

## Jacob Juntunen Diversity and Inclusion Statement

In order to demonstrate how I strive for diversity and inclusion in academia, I will focus on my employment at Southern Illinois University (SIU) since 2012. At SIU, my work with the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program (WGSS), my Department of Theater teaching, and my research agenda, has all worked towards inclusivity.

I have been a co-appointed faculty member with WGSS at SIU since I was hired. Since 2014, I have served on the campus-wide elected WGSS Executive Committee. My focus on that committee has been recruitment, scholarship, curricular change, teaching, and professional development. I help organize the annual WGSS conference which attracts spectators outside the WGSS minor and graduate certificate, and so acts as a public face for the program. I serve on the conference selection committee that evaluates submissions and awards scholarships to students. I also mentor my own Theater students on submitting and presenting. This is a superb local event to mentor them at in order to encourage submission to national conferences, particularly if their subject position is one given primacy by WGSS. I collaborated with the Executive Committee on updating the curriculum to include more courses for the Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS) minor. I also solicit and evaluate faculty applications for WGSS funding to support diverse research.

Within the Department of Theater I have sought to maintain a diverse group of MFA playwriting students—the population I have the most direct influence on—and have recruited first generation, transfer, and minority theatre majors from the Chicago and Southern Illinois regions. I have done this primarily through presenting my own work, both scholarship and playwriting, but also by inviting a diverse group of visiting artists to SIU, particularly for the annual new play festival. Through this, I have created a nation-wide network of multicultural scholars and artists with whom I work on recruiting diverse students and mentoring current students.

My teaching supports diversity and inclusion both through specialized courses and within syllabi for standard courses. Specialized courses I teach include African American Representation, Performance, and Theatre; Sex and HIV/AIDS; LGBTQ+ Theatre; and Latinx Theatre. In classes such as Play Analysis or Theatre History I make sure to include subject matter that fronts diversity and inclusion by contextualizing the canon with diversity. For instance, I teach Brecht alongside Min Tian's response and Brook's *Mahabharata* with Rustom Bharucha's reaction.

My research also highlights diversity and inclusion. A major focus of my first book was LGBTQ+ history, and, while shifting geography from the U.S. to Poland, race, gender, faith tradition, and sexuality play important parts within my second book.

Finally, I recognize that my understanding of inclusivity must continually grow, and that, for this, students are often my greatest resource. For instance, once while teaching *All My Sons*, I provided a pat interpretation of the play as an unnuanced argument against war profiteering. A student looked puzzled, and then spoke up. As an Iraq veteran, he had a different take. While I felt embarrassed at my simplistic and potentially offensive previous comments, I encouraged this student to take the floor. His understanding of Miller's play profoundly changed mine and woke me to another important type of diversity in the classroom. Altogether, my efforts towards diversity and inclusion are quite varied, from syllabi to service, and I see in them a constant effort to grow past my assumptions.