#staywoke: Digital Engagement and Literacies in Antiracist Pedagogy

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Abstract

In this essay I explore how the hashtag injunction #staywoke associated with Black Lives Matter challenges digital engagement and literacies in American studies antiracist pedagogy. This phrase calls for an awakening into a sustained awareness of intersectional social justice focused on antiblackness through social media: I discuss my pedagogical experiments in teaching a course on Black American and Asian American comparative racialization, where #staywoke was the guiding principle for fostering a democratizing antiracist critical consciousness for students and myself as an educator. Following Amy Earhart and Toniesha Taylor's STET (both scholars publish under this version of their names) dispersal model for digital humanities projects, I offer pedagogical strategies and models in the project of training critical thinking and unsettling the boundaries between the classroom and the world toward a potentially transformative politics despite the pressures of neoliberal higher education. Against the tendency for digital humanities pedagogy to revolve around centralized, major projects, my methodology focuses on the development of a holistic series of assignments building digital literacies and "minor" student-led and personalized digital humanities projects. In closing, I gesture toward the implications for the limits of digital humanities pedagogy as a practice in the university and profession vulnerable to problems identified by existing critiques of public scholarship and the digital humanities.

The imperative of the popular hashtag #staywoke demands sustained awareness of intersectional social justice focused on antiblackness: to "stay woke" requires an awakening into critical consciousness predicated on the active push to stay informed and connected. This phrase in African American Vernacular English, popularized by the cultural force known as "Black Twitter," is linked to Black Lives Matter and the movement's STET (there is now the Movement for Black Lives hence the capitalization)call to keep informed.[1] American studies' engagement with the digital humanities demands the field's renewed commitment to open and accessible interdisciplinary antiracist work in light of Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi's founding of #BlackLivesMatter as a grassroots movement mobilized through social media. Such hashtags share productive characteristics with the Raymond Williams–inspired *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*: both cohere unruly discursive genealogies that provoke collaborative and critical engagement. Indeed, as Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler point out, keywords organize and contextualize information and meaning in a manner akin to metadata or meta-tags in information technology.[2] In turn, what if antiracist social media activism inspired new keywords for American studies? Addressing the entanglement between racial and technological formations, Tara McPherson argues for bringing together American studies and the digital humanities: "Politically committed academics with humanities skill sets must engage technology and its production not simply as an object of our scorn, critique, or fascination but as a productive and generative space that is always emergent and never fully determined."[3] In this sense, #staywoke expresses that meeting of political commitment and technological engagement.

The practice of pedagogy offers us another way to consider Alan Liu's challenge to the digital humanities to use its strengths in dialogue with cultural criticism toward the ideal of

public service.[4] In digital humanities pedagogy at present, however, substantive considerations of critical race theory, feminism, and other critically engaged American studies approaches have been sidelined despite appeals by scholars like Miriam Posner.[5] In his editor's introduction to the 2012 *Digital Humanities Pedagogy* collection, Brett Hirsch STET (publishes under this name; thanks for catching typo) gives a historical overview of the inconsistent place of pedagogy in the digital humanities, arguing for its needed centrality to the field. Yet there is a marked absence of essays on race and gender in this volume, which **Hirsch** acknowledges, stating, "Such contingencies are unfortunate, and unfortunately unavoidable."[6] Similar omissions tend to recur, for instance, in the digital humanities pedagogy special issue of the *CEA Critic* STET (that is the full name of the journal) in 2014. Engagements remain the exception rather than the norm when we look at efforts like the 2014 series on pedagogical alterity for the digital journal *Hybrid Pedagogy*. Even important interventions like FemTechNet's *Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Workbook* struggle against the very problems they make visible, like a lack of sustained resources, institutional support, and wider recognition, not to mention the frequent precarity of these overburdened educators.[7] Nonetheless, what work exists, like Earhart and Taylor's pedagogies of race, demonstrates the radical potential of the intersection between digital humanities pedagogy and American studies. Now that *#woke* has entered the mainstream vernacular as a keyword for social justice awareness, we need to consider how the ongoing impact of digital engagements unsettles both our students and ourselves in the American studies classroom toward a potentially transformative antiracist politics despite the pressures of neoliberal higher education.[8]

How might centering the responsibility to #staywoke change our teaching? I came to this pedagogical dilemma as a graduate student who had the lucky confluence of circumstances to

both design my own upper-level undergraduate course and participate as a HASTAC Scholar as part of the Humanities Arts Science and Technology Collaboratory. In what follows, I unpack my pedagogical experiments in one course where I take #staywoke as the organizing principle in course creation, lesson planning, and assignment design as part of investigating models for interweaving digital engagement and literacies to foster an antiracist critical consciousness. Against the acquisition model for grand, centralized projects, Earhart and Taylor propose the democratic "dispersal model," which avoids dependencies on traditional power structures, grant funding, and advanced technical knowledge.[9] In this spirit, my methodology focuses on the potential of the seemingly "minor" small-scale rather than the "major" large-scale: the development of brief assignments focused on digital literacies that build toward "minor" student-led digital humanities projects integrated into the ongoing holistic collaborative framework of the course community. In closing, I gesture toward the implications of #staywoke as a keyword for mobilizing considerations of digital humanities pedagogy and intellectual labor within and beyond the academy.

Teaching Digital Citation and Literacies as Antiracist Practices

#staywoke challenges the digital humanities to stand by its public investments in openness and access by engaging in intersectional, antiracist work. The immediacy and reach of digital activism has heightened the sense that scholars in American studies and related critical fields should be responsive and responsible to communities in their research and their teaching. One democratizing effect has been the conscious development of pedagogical practices in solidarity with activist work made possible through digital platforms. In 2014 Marcia Chatelain used Twitter to bring together educators for the #FergusonSyllabus crowdsource campaign, opening

the way for other movements to develop online interdisciplinary syllabi and digital resources accessible to the public.[i] (forgot to insert citation; the endnote numbering isn't working correctly, possibly because of Track Changes, but I've inserted the formatted reference and hope you can clear up the endnote part?) Since then, prominent examples include #StandingRockSyllabus, #CharlestonSyllabus, and #PulseOrlandoSyllabus. On a smaller scale, paying heed to online grassroots actions and conversations can inspire syllabus development. In my case, the genesis of this particular course owes its life in part to my use of Twitter as a junior scholar following hashtags and conversations around social justice during my graduate school struggle to understand the stakes of my research in long nineteenth-century American literature. While I first joined Twitter as a response to the pressures of academic professionalization, the urgency of #BlackLivesMatter reoriented my use of the platform and made me wonder about how I could support such antiracist digital activism not only in my private life but from my position as an academic.

In the fall of 2015 I taught Black Power, Yellow Peril, an expository writing course on Black American and Asian American comparative racialization through literature and culture. My course title was explicitly indebted to a Twitter hashtag of the same name started in 2013 by Suey Park, an Asian American social media activist, one of several hashtag campaigns from the Asian American Twitter community in solidarity with Black Twitter.[10] The messy but productive assemblage of online conversations among both academic and nonacademic voices that coalesced around #BlackPowerYellowPeril helped draw attention to the often-overlooked cultural and political histories of Black American and Asian American comparative racialization, conflict, and coalition. The layers of citation within the hashtag reflected my interest in bringing together a broad array of readings by predominantly women of color that could tie our

contemporary moment back to the ideal of Third World solidarity that was integral to the Black Power vision and the late nineteenth-century construction of the Chinese in the United States as the Yellow Peril in the wake of slavery's abolition.

The hashtag itself was a reference to a 1969 photograph by Roz Payne, known for documenting the Black Panther Party, which depicts members of the Asian American Political Alliance protesting the imprisonment of Huey Newton alongside the Panthers in Oakland, California.[11] In the photograph one protester's sign depicts the Chinese character for "East" with "Free Huey" written underneath; the other proclaims "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power," giving the image its name for archival posterity. Payne's photograph has had a rich meme-like afterlife recirculated on Asian American activist online spaces acting in solidarity with Black Lives Matter through initiatives like #Asians4BlackLives. In the first week of class I presented these historical linkages made visible through social media alongside Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton's STET (published under this name) foundational discussions on Black Power, coalition, and their transnational vision involving the need "to reorient this society's attitudes and politics toward African and Asian countries."[12] In this way the course approached the present-day call for social justice that my students knew as #woke by having them explore the intertwined genealogies of Black American and Asian American resistance and representation framed by critical interrogation about the possibilities of developing viable, intersectional solidarities.

After drawing on hashtag activism as inspiration for syllabus development, I designed a series of opening class lessons and brief assignments to introduce students to the implications of "staying woke," establishing principles for the sequence of "minor" student-led digital humanities projects to come. I wanted to encourage thinking about "wokeness" by awakening

students to their own place in the world, in keeping with Paulo Freire's injunction to invite "reflective participation in the act of liberation."[13] The promise of the digital presents an occasion for the kinds of critical thinking American studies seeks to foster by bringing together students' studies and experiences, in Tanya Clement's words, "to be more engaged citizens in the world."[14] The immersion of digital humanities assignments encourages such a critical stance toward the world: to highlight some examples from FemTechNet**'s** *Workbook* (realized had to change for consistency), see Dana Simmons's exercises using different document archives and simulations of historical case studies or Joseph Dumit's Donna Haraway–inspired implosion project.[15]

"Rather than embodying the conventional false assumption that the university setting is not the 'real world' and teaching accordingly," says bell hooks in *Teaching Community* about pedagogy writ large, "the democratic educator breaks through the false construction of the corporate university as set apart from real life and seeks to re-envision schooling as always a part of our real world experience, and our real life."[16] In my teaching I took the literal sense of hooks's appeal by making our own university the focus of analysis. As an opening day exercise, I projected the university's diversity website on the screen juxtaposed with a brief excerpt from Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included*: "Diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only of marketing the university but of making the university into a marketplace. . . . Scholars have suggested that the managerial focus on diversity works to individuate difference and conceal the continuation of systemic inequalities within universities."[17] At first, students were uncomfortable with the exercise: what I speculate to be a combination of first-day anxieties, unfamiliarity with explicit digital analysis, and perhaps a sense of scrutiny as to their individual situatedness within the discourse of diversity in higher education. As a class, we

navigated the website while I encouraged students to share their observations about the visuals, language, and construction of the website in relation to Ahmed's critique of diversity.

Initially, the general attitude was that the composition of the website barely deserved analysis as an ordinary digital object that they might have encountered in passing before applying to our institution or just after matriculation. Drawing attention to their experience of this nonuse, however, combined with the anodyne design soon sparked enthusiastic engagement. Some of their most critical comments were about the intended audience for the website— "parents and donors"—along with how the site was structured to both highlight and hide actual on-campus diversity statistics and studies. This exercise was a way into cultivating students' existing abilities to formally analyze internet content; as Freire puts it, "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information."[18] Using the university's digital face against itself to place the marketing of "diversity" under the scrutiny of "wokeness" gave my students a framework that allowed them to articulate what they as students, particularly underrepresented minorities, had already recognized as the limits of "diversity" in their experiences with higher education.

After affirming students' self-awareness of themselves within the university, I turned to developing a similar stance toward our objects of study. Integrating digital materials into our teaching helps highlight the porousness of the boundaries between the university and the world; however, to include these objects responsibly, we must avoid presenting them as consumable and disposable. While I chose to base my teaching around free digital work and technologies with easy entry points for the sake of student accessibility, I did not want to present this openness as an implicit devaluation of the often-gendered and -racialized labor involved; for, as Lisa Nakamura observes, "Cheap female labour is the engine that powers the internet."[19] Responding

to these concerns, the Center for Solutions to Online Violence paired with FemTechNet for a

series of online workshops and videos addressing research ethics, social media, and

accountability for teachers, students, and journalists.[20] In this regard, I taught Alicia Garza's

important essay "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement" not only as an introduction

to Black Lives Matter but because she demonstrates how denigrated "hashtag activism"

combines a profound critique of anti-Black**{Au: OK to uppercase "Black" throughout?" (yes)**

racism along with the importance of citation as a political practice to undo the erasure of queer

Black women. As Garza states, "When you adopt the work of queer women of color, don't name

or recognize it, and promote it as if it has no history of its own such actions are problematic."[21]

Inspired by Garza's critique, I paired "Herstory" with a homework assignment for

recognizing these grassroots voices engaged in projects of self-determination and community

creation. Students had to collect tweets related to #BlackLivesMatter and other trending race-

related hashtags like #NotYourAsianSidekick and #IfTheyGunnedMeDown. Students

appreciated how this simple homework enabled them to share discursive reference points drawn

from current conversations about race: these tweets displayed a range of voices across a

spectrum of commentary and critique that often mingled anger and wit. Material support is also

key. Since the free nature of many digital writings and resources obscures the labor that goes into

them, I tried to make a point of sharing different online donation or "tipping" services like

Patreon for creators whose work I assigned. Through such exercises we can introduce our

students to the value of online discourse and the politics of citation beyond the rote obligations of

academic context and toward an ethics of respect bound up in the responsibilities of community.

Next, this respect manifests in the teaching of responsible methodology by

highlighting the literacies necessary for careful analysis of digital technologies that attend to

differences in practice and structure. In her essay on reimagining teaching through the internet, Adeline Koh states, "The Internet poses to us an active challenge to deeply reconsider what it means to be *literate* in the twenty-first century."[22] Not merely a need for learning new skills and updating established methodologies, these literacies can productively defamiliarize everyday technological materials and practices, like FemTechNet's guide to teaching with Wikipedia through "feminist wiki-storming."[23] For instance, in our discussions on hashtag activism we considered the economies of attention and networks of influence involved in individual tweets, threads, and conversations in communities like Black Twitter along with how the 140-character limit encourages close reading's focus on precision of language and tone. In the case of #staywoke, for example, its uses **on Twitter {Au: "its" refers to Twitter?}** (yes; have changed to reflect) can be variously sincere, ironic, and playful and should be read with an eye to retweets, likes, and followers.

By way of contrast to the deliberate public actions of individual social media users, I assigned homework that asked students to input partial phrases related to Black and Asian peoples into Google in order to illustrate how the autofill feature allows us to tap into the anonymous collective consciousness and to question the neutrality of search algorithms.[24] In preparation for the following class, students completed this assignment alongside reading Claire **Jean** Kim's influential work on racial triangulation.[ii] (same as above)As I soon realized with the halting in-class discussion, this combination was a challenge: there was a tension between my students' varying levels of experience with formal academic discourse and the perceived informality of the autofill results. It became apparent, however, that Kim's visualization of comparative racialization and its terminology by way of a graph resonated across their disciplinary backgrounds. In a moment of improvisation, I shifted to an in-class activity to help

us bring these two elements together: we plotted the frequently ignorant if not outright offensive search results on Kim's graph, depicting axes of inferiority to superiority and foreigner to insider, as a way to track and debate the comparative racialization of Black Americans and Asian Americans in the popular imagination through civic ostracism and relative valorization.

Inasmuch as the interdisciplinary nature of American studies allows us to consider a vast array of texts, objects, and voices often obscured or silenced, adding social media platforms and other digital objects underscores for students a longer living history of how antiracist work can arise through or be limited by everyday conversations facilitated by digital and predigital media. To train our students how to engage critically with digital media begins with the affirmation of their own preexisting skills in digital analysis and the defamiliarization of these digital terrains of everyday life as inextricable from the histories and structures of the world. Assignments geared to the development of these digital literacies should engage our politics of citation to counteract the devaluation of the digital labor and social justice work disproportionately undertaken and led by women, particularly queer women of color, as Garza emphasizes. In digital humanities exercises toward the fostering of critical consciousness, we can therefore emphasize that we are not learning *about* so much as learning *from* these digital sources.

A "Minor" Approach to Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Developing Critical Consciousness through Curation and Community

The phrase *#staywoke* challenges us as educators to go beyond an isolated epiphany, like a singular activity or assignment, and commit to building into our courses the ongoing process of

everyday awareness as a conscientious stance toward the world. Recent pedagogical digital humanities projects like Earhart and Taylor's *White Violence, Black Power* or Jessica DeSpain's *The Wide, Wide World Digital Edition* break ground for demonstrating how students can do relevant and rigorous American studies digital humanities work guided by critical race studies and feminist studies; however, these models still privilege large-scale centralized projects that are institution-specific and dependent on access to resources that can be digitized.[25] Guided by similar concerns and political investments, I push Earhart and Taylor's proposition for a "dispersal model" of digital humanities work toward the creation of an easily replicable holistic series of "minor" digital humanities projects that can be personalized through student interests and require ongoing but low-stakes engagement.

Discussion, like writing itself, is a skill to be cultivated. The preceding lessons laid the groundwork for the collective digital humanities exercises to be sustained throughout the course with the following goals: to immerse my students in the living dialogue of social justice, to develop our class as a communal space of inquiry, and to create the conditions for subsequent interlinked small-scale projects. In my experience students are justifiably wary of talking about issues such as race and current events in the classroom in ways that can emerge as defensive, if not hostile. Mindful of this, I did not want to presume a set level of knowledge about any subject. First, I built shared entry points into discussion by giving students lists of publications, blogs, and people to follow on social media or in their RSS feed in order to integrate these conversations into their everyday online lives. For the objectives of my course, the list of suggestions included established writers like Ta-Nehisi Coates and Roxane Gay; to activists like Alicia Garza and De**R**ay**{Au: Should be "DeRay"?}** Mc**k**esson (yes, thank you for catching that; capitalization should not be in the last name); to blogs like NPR's Code Switch, Black Girl

Dangerous, and Angry Asian Man; to writers and artists with active social media communities like Son of Baldwin and Darkmatter. These lists were not definitive: students would later make their own recommendations to me, like YouTube personality and trans rights activist Kat Blaque.

Together as a class community, we shared an assemblage of running news and commentary to frame the cultural and political relevance of our readings. This heterogeneous mix of Black American and Asian American perspectives resulted in a productive tension between the course materials and these digital examples of how ideologies take life outside texts and academe. The hope was to begin an active pedagogical process where, according to Freire, "the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled."[26] In this case, casting a critical gaze toward that reality through the everyday practice of social media allowed students to develop, practice, and contextualize critical vocabularies like the keywords for American cultural studies alongside the potential emergence of new keywords from digital discourses.

The next phase was to push for active engagement with this informal immersion by reformulating the popular pedagogical activity of reading response blogs as an ongoing digital curation project running parallel to the progression of our syllabus and readings. In the higher education pedagogical discourse, the "flipped" or "hybrid" classroom trend requires structuring lessons where students learn materials before class so that the classroom becomes a space to engage and practice that knowledge guided by the instructor. The "flipped classroom" is often associated with digital pedagogy, especially MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses), but as Ian Bogost critiques, not only does the term make assumptions about the "traditional" classroom, but it also can lead to dangerously standardized teaching that is more about the university's concerns

about the efficiency of labor and fiscal management than education.[27] Adapting the ideals of the "flipped classroom," however, I aimed to build students' confidence in themselves as critical interlocutors with stakes in the project of collective learning. I decided to use Tumblr, a free microblogging and social networking website, because the linear format of forum posts can dissuade students from reading each other's responses.

Additionally, my interest in using the platform was based on its foregrounding of multimedia and community engagement, as well as its cultural status as a digital space for grassroots social justice discussion, which Jasmine Rault and T. L. Cowan name as one of the "online feminist pedagogical publics" that exist outside conventional education spaces.[28] While I was in charge of the course Tumblr that collated everyone's work, students were responsible for cultivating their own blog, following each other's work, and both reblogging and engaging their peers. Tumblr freed us from the restrictions of university-hosted servers and technologies: through our use of this free platform we participated in a space lateral to many grassroots conversations about social justice. As Tumblr users, students could experiment with, rather than just critiquing, the online grammars of gifs, memes, and other media.

In their personal digital galleries students were tasked with curating an "item" of their choice to complement the assigned readings. Student creative control over their personalized archives was balanced against requirements to curate possible "items" according to a rubric of predetermined categories that had to be addressed by the end of the semester. Students had to mix high and low, academic and nonacademic, timely and historical. While categories like news, culture, and history would easily be addressed by digital media, students had to also seek out a peer-reviewed article or academic lecture, an event on campus, and artifacts from the university library archives and on-campus museum. In this way, I aimed to train a democratized form of

critical thinking that attends to everyday life within and beyond the traditional boundaries of scholarly authority for my students as archivists and researchers. One such serendipitous outcome were student observations about the similarities between the library's archive of Black Panther Party platform posters and the online circulation of Black Lives Matter demands. Finally, students had regular rotating responsibilities to open our class discussions by delivering a brief, casual presentation on their post for that day.

Although the ensuing class would be structured by my prepared lesson plan, I had to be flexible and open to how my students' choices and analyses would bring out unexpected nuances and improvisations. In one example, a student noticed that a Black Lives Matter protest at Dartmouth College was trending on Facebook, leading that student to comment on the distinct disparity between the actual actions of student protestors in the viral video and how the public on the aggregate page read the events. They**{Au: Antecedent of "They" not clear.}** (was using "they" as gender neutral single pronoun for the student; if that doesn't fit with AQ's style or complicates comprehension it could be changed just to "The student") linked these analyses of digital materials to that day's discussion of Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, adding an unexpected dimension to the novel's time-travel conceit through which Butler brings together the long history of debates about respectability and Black resistance. Drawing on Freire's and hooks's discussions of engaged pedagogy and radical openness, I hoped to embrace my vulnerability as an instructor in a productive manner: through opening up my lessons to the unpredictable contingencies of students' digital curations, I sought to model my own process of learning and thinking in order to respect the critical capabilities of my students and thereby unsettle and inform all of us in the process popularly known as "staying woke."

Incorporating a digital dimension to our pedagogy gives us a tool to encourage our students to see our courses, assignments, and the process of learning as part of a holistic and rigorous engagement within and beyond the classroom. When I first began the digital curation assignment, I made clear that this work would act as a living record of their thinking in the course to build toward the class's final two assignments: one creative, the other analytic. The first encouraged students to remix their blog posts and our readings as inspiration for a creative project in any format. For one student, this meant writing a dystopian short story about an America where mixed-race people are illegal, updating Sui Sin Far's work on racial hybridity and the Chinese Exclusion Act with a curated item, an antimiscegenation viral video. The second assignment invited students to revisit, rewrite, and synthesize two of their earlier posts with one drawn from a peer's blog. The resulting analysis had to incorporate our readings and use at least one keyword from American cultural studies to guide their critiques. In one Tumblr reflection essay, a student discussed the keywords *digital*, *media*, and *literature* by using Quora, the question and answer website, as a frame for bringing together Black Lives Matter and the murder of Laquan McDonald that October, a peer's post on anti-Latinx racism in baseball coverage, and the selections from Ture and Hamilton's *Black Power* that opened our class. This cumulative holistic approach to assignment design can aid in teaching students how to recognize ongoing histories and structural patterns of racialization and oppression through their own diachronic experiences. Notably, my students' progress as thinkers and writers was legible to our institution and thereby allayed administrative skepticism about the themes of my course. I am proud to say that my students won both the essay prize and the honorable distinction among all the expository writing seminars that semester.

In the larger context of the coeval historical moment, an unintended effect of our fall 2015 course was that together we chronicled the ascendance of Donald Trump and the forces that gave rise to his politics. My students did not need me to draw the parallels and continuities. While some began with the idealism of sincere disbelief, and others the shield of grim cynicism, all were eager to bring their observations into our discussions and their blog posts. In the end, this course was not just an academic exercise but a collective space for us to work through, commiserate over, and question our experiences during this difficult unfolding of American politics.

Conclusion: What Does It Mean for Digital Pedagogy to Heed #StayWoke?

Eschewing the ambitious scale of Earhart and Taylor's cross-institutional archival project *White Violence, Black Resistance*, my experiments drew on the principles of their dispersal model to offer pedagogical schemas that can be implemented even with the limited privileges of a nonfaculty educator: personalized minor projects that are still political, student-driven, and collaborative. Through such assignments we can emphasize to our students that attending to the digital as both medium and object can allow us to track our own asynchronous developments in the organic process of intersectional antiracist critical consciousness. The "minor" status of the projects and related assignments, which defamiliarize and validate our experiences of everyday digital discourse, thereby enact the ordinariness of #staywoke as ongoing and difficult praxis—in a sense influenced in part by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on the subversions of minor literatures, recognizing the potential of a minor digital humanities. (actually should I have a citation here?) In this regard, for American studies #staywoke functions as a pedagogical meta-

level keyword for our scholarly openness and ethical responsiveness to learning from and engaging with digital grassroots antiracist work from which new keywords may arise.

In accordance with the digital humanities' emphasis on openness and collaboration, I shared selections from my experiments in digital humanities pedagogy with the HASTAC and THATcamp communities to provide adaptable and accessible templates for other educators to deepen student engagement. Although not as prestigious as large-scale projects, these small-scale assignments can easily be modified for other topics or made local for other contexts; again, the dispersal model does not require advanced technical skills or expensive resources or grant funding. I also believe it is relevant to the democratic aims of digital humanities pedagogy that I publicly modeled this work as a junior scholar who had yet to accrue the professional capital for drawing on institutional resources and building partnerships beyond the university. Through HASTAC and THATcamp I was able to disseminate this work and receive feedback from a wide range of digital humanities practitioners. HASTAC allowed me to reach an international audience because my post was promoted as the #ScholarsMustRead in the HASTAC newsletter and on social media, while the THATcamp unconference put me into conversation with the local network of digital humanities academics.[29] Overall, the responses from my HASTAC and THATcamp colleagues were enthusiastic: common themes were how the assignment addresses the difficulty of facilitating classroom conversations about race, the need to develop vocabularies for discussion, and the struggle to connect our teaching with real-world issues. In short, these shared concerns in our teaching mirror the imperative #staywoke and its implications for pedagogy in higher education.

However, much like its literal meaning, the compulsion to #staywoke can be exhausting and comes with its own perils for digital humanities pedagogy. An emerging concern for many is

how the performance of "wokeness" can act as an appropriative form of social and cultural currency that threatens to decenter praxis and the term's origins in the urgency of antiblackness.[30] The diversity industrial complex in higher education creates openings we can leverage toward antiracist ends, but can co-opt these terms and our work toward maintaining the public face of the institution without engaging in real change. Even as we must be vigilant against this whitewashing in our teaching, digital engagement in intensive topics like anti-Black racism and social justice makes demands on the energies and emotions of students and instructors that can threaten to lead to burnout. Precautions like safety, care, and strategic refusals to engage must be a part of digital literacy in the classroom for student and teacher; teaching critical engagement with different objects must come with discussions about how we are affected by our objects of study.[31] Attention to different digital publics must not eclipse the responsibility to nurture our classes as their own communities. Much like community management for the better sort of online spaces, we must tend to both the quality of overall classroom discourse and the safety and growth of our individual students.

Finally, we need to extend the critical awareness of #staywoke to digital humanities pedagogy's structural and labor concerns in relation to public scholarship and the broader discipline of digital humanities. While critics like Earhart and Taylor draw needed attention to the inequitable distribution of resources and support that can limit possible teaching projects, I speak specifically about the possible risks for practitioners of digital humanities pedagogy. To paraphrase Tressie McMillan Cottom's work on academic public writing, institutions want everything but the burden.[32] As Cottom explores in her research on Black women academics, while social media amplifies scholarship to public audiences, it can also galvanize outrage and trigger targeted attack campaigns.

Although public engagement enriches the "reputational currency" of universities and provides an answer to populist concerns about removing barriers to access, institutions of higher education have been slow to put protections and resources in place commensurate with this increased visibility and vulnerability, especially for those already marginalized in the academy.[33] At the intersection of digital humanities and American studies, scholars like Moya Bailey, Natalia Cecire, Amanda Phillips, and others collaborate through projects like FemTechNet and #transformDH that seek to redefine the field by critiquing the discipline's hegemonic investments and resisting the erasure of people of color and other marginalized groups. In Jesse Stommel's keynote "Queering Open Pedagogy," he calls for critical pedagogy as activism and inclusion, stating, "bell hooks means something very specific when she talks of Radical Openness, and so far the Open Education movement has failed to tread that particular water."[34] In this light, I must stress that I was privileged, particularly as a graduate student and a non-Black woman of color, to be in a position of relative security with the conditions necessary for my experiments in digital humanities pedagogy that could have resulted in failure.

Beyond pitfalls in the immediate classroom, the potential dangers of the pedagogical schemas I have outlined include that this low-resource approach may further justify the underfunding of such work and its teachers under the neoliberal auspices of valorizing those educators who are successful. Antiracist work already tends to be done by those precariously positioned in the profession who often are overlooked or taken for granted. Much as with public scholarship on social justice issues, engaging in digital humanities pedagogy may render those already precarious educators even more vulnerable as targets for attack; conversely, these teachers may be deterred from exploring risky digital innovations that would reward them professionally because of real concerns about personal safety and job security. In exposing the

limits of the diversity industrial complex in higher education, we ourselves are exposed. It is in

the face of these pressures that women of color create resources like FemTechNet's *Critical*

Race and Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Workbook—a site, in all senses of the word, for mutual

support and survival. The demand to #staywoke in our professional context calls us as American

studies scholars to recognize the uneven distribution of risks and rewards that come with

experiments in digital humanities pedagogy and to challenge the power dynamics of the

neoliberal corporate university.

Notes
1. For a few examples of this overlap, see the 2016 documentary *Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement* and the 501(c)(4) organization StayWoke, founded by movement STET organizers to engage and mobilize people online for equity and justice.
2. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds., introduction to *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 1.
3. Tara McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? Or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/29.
4. Alan Liu, "Where Is Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities?" in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/20.**{Au: Access date included only for undated material.}**
5. "The great value of teaching DH to undergrads, I have come to believe, is not showing them how to use new technology, but showing them how provisional, relative, and profoundly ideological is the world being constructed all around us with data. It is an opportunity to show them that our most apparently universal categories—man/woman, black/white—are not inevitable, but the result of very specific power arrangements" (Miriam Posner, "What's Next: The Radical, Unrealized Potential of Digital Humanities," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016], dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/54).
6. Brett D. Hirsch, "</Parentheses>: Digital Humanities and the Place of Pedagogy," in *Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles, and Politics*, ed. Brett D. Hirsch (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 27.
7. Part of the opening statement from the *Workbook*: "The Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Committee (CRES) of FemTechNet is composed of a handful of graduate students, post-docs, librarians, and alt-ac professionals. We keenly feel the pressures of women of color in academia. We understand that for junior scholars the labor of developing one's pedagogy is extensive. For women of color junior teacher-scholars, experimentation in the classroom can be a risk, even though their institutions encourage and exhort them to practice digital pedagogy or to teach

online. Because these same institutions often offer little support to develop these skills we are leveraging the collective intelligence and experience of the FemTechNet network to cohere a practical resource for those who endeavor to share and support others, and those who seek to learn and improve their own skills" (Anne Cong-Huyen and the FemTechNet Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Committee, introduction to *FemTechNet Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Workbook*, September 11, 2015, scalar.usc.edu/works/ftn-ethnic-studies-pedagogy-workbook-/introduction?path=index). See also essays on FemTechNet in the recent collection *MOOCS and Their Afterlives: Experiments in Scale and Access in Higher Education*, ed. Elizabeth Losh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

8. See "Stay Woke: The New Sense of 'Woke' Is Gaining Popularity," Merriam-Webster, accessed July 1, 2017, www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/woke-meaning-origin.

9. Amy E. Earhart and Toniesha L. Taylor, "Pedagogies of Race: Digital Humanities in the Age of Ferguson," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/72.

10. For more on relevant hashtag activism and solidarity, see Rachel Kuo, "Reflections on #Solidarity: Intersectional Movements in AAPI Communities," in *The Routledge Companion to Asian American Media*, ed. Lori Kido Lopez and Vincent N. Pham (New York: Routledge, 2017).

11. "Roz Payne: Yellow Peril Supports Black Power, Oakland, California," *International Center of Photography*, accessed May 3, 2017, www.icp.org/browse/archive/objects/yellow-peril-supports-black-power-oakland-california-0.

12. Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 82.

13. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), 65.

14. Tanya Clement, "Multiliteracies in the Undergraduate Digital Humanities Curriculum," in *Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles, and Politics*, ed. Brett D. Hirsch (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 366.

15. "Assignments," *FemTechNet Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Workbook*, September 11, 2015, scalar.usc.edu/works/ftn-ethnic-studies-pedagogy-workbook-/assignments.

16. bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 41.

17. Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 53.

18. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), 79.

19. Lisa Nakamura, "The Unwanted Labour of Social Media: Women of Colour Call Out Culture as Venture Community Management," *New Formations* 86 (2015): 106.

20. "CSOV Videos: Research Ethics, Social Media, and Accountability Video Series," *FemTechNet*, accessed July 1, 2017, femtechnet.org/csov-videos/.

21. Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/.

22. Adeline Koh, "Teaching with the Internet; or How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Google in My Classroom," *Hybrid Pedagogy*, August 1, 2015, www.digitalpedagogylab.com/hybridped/teaching-with-the-internet-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-google-in-my-classroom/.

23. "Feminist Wiki-Storming," <u>FemTechNet</u>, accessed July 1, 2017, femtechnet.org/docc/feminist-wiki-storming/.

24. See Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

25. Jessica DeSpain, "A Feminist Digital Humanities Pedagogy beyond the Classroom," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 26.1 (2016): 65–73.

26. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), 39.

27. Ian Bogost, "The Secret Life of MOOCS," in *MOOCS and Their Afterlives: Experiments in Scale and Access in Higher Education*, ed. Elizabeth Losh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 278.

28. Jasmine Rault and T. L. Cowan, "Haven't You Ever Heard of Tumblr? FemTechNet's Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC), Pedagogical Publics, and Classroom Incivility," in *MOOCS and Their Afterlives: Experiments in Scale and Access in Higher Education*, ed. Elizabeth Losh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 164.

29. Apropos of disciplinary marginalization, at the time I was not aware of the existence of FemTechNet despite my engagement in these digital humanities spaces during my graduate studies.

30. Amanda Hess, "Earning the 'Woke' Badge," *New York Times*, April 19, 2016; "How 'Woke' Fell Asleep," OxfordWords**{Au: Should be "Oxford Dictionaries"?}** (blog), November 16, 2016, blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/11/woke/. (it is the OxfordWords blog of the larger website Oxford Dictionaries)

31. For practical advice and discussions about online safety, risk, and harassment, see "CSOV Videos: Research Ethics, Social Media & Accountability Video Series," <u>FemTechNet</u>, accessed July 1, 2017, femtechnet.org/csov-videos/.

32. Tressie McMillan Cottom, "Everything but the Burden: Publics, Public Scholarship, and Institutions," tressiemc, May 12, 2015, tressiemc.com/uncategorized/everything-but-the-burden-publics-public-scholarship-and-institutions/.

33. Tressie McMillan Cottom, "'Who Do You Think You Are?': When Marginality Meets Academic Microcelebrity," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 7 (2015), doi:10.7264/N3319T5T.

34. Jesse Stommel, "Queering Open Pedagogy," keynote at Digital Pedagogy Lab Vancouver, July 30, 2017, www.digitalpedagogylab.com/jesse-stommel-keynote-digital-pedagogy-lab-vancouver/.

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[i] "Teaching #Ferguson, Current events in the Classroom Resources," August 20, 2014, *http://bit.ly/FergusonSyllabus*.

[ii] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27.1 (1999): 105-138.