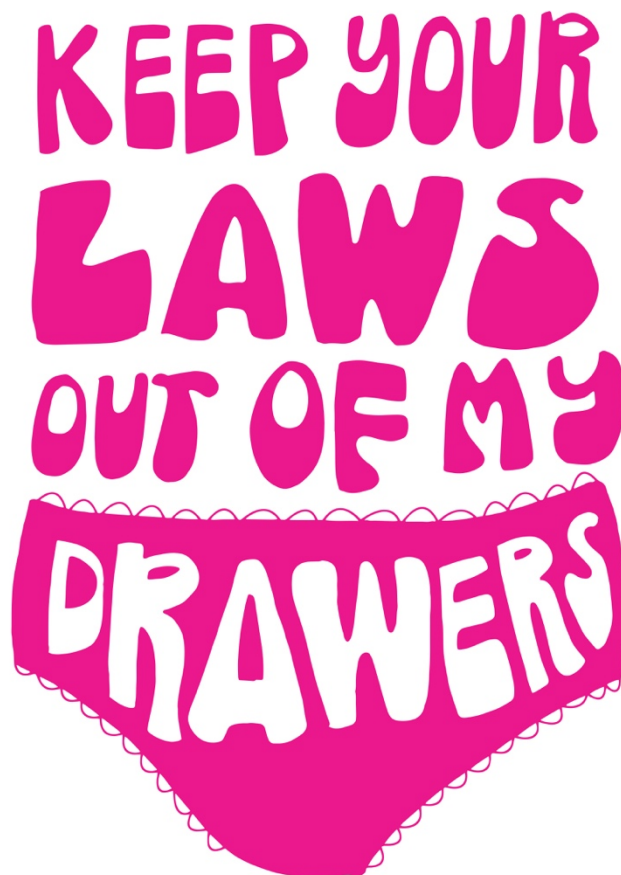


RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

All Power to All the People: WGS and Feminist Pedagogy in the Era of the Alt-Right

by Zakiya R. Adair



"KEEP YOUR LAWS OFF MY DRAWERS" BY LESLEY NUMBERS VIA JUST SEEDS

Poet, activist-scholar Audre Lorde (1984) asked, "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?" Lorde first posed this question as part of a talk that she had been asked to give for New York University's Institute for the Humanities. Lorde was frustrated with the conference's lack of intersectional feminist participation, writing, "to read this program is to assume that lesbian and black women have nothing to say of existentialism, the erotic, women's culture and silence, developing feminist theory of heterosexuality and power" (25). Lorde answered her question with, "it means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable" (25). Over thirty years later Lorde's searing indictment against tokenism is relevant to the precarity of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) and its place in higher education. WGS has been institutionalized in colleges and universities throughout the United States for over forty years. Emerging out of the 1960s Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements and activism, WGS was an answer to student demands for diverse faculty and for a curriculum that addressed systemic issues of racism, homophobia, sexism, and classism among others. But institutionalization has also made WGS invested in maintaining academic institutions that were never designed for their inclusion. Student activists wanted faculty who would incorporate feminist pedagogy to dismantle hierarchal learning models; they wanted WGS departments that would rid institutions of systemic inequities.

To do this, many WGS programs sought departmentalization as a primary goal to secure a more permanent place in colleges and universities. However this place was often contingent on how well WGS demonstrated its value to the institution. Because colleges and universities use neoliberal metrics to determine the economic value of departments, WGS -- usually one of the smallest departments -- can rarely demonstrate a large enough major pool to fulfill a positive economic impact so it must find other means to secure its place. The place, on the margins of the college or university, usually includes doing the bulk of the diversity work of the institution. This includes organizing yearly campus events on race, gender, and sexuality, putting on a full program of events for Women's History Month, and creating and facilitating workshops and or dialogues with other departments on issues related to sexism and diversity. If there is a violent local or national incident against women or LGBTQ+ persons then academic institutions call on their WGS departments to speak on the matter. To be clear, this work is a part of the ethos of WGS -- it is ingrained in our scholarship and teaching -- but when WGS is restrained in the narrow perimeters of doing the diversity work of the institution the possibility for radical change is limited and it is in this context that WGS has been tokenized.

To offset this vulnerability, many WGS departments pushed colleges and universities to make analysis of gender a part of the required general education curricula; this requirement ensured that nearly every student would have to take at least one WGS course to finish their degree objectives. Students usually fulfill this requirement by taking the Introduction to Women's Studies course. But

teaching the Introduction to Women's Studies course also exposed WGS faculty to resistant students who resented having to take the course. This put WGS in the awkward position of trying to balance its radical and interventionist roots within the limits of the neoliberal college/university.

WGS has experienced many challenges to its institutionalization, but this moment, in the era of the Alt-Right and in a context where neoliberal policies have reshaped higher education, feels particularly challenging. The presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump were one among several globally successful elections to office of right-wing, xenophobic candidates. In Brazil, England, and the United States, these elected officials have pushed through policies that impinge on the rights of marginalized people and that virtually criminalize non-white, non-cis-straight persons. In the United States, Trump declared his candidacy for President by focusing on Mexican immigration, and by calling Mexican immigrants in the U.S. rapists and criminals. He made frequent misogynistic comments and openly ridiculed women who came forward with allegations of sexual assault. His "bad hombre" and "nasty women" rhetoric found a welcome home among white supremacists. Throughout his time in office, Trump employed racist, draconian measures to police brown, black, and queer persons by constructing a border wall between the United States and Mexico, as well as numerous executive orders that undid decades of Civil Rights and LGBTQ rights. Colleges and universities have been a primary target of Trump's regime. Trump's false rhetoric that Xstudies (departments that are interdisciplinary and that have at their core critical analysis and engagement with institutional systems of inequalities) are a tool of the ultra-left to brainwash students has ignited the student base of the Alt-Right. His hyperbole played to the built-up frustrations and anger of white Americans, many of whom were young students who believed that they were losing their long held place of dominance in colleges and universities. My article examines the institutionalization of WGS and gender as a required general education course. This article also explores the potentials for radical feminist pedagogy amid the most recent rise of the Alt-Right, and how that rise has impacted the discipline. I situate my personal experience as a black feminist scholar alongside the institutionalization of WGS as a way to highlight some of the struggles of marginalized faculty working in WGS in a neoliberal context.

Neoliberalism and WGS

One cannot understand the rise of the Alt-Right in the academy without understanding neoliberalism. Wendy Brown (2015) asserts that the premise of public higher education has been to provide citizens with language and skills to understand and interpret the world, but the corporatization of higher education has "given way to a formulation of education as primarily valuable to human capital development, where human capital is what the individual, the business world, and the state seek to enhance in order to maximize competitiveness" (176). Under the neoliberal regime, the distinction between the social, the economic, and the political is collapsing in what

constitutes the marketization of the state, meaning that no longer does the state regulate the markets but instead it subjects itself to their laws. Neoliberalism shifted the way colleges and universities were run. The neoliberal framework in institutions of higher learning occurs in three distinct phases—the market, hyper-individualism, and competition. In a neoliberal context, higher education is market-driven when colleges and universities are pressured to meet a business-type model where curriculum and intellectual production are shaped and contingent on student demand and government policy. Hyper-individualism occurs when faculty are pushed to conduct and produce research that can be quantified by citation counts, where publishing as a single author is seen as more prestigious or rigorous, and community engagement and activism are weighed only as service. Competition occurs when departments are required to vie for limited institutional resources. On a yearly basis colleges and universities count how many majors a department has, and these numbers determine faculty lines and a department's budget. The irony of WGS's strategy to require gender as a general education requirement and to house that requirement in the department is that many of those students do not declare WGS as a major. This means that while WGS has expanded its reach, the numbers do not count.

For WGS, the shift in public higher education toward a market-driven model has also presented challenges to the kinds of dialogues we engage in our classrooms and especially in our pedagogy. This ideological shift was a prelude to the current moment we find ourselves in regarding the rise of Alt-Right rhetoric and neoconservative student groups, many of whom try to use the classroom as a space to promote their hate-fueled discourse. I have taught the Introduction to WGS course many times and at different types of institutions. Throughout the years, I have dealt with numerous microaggressions and incidents of overt resistance from students. The intensity and frequency of these attacks have only increased since the election of Trump. Common resistance that I have had to negotiate has included students who engage in disruptive behavior that has involved rude and dismissive comments that challenged my authority in the class and derogatory opinion-based statements on the course materials.

Frequent end of the semester student evaluation comments have included: "the professor should allow students to present alternative sides to issues pertaining to police brutality and sexual assault"; "professor should smile"; "professor should not talk about race so much." Sometimes the resistance is less overt and appears in the continuous referral to me as Miss or Mrs. instead of Professor or Doctor. Often, the opposition is more subtle, such as a series of microaggressions cloaked as inquiry and fact-checking. Sometimes the resistance is a deafening silence projected from a wall of bodies in the back of the classroom that refuse to participate. So, what can be done about this? WGS should be careful about our relationship to the larger institution; we must carefully weigh our desire for institutional security with our innate challenge of systems of inequality. As a discipline that critically interrogates relationships of power between institutions

and individuals, WGS is now in a conundrum in terms of our institutional responsibilities and trappings. At times conflict arises between what WGS aims to do and what the college and larger institution will allow. The precarity of the current moment is increased by the steady appropriation of the language of social justice by the Alt-Right to firm up and increase their presence on college campuses.

To be clear, WGS is not the only discipline under attack. In the current neoliberal context, many humanities-based disciplines and all the Xstudies have been impacted. This has occurred alongside the neoliberal college's rebranding of itself as a bastion for interdisciplinary and intersectional diversity. In addition to the neoliberal marketization of colleges/universities, President Trump has sanctioned white supremacist discourse and provided a platform for dangerous conspiracy theories that colleges and universities impinge upon free speech. This has created a space for the appropriation by the Alt-Right to use neoliberal framing of intersectionality and inclusion to inject themselves and their hate as a part of a diverse intellectual community. Rembert Browne (2016) asserts that Trump won the presidency because he encouraged sexists also to be racist and racists to be homophobic. This is what Brown theorizes as the intersectionality of hate.

The impact of the Alt-Right on college campuses appears in several forms: as invited campus speakers and visiting fellows, as official student campus organizations, as individual students who surveil and stalk WGS faculty. This is done through recording lectures and posting the contents to anonymous racist online platforms. One popular claim by Alt-Right students is that their opinions, their white culture, and racist memorabilia and statues are being erased by a far-left collaboration between education, media, and government. Ironically, it is now people of color and non-binary, non-cis-straight persons who are accused of being snowflakes for demanding safe spaces, without recognizing that there are no so-called safe spaces for people of color. In fact it is the alt-right who have behaved like snowflakes in that any expression of progressive views in the classroom supposedly robs them of their rights to free speech. The language of political correctness, which was initially developed by people on the left to mock dogmatism amongst the ranks, is now used by conservatives on the right to claim victimization and persecution by the left for their views, particularly as they relate to race. As a result, WGS is in a paradoxical space: both more firmly established within academic institutions -- requiring us to be self-reflective about our disciplinary goals within the current neoliberal corporatization of higher education -- and struggling with the right-wing target this incorporation and visibility has engendered.

Teaching WGS in the age of Trump and the rise of the Alt-Right

As market driven institutions colleges and universities must demonstrate for prospective parents and students the economic viability of a college degree. Most do this by making a direct association between certain majors and in-demand careers. The economic viability argument usually

favors STEM and business majors as the best bet for prospective students to ensure a high paying job upon graduation. This argument relies on an unstable and ever-changing job market. Another consequence of the market driven approach is that many colleges and universities use decreases in fiscal budgets to justify the merging or closing of departments. The pandemic caused by the novel Coronavirus has revealed the vulnerability and disparities in colleges and universities. Nationwide WGS and other liberal arts departments have been closed or merged, faculty have been fired, and hiring in these departments has been frozen. Now more than ever it is crucial that WGS departments function as a critique of the institution and push for equity. The WGS push for gender as a general education requirement has allowed WGS the opportunity to reach a lot of students but an unexpected outcome has also been less of an opportunity to remake the institution.

A significant change to WGS has been the steady depoliticization of its curriculum, in other words, the abandonment of an intersectional economic and political approach to WGS. Numerous factors have contributed to the current depoliticization of WGS, perhaps the most significant being the relationship between second-wave feminism and neoliberalism. Nancy Fraser (2009) argues that during the 1960s, second-wave feminism politicized the personal and "expanded the meaning of justice, reinterpreting as injustices social inequalities that had been overlooked, tolerated or rationalized since time immemorial" (103). Fraser asserts that the rise of second-wave feminism coincided with a shift in capitalism towards privatization; "what had begun as a radical countercultural movement was now en route to becoming a broad-based mass social phenomenon. Attracting adherents of every class, ethnicity, nationality, and political ideology, feminist ideas found their way into every nook and cranny of social life and transformed the self-understandings of all whom they touched" (107-108). This overdependence on individualism has created a space for Alt-Right students' demands for equal representation and inclusion of their ideas and personal experiences.

The Alt-Right has been highly active in identifying and targeting departments, classes, and faculty in areas that they deem anti-white. They utilize social media and political strategies to advocate the firing of faculty and defunding of WGS programs, institutes, and departments. In the neoliberal college, tuition is a contract wherein the student/parent is the consumer, and the faculty and administrator are the customer representative. They assert that their tuition dollars should ensure equal inclusion of their hate fueled ideas and rhetoric. For example, in 2019, the conservative group Campus Reform published on their website a full list of events planned for Women's History Month at The College of New Jersey. The list contained full details of the names of events and the speakers and the locations. Although there were no explicit threats, the very fact that the list was published as important information for concerned citizens who want to document "leftist abuse and bias" on college campuses was a mark of the market-driven neoliberal college that asserts that it is the tax-dollar of the community that goes into funding public colleges and universities and as such, they have a right to determine and

monitor events, classes, and organizations. In addition to WGS departments and faculty being under threat from corporatist neoliberalism, this model has generally coalesced with right-wing politics. This political arm has a pro-corporate, small government approach; these ideas are often used as a way of promoting fiscal and moral responsibility to public colleges and universities, who are dependent on state and federal funding.

The Many Roles of the WGS Professor

I obtained my PhD. in Women's Studies at a time when only eleven universities across the United States offered the Ph.D. in the discipline. When I was on the job market, this created a significant hurdle for me in relation to my peers who graduated from more traditional fields like History or English. I was often tasked with emphasizing the relevance and adaptability of my field of inquiry to potential employers. Some of my graduate school mentors were not optimistic about my ability to get a tenure track job where my tenure was exclusively in a Women's Studies department. They cautioned me to focus on History, my second discipline. My entire graduate school training had been shaped to conform to the field of History, which, at that time, was how many WGS doctoral programs were organized. Since I had expressed an interest in pursuing a career in academia, I was told that I had to follow the scholarly expectations of History so that I could demonstrate for potential departments that my teaching and research would align with an established scholarly field. I was advised to do this because colleges and universities would be reluctant to hire a graduate in Women's Studies.

Being both outside but inside the History Department was a challenge, but I did what I needed to do to ensure the best opportunity to get a tenure track job in academia by shaping my pedagogy in accordance with the standard pedagogy of the History discipline. I struggled to merge feminist pedagogy with History pedagogy. The main issue revolved around feminist pedagogy that is student-centered and seeks to dismantle classroom hierarchies contrasting with History pedagogy that asserts the instructor as the head source of knowledge. Prior to Trump's campaign and election, I was able to merge these two approaches. I used in-class small group discussions and paired historical articles with feminist theory as an effective practice of this method. After Trump's election, I had to provide a lot more structure so as not to encourage Alt-Right aligned students with a method to incorporate their opinions. Masquerading as interested students they disrupt lectures and challenge course content making it difficult to maintain a feminist classroom where everyone gets a voice and where the knowledge that they bring to the class is acknowledged and respected. I have had to adapt my teaching style so that diversity and inclusion are not misinterpreted to include hate.

Feminist pedagogy calls for a democratic learning structure where the power of the professor is de-centered. This type of pedagogy breaks up teacher/learner hierarchies, but it also requires the instructor to occupy many different roles. The Introduction to WGS course requires the instructor to adapt quickly to students who

have vastly different experiences and interests in WGS curriculum. At my current institution, all undergraduate students must complete a set of liberal learning courses as part of their general education program, one of which is under civic responsibility. Students can fulfill the civic responsibility requirement by taking one class that is designated as either gender, global, or race and ethnicity. Students can take other WGS courses to fulfill the gender requirement, and some of these courses are offered as more advanced seminars, but as a rule at my college students usually take the Introduction to WGS course to fulfill this requirement. My department requires that all full-time faculty teach the Introduction course at least once. I am a recently tenured professor in Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies and African American Studies; I have taught the Introduction course twice at my current institution and a few times at my previous institution. The Introduction to WGS course is an overview of various feminist topics, themes, theories, and history of the women's movements, the Civil Rights movement, and the LGBTQ+ movement. Because of the differing types of students and the vast amount of content, the Introduction to WGS is an incredibly challenging course to teach.

Every semester I have taught I have had multiple students break down in my office over personal difficulties: one student expressed suicidal thoughts, another student asked for an incomplete for one of my courses because he was arrested and didn't have money for bail. I had multiple students explain to me in detail about their experience with domestic violence, sexual abuse, and poverty. One student told me they were homeless because their family didn't accept their sexual identity. Each time these confessionals happened, I happily and eagerly stepped up to provide emotional support and resources to help my students. In this sense I am a teacher, an advocate, a counselor, and a crisis negotiator. This is true for many instructors who come from marginalized backgrounds, but it is especially true for WGS instructors. My race and gender identity as a black cis gendered female inspire a trust that is racially familiar, and the content of my course provokes introspection and self-reflection; this made students feel comfortable with me and this dynamic in the classroom is a scenario that is rare in the academy. The emotional labor of occupying multiple roles in the classroom affected my role as a faculty member by increasing my workload. I am happy to do the extra work --caring for my students and being an advocate for them is a big part of why I became a professor -- but colleges and universities are ill equipped to handle the complex needs of students. In a neoliberal college/university emotional labor does not count towards tenure and promotion -- it does not even count as service -- and because this type of labor is usually left to women of color many are not able to complete or satisfy broader college tenure and promotion requirements. I was fortunate to have supportive colleagues and senior mentors that helped me but many do not. Neoliberal measures of progress in academic institutions only include metrics that can be quantified as a benefit to the institution. This makes it even more difficult to matriculate through tenure and provide an intellectually rigorous student-centered feminist course.

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) argue that universities and colleges "became important venues for disseminating intersectionality" (32). In the neoliberal corporate model of higher education, colleges can engage and even promote programs that incorporate theories of intersectionality to suit their own aims. I have experienced the distinction between critical inquiry and critical praxis most in my teaching. For example, my pedagogy is informed by black feminist pedagogy that rests on three elements: democratic learning, active participatory learning, social justice epistemology. For me, feminist pedagogy means a constant examination and critique of standard pedagogical practices. I design all my courses as spaces of respect, engagement, and intellectual rigor. This classroom model and pedagogy are not always received well by students, especially in my courses that meet the general education liberal learning requirements. In these courses, where most students are non-majors, I have had to negotiate their resistance to critical reflection on systems of inequality and privilege with my desire to push them past their intellectual boundaries. Yet and still, students will vocalize their resistance to their values being fundamentally challenged in course evaluations.

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For junior and adjunct faculty, the end of semester course evaluation is a significant part of achieving tenure. Many women, people of color, and non-binary non-cis individuals frequently receive lower student evaluation marks than their peers, yet still many institutions continue to require these evaluations as a part of tenure and promotion or in the case of adjunct faculty to determine contract renewal. The fear of negative evaluations looms large, especially in colleges and universities that do not offer other means to evaluate teaching such as the peer review system. When I started teaching, course evaluations were conducted in class and facilitated by the professor. In my experience, the in-person format yielded a higher number of participants, and most importantly, the narrative feedback reflected a greater range of student experience with the course; however currently most institutions including my current one has switched the student evaluation to an online format, which has shifted control and facilitation of the evaluation away from the professor. As previously stated, frequent negative comments that I have received are that my courses focus too much on race; that I do not smile enough; that I do not teach alternative viewpoints on abortion or police brutality. The alternative viewpoint criticism is, once again, a manifestation of the market-driven neoliberal college/university: the student (consumer) has a right to receive an education from the institution (business) that reflects their interests; the professor (customer service agent) is obliged to deliver

these demands to increase student (consumer) satisfaction. This is not to say that courses should not be student-centered -- they should -- but the push to meet the market-driven demands that students enjoy their classes is particularly burdensome to faculty in the studies disciplines who primarily teach courses pertaining to power structures and privilege.

I have struggled to offer classes that adhere in content and form with my feminist beliefs despite my anxiety about the potential harm to my job that negative course evaluations may bring. An example of this struggle occurred when Donald Trump was elected President. In my African American Women's History course (WGS cross-listed with History), I devoted a small amount of time during class for students to discuss their reactions to the election and to also discuss the rhetoric of hate that was a common theme throughout the election process. Many of my students were eager to engage critically, but there were also students who spoke out about their support of Trump and their feelings that they had been largely silenced. I was struck by how easily these students used the language of social justice to defend the intersectionality of hate. These students had a very hard time seeing the contradictions of their defense and claims of censorship.

Alt-Right aligned students believe in the false rhetoric that colleges are liberal-leaning institutions that infringe on their right to free speech. In 2019 President Trump emboldened this when he signed the *Executive Order On Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (Trump 2019). The executive order threatened loss of federal research grants to any college or university found to be not in compliance with the First Amendment. This is not new to WGS, but what is new is the election of a president that openly encouraged hate, who stoked racist, homophobic, and xenophobic fears, and who sanctions students' rights to monitor classes and surveil professors who they feel have violated their right to free speech. What this means, in part, is that the university as a place for critical thought, trying out ideas, innovation, social justice, and the vulnerability of embracing failure as a part of inquiry are compromised by the corporate model which involves the "logics of corporate management," wherein "the specific academic or academic practice is to be framed by, or tested against, the strategic objectives of the university" (Clarke 2017 137). In this context, the university as an institution becomes a self-protective entity that seeks to suppress or eliminate that which threatens state funding and or donor support.

A major contribution of WGS to academia and to the larger public comes from BIPOC feminist theory on identity. In the groundbreaking *Combahee River Collective* (CRC) statement (1977), black queer feminists asserted that, "the most profound and potentially most radical politics come from our own identity" (quoted in Taylor, 2017 15-27). The "personal is political" ethos of second wave feminism was a pillar of much of the early curriculum and pedagogy of WGS. This approach was useful but when stripped from its BIPOC queer origins it relied on ambiguous identities and personal experience. Fraser (108) identifies this as "feminist anti-economism resignified." Fraser argues that the language of social justice that is now ingrained in many

WGS departments is the result of neoliberalism's impact on second wave feminism. Fraser (108) writes, "neoliberalism's rise coincided with a major alteration in the political culture of capitalist societies. In this period claims for justice were increasingly couched as claims for the recognition of identity and difference." Fraser contends that this shift transformed second wave feminism "into a variant of identity politics" (108). This variant was devoid of the BIPOC work that black queer feminists did on identity politics to ground the personal in a specific anti-black racist context; without this institutions and alt-right students have been able to co-opt the language of identity politics, which is really a shell that protects their discourse of hate.

Thus, this current moment of neoliberal restructuring is very much connected to shifts in neo-conservatism that emerged post 9/11. Sarah Chinn and Joseph Entin's (2018) arguments about the impact of Trump are useful: "Trump's election does represent something new or at least a newly dramatic intensification: a heightening of the reactionary rhetoric and policies against vulnerable populations" (2).

When I first started teaching as a graduate student, I relied on Paulo Freire's (1968) groundbreaking and transformative *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire's book provided me with a template for how to change the structure of the classroom -- to break up the actual physical space in an effort to decenter the privilege of the professor. Freire's pedagogy did not conform to the standard military-like pedagogy that assumes the student is a blank slate, and the professor is the ultimate source of power and knowledge. Another incredibly influential text for me was bell hooks's (1994) *Teaching to Transgress*. hooks's book was another radical text that, for me, demonstrated how professors could use the content and structure of a course to radically transgress. *Teaching To Transgress* was the first text that I read that discussed the dynamics of teaching while black, and that explored the intimacy of teaching. hooks (1994) writes: "to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can and must deeply and intimately begin." Feminist pedagogy has inspired many administrators and faculty to adopt a more inclusive and engaged pedagogy. Increasingly, the Alt-Right has used the language of diversity, free speech, open dialogue, and inclusivity as a cloak to hide their racist, homophobic, and sexist ideology. Take, for example, the white supremacist protest and rallies in Charlottesville, VA, in August 2017 (Lind Vox 2017). Organized under the banner "Unite the Right" large numbers of neo-nazi, KKK, white nationalists, and other racist organizations descended on the college town of Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the planned removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee (Lind Vox 2017). In response to the violent protest, where white nationalist James Alex Fields Jr. drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters killing Heather Heyer and injuring more than a dozen, President Trump declared that there were bad guys on both sides. President Trump's false equivalency is indicative of the Alt-Right strategy to appropriate the language of social justice.

Another significant issue is the institutional co-optation of some of the radical concepts that were foundational to WGS. Concepts like interdisciplinary, engaged teaching,

and diversity are frequently used by many institutions of higher learning to promote the college or university as cutting edge or as an excellent space for undergraduate learning and training. Rarely do women's and gender studies scholars get credit for this contribution. We are told that we should be happy that we have a seat at the table. As a vehicle for discrediting WGS, in 2017, two scholars published a fake article in the journal *Cogent Social Sciences*. Titled "The Conceptual Penis as Social Construct," the article contained numerous jumbled sentences and fake sources. The authors' stated reason for publishing the fake article was a stereotypical representation of gender studies:

We intended to test the hypothesis that flattery of the academic left's moral architecture in general, and of the moral orthodoxy in gender studies in particular, is the overwhelming determiner of publication in an academic journal in the field. That is, we sought to demonstrate that a desire for a certain moral view of the world to be validated could overcome the critical assessment required for legitimate scholarship. Particularly, we suspected that gender studies is crippled academically by an overriding almost-religious belief that maleness is the root of all evil. On the evidence, our suspicion was justified. (Jaschik 2017).

It did not matter that the publication venue that the authors chose was not academic or that they actually paid to publish their article with *Cogent Social Sciences*. The publication of the article confirmed the beliefs of many who were already skeptical of the intellectual rigor of WGS scholarship. And, these attacks have not stopped. In the fall of 2018, three scholars -- James Lindsay, Helen Pluckrose, and Peter Boghossian -- wrote 20 fake papers over the course of a year. The attack on WGS scholarship coincided with Alt-Right attacks on WGS departments as an abuse of state monies allocated to public colleges and universities.

Another aspect of the impact of neoliberal corporatization on WGS is the economic politics of state funding that determine WGS budgetary and fiscal goals each year. For many public colleges and universities this means that it is up to the state to determine the programs that are on the cutting board, and the metrics used to make these decisions follow the neoliberal model that prioritizes a market-based approach over the intrinsic value of learning and creating global citizens. The power of conservative legislators' purse strings is threatening to departments and programs such as WGS. It is also stressful for students who fear department closure or class cancellations because many of them come to WGS looking for a safe haven on college campuses that can feel intimidating and unwelcoming. Following a market-based approach to institutional budgetary and fiscal goals means that WGS departments may find that their request for faculty line hires is scrutinized and denied, or that their annual speaker funds are cut or minimized; this can also mean that WGS does not get full-time administrative support. The implication being that an undergraduate degree in WGS does not lead to viable careers for students. The idea that these programs aren't practical and do not lead to jobs is a market-based approach to legitimize program cuts, but it also accomplishes the elimination of

ideas and pedagogy that conflict with conservative perspectives and values. It is a seemingly neutral method of curbing academic freedom through the lens of neoliberalism, which is anything but neutral.

While WGS faculty negotiate the demands of WGS students, we are also reminded that we have research and writing obligations to fulfill. Research output is a priority, but this fact is difficult to reconcile with an emphasis on the theoretical and praxis-based elements of what WGS stands for in terms of its social justice mission. When I was a junior pre-tenure WGS faculty member at a research-intensive university, I was encouraged to shift my energy from teaching and service towards research and academic publishing. This public/publish or perish model is particularly risky for scholars of color in Women's and Gender Studies, who are often told that in addition to an active research agenda and teaching and advising, they will also need to cultivate an online public identity. At a 2017 academic conference for scholars of African American intellectual history, I attended a panel that offered advice to junior scholars on how to get their first book contract, in which one editor from a well-respected academic press encouraged junior scholars to cultivate an intellectual brand by using blogs and social media to speak on current social and political issues. The editor stated that this was one of the things that her press looked for in identifying potential authors: another market-driven approach to academic publishing. The prioritization of branding creates a paradox for many scholars in WGS departments because, for many of us, the profession is also connected to our activist desire for a progressive and ever-evolving feminist space in the classroom and social justice but speaking out can also lead to job loss. When negative attention is brought to the university or college, the immediate reaction is often one of censure or rebuff because part of the job of college/university administrators is to protect the university from backlash and to ensure that the university continues to attract students whose "butts in seats" fulfills the neoliberal market-driven model.

Current attacks on WGS as a field have not only centered on delegitimizing its scholarship but also assert that its curriculum and scholarship do not encourage critical thinking but instead push a dangerous far-left political agenda. Faculty who are labeled by the Alt-right as dangerous get attacked and threatened through a variety of social media outlets. Turning Point USA (2016) published an online blog entitled "Professor Watchlist." The list was published online as a resource for ultra-far-right students and young professionals. In addition to department affiliations and exact addresses the list also contained pictures, full names, and university affiliations. As an example of white supremacy not being about specific bodies raced as white, a key person involved with Turning Point USA is a black American woman named Candace Owens. Owens is the director of communications and has gained prominence through her many online attacks of the liberal media. Owens frequently asserts that colleges and universities are nothing more than factories of liberal indoctrination. The Professor Watchlist is described as:

an aggregated list of pre-existing news stories that were published by a variety of news organizations. While we

accept tips for new additions on our website, we only publish profiles on incidents that have already been reported by a credible source. TPUSA will continue to fight for free speech and the right for professors to say whatever they wish; however, students, parents, and alumni deserve to know the specific incidents and names of professors that advance a radical agenda in lecture halls.

All of the professors identified are liberal academics, and all of the so-called evidence is taken from third-person accounts of statements made during class lectures or from material taken from course syllabi or online social media statements. Turning point USA asserts that it will "expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom." By co-opting the language of progressive critical thoughts and using it as a means to "protect" students from those whom they identify as biased professors, the Watchlist report and its parent organizer Turning Point US have used the language of social justice as a cloak to promote hate and to attack liberal social justice scholars.

This mechanism of the Alt-Right contends that our curriculum is coercive to students and a danger to the larger public, and that our very presence in academia represents a threat to free speech and traditional moral values. In their article, "When Margins Become Centered: Black Queer Women in Front and Outside of the Classroom," authors Moya Bailey and Shannon J. Miller (2015) discuss the vulnerability that many feminists and people of color face on the tenure clock. Bailey and Miller reflect on their experiences as black queer women in the academy: "We assert that feminist classrooms are arenas for discovery, liberation and resistance of hegemonic structures, and attempt to construct these spaces both in and outside of women's studies departments" (Bailey and Miller 2015, 169). The attempt by feminist scholars to create classrooms and learning environments that resist hegemonic structures creates added emotional labor and moral imperative. It impacts how the students receive information and how they receive a professor. If we understand feminist pedagogy as a moral imperative as well, we cannot "just say no" to the emotional labor that our students require of us.

Part of the incentive for many Women's and Gender Studies faculty to join WGS departments is the feeling that these departments are often the only ones that will offer a refuge -- an intellectual space to do the work that is often criticized or met with hostility in other more traditional disciplines. This was a major factor in my decision to get my Ph.D. in WGS. Students who are not wealthy and those who are marginalized by various identities are told that they can not afford to "think for thinking's sake." The message is that college should be practical, but this line of thinking pushes these students away from disciplines like WGS that provide these same students with a much-needed language to understand who they are in the world and how they can fight back against systems that marginalize people.

Conclusion

To return to Lorde, WGS has been using the space of higher education -- tools of a racist patriarchy -- to prepare students to critically engage and deconstruct the systems of a racist patriarchy. Now that we are firmly fixed within the institution, we must fight our way out of the quagmire of neoliberal feminism's imprint on WGS. A shift in focus away from neoliberal identity politics can return WGS to its radical interventionist roots -- an investment in the redistribution of wealth and a critique of capitalist systems to engage with faculty outside of the classroom. Students want courses that reflect their lives and that provide them with tools to navigate an ever-changing world with so much upheaval. The novel Coronavirus pandemic and protest over continued police brutality incidents has left many students hungry for more than a passive college learning experience. Students want engaged pedagogy, they want a language to use to discuss and understand larger systems of inequality, and WGS is the place to find it.

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