STaR Coordinator) NHCC's Executive Team on racism, sexism, and homophobia in workplace settings,
Spring 2021

Q.U.E.E.R. Club Faculty Advisor, NHCC
Advised student club at weekly meetings, sponsored events on campus, and conferences with the goal of improving the climate for LGBTQ individuals by raising awareness and abolishing ignorance, discrimination, and violence

Success, Teaching and Retention Committee Member, NHCC
Served as a faculty representative on small committee to provide faculty with local opportunities for exploration and growth in the areas of curriculum development and student success

Strategic Direction Planning Committee, NHCC
Served as a faculty representative on a small committee to help create NHCC's Strategic Direction Diversity Master Plan

Writing Center Faculty Tutor, NHCC

Empowered students and provide guidance on academic papers, research projects, scholarship applications, college admission essays, creative writing and the English language in a one-on-one setting

Search Committees

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Diversity Specialist Search, NHCC
Summer 2021

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Diversity Specialist Search, NHCC
Spring 2021

College of Liberal Arts Dean Search, NHCC
Fall 2020

Awards/Honors

Faculty of Excellence Award (2021)
North Hennepin Community College, Student Support Services/TRIO

Student Life Excellence Award (2018)
North Hennepin Community College Outstanding Club Advisor of the Year

Publications

Poetry published in *The Hyacinth Review* (2022)
“The Peony” & “Arrangement with Flowers”

Poetry published in *The Sewanee Review* (2021)
“Last Night”

winner of the 2020 Poetry Prize selected by Donika Kelly

Poetry Criticism published in *The Sewanee Review's* blog *The Conglomerate* (2021)
“Stanzas: Jim Moore”

Poetry published in *TAYO Literary Magazine* (2019)
“Border Town”

Poetry published in *JuJubes* (2015)
Poets & Artists Magazine
“Girlhood: A Manifesto from the Great Aunts” & “Bernice Swanson’s Light Shines Forth”
nominated for a Pushcart Prize

Poetry published in *Water~Stone Review* (2014)
Hamline University
“The Figure”

Poetry published in *So To Speak: A Feminist Journal of Language & Art* (2009)
George Mason University
“Starting Point”

Poetry published in *LaFovea* (2008)
On-line Journal
“Your Breath Smells Like Milk” & “Color Talk”

Public Readings

Queer Voices Reading Series (Hennepin County & Quatrefoil Library), online
June 2021

ARCC Faculty Reading Series, Banfill Center for the Arts, Fridley, MN
September 2019

555 Reads, Moon Palace Books, Minneapolis, MN
November 2017

Five Writers, Five Minutes, Five Watt, Five Watt Coffee, Minneapolis, MN
September 2016

Poetry-On-a-Stick, Walker Library, Minneapolis, MN
August 2015

Water~Stone Review Publication Reading & Reception, St. Paul, MN
November 2014

Lowertown Reading Jam series, St. Paul, MN
July 2014

Related Experience

Queer Voices Writing Circles Member (Hennepin County & Quatrefoil Library), online
Workshop and generate new creative work in a circle of BIPOC and queer writers who meet every other weekend

Jerome Foundation Fellow, Artist Resident at The Anderson Center
Revised poems from my graduate thesis, researching articles from the South Dakota historical society, and drafting new work in support of my first collection of poems

Reader for the Frost Place Chapbook Competition sponsored by Bull City Press
Judged several poetry manuscript submissions for the competition

Planning Committee for Soirée for Scholarships
Coordinated manuscript critique donations from esteemed authors to raise funds for diversity scholarships at the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson

Professional Development

Comp Talks at North Hennepin Community College
Participation in English Department "Comp Talks" hosted by Heidi Farrah
Fall 2021 - Present

Labor-Based Grading Pedagogy Training at North Hennepin Community College
Participation in Labor-Based Grading training delivered by STaR/Deanna Forsman
Spring 2022

Mental Health First Aid at North Hennepin Community College
Completion of Mental Health Crisis Intervention training delivered by Dr. Sean Peyton
January 2022

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Course at North Hennepin Community College
Participation in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Course delivered by STaR/Deanna Forsman
Fall 2021

Story Circle Institute at The Minnesota Humanities Center
Completion of “Story Circles: Activating Change in Cultural Systems”
June 2021

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Qualifying Seminar,
Completion of Qualifying Seminar for administration and interpretation of IDI
May 19-21, 2021

Storytelling Institute Workshop at South Mountain Community College
Completion of Storytelling Workshop, “Becoming Storytellers: Maximizing Learning Experiences Through Storytelling!”
– February 11-14, 2020

Accelerated Reading and Writing at Century College
Completion of Developmental Educational reform training in English, Reading, and ESL/ESOL with Dr. Sim
Barthoum and Dr. Mark Manasse
August 12-14, 2019

SEED (Seeking Education Equity & Diversity) at Wellesley College
Completion of New Leader’s Week, a training for SEED facilitators who are devoted to establishing greater equity and
diversity in educational institutions
July 7-13, 2019

Minnesota Colleges Professional Association
Registered member of the LGBTQIA+ Commission of MCPA