

INTRODUCTION: PROGRESSIVE PEDAGOGIES FOR HUMANITIES RESEARCH AND CITATION

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Whom do we cite, and why? What kinds of ‘stories’ do we tell our students through our syllabi, footnotes, and bibliographies?

These questions prefaced our call for participants in “Citational Practice as Critical Feminist Pedagogy,” a pair of workshops we ran in spring 2021 through Columbia University’s Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). These workshops, as part of the CTL’s “Learning Community” series, brought together around 30 graduate students from a range of disciplines to identify “problem areas” in traditional citational practices and explore how to teach citation in ways that help students question and challenge dominant structures of knowledge, intellectual genealogies, and academic narratives. For the second session, participants designed and workshoped original instructional resources that could be used for teaching citational practice in ways that address these problem areas and dismantle exclusionary epistemological and political hierarchies.

When the Learning Community concluded, we invited interested participants to revise their original instructional resources for submission to an open-access pedagogy publication. The resulting teaching resources, developed by six PhD students from various disciplines in the humanities at Columbia University, form the pilot collection of *Teaching Citational Practice: Critical Feminist Approaches*. This collection, “Progressive Pedagogies for Humanities Research and Citation,” presents a variety of approaches for teaching and modeling research and citation in higher-education settings. These approaches range from activities that involve interrogating documents such as syllabi and bibliographies to assignments that encourage students to acknowledge traditionally overlooked people, places, and experiences as legitimate sites of knowledge production. Taken together, the work of our contributors supports a practice of citation grounded in pedagogical principles of inclusivity, equity, and empowerment.

As a whole, “Progressive Pedagogies for Humanities Research and Citation” bears witness to the inherently collaborative and interdisciplinary work of the

Learning Community from which it stemmed. That is, it renders visible (and citable) the pedagogical labor of graduate students, a labor that is often overlooked in traditional practices of citation and undervalued through practices of compensation. Furthermore, this collection leverages a critique of institutional norms of citation at the same time that it mobilizes citational practices for acknowledging and thinking *with* the work on citation by those who have come before. The collection practices citation as “feminist memory,” bearing in mind that, as cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (2017) writes, “Where we find feminism matters; from whom we find feminism matters. Feminism as a collective movement is made out of how we are moved to become feminists in dialogue with others” (p. 15, 5).

Why citation?

The story of our movement towards the topic of critical feminist approaches to citation begins with a complaint.¹ Back in August of 2020, the two of us met on Zoom to discuss potential topics for our Learning Community. For some additional context, “Learning Communities” are typically co-designed and co-facilitated by two graduate students who have been awarded Senior Lead Teaching Fellowships by Columbia’s CTL. We were paired with each other due to resonances in our teaching interests: Cat hoped to design a Learning Community on a topic related to feminist pedagogy, and Diana wanted to explore practical applications of antiracism. As Cat talked through her interest in the former, she shared with Diana an anecdote from a workshop she had recently attended on inclusive pedagogy. During the workshop, a participant had asked the facilitator to provide an example of how an instructor could make course design “more inclusive.” The facilitator offered an example that went something like this: “Let’s say that a student complains that a professor’s syllabus only has male authors. The next time the course is taught, the professor adds a woman author.” Like Bisquick: just add [woman] and stir.

But inclusive pedagogy is not like instant pancakes. In our early conversation, Cat proposed to Diana that Sara Ahmed’s writing could provide a helpful framework for thinking through that exchange in the inclusive pedagogy workshop. In *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Ahmed (2012) critiques the “cultural enrichment discourse” of diversity and inclusion initiatives. Quoting bell hooks, she writes, “Diversity evokes the pleasures of

¹ On ‘complaint as feminist pedagogy,’ see Sara Ahmed’s (2021) blog post, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2021/06/16/complaint-as-feminist-pedagogy/>.

consumption. The bodies of others, by adding spice and color, ‘liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture’” (hooks, 1992, p. 21; in Ahmed, 2012, p. 69). As Ahmed and hooks together help us see, the notion that any course could be made more “inclusive” by simply tacking on a woman author or an author of color represents an example of using citation as a tokenizing, performative gesture that ultimately reinscribes existing hierarchies rather than making any kind of substantial, material step towards dismantling the exclusivist narrative enacted by such a syllabus.

The specificity of citational practice as a potential focus for our Learning Community excited Diana during our first Zoom meeting. Citation represented an occasion for examining concrete actions that students and instructors take both within and beyond classroom contexts, and for thinking about strategies for putting principles of not just feminist but also antiracist pedagogy into practical action. By August 2020, antiracism and racial justice had become prominent talking-points at Columbia and more widely, given the intensification of the Black Lives Matter Movement and associated public dialogue in the wake of the May 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Particularly as academic “talking-points,” however, antiracism and racial justice seemed in danger of becoming reduced to theoretical abstraction and vague corporate gestures, as with the administrative statements of antiracism that had proliferated during the intervening summer. Like others desiring and pursuing action beyond virtue signaling, Diana wanted to find ways of identifying and responding to actually occurring racism on the university campus. Citational practice struck her as a clear arena wherein racism is regularly, systemically reproduced, and where there is ample opportunity for academics to proactively intervene.

As Ahmed (2017) suggests through her characterization of citation as a “feminist brick” (p. 16), citational practice is indeed a concrete site of intervention, one that has a material impact on living bodies and ideas. Ahmed’s work thus became one major throughline of the Learning Community that developed out of our early conversation, and her thinking is also a pervasive presence across the work collated in this pilot resource collection. But just as the Learning Community itself brought together a group of thinkers representing a variety of perspectives, the archive of scholarship that informs the work of this resource collection is multitudinous and diverse. In addition to Ahmed, we and the collection’s contributors have drawn inspiration from the Cite Black Women Collective (founded by Christen A. Smith) and the Citation Practices Challenge (organized by Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and Rubén

Gaztambide-Fernández), as well as Kimberlé Crenshaw’s writing on intersectionality. Another common critical touchpoint is scientists’ Rebecca Jordan-Young and Katrina Karkazis’s 2019 book *Testosterone: An Unauthorized Biography*. During our Learning Community, Diana highlighted a passage from *Testosterone* in which the authors call for STEM scholars in particular to develop “better strategies for responsibly identifying deeply problematic work without adding to its fact value” by citing it (Jordan-Young and Karkazis, 2019, p. 158). As this and similar injunctions by other scholars illustrate, practices of academic citation have become subject to increased scrutiny in recent years, and there has been work across disciplines to identify both the stakes of citational practice and the necessity of reform.

The goal behind “Progressive Pedagogies for Humanities Research and Citation”—and behind *Teaching Citational Practice* as a whole—is to join and add to that transdisciplinary dialogue by helping to cultivate reformist approaches to citational practice specifically at the site of pedagogy. In the pages that follow, readers will find the six teaching resources developed through our Learning Community and subsequently revised during the summer months. Each resource is preceded by an overview in which the author critically reflects on her resource’s context and design, situating the resource in relation to disciplinarily specific problem areas in citational practice. But these overviews also gesture outside of each author’s academic discipline, offering suggestions for the uses of each resource in other academic settings. Although this collection incidentally focuses on teaching citational practice in the humanities, we are confident that users from a wide range of fields will recognize opportunities for adapting these approaches to their own classrooms, curricula, and student populations.

An overview of the collection

Our collection begins at the beginning, with teaching resources that intervene in citational practice at the outset of a given class. In “Critiquing the Syllabus: Inviting Student Assessment of Standardized Curricula,” German Studies PhD candidate Cosima Mattner presents a collaborative reflection exercise for guiding undergraduate students through constructive appraisal of a course syllabus. Envisioned as an activity that accompanies the instructor’s introduction of the syllabus during an initial class meeting, Mattner’s resource helps direct students’ attention to “the citational practice of the class as it surfaces in the syllabus” (p. 11). Students are encouraged to identify the identities of scholars and the types of scholarship represented or not

represented in the course curriculum, and to participate in a dialogue about what this representational work reveals about “disciplinary norms of knowledge production” (p. 11).

Like Mattner’s, the resource contributed by Sandra Chiritescu, PhD candidate in Yiddish Studies, focuses on course syllabi. Chiritescu has designed an adaptable syllabus note that, in her own application, would introduce a section of “Further Readings in Other Languages” for a course in Yiddish Studies. As described in “A Borderless Yiddish Syllabus: Framing Non-Anglophone Scholarship for Undergraduate Courses,” Chiritescu’s syllabus note represents an effort to both identify and work against the tendency of U.S. teaching and scholarship to automatically privilege Anglophone authors and publications: an issue relevant to many disciplines beyond Yiddish Studies. Her overview itself models the alternative citational practice that she invokes, as Chiritescu traces her own investment in the teaching of Yiddish in communities beyond the bounds of the traditional academy: “The way in which multilingual knowledge circulates among these various groups—often via a citational practice reliant on oral history, oral tradition, ethnographic encounters, and family history—is an alternative model to more traditional and Anglocentric academic citational practices and worth familiarizing students with” (p. 20).

The third resource in this collection extends the focus of the preceding two on opportunities for addressing citational practice early in a given semester. Contributed by Classics PhD candidate Emma Ianni, “More of a Comment Than a Question: Inclusive Pedagogy and the Role of Commentaries in the Classics Classroom” presents an ice-breaker activity that will particularly appeal to instructors who assign editorial commentaries to accompany classical texts. As Ianni’s overview makes clear, while such commentaries are traditionally treated as neutral and benign philological tools, they in fact “contribute to a gatekeeping of the discipline, under the guise of prioritizing textual deference” (p. 24). Accordingly, her teaching resource presents a handout that guides students through a critical interrogation of a standardized commentary, with prompts for identifying its problematic elements and the biases that those elements reveal. Instructors outside of Classics may consider adapting this exercise to similarly standardized yet problematic textual objects common to their own fields.

The resource contributed by Shanelle E. Kim, PhD student in English and Comparative Literature, shares common ground with Ianni’s by helping students defamiliarize and interrogate an object that tends to be naturalized

and depoliticized across disciplines: the bibliography. In “‘The paths we were told to follow’: A Citational Practice Worksheet for Students,” Kim describes an exercise that she developed for use while teaching a research unit in a first-year writing course. Her exercise prompts students to assess the bibliography of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang’s (2012) “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” with an eye toward how this bibliography itself embodies the essay’s “purpose” of “resist[ing] institutional reproductions of white settler colonialism” (Kim, p. 34). Ultimately, through this guided critical reflection on the academic bibliography, students develop “a more critical eye toward the scholarly citations they encounter, an ability to identify modes of resistance, and a sense of responsibility for their own citational practices” (p. 35).

The last two resources in the collection allow for interventions into the ways we teach citation through graded assignments and capstone projects. In “Embodying Learning: Theory as Praxis,” Emily Fitzgerald, PhD candidate in Philosophy of Religion, presents a field assignment that encourages students to consider bodies of knowledge beyond the confines of the textual, and in particular “to examine their own embodied experiences” as a locus of knowledge and site of citation (p. 41). Drawing on her background as a martial arts practitioner, Fitzgerald invites students to attune themselves to the range of embodied ‘practices’ of knowledge beyond traditional ‘scholarly’ ones, thus creating a citational relation that can “encourage new ties between the academic world and those outside it” (p. 41). As FitzGerald explains, such new ties can help facilitate “community-building that goes beyond the limits of the ivory tower and, thus, dismantles the power structures that prevent many from receiving the credit they deserve” (p. 41).

Finally, “Ephemeral Citational Practices in Student Research Projects” continues the work of extending citational practices beyond traditional and text-based scholarly archives, bringing to the fore the political, epistemological stakes of what is and is not recognized as ‘evidence.’ Contributed by Lilith Todd, PhD candidate in English and Comparative Literature, this exercise has students think with José Esteban Muñoz’s (1996) notion of ephemeral evidence as they undertake a sustained research project. Todd reorients students toward thinking about the physical space, embodied labor, and varied sociality of their writing process—the ephemeral traces of labor, matter, memory—in ways that can enable students to “creatively imagine sites of embodied knowledge and its political stakes for their project” (p. 49). Her markedly queer approach to citation will bear fruit particularly for instructors

whose research and teaching deals with subjects who are disserved or occluded from traditional forms of evidence and material archives.

Annotating the collection

As Todd's focus on ephemera encapsulates, an overarching theme of this collection as a whole is one of amplifying traces of labor that are often occluded in the name of the abstracted, disembodied, intellectually 'rigorous' scholar. Such traces can include those of graduate workers' labor, undergraduate students' labor, the emotional labor of mentors, the labor of librarians, the labor of book digitizers, non- or para-academic labor, and the labor of caretakers. Indeed, as Cat and Diana collaborated on this project, we were mindful throughout of the different kinds of labor that each of us was performing and that we were asking of our contributors. At the same time that we took steps whenever possible to reduce that labor, we also made a point of seeking out opportunities to highlight and celebrate it, and particularly to acknowledge the forms of collaborative intellectual work that took place among our contributors throughout the project.²

To the latter end, we decided to add a special digital feature to this pilot collection. When you access "Progressive Pedagogies for Humanities Research and Citation" online, you'll find two options for downloading a PDF copy of each resource: one that generates a 'clean' copy, and another that generates an 'annotated' one. The set of annotations on a given resource was produced by another contributor to this collection; we created annotation pairings among contributors on the basis of resonances between the aims and investments of their respective resources. As we explained to our contributors, the purpose of the annotations was twofold: (1) to think alongside the resource creator about the resource's pedagogical methods and possible applications in other disciplines and contexts; and (2) to enact and make visible the collaborative and interdisciplinary labor that brought our collection into being.

² Insofar as this introduction is also an opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on both our own labor and the work of our contributors, we draw inspiration from Sukanya Banerjee, Ryan D. Fong, and Helena Michie (2021), whose introduction to the special issue of *Victorian Literature & Culture* on "Widening the Nineteenth Century" singularly includes extensive discussion of the processes that the editors and their contributors followed to collaboratively produce the special issue.

The limits of our labor

In addition to discussing the affordances of the resources that they have developed, several contributors to this collection use their resource overviews to reflect on the limitations of these teaching exercises. For one, both Mattner and Chiritescu identify the need for critiques of syllabi to take place not only as discussions within individual classes but at the level of departmental and programmatic interventions into standardized curricular design. For another, Kim describes how her students, during the discussion built into her teaching exercise, reflected on the extent to which academic institutions ultimately and necessarily circumscribe all knowledge produced within their boundaries.

These astute observations by our contributors and their students point to two levels of limitations that face the teaching exercises gathered here, and that more generally face any attempt to make the classroom a site for enacting political and ethical interventions. First, there is only so much that a single activity, assignment, class, or instructor can achieve; the pedagogical work of interrogating and dismantling harmful practices—whether citational or otherwise—has to be folded into larger projects of structural change. Second, and related, the structures of academia will always constrain those projects. As many BIPOC scholars have argued, the academy is fundamentally an institution founded on and deriving its power from racial capitalism and settler colonialism,³ and the only path to truly transforming that institution, like all others of its kind, is a path of abolition.⁴

Yet despite these significant limitations, we still see pedagogy, and specifically the teaching of citational practice, as a powerful site for doing the kind of work that can scaffold structural, systemic change. This is not only because the classroom is where we pass down traditional citational practices to new generations of students. Further, it is in teaching and learning contexts that citational practice occurs and is reified among current scholars themselves; indeed, the classroom is perhaps the only standardized space in academia wherein scholars, as instructors, are regularly called upon to articulate who, what, and how they cite. The classroom is thus a space where scholars can

³ Here we paraphrase Eugenia Zuroski, quoted in Newby and Yoon (2020, September 18).

⁴ As Saidiya Hartman (2020, July 14) puts it, “The possessive investment in whiteness” can only be “rectified” through “a remaking of the social order, and nothing short of that is going to make a difference.”

become more reflective about our own citational practice as we teach our students, and where we can interrogate the inherited habits and assumptions on which that practice draws.

Part of the joy and the challenge of our jobs as instructors is that we are also storytellers. Teaching, to a large extent, is about looking at old stories and figuring out how to tell them in a new way. We see this as particularly true of teaching citational practice: each of the exercises collected here involves showing our students how to poke in and around existing narratives, determine what's wrong with them, and tell a different story by way of who, what, and how they cite. With the aid of this collection, we hope that you can activate citation in the classroom as a collaborative mode of storytelling, one that empowers students to stitch together fresh narratives about what forms and sources of knowledge have value.⁵ It is not only we instructors who tell our students 'stories' through our syllabi, footnotes, and bibliographies: our students, too, have stories to tell, stories to cite.

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⁵ In her classroom icebreaker exercise "[Where Do You Know From?](#)", another model for the contributors to our collection, Eugenia Zuroski (2020) approaches citation in this way by prompting students to critically reflect on where their knowledge comes from and what kinds of knowledge they bring to the class. As it problematizes colonialist notions of "academic intellectual authority," Zuroski's exercise also provides students "the opportunity to tell me and each other what kinds of knowing are present, so we are in a position to learn from one another." Zuroski empowers students to position themselves in relation to one another as intellectual agents by crafting their own epistemological narratives.

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