2021 Watson Conference Schedule

# **Wednesday, April 21, 2021**

## 11-11:45 AM EST: COMMUNITY WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, & CAKE

The purpose of this opening session is to break us out of our Zoom isolation and create a sense of community that we aspire to sustain over the conference. We hope that our plans will intrigue you. Here is the rundown:

* *Optional, before the session begins*: Assemble and microwave your Watson Mug Cake. Upload a Zoom background that might be a good conversation starter—perhaps one that represents a hobby or a favorite place.
* *10 minutes:* As we enjoy our mug cakes, the Watson Conference director and assistant directors will make some announcements (to be linked here).
* *10-15 minutes:* In moderated breakout rooms, we will introduce ourselves and (1) describe what brings us here and what we’d like to learn and contribute, and (2) reflect on ideas for creating and preserving an inclusive communal space over Zoom.
* *10 minutes:* Back in the main room, breakout room moderators will share highlights from the discussions.
* *A few minutes*: Pet parade! If your pet is available, put them on camera for a minute and let them soak up the (Zoom) spotlight. This way, we can greet and delight in some of the unregistered participants that, we hope, will grace us with their presence over the conference.

Please note: We recognize that these offerings may not appeal to everyone, and especially not to those who want to conserve their energy for the prospect of virtual-conference fatigue. We understand!

## 12-1 PM EST: KEYNOTE - White Institutions, Racialized Emotional Labor and BIPOC Scholar Fatigue (Dr. Cherie Dawson-Edwards)

**Moderator: Dr. Gwendolyn D. Pough**

Racialized emotional and intellectual labor in white spaces is a burden placed on BIPOC scholars that can impact our productivity, lead to racial trauma, and induce burnout or fatigue. BIPOC scholars must exist in complex where we must choose to engage in our own objectification or risk ostracization (see Pierce 2003, 2012). Research affirms that racialized emotional labor by BIPOC persons is often expected and adjacent to our inclusion in the academy (Evans & Moore, 2015). As such, it is not valued or seen as a contribution that should be rewarded or compensated. This presentation will explore the extant literature on racialized emotional and intellectual labor in white institutional spaces while introducing a developing framework for compensating this labor. Participants will be challenged to examine their expectations for their BIPOC colleagues to engage in anti-racist discourse as acts of academic service to the institution or field. **Presenter Profile:**[Cherie Dawson-Edwards](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/8c22bbd83af5433685caa28a8b37c637)  
**Moderator Profile:** [Gwendolyn D. Pough](http://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/conference-presenters/gwendolyn-pough)

## 1:30-3 PM EST: PANEL - Making Social Justice Work an Integral Part of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young, Dr. Michael Pemberton, Dr. Maria Novotny, Dr. Antonio Byrd)

In 2017, as the CCCC was preparing to host its annual convention in Kansas City, Missouri, the Missouri legislature passed SB 43, a discriminatory bill that, in the words of the NAACP, “would prevent individuals from protecting themselves from discrimination, harassment and retaliation in Missouri.” In response, the NAACP issued its first ever travel advisory for the state, which caused many members of the CCCC to demand that the convention be cancelled in protest. Though the Executive Board decided, after much debate, not to cancel the convention, largely due to the devastating financial consequences that would result, convention planners, led by Asao Inoue, reshaped the program theme to focus strongly on social justice issues in research, in the classroom, in our nation’s infrastructure, and in our home communities.

A central component of this new direction was the formation of the Social Justice and Activism at the Conference (SJAC) Task Force, chaired by Akua Duku Anokye, which planned, organized, and participated in a number of social justice initiatives including two free pre-convention workshops, a system of volunteer travel companions, access to sessions via streaming media, and collaborations with local activist groups. The CCCC Executive Board voted soon after to extend the SJAC’s work into future conventions, forming the Social Justice At the Convention Committee for a three-year, potentially renewable, term. Among the committee’s charges was “[w]ithin the program chair’s vision, collaborate with the local committee chair to develop social justice and local engagement activities that complement the convention theme, either via activities co-located or co-proximal to the convention, activities built into the convention program, and/or some other alternative.”   
  
The reconstituted SJAC is now in its third year of operation, and its journey has not been an easy one. After organizing and implementing a full slate of social justice activities at the 2019 convention in Pittsburgh with convention chair Vershawn Ashanti Young, the 2020 convention in Milwaukee was abruptly cancelled due to the pandemic, and the 2021 convention in Spokane moved completely online. The challenges of doing social justice programming in a shifting convention landscape have been tremendous but, we have found, they are not insurmountable. 

The consultants for this panel have had extensive experience planning social justice initiatives for the CCCC convention, and the lessons they have learned in the process will be important and useful to others who want to highlight such programming in national, regional, local, and online venues. The consultants and their roles on this proposed panel are as follows:   
  
Vershawn Ashanti Young, University of Waterloo, 2020 CCCC Chair and 2019 Convention Chair: “Elevating the Prominence of Social Justice Programming Within and at a National Convention”  
This presentation will focus on the challenges of working on social justice issues in controversial times, with supportive and reluctant stakeholders, and how to deal with personal injustices as a person of colour while trying to lead an organization to renew and recharge commitments to racial and social justice. This presentation will also introduce how individuals and groups can create Black Body Acknowledgment statements similar to the Indigenous and Native Peoples Land Acknowledgements.   
**Presenter Profile:** [Vershawn Ashanti Young](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/921ad3360ece45f785d9bde85db24368)   
Michael Pemberton, Georgia Southern University, Co-Chair of the SJAC 2018-2021: “Developing Social Justice Initiatives in the Years of Living Dangerously”  
This presentation will discuss the history and work of the SJAC over the last three years and how it has adapted to the challenging impact of a global pandemic. Specifically, the presentation will describe several of its social justice programming initiatives for the 2019 convention in Pittsburgh, how it managed the cancellation of the 2020 convention in Milwaukee, and how it prepared for and handled its social justice work for the 2021 convention, originally scheduled to take place in Spokane but moved online in January. The speaker will then discuss several of the lessons learned from doing this work, focusing on the opportunities and constraints inherent in building social justice programming for a national convention as well as the emotional labor involved when doing so during a global crisis and a shifting, unstable convention landscape.   
**Presenter Profile:** [Michael Pemberton](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/258bb47e36714caf99d0cbe0d8a6ff06)  
   
Maria Novotny, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Local Arrangements Chair for the 2020 CCCC convention and Co-Chair of the SJAC: “Localizing Sustainable Social Justice Commitments at Host City Sites”  
Reflecting on Dr. Novotny’s role as the local arrangements chair for (the then canceled) CCCC 2020 in Milwaukee, this presentation will speak to the various predicaments featuring community organizations at national, disciplinary conferences. The presentation operates on the assumption that: if rhetoric and composition, as a discipline, is committed to supporting the local social justice actions of conference host-city communities, then we must work towards developing a sustainable labor-based infrastructure such work requires. The speaker then proposes developing a framework of care as a potential model to sustain local community organizing efforts at national conferences.   
**Presenter Profile:** [Maria Novotny](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/b2b8da3dac174fd79b908f826f1c1923)

Antonio Byrd, University of Missouri, Kansas City, SJAC committee member 2018-2021: “Creating Social Justice Conference Events for Greater Impact in and Beyond Local Community”  
Reflecting on his experience of getting involved with SJAC, Dr. Byrd asks, “What do we leave behind and what do we take with us after the social justice event ends?” This presentation speaks to how national conferences can be focal points for inspiring and rejuvenating justice-engaged work for local community organizers and conference attendees. The speaker considers how his discourse on attending conferences often highlighted economic contributions to the community while returning home with broader social networks and intellectual fulfillment. However, the 2018 social justice initiatives, and subsequent SJAC membership, led to important lessons about how national conferences cannot separate themselves from the social and cultural struggles of the host city. Drawing on an activist panel the speaker helped organize at the 2019 annual CCCC, the speaker proposes ways one can organize social justice events that lead to more than just roundtable conversation but strategies for social justice work that local community and conference attendees can practice when they go their separate ways.  
**Presenter Profile:** [Antonio Byrd](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/e0633bf0d0b04abb80e7876584256fba)

## 3:30-5:15 PM EST: ROUNDTABLE - "Beyond the Land Acknowledgment: Decolonial Actions for the Watson Conference and the University of Louisville"

### (Moderator: Dr. Frank Kelderman; Panelists: Dr. Andrea Riley Mukavetz, Dr. Betty Booth Donohue, Dr. Ron Sheffield, Dr. Carmen Cariño Trujillo, Dr. Hilaria Cruz, Dr. Carrie Mott, Dr. Anna Browne Ribeiro, Dr. Karl Swinehart)

What does a decolonial approach to conference design look like? This roundtable seeks to help planners of academic conferences generally (and the Watson conference specifically) consider concrete ways to support Indigenous people, communities, and nations and dismantle white supremacist structures. Native scholars from several different institutions will share their experiences with conference planning and other projects; native and settler scholars from the University of Louisville (UofL), assembled for the first time, will begin the conversation about actions and initiatives that UofL might take and that the Watson Conference could advance. As they offer their perspectives, presenters will draw on their expertise in archaeology, geography, leadership and organizational development, linguistics, linguistic anthropology, literary studies, rhetoric, and sociology.

**Presenter Profiles:** [Frank Kelderman](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/edf6377b5c7c4ca88416d33e99807b0d) (moderator); [Andrea Riley Mukavetz](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/c7739facd5814b95996bcd3a52277c5c); [Betty Booth Donohue](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/3be5a50f622442578ad9570ff5b7b649); [Ron Sheffield](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/b54182d874cd44c3841d20898eede2d1); [Carmen Cariño Trujillo](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/7b5e342d430f462c8217cee6e7fa83ae), [Hilaria Cruz](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/badb9d75987a488080dd67e451a2f9c0), [Carrie Mott](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/9dc3e89821ca4518b3b4f011655da759), [Anna Browne Ribeiro](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/42ab7643ec6d4c1d96b2d244cbca3b55), [Karl Swinehart](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/0ab60afbd5c243e7a7eea3039a6f6679)

## 5:45-7 PM EST: PANEL "#TheFeministsAreComing: But Are They Anti-Racist?" (Dr. Michelle Grue) "Antiracist Conversations and Organizing: Reforming Academic Conference Genres" (Dr. Sumyat Thu)

This panel will be moderated by [Dr. Stephanie Kerschbaum](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/conference-presenters/stephanie-kerschbaum).

Michelle Grue: "#TheFeministsAreComing: But Are They Anti-Racist?"  
Calls for anti-racism in Writing Studies (NCTE/CCCC Black Linguistic Justice Demands, Inoue’s CCCC address, etc.) can feel overwhelming for several reasons, in part because of the often unpaid labor of conference organization and the lack of a clear model of what an anti-racist conference space, physical or digital, would look like. In this talk and in the handout attendees receive, I use a specific Writing Studies organization -- The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition -- as an example of both positive efforts they make in their intersectional feminism in digital spaces, but also the valuable critiques of their in-person conferences and the varied ways the organization has, over time, responded to those criticisms. By using this particular group as a focus, I am able to take generalized anti-racist Writing Studies calls and show how they can be applied in specifics to a particular organization.

Despite saying on the Coalition’s website and enacting in their social media spaces that they “welcome and sustain all who do feminist work, inclusive of all genders, sexualities, races, classes, nationalities, religions, abilities, and other identities, in their research and classrooms” more work needs to be done in their physical publics. Critiques of the Coalition include the defensiveness and exclusion held at the town hall hosted at the 2019 Feminisms and Rhetorics conference, accessibility concerns questioned and critiqued as an expense, the overwhelming whiteness and white feminism of the conference, and the trappings of glorified slavery at the conference location. The Coalition has not ignored its critiques. As noted on the Coalition’s website, they have canceled the 2021 Feminism and Rhetorics conference both out of the COVID-related issues with travel and the ongoing conversations about the future of the conference. One hopes that, with the extra time between now and the next conference in 2023, the Coalition will use the digital conference alternatives it has planned to deliver for the interim to “characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate, projecting for that world a concrete and livable shape” (Warner, 2002, p. 81).

This talk (and the handout that will be distributed along with it) will outline ways to meet the concerns lobbied against the Coalition, but also highlight positive moves taken by other Writing Studies organizations for conferences and conference-like gatherings, such as the Naylor Symposium and Digital Black Lit and Composition (DBLAC), namely their intentional and substantive looping in and support of Black and other people of color in their event communities and their structural inclusion of graduate students and scholars of color. By both addressing critiques and spotlighting moves in an anti-racist direction, I hope attendees of my talk will be better equipped to engage in interactive anti-racist conference work, growing and changing such that they are more inclusive and more intersectional over time and in all their spaces.

**Presenter Profile:** [Michelle Grue](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/356a66c39c994c35b145252514eb21d0)

Sumyat Thu: "Antiracist Conversations and Organizing: Reforming Academic Conference Genres"  
Normative forms of academic knowledge sharing and conversing in conferences often privilege individualistic ways of presenting knowledge by academics for academics that disproportionately focus on cognitive, theoretical, and argumentative ways of knowing and less on collaboration and practice-based, embodied, and wholistic forms of knowing and discussing. These conventional genres of academic conferencing reflect the values of systemic patriarchal Whiteness that we want to be more critically mindful of and consistently dismantle. As part of a graduate student-led conference organizing team, I served as the chair of 2019 Praxis Conference at the University of Washington (Seattle) on the theme of “Antiracist Pedagogy: Visions and Practices for Institutional Change.” In collaboration with my then-graduate student colleagues, I worked on this conference organizing for three years in total up until serving as the chair. One specific example of how we reformed conference genres was, instead of a traditional keynote speech by an academic, we hosted a keynote panel and discussion with a student leader from the Black Student Union, a principal of a local alternative high school, and a community organizer from the local Asian community. The keynote panel generated refreshing and productive conversations on the issues of antiracist pedagogy and praxis in K-12 and higher education as well as a generally positive reception from the audience. Based on what I have learned from these collaborative and grassroots efforts of conference organizing and fostering engagement between academics, community organizers, and student activists at my institution, I plan to talk about how we can rethink and take up conference genres such as keynote speeches, presentation and panel genres, and Q&A discussions to be less individualistic and hierarchical but more informed and embodied by Critical Race Theory traditions and antiracist forms of community organizing and knowledge sharing. Specifically, I will discuss different ways of fostering conversations and collaborations between academics, student and community organizers, and local community members, co-creating equity-based conferencing norms such as being aware of our social positions and how we are taking up space, building in mindfulness breaks, and practicing rhetorical, active listening in formal and informal conversations, and expanding presentation genres to include inquiry-based and embodied forms of knowing such as narrative storytelling and performance-based genres.

**Presenter Profile:**[Sumyat Thu](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/bd3b3b5676c54778a807c196ed01b7bb)

# **Thursday, April 22, 2021**

## 11 AM-12 NOON EST: KEYNOTE - "‘...Had Y'all Simply Listened to Black Women’: A Call for Intentional Listening and Impactful Anti-Racist Action" (Dr. Temptaous Mckoy)

In this keynote, I'm gone address the calls made by Black women to have a more equitable field of composition by calling on individuals to be more intentional in their listening and anti-racist practices. This keynote address was birthed from the events leading to the 2021 Watson Conference, in which Black women called on conference organizers to be more intentional in their listening and organization practices. Not to mention, as we see the recent turn of events regarding the 2020 presidential election, the voices of Black women are now being amplified and centered more—after the fact. However, this brings me to ask the people a question: What if folks listened to Black women in the first damn place? This keynote will ask its audience to genuinely consider their roles in assisting in the silencing of Black women and other historically marginalized voices. Some reflection 'bout to happen as I'm callin' on attendees to be more reflective in where the Black women may or may not exist in their departments, organizations, and general social circles. It is my hope that by engaging in this critical conversation, members of the audience will be more likely to interrogate their past interactions with Black women and other historically marginalized scholars. In doing this work, I assert that people will be better aligned to be far more intentional in listening to the voices of Black women while ensuring their actions are impactful and not simply performative. This keynote will not be given from a desk or office, nah we coming from the living room couch. So, pour your coffee, tea, or whatever works for you and be prepared to ask yourself, “What if I simply listened to Black Women?”

**Presenter Profile:** [Temptaous Mckoy](http://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/conference-presenters/temptaous-mckoy)

## 12:30-1:45 pm EST: PANEL "What Am I Doing Here? When Conference Acceptance Doesn’t Mean Conference Inclusion" (Dr. Karen R. Tellez-Trujillo) "Policy, Programs, and Practice: A Tripartite Approach to Challenging White Supremacy in Professional Conference Planning"  (Dr. Mara Lee Grayson)

This panel will be moderated by [Dr. Stephanie Kerschbaum](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/conference-presenters/stephanie-kerschbaum).

### Karen R. Tellez-Trujillo: "What Am I Doing Here? When Conference Acceptance Doesn’t Mean Conference Inclusion”

At a large summer seminar in the Midwest, I marveled at the sea of faces in which I could find only one other Hispanic participant. Were we not applying, or not being accepted? If we weren’t applying, why was that? Could there be that many poorly written submissions by people of color?

Let’s face it, students and faculty of color are outnumbered at conferences. Sometimes this is because there are limited funds to travel and universities are not willing to help, or there are limitations to the distance and time it takes to pull non-traditional students away from home for a conference. When the student or faculty member is present, however, there should be approaches in place to keep the participant from feeling as if they left their homes and paid to be excluded. One of the many ways people of color are excluded at conferences is when the presenter feels uncomfortable enough to not want to participate again. This comes in the way of poorly attended panels, aggressive commentary dressed up as a question, and not seeing any others “like you” among the names in the program or faces at the tables. Among my recommendations is the obvious request that more students and faculty of color be accepted to conferences and that calls for proposals not be written in such a way that it requires a series of meetings to decode what a conference call is truly asking for. Less obviously, my recommendations for addressing microaggressions and hate speech at conferences are aimed at both presenter and audience and cover the following:

* Conferences set up for online attendance and presentations, as well as on-site attendance and participation.
* Moderators working as facilitators when participants dole out micro-aggressions to panel presenters in the form of questions. This is particularly useful to presenters responding to more experienced scholars who use this positionality to intimidate, humiliate, and flex academic muscle under the guise of conference behavior.
* Questions submitted by the guests to the moderator on behalf of the panel participants for screening. This can also be done in the online setting through Zoom.
* Presentation papers submitted ahead of time, and to be skimmed by conference sponsors to avoid microaggressions and hate speech delivery from presenter to audience.

In my presentation, I will draw on recommendations such as those listed above while including a draft plan for what these suggestions would look like in practice. This includes the labor involved, the number, and the experience-level of support persons necessary to pull this off.

**Presenter Profile:** [Karen R. Tellez-Trujillo](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/a6058aa0e3624a748d4390e24a83178a)

### Mara Lee Grayson: "Policy, Programs, and Practice: A Tripartite Approach to Challenging White Supremacy in Professional Conference Planning"

Traditional so-called “diversity” trainings generally emphasize the reduction of race-based prejudice and the expansion of opportunities for members who identify as BIPOC; though the significance of these emphases should not be understated, too often we see that the reduction of prejudice is temporary or limited and the new opportunities translate to access without equity. For example, participants may make fewer overt racist remarks but may continue to participate in covert racism or misogyny; BIPOC scholars may receive additional funding to attend a conference but limited support once they arrive. Other times, the formation of initiatives aimed toward inclusion places additional labor on marginalized scholars who are called upon to lead such programs.

Most problematically, these structures tend to be additive rather than integrative and, thus, do not challenge the deeply rooted ways of knowing and doing that result from and perpetuate white supremacy (Guinier, 2004; Leonardo, 2009; Mills, 1997). As Cordery (2020) notes, an organization must acknowledge how “it benefits from white privilege and commit to actively working to disarm this weapon of privilege before it can earnestly and holistically support racial justice.”

This presentation highlights one approach to organizational change that addresses the ingrained ideological, rhetorical, and institutional nature of white supremacy and how these structures perpetuate racism and inequity. This integrative approach features a tripartite structure designed to interrogate how white supremacy functions at multiple levels and in multiple spaces within an organization or conference. The components include:

* Policy: Organization leaders and policymakers explore how founding documents, by-laws, and policies perpetuate white supremacy and contribute to inequity and marginalization of members and conference attendees; this includes planning, revision, or drafting of existing or new documents.
* Programs: Program leaders (event organizers, section chairs, proposal review coordinators) examine how programmatic structures and offerings perpetuate racism and develop ideas for small-scale or large-scale programmatic change.
* Practice: To move from structure to behavior, members critically examine their own positionalities, relative privilege, and attitudes about race and racism, and the subsequent impacts on their work and interactions. I use the term “practice” to connote the ongoing nature of this work and the continual (un)learning it requires.

I draw upon original and existing scholarship and my experiences as a critical whiteness consultant and a member or chair of multiple professional committees about whiteness and racism in professional organizations to demonstrate how this approach differs from other approaches, how it works, and why it is effective. To protect clients’ confidentiality and my ongoing work with the professional organizations I serve, I use my work with my home institution, California State University, Dominguez Hills, as an example of this structure’s operation, challenges, and successes. I build upon my experience with professional organizations such as NCTE and CCCC to draw parallels between this setting and the context of the professional conference, while also highlighting the distinctions between these contexts and, therefore, the adjustments that must be made.

Challenging white supremacy requires long-term, intensive work, and this approach provides a structure that acknowledges and welcomes that intensity and complexity.

**Presenter Profile:** [Mara Lee Grayson](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/43bc49c9c2474ce6bde6f3fe824dedf4)

## 2:30-4 pm EST: PANEL - "Intersectional Imperatives: Steps toward an Antiracist and Inclusive Feminisms & Rhetorics Conference" (Dr. Wendy Sharer, Dr. Jessica Enoch, Dr. Jane Greer, Dr. Gwendolyn D. Pough, and Dr. Heather Brook Adams)

### Wendy Sharer: "Background and Contexts"

Dr. Sharer will briefly explore exclusionary practices and histories that culminated in substantial revision of the Coalition’s biennial Feminisms & Rhetorics conference and in ongoing efforts to front antiracist, inclusive work in the organization.

In March of 2020, the Advisory Board of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition voted to cancel the 2021 Biennial Feminisms and Rhetorics (FemRhet) Conference. This decision was made in light of COVID, but, more significantly, it reflected long-standing (and growing) concerns about the inclusivity of the conference. Concerns about the whiteness of conference programs, concerns about the costs of attending (for graduate students in particular), and concerns about the inaccessibility and exclusionary histories of the places and spaces within which the conference had been held all contributed.

The cancellation of the 2021 FemRhet conference was followed in April 2020 by the Advisory Board's vote to establish a task force to explore and articulate changes to the workflows, processes, and formats of the FemRhet conference. Before such a task force could be formed, in May of 2020, we witnessed the murder of George Floyd. The ongoing killing of Black people at the hands of the police and the massive demonstrations protesting police brutality and systemic racism in law enforcement drove home the need to upend “conferencing as usual.”   
**Presenter Profile:**[**Wendy Sharer**](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/bc51aae8b8e946f78bc11211e9584dda)

### Jessica Enoch: "The Workflow, Processes, and Format Task Force"

In June of 2020, the newly formed "Workflow, Processes, and Formats" (WPF) task force was charged with identifying specific actions that the Coalition and/or FemRhet planning teams might take to ensure that antiracism and inclusivity inform all aspects of future conference planning and implementation. The WPF task force members have worked hard this past year to generate paths toward substantive change and will, by the time of the Watson Conference, have made specific recommendations to the Advisory Board.

In this portion of the proposed session, a member of the WPF task will explore how the group’s conversations were anchored to multiple layers and forms of feedback: feedback provided by individual task force members; feedback communicated through evaluations that FemRhet conference attendees have provided over the years; and feedback gathered through an “inclusivity survey,” distributed via email and social media to Coalition members and supporters, that was designed to gather information that might enable greater inclusivity in the FemRhet conference and the broader Coalition.

This portion of the session will also explore the essential role of expertise to the effective work of the task force. Task force members include two experts in Black studies and African American rhetorics who were able to speak to efforts to center BIPOC scholars (and their labor) in ways that are substantial and long-term (not just for the benefit of the Coalition or for one conference). Another member is an established disability studies scholar-organizer whose expertise in accessibility has been invaluable to discussions. Additionally, the task force involved organizers of past FemRhet conferences whose generosity and openness in sharing first-hand experience provided critical perspectives on how certain aspects of previous FemRhet conferences have limited the radical potential of the conference to be a holistically inclusive space.   
**Presenter Profile:** [Jessica Enoch](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/590babf916e34338850b83db47fe76e5)

### Jane Greer: "The Graduate Student Outreach Task Force"

Efforts to increase accessibility and inclusivity this past year have also consisted of the essential work of a Graduate Student Outreach task force. This task force was formed in 2019 in response to concerns about inclusivity and accessibility for graduate students at the Feminisms and Rhetorics conference and in the Coalition as a whole. Dr. Greer will explore how “taking stock” played a critical role in the efforts of this group. The task force spent significant time cataloguing existing opportunities for graduate students within the Coalition and at its biennial conference. This process of “documentation without defensiveness” laid the groundwork for the taskforce to help expand and transform mentoring opportunities within the Coalition and to recommend changes to the organization’s governance structure.    
**Presenter Profile:**[**Jane Greer**](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/9d42f68f1df045db9756855040aaf759)

### Gwendolyn D. Pough & Heather Brook Adams: "The Shared Values Task Force"

A third significant component of this year's work toward a more inclusive conference and organization was a Shared Values task force. When it became apparent that articulating a set of shared principles and values with regard to antiracism and promoting inclusivity would be of invaluable assistance in coordinating the work of the task forces and in guiding future efforts of the Coalition, this task force was formed to draft such a guiding document.

The idea of a shared values statement emerged from effective models that Coalition advisory board members engaged with through community organizing and advocacy work. Learning from such communities of practice, this task force set about identifying the rhetorical and organizational purposes of similar statements, including the ability for stated values to both move toward some coherence across various working groups and to provide a heuristic for generating new ideas and facilitating dialogue through potential conflict. As a small group, we were also able to dialogue and listen to one another and thus identify key rhetorical restraints such as determining who (all) should contribute to values-naming, possibilities for statement development, and the need for transparency throughout a values-drafting process.   
**Presenter Profiles:** [Gwendolyn D. Pough](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/de291755072c487e95d541bc88102141); [Heather Brook Adams](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/224b51ce722d40389254c0d572332962)

### Wendy Sharer: "Wrap-up and Q&A"

The session will conclude with a brief discussion of how the work of these three task forces--the Workflow, Processes, and Formats task force; the Graduate Student Outreach task force; and the Shared Values task force--highlight the multiple, complex, intersecting roles that organizations, institutions, and conference programming play in fostering and/or limiting the inclusivity and accessibility of a conference. Time will be provided for questions and conversation among attendees.

## 4:30-6 pm EST: WORKSHOP - "Sharing Lessons Learned: From Antiracist Programming to Antiracist Conferences" (Dr. Emily Rónay Johnston and Dr. Amanda Solomon Amorao)

This session will function as a workshop on developing and implementing feedback and reporting mechanisms for conferences to assess their antiracist performance objectives. Drawing from their own experiences of piloting an antiracist pedagogy initiative and a learning/teaching for justice conference at their home institution, the presenters will showcase lessons they have learned about antiracist programming in higher education, and guide participants in developing strategies for transferring those lessons into the context of antiracist professional conferences. Ultimately, participants will come away with a drafted set of best practices for designing and assessing antiracist conferences centered on intersectional collaboration, collective accountability, and radical care.

The workshop will open with a case study of antiracist programming at the presenters’ home institution. Emily Rónay Johnston will describe the Certificate in Antiracist Writing Pedagogy Program she has developed to support first-year writing instructors in crafting a teaching philosophy and toolbox of practical methods for resisting White supremacy. As recent composition scholarship makes clear (Condon & Young, 2016; Inoue, 2015; Inoue & Poe, 2012), first-year writing (FYW) is entrenched in Whiteness. And, since FYW is among the strongest predictors of student success in higher education (see Garret, Bridgewater, & Feinstein, 2017), FYW is an ideal site for teaching students to interrogate the standard language ideology that permeates higher education in the U.S. As she will explain, sustaining such a program cannot and should not occur in a vacuum. To live up to its founding principles of naming and actively resisting White supremacy, the program requires collaboration with campus communities across disciplines and units, such as teaching resource centers, writing centers, student resource centers, and upper-level administrators positioned to amplify the expedience of antiracist pedagogy campus-wide.

Amanda Solomon Amorao will describe one outcome of these intersectional cross-campus collaborations: the inaugural Learning/Teaching for Justice Conference (or LTJC) at the presenters’ home institution, which emerged from the deep work of building the antiracist pedagogy program that Johnston will describe. The LTJC centers student voices and takes as its point of departure Paulo Freire's notion of the teacher-student/student-teacher in order to break down racist and elitist hierarchies between undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and staff in higher education. The conference aims to cultivate an active, interactive, and inclusive space for educators to be students, and for students to educate. In planning and executing the LTJC, the organizing committee has learned important lessons for enacting an antiracist conference structure. The first lesson is that collaboration with BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff in conference design is the starting point. Second, to ensure that conference committees are indeed composed of collaborations among BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff, conference committees must look beyond themselves for support. The final lesson is transparency above all.

Taken together, the Certificate in Antiracist Writing Pedagogy and the LJTC illustrate both the complexity and opportunity of antiracist programming. After presenting a brief case study of the presenters’ home institution, the session will shift into a workshop in which participants will dialogue and collectively draft a set of best practices for convening and assessing antiracism in professional conferences. The workshop will center on three key areas for antiracist conference assessment, based on the presenters’ lessons learned at their home institution:

1. Intersectional collaboration. Intersectional collaboration in the context of antiracist conferences means that in planning and hosting conferences, conference committees must prioritize participation from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and community stakeholders.
2. Collective accountability. To sustain intersectional collaboration, conference committees must be grounded in collective accountability: a shared responsibility for reflecting on how the committee is living up to its vision of antiracism, especially when that may mean calling out instances or patterns of racism occurring within the committee.
3. Radical care. Just as intersectional collaboration cannot function without collective accountability, collective accountability cannot function without radical care. Radical care is the daily work of humanizing ourselves and each other in antiracist spaces. Humanizing ourselves and each other means that we regard one another as complex people working within hierarchical institutions who are navigating interrelated systems of domination as we may also, especially amidst a pandemic, experience grief and loss, parent small children while working from home, struggle to put food on the table, and effort to find balance in our everyday lives. Radical care means that we are not only aware of these realities for ourselves and each other, but that we actively make space to share these realities and to integrate them into the work of antiracism.

**Presenter Profiles:**[Emily Rónay Johnston](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/5fd84b8491464c0f8efd75f061132afa); [Amanda Solomon Amorao](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/485de26bed6941df90d5b1eaa8ad1b48)

# **Friday, April 23, 2021**

## 11-12:30 PM EST: WORKSHOP - "Conferencing toward Racial Literacies from the Post-White Orientation" (Dr. Marcus Croom)

In response to the Watson 2021 call for consultation and conference theme, “Toward the Antiracist Conference: Reckoning with the Past, Reimagining the Present,” this 90-minute workshop will challenge participants to racially reorient themselves, personally and professionally. Dr. Marcus Croom will introduce the post-White orientation and offer a template that conference designers can use to support the development of racial literacies through de/reconstructing the priorities and practices of their conference gatherings. Conference designers will understand how to begin using practice of race theory (PRT) to explicitly engage in healthier ways of thinking and doing race and, in turn, begin to design conference opportunities for their conference participants to also develop racial literacies.

*Related Literature*  
Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois anticipated a practice theory of race and also indicated what racial literacies involve:

Thus, it is easy to see that scientific definition of race is impossible; it is easy to prove that physical characteristics are not so inherited as to make it possible to divide the world into races; that ability is the monopoly of no known aristocracy; that the possibilities of human development cannot be circumscribed by color, nationality, or any conceivable definition of race; [and yet] all this has nothing to do with the plain fact that throughout the world today organized groups of men by monopoly of economic and physical power, legal enactment and intellectual training are limiting with determination and unflagging zeal the development of other groups; and that the concentration particularly of economic power today puts the majority of mankind into a slavery to the rest. (Du Bois, 1940, p. 137)

In other words, 1) the common sense view of race is false (Croom, 2020a); 2) despite the inaccuracy of the biological theory of race, the “plain fact” is that race is real in human history and experience; 3) warranted is an alternative theorization that demystifies race and more accurately accounts for race in human history and experience; and 4) the ongoing fact of consequential human racialization calls for racial literacies, that is, race critical “ways of thinking and doing that support human well-being amid the various processes that racially situate our lives, and some of these race practices and racial experiences are violence and trauma(tic)” (Croom, Flores, Kamberelis, 2019, p. 17).

Western European and American customs of race practice are routinely oriented by the baseless and morally bankrupt notion of racially White superiority, and anti-Blackness in particular. Thus, the vindicationist tradition and the post-White orientation names and counters this antihuman, deficiency philosophy which continues to be uncritically generated and perpetuated (including European Science and European Critical Theory) through various forms of race practice (Croom, 2020b; Hoover, 1990). When race is defined as “consequential social practice,” this means that our racial past and racial present need not be our racial future (Croom, 2020c). That is, we can think and do race for good rather than ill. Race critical conference designs are avenues that can support the development of racial literacies and accelerate the realization of a post-White racial future in the U.S. and perhaps other Westernized contexts as well.   
  
*Proposed Workshop Schedule*

* 10 minutes: Workshop participant connections and introduction of Dr. Marcus Croom
* 20 minutes: Update Your Racial Positioning System: The Post-White Orientation
* 20 minutes: Pay Attention to What You Are Doing: Practice of Race Theory (PRT)
* 25 minutes: Developing Racial Literacies through Conference Design
* 15 minutes: Workshop review & participant questions

*Post-White Conference Design Template*

* Identify and Reject All Forms of the Deficiency Philosophy; the White, Anti-Black Orientation; and Post-Racialism
* Identify Forms of Race Practice (unwritten, written, symbolic, material, individual, institutional, etc.)
* De/Reconstruct Processes and Practices that Perpetuate the Deficiency Philosophy; the White, Anti-Black Orientation; and Post-Racialism
* Establish Processes and Practices that Perpetuate the Post-White Orientation (Croom, 2020b; Croom, 2016, p. 18):

“By post-White orientation, I mean a racial understanding and practice characterized by (a) unequivocal regard for “non-White” humanity, particularly “Black” humanity; (b) demotion of “White” standing (i.e., position, status); (c) rejection of post-racial notions; (d) non-hierarchical racialization; and (e) anticipation of a post-White sociopolitical norm.”

* Designate Paid or Unpaid Roles for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to Co-Design Conference Gatherings

**Presenter Profile:** [Marcus Croom](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/2021-program/conference/resolveuid/321c71996b97479eb9a96608fdb57241)

## 12:45-1:30 PM EST: COMMUNITY REFLECTION & CLOSING PET PARADE

What did we learn, and what’s next? All are welcome to join this conclusion to the conference, no matter how many other sessions you managed to attend.

* *10 minutes:* The organizers will return to what was shared during the opening session and identify themes from the reflections submitted during the conference.
* *15-20 minutes:* In moderated breakout rooms, we will address how we apply what we’ve learned to future conferences and other settings. We will also consider what policies and practices we still need to investigate and how we might realize them.
* *15 minutes:* Back in the main room, breakout room moderators will share highlights from the discussions.
* *A few minutes:* We will say goodbye with another pet parade, where our favorite unregistered attendees can again strut their stuff.