

*Statement on Diversity and Inclusion*

I disavow racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ethnocentrism, classism, and all other forms of discrimination. These tendencies work in concert to deny individuals and populations the right to speak and live. In my view, it does not suffice to renounce them in mere words, and merely as an individual. To take these issues seriously is to commit to decisive action and intersectional solidarity. In this statement, I will describe my efforts to promote diversity and counteract social exclusion in my classroom and beyond.

At the beginning of every semester, I invite my students to express what “diversity” means to them. This provides an opportunity for us to learn from one another. Virginia Tech is both culturally heterogeneous — my students have come from five continents; many speak English as a second, third, or even fourth language — and ideologically diverse. The undergraduate population includes a large Corps of Cadets program, and throughout my career, I have taught students on active military duty. As an instructor of Political Theory, I often moderated discussions between students who endorse demilitarization and students in full cadet uniform. These conversations always reflected the respect and open-mindedness that characterizes my pedagogical approach.

Virginia Tech has many students, faculty, and staff from Charlottesville, VA. After the events of the Unite the Right rally, I redoubled my commitment to discussing racism, anti-Semitism, and white supremacy in class sessions and among my colleagues. I support the Black Lives Matter movement, and because I benefit from white privilege, it is my responsibility to challenge racism in my community. I also see it as my duty to learn about the social history of the areas where I live and work. Before moving to the Appalachian region, I was unfamiliar with its artistic traditions and history of marginalization. My students and peers introduced me to the vibrant culture that defines southern Virginia and West Virginia, along with activist movements for causes specific to Southern Appalachia.

My social convictions are reflected throughout my pedagogy and campus activities. In my Political Theory courses, I emphasize the role of sexism in shaping political thought; the imperial policies and colonial legacy of Western Europe and the United States; and the history of the slave trade in the United States and beyond, with a focus on anti-Black racism in the United States. My courses on new media point to the ways in which identity is presupposed, mediated, and violated by digital tools. Here, I indicate that rhetorics of technological neutrality reinforce entrenched biases, and that digital automation is connected with global economic inequality. In 2017, I produced a campus museum exhibit highlighting the work of women and nonbinary digital media artists. This showcase included work from students, faculty, staff, and area residents; an opening event provided a unique opportunity for artists to meet one another. These activities embody my social principles, but there remains much more that I can do. I acknowledge that my research activities have centered European and North American paradigms. As my scholarship evolves, I am incorporating perspectives from the Global South, and identifying where European and North American canons have misconstrued and appropriated global intellectual traditions.

Educational professionals must not only affirm diversity through events, lectures, and assignments. They must also cultivate an environment where community members feel safe and supported at all times. Upon greeting each new group of students, I specify my gender pronouns (she/her) and welcome them to do the same. I also work to normalize nonbinary and transgender identities throughout my professional communications. Another way to nurture inclusion is to

promote accessibility. As a student at The New School University, I was employed as an assistive technologies specialist. Here, I became familiar with A.D.A. requirements for physical and virtual learning spaces, along with various means to support individuals with disabilities. At Virginia Tech, I participated in advocacy events to improve campus-wide accessibility. I also have extensive experience volunteering with children on the autism spectrum.

I have always stood with colleagues who work to vanquish oppression in local and global contexts. Based on my own experiences, I am particularly sensitive to the challenges faced by women scholars of technology. While my outlook will always be informed by my life story, I consistently strive to learn from those around me. As I tell my students, to advance inclusion is to remain open to other perspectives. I am grateful for every person who has helped me grow.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'ES' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Emma Stamm