"No, it's not as if I'm Oscar Wilde or anything"

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of English

By

Jesse A. Gray

May 2016
The graduate project of Jesse A. Gray is approved:

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ABSTRACT

“No, it's not as if I'm Oscar Wilde or anything”

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Master of Arts in English

Contained within this portfolio is a series of assignments, reports, essays, and other general materials to assist us graduating Master’s students with the needed skills and preparation to find suitable (and enjoyable) employment after the dark day of graduation. These materials include: 1. a statement of professional identity, in which I discuss the importance of critical theory studies as well as cultural diversity in my research and teaching concentrations. 2. A “Career Research Report,” that explores the various trends in employment for the work I want to explore after graduation, that being a full-time instructor at a teaching heavy institution, as well as the ways to search and apply for jobs in said field. 3. A copy of a fully up-to-date and complete Curriculum Vitae, as well as a resume for the types of jobs that don’t place such an importance on the CV. Then finally; 4. Various completed application materials, specifically a letter of interest for an English instructor position at Pierce College, as discussed earlier in the “Career Research Report,” which will be ready for distribution as soon as I feel ready.
Statement of Professional Self-Identity

There’s something of a difficulty in attempting to identify and explain oneself when one has gone through years of schooling, and everything associated with that, to learn the critical language of complications and multiplicities. Personally, having to talk about what I am, what I want to be, or whatever else always comes either with a sense of self-indulgence, a feeling of unease at “limiting” myself with labels, or more generally some sort of mixture of the two. Slowly this sense of discomfort has been starting to pass as I’ve become more aware of where my interests and principles lay, as well gaining the understanding (through life experiences and also more freeing theoretical concepts) that these sort of self-identifying labels are, of course, as malleable and fluid as it is that I want them to be. With that concept percolating in my mind, I’m finding that my concepts of my personal and professional self oftentimes involves ideas that seem to be without obvious connection of concrete examples. That place of negotiation between these seemingly disparate or under realized notions of my personal or professional self is where I find myself now, and for the most part, exactly where I feel I need to be.

After the spring 2016 semester is over, and I graduate with that M.A. that I’ve been chasing so diligently, I hope to move on to a couple places that will further nurture my growing appreciation of teaching and learning. At this moment, I am hoping to be able to find some sort of situation that would be similar to my experience as a Supplemental Instructor, teaching students that need a little extra help succeeding in college level English courses. I myself spent lots of time in community college, in and out of remedial English classes, finding it hard to find any sort of “reason” to attend. Eventually I gained the self-confidence and basic understanding to not only do well in my
English classes but also to find the subject so interesting that I decided, maybe obviously, to pursue English for my various college degrees. This experience that I’ve had in my own studies I feel helps me understand and enjoy the process of teaching students who maybe think that studying English offers nothing to them. Which leads me into wanting to, after graduation, continue teaching such students in a place like the community college environment that is rife with apathetic, potentially insightful, English students.

Potentially working in an environment like community college in where I can assist students the sometimes frustrating world of English study also offer the chance to interact with something else that is important to me, professionally and personally, that being the idea of being around diverse types of people. Something that can immediately make me feel unfulfilled, or heaven forbid, bored in any situation is a lack of diversity amongst the group of people that I’m around. This can mean lack of diversity gender-wise, culturally, racially, age-wise, really anything that differentiates individuals from each other. A mixture of backgrounds and experiences is something that even now I attempt to surround myself when it comes to friends, colleagues, or whatever and may have something to do with the somewhat culturally limited environment in which I grew up in in the rural Northern California area.

Additionally, my insistence on working/living/existing in a, by nearly every definition, diverse environment also fits in somewhat with what I find as the theoretical foundations that define my future interests in academic research and creative production. Pulling from such critical theorists as Derrida, Gayarti Spivak, Donna Haraway, Deleuze & Guattari, and others, I hope to find a way to bridge the gap that sometimes exists between what is critical and what is creative. Ideally, what I would like to concentrate on
engaging with would not rely only discussing matters of the aesthetic and the critical, but also on what the place of new modes of textual production is in that conversation. I hope to have this research include matters of multi-modality (as I’ve experienced under the semi-tutelage of Dr. Santoh Khadka), matters of multi/poly/non/etc-genre texts, as well as a deep consideration of what the future of post-post-post-modern of post-post-structuralist theory might even look like.

To sum up, as I said in the beginning, I find myself at a place of negotiation between two interests, which while not being at odds with each other may still prove to be somewhat difficult to combine. On the one hand there is the dreams of engaging in critical/creative forces of textual production and creation, and on the other hand there is the dream of teaching students that may not so easily see why English is something that they should care about. This place of negotiation between all these different concepts and fields of interest is exactly where I like to be, ultimately, hopefully, leading me to live a professional and personal life full of diversity, variety, and difference.

Oh! Also it’d be nice to have an office, so I’ll do what I have to get me one of those.
Education

MASTER OF ARTS | 2016 | CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE
-English Literature
Areas of Concentration: Multi-Modal Communications, Digital Humanities, African American Literature, Women’s Studies, Literary Critical Theory.

BACHELOR OF ARTS | 2014 | HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY
-English Literature
Areas of Concentration: African American Literature, Black British Literature, Young Adult Literature, Literary Critical Theory.

ASSOCIATE OF ARTS | 2010 | HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY
-Behavioral Arts
Areas of Concentration: English Literature, Behavioral Psychology.

Teaching Experience

California State University, Northridge
Supplemental Instructor – University 61A (Writing) 2015-2016
Taught a supplemental remedial writing course helping students develop writing skills to assist them in passing their main English courses. Created daily lesson plans, took attendance, developed and delivered class lectures, and participated in constant individual student conferences outside of class.

Conferences

“The Lacanian Mirror Stage and the Formation of the Westian Artistic Self”
AGSE/STDIC Spring 2016 Conference, CSU Northridge.

“Donna Haraway’s Cyborg and the Re/Consideration of the Modernity Myth”
College of Liberal Arts Graduate Symposium, University of Nevada, Reno. 2016.

“Coding the Digital Translations of Yesterday” (W/Fowzia Sharmeen)
AGSE Spring 2015 Conference, CSU Northridge.

Memberships/Workshops Lead

Vice-President of 4Humanities@CSUN. 2015-2016.
Digital Humanities Research Lab Technician, CSU Northridge. 2016.
“Composing With Video Faculty Workshop” with Dr. Santosh Khadka. 2016.
Grant Writing for WeLiftLA. 2015.
Qualifications Profile

EXCELLENT ACADEMIC RECORD AND STRONG BACKGROUND IN ENGLISH AND COMPOSITION

Master of Arts in English Literature, Bachelor degree in English Literature, an academic record displaying high achievement in my major classes, and one year as a Supplemental Instructor assisting in the teaching of freshman level English.

COMMITMENT TO UP-TO-DATE KNOWLEDGE

Ongoing passion in staying up-to-date with new teaching styles, diverse pedagogical theories that endorse inclusivity, collaboration and cooperation techniques, as well as the successful utilization of multimodal teaching technologies that engage the students with new media practices.

COMMUNICATION WITH MULTICULTURAL STAFF, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATION

Commitment to creating a climate of understanding around the various backgrounds of my students, professors, and colleagues. Encouraging students to meet me one-on-one for more personalized discussions about their work and progress, while also utilizing alternative modes of composition to endorse non-traditional modes of argumentation.

COMMITMENT TO EXTRACURRICULAR RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENT AND COLLEGE

Participated in graduate and undergrad clubs and groups, workshops, and conferences that demonstrate my willingness to be active on multiple committees, as well as in assisting colleagues and senior faculty with any sort of project that would enhance the academic community.

PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR FRESHMAN-LEVEL COMPOSITION COURSES

Taught classes that have been concerned with preparing students who have difficulty understanding the basics of reading, writing, and general composition, to be successful in their college careers, students usually from a background where English is their second (or third, of fourth) language.

EMPHASIS ON COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

Encouraging of students engaging with group work, peer review, and other modes of collaboration, in order to encourage the growth of problem solving skills, creativity, and foster the academic community at large. Often has assigned group projects with an individual component.

LEARNER-CENTERED FOCUS

Very focused on the progress of my students, encouraging a dialog on their progress and process, encouraging risk-taking and the possibilities of productive failure. As well as, motivating students to engage with multimodal texts, in where their reaction and response to a text taken into consideration.

Education

MASTER OF ARTS | 2016 | CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

English Literature

BACHELOR OF ARTS | 2014 | HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

English Literature Studies

Experience Highlights

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTOR | (CSU NORTHRIDGE) FALL 2015 – SPRING 2016

Taught a supplemental remedial writing course helping students pass develop writing skills to assist them in passing their main English courses. Created daily lesson plans, did attendance, ran class lectures, and participated in constant individual student conferences outside of class.
April 18, 2016
Mary Fellows
Pierce College
6201 Winnetka Ave,
Woodland Hills, CA 91371

Dear Ms. Fellows:

I am writing to express interest in the tenure-track English Instructor position at Pierce College.

Currently, I am attending CSU Northridge, competing the final requirements for M.A. program, where I will be graduating in May in good academic standing with a degree in English Literature. Previously I have graduated from Humboldt State University with a Bachelor degree in English Literature Studies, as well as from the College of the Redwoods with an Associate degree in Behavioral Science.

For the last two semester I have been Supplemental Instructor, which means I help teach a lower-level Freshman English composition course. Also I am a lab technician in the undergrad Digital Humanities Lab assisting students with digital aspects of English research and composition.

Further, I myself spent lots of time in community college, in and out of remedial English classes, finding it hard to find any sort of “reason” to attend. Eventually I gained the self-confidence and basic understanding to not only do well in my English classes but also to find the subject so interesting that I decided to pursue English for my various college degrees. This experience feel helps me understand the process of teaching students who may think that studying English offers little to them.

Finally, working in an environment like Pierce College, considering its size and its location, would allow the chance for me to help students from diverse backgrounds succeed in the sometimes frustrating world of English. The sort of diversity portrayed by Pierce, is something that I attempt to surround myself with when it comes to colleagues, employers, and students in an effort to engage in a professional life full of diversity, variety, and difference.

Sincerely,
Jesse Gray