

*Notice that this writer does not begin with a personal anecdote? The approach here is powerful in part because it allows a central, guiding question to inform the writer's plans for future scholarship. This fits the guiding principle that personal statements are narratives of professional development, but it resists efforts to interpret "narrative" conventionally. The writer recognizes that there is an apparent conflict between her scholarly interests—writing pedagogy and the study of race and ethnicity in literature—but then turns that tension into her greatest strength. She shows how her two scholarly interests inform and enrich one another. This gives her statement, and her professional identity, a focus that appeals to admissions committees.*

What happens when students write about race and ethnicity? How is this writing affected by students' personal identities, academic disciplines, and social contexts? Where can the study of student writing intersect with conversations in ethnic studies? As I pursue a PhD in English, these questions will drive my research.

Having studied writing pedagogy in college and having developed writing assignments for EFL students while teaching in Japan, I continued to pursue my academic interest in student writing during my first semester in UConn's MA program. In a case study, written for my graduate seminar in the Theory and Teaching of Writing, I analyzed an essay in which a student from the English 110 course that I was teaching put her own life experience into conversation with Richard Rodriguez's piece "The Achievement of Desire." My approach was similar to one I take when writing about published literature: I coupled a close reading of the student's essay with attention to the essay's context as well as the language theories of M.M. Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. As I read my student's work, I observed that she at times glossed over racial and cultural distinctions

between herself and Rodriguez. The fact that I was still considering reasons, even after the semester, for why the student did this confirmed my particular interest in student writing about race and ethnicity.

In my literature seminars I have taken an interdisciplinary ethnic studies approach, drawing on history, politics, and religious studies to examine issues of race and ethnicity in literary texts. In a Harlem Renaissance course, for instance, I wrote on the relationship between playwright Georgia Douglas Johnson's political agenda and her portrayal of blackness. For a Native American Literatures seminar paper, I considered how Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight* enacts as well as revises American Indian naming practices. And, in a course paper for The Bible and Literature (included as my writing sample), I analyzed how Native mythology interrupts discourses of Christian patriarchy in Thomas King's novel *Green Grass Running Water*. My exploration of discursive power in this novel came to bear immediately on my study of student writing during a Writing Across and Beyond the Curriculum seminar in which I researched ethnic minority students' initiation into academic discourse communities as well as their culturally-influenced resistance to such communities.

The Writing Across and Beyond the Curriculum seminar, coupled with my previous experience working on an across-the-disciplines textbook project, also deepened my curiosity about the ways that context affects writing. By studying how individual students' writing on race and ethnicity changes as students move, for example, from a Freshmen English

classroom to a history classroom, a nursing classroom, or a non-academic community, I intend to contribute to scholarship in Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID). I will draw on ethnographies and case studies by WAC/WID scholars such as Anne Beaufort, Anne Herrington, and Charles Moran as I develop methodologies and theoretical frameworks for my own study. At the same time, WAC/WID scholarship has focused on contexts' effects on writing in a general way, and I hope that my specific study of writing on race and ethnicity will open possibilities for more topic-driven studies of writing across and beyond the curriculum.

A paper that I wrote for the Writing Across and Beyond the Curriculum seminar became the basis for an English 110 summer pilot course that I taught last June. Since my research suggested that meta-knowledge about how to approach writing in different contexts transfers from Freshman English to other settings more than any other skill, I gave my students frameworks to use when observing and discussing the work of various writing communities. I drew the frameworks from discourse community theory, activity theory, and Beaufort's theory of knowledge domains. My students then used the frameworks as they analyzed writing communities at UConn, ranging from UNESCO to the field hockey staff. I learned from my students both about how writing works in diverse contexts at UConn and how the frameworks I had culled could be stretched in directions I—and possibly the theorists—had not anticipated. While my research on student writing about race and ethnicity

will not have pedagogy as its only focus, I anticipate that it will have implications for teaching and that I will develop it, in part, through interactions with students in classroom settings.

As a PhD candidate at UConn, I would look forward to continuing the professional relationships that I have begun to foster here. Working with Professors Capshaw Smith and Tilton has given me moorings in ethnic studies. I have also developed theoretical perspectives on writing via coursework with Professors Recchio, Winter, and Deans. In addition, I have worked with Professors Recchio and Winter on the Freshman English teaching orientation, the English 110 summer pilot project, and collaborations between Freshman English and the Writing Center. As a graduate assistant in the Writing Center, I am currently working with Professors Deans and Tonry as I research race and ethnicity in writing as well as writing center collaborations and as I carry out collaborative projects with First Year Programs and Freshman English. I have developed my interest in student writing about race and ethnicity through my work with UConn professors, and I know that the resources and feedback they bring would be invaluable as I carry out my doctoral research.

My ultimate goal is to research and teach writing, rhetoric, and ethnic American literatures as a Professor of English. In addition, I aim to serve as a writing program administrator for first-year writing, creative writing, writing centers, or WAC/WID initiatives. My experience in UConn's MA program and my familiarity with the research, teaching, and

administrative opportunities here leads me to believe that UConn's PhD in English, more than any other program, would prepare me for my goals.

Thank you for considering my application.