



*Diversity Mission Statement*

George Mason University provides the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of students from a myriad of backgrounds and origins. I am fortunate in that my life experiences, teaching, and research all allow me to contribute to this inclusive environment and to advocate for my students regardless of background. Beyond this general statement, I will attempt to provide specific ways in which I value, promote, and protect diversity in my academic life. I am, in one small way, a member of a minority community, that of military veterans. My time in the army drove home the values of equality and diversity as I led soldiers from varied economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds in stressful and difficult times. In addition, having worked at a University which, like George Mason, received national recognition as a military-friendly campus, I am naturally comfortable working with student-veterans both in and out of the classroom.

Throughout my career in higher education, I have felt it a duty to model tolerance and equality in the classroom and to be available as a mentor and friendly ear outside it. While the circumstances are often difficult, I am deeply humbled when students reach out to me for help, advice, or just to listen to them work through whatever crises, some serious, that they may be experiencing. More times than I would like to count I have personally walked a student to the counseling center and sat with them until they have been seen or made an appointment. I take this mentoring aspect of teaching seriously and students of all kinds frequently come to see me (not always in crisis!) for which I am grateful. When the Nazis invaded Charlottesville last year, I tweeted my support for students who felt unsafe during the violence, offering a safe space. A former student wrote me afterward “thank you for supporting this student body. I didn’t need it today, but I’m sure there are those who did and for whom you make a difference. I have always appreciated your Twitter -- but today it has been a sort of tangible beacon of the goodness of this university.”

My teaching journey has also exposed me to an incredibly diverse set of students and teaching environments. I have taught Special Forces about Eastern European History at Ft. Bragg. I have taught older non-traditional students at both UNO and UVA. I have taught secondary school teachers as part of programming at the Virginia Holocaust Museum. In addition, I am comfortable with a variety of pedagogies often used to reach a diverse student body, including those with ADA accommodations; I have taught hearing- and sight-impaired as well as neuroatypical students. This experience also improved my own teaching. I have taught fully online synchronous and asynchronous courses, blended courses as well as traditional classroom courses. I have benefited immensely from these experiences with not only different students but different teaching techniques.

Finally, my own research interests in the Holocaust and Genocide as well as Public History lead me to advocate for human and civil rights and tolerance in and out of the classroom. This often means bringing my topic to the larger community. I have published several op/eds in the *Washington Post* addressing human rights issues as well as white supremacy. In addition, in the past year, I have spoken to public audiences about the issues raised by Confederate monuments and racism. I also seek to connect students and teaching to the community. I had the (mis)fortune to teach a course on the History of Antisemitism in Fall 2017, immediately after Nazis had marched in Charlottesville which allowed me to highlight the history of antisemitism and racism to a very attentive audience. Before I left UNO, I had set in motion a project that involved my students collecting oral histories from the large Sudanese refugee community in Omaha. These partnerships are particularly valuable. Students in my History of Museums class not only partnered with a local firm to design and build their exhibit but also visited local museums for behind the scenes conversations with professionals.

In conclusion, I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to the university’s nationally recognized excellence in its commitment to diversity. I hope that my experience in leading and mentoring, teaching, research and engagement with diverse groups in the community will play a small part in maintaining that excellence.