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I have been most inspired by those teachers who have had the courage to transgress those boundaries that would confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning.
--- bell hooks

My experience exploring the evolution of the bildungsroman, coming of age narratives, and its intersections with race, gender, sexual orientation, and trauma in children's and young adult literature, has led me to center my pedagogical approach in accessibility, collaborative creation, and multimodal interactivity, allowing me to open up a myriad of inroads to textual evaluation and scholarly criticism in the classroom. To this end, I champion student self-efficacy by creating interactive lesson plans that allow students to explore different methods of analysis and research. Put succinctly, these paths foster the development of their academic writing acumen by centering lessons in a game-like structure. Constructing my pedagogy in this way affords me the space to advocate for strategic risk taking in writing and literature courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. As I tell my students, "In this class you must be brave enough to fail, to be uncool, to attempt difficult things, because no one starts out as an expert; and in this course, we're all going to do our best to get better, and that means we're going to come up short from time to time. But that's the whole point, to keep going even after we fail. If we do that, pick ourselves up and learn from our mistakes, then we're all going to improve together, me included."

Specifically, my approach to pedagogy, and the game-like structure of my courses, provides the opportunity for students to fail in a safe way. That is, in approaching textual analysis and academic writing, in a manner akin to an adventure, a student (or group of students) is able to fail in their particular goal for the game (or assignment) while still developing the necessary research and exploratory skills that will aid them both in and out of the classroom. Meaning, failure in this case has more to do with the outcome of a student's avatar or embodied in-game character rather than their personal ability or aptitude. In either case, failure or success, the game is still completed and thus a lesson is still learned. In that way, the structures of game-work (as I have referred to this modality in my research) allow students to fail in-game and still succeed in furthering their knowledge of the subject matter. Further, this approach discourages a "binge and purge" approach to learning, instead empowering students to consider texts and academic writing with a critical sensibility, that stems from a mindset of exploration and deep understanding, rather than simply rote memorization.

I also encourage a sense of collaboration by creatively building assignments that demonstrate the benefits of group learning. These assignments ask students to adopt different roles within the group, allowing them to inhabit the space of a person outside of themselves and illustrating the need for different strengths, skills, and points of view. Additionally, to more fully support this sense of collaboration, I create multimodal assignments and utilize platforms that have inbuilt accessibility options for students with different physical and learning needs. As an educator, this is an especially important cornerstone of my pedagogical praxis. Assignments and progress evaluations that allow students to showcase both their strengths as well as the positive development of their weaknesses, creates an environment in which growth, personal, intellectual, and interpersonal, is the goal. This reconceptualization of success in the classroom is paralleled by their final course grade and is one that encourages embracing complex investigations of text, writing, and self-examination, while also assuaging fears of lower academic marks for failing to conform to a single hegemonic mode of learning.

It is my intention to inspire my students to approach their goals, be they academic, career, or personal, with the same multiform approach that underlies my course structure. Preparing them for successful futures in a multitude of professions and as people who consider failure an opportunity for evolution, and who carefully approach different mindsets and cultural backgrounds with the same appreciation, respect, and genuine curiosity they exhibit in their studies. In short, I hope that through a model of collaboration, multimodal problem solving, and accessible pathways for many distinct needs, I can assist students on the road to becoming the best versions of themselves.