

COLIN GODWIN: This class has shaped how I approach communicating with others in showing me how differently languages that I previously understood to be invalid, including Creole, Southern American English after I hear anything, I'm like-- Stereotypical languages like that are actually very systematic, and should be regarded as languages in and of themselves that should be given validity inside the US, whether that be through court room interpreters for people like Rachel Jeantel, who spoke primarily African-American English, or even just inside of Haiti teaching classes in Creole, as a means to connect with students better.

ELENA ALBERTI: Yeah. Also I think how this class shaped my communication is it allowed me to discuss more difficult topics without feeling hindered. I didn't have to feel like I was going to offend anyone because it was in the context of learning. And I think people were very open with answering questions that might be seen as like, why don't you know this, or stuff like that.

And further, also with the presentations and with the essays, I feel like you had to develop your communication skills in a bunch of different ways, not only speaking but how we present now, and then also how do you write an essay. I think Dr. Nora Jackson was really great in helping me develop my writing style. And yeah, I thought I was going to say something else, but--

[LAUGHING]

LORRAINE WONG: I think the conversations that we had were really interesting all the time. Everyone has some sort of opinion. Some people are more willing to speak about them than others, and personally I feel that oftentimes in conversations I'm more reticent. But this class felt like such a safe space that it was possible to speak about personal experiences or opinions on readings and all of these things. And I really appreciated the presentations that we have to do as well, because as a communication intensive course we have to have some sort of oral component and present things, and those freak me out all the time. But it's important to have this type of practice and to be able to have a safe space in order to practice and then be able to do it better and better each time.

DANA VIGUE: Yeah. And, you know, for me, starting this summer I'm going to be beginning my M.D. PhD in anthropology. And trained as an anthropologist, I've always had this idea that you don't really need interject that much personal experience into what you write, especially if it's an academic work. And from the get-go in this class, we were expected to draw equal parts from the theory

with which we engaged and equal parts from our own experiences and present that in the form of a narrative, that was in conversation with the theory. And I was uncomfortable with that. I thought that-- I had this notion that doing so would make my writing less professional, less objective, and perhaps less valuable, because it wasn't primarily rooted in theory. So much of it was narrative, so much of it was now subjective.

But I found that interrogating my own experiences as an academic, who's engaging with the theory, helped me to kind of deconstruct stereotypes like the ones Colin articulated, and these preconceived notions that we inherently carry in when we're trying to do objective analyzes in a way that I had never had the opportunity to do before. And so getting out of my comfort zone by writing these academic papers that were equal parts personal narrative was something that I think will prepare me well as an anthropologist to ensure that, to a greater extent, I'm able to understand where I stand in terms of a particular issue and perhaps do more justice when I do produce a work.

ELENA ALBERTI: And on top of all this, one way that I would like to see the course improve-- which Colin mentioned in class and has to do with communication-- is having difficult conversations with someone who doesn't have your view. Something we talked about in this class was that everyone here is kind of like-minded. We all sought out this class for a reason. And I think I didn't get to challenge myself in communicating to someone who didn't agree with me. And that could be a way that educators can improve.

LORRAINE Definitely.

WONG: