Teaching Statement Corinne T. Field, June 2017

In all of my teaching, I try to accomplish three overarching goals: provide students with the tools they need to develop their own understanding of key concepts in gender studies; enable them to apply these ideas to issues that interest them; and encourage all participants—myself included—to question preconceived beliefs. The strategies I use to accomplish these goals differ for large lectures and small seminars, but I am always guided by what I see as the core principals of feminist pedagogy which include: encouraging people to articulate their own truths from where they stand; requiring logical arguments and convincing evidence to back up claims; and moving the often marginalized perspectives of women, people of color, and non-gender conforming individuals from the margins of academic discourse to the center.

Applying these principles of feminist pedagogy in large lectures is a challenge, but can be done by investing class time in active learning. Since 2013, I have taught "Introduction to Gender and Sexuality Studies," growing this course from 60 to 120 students. I rarely present a straight-up lecture, but rather engage students in a variety of individual and group projects. Every class begins with a five-minute presentation by six students who define a key concept from the reading and apply it to an outside source.

This ensures that every participant practices the skill of speaking to a large group, a skill that I believe is essential for young people—particularly women—to master. Following the presentation, I often prompt a Socratic discussion designed to deepen students' interpretations of the reading. Other days, I break them up into small groups, ask them to apply the reading to some scenario, and then have them come back together for a large discussion. Several times, I have them engage in silent writing and then share their conclusions with a partner. The goal of all of these exercises is to have students articulate their own interpretation of the reading to peers who may or may not agree with them, thus strengthening both critical thinking and communication skills. Class ends with a ten- or fifteen-minute lecture where I introduce the next reading, place it in context, and lay out key issues. Assignments include short writing exercises where students focus on using evidence, writing thesis statements, and defining terms. Longer papers require them to integrate these skills. By requiring them to peer-edit paper drafts, I show students how to effectively edit someone else's writing and revise their own work in response to critical feedback. This experience prepares them well for more advanced courses at UVA and also for professional workplaces that increasingly emphasize collaboration and team-based projects.

Student evaluations for this course point out that they are more engaged in my large lecture than in many of their small seminars. Students also note my ability to teach people with different political commitments. In 2014, undergraduate Ben Rudgley penned an editorial in the *Cavalier Daily* calling for an abolition of gender studies as a superficial and divisive discipline. At friends' urging, he enrolled in my class, and the next year printed another editorial reporting that he had changed his mind. As he explained, "after introducing myself and expecting a deserved rebuke for what I wrote, Professor Field surprised me by instead warmly and excitedly welcoming me and my perspective into her class. Over the next few weeks and months we engaged with rigorous source material, written from a range of academic disciplines, that examined

how gender and perceptions of gender shape the world around us." He concluded by urging "students of all backgrounds and interests to enroll in a WGS class before they graduate because it will undoubtedly challenge assumptions, bend—and meld— orthodoxies and illuminate many of society’s most tragic, and overlooked, shortcomings." Indeed, enrollment in this class has grown dramatically over the past four years and WGS now has three instructors offering this class every term with two smaller sections of 30 students in addition to the large lecture.

The other large lecture that I teach regularly is a two-semester survey of "Gender and Sexuality in America, 1600-1865" and "1865-Present." In this course, which is cross-listed in WGS and History, I use primary documents—such as letters, memoirs, court cases, photographs, and songs—to engage students directly with the past. Through weekly written reflections and longer research papers, I enable students to develop their own analytical interests. This approach requires students to generate their own interpretations of the past, an approach that students found challenging but rewarding.

This course also grew in enrollments from 60 to 120 students in the spring of 2015.

The teaching opportunities that I am most excited about right now are small seminars where I can experiment with assignments that enable students to contribute substantively to scholarship in gender history. In the fall of 2016, I taught a seminar on the "Global History of Black Girlhood" in which students worked together to design an exhibit of archival material from UVA Special Collections that was on display during the Global History of Black Girlhood Conference held in March 2017. From the first day onwards, students understood that their work in this class mattered—that visiting scholars, graduate students, and activists would engage with their exhibit and accompanying online articles. Because WGS is an interdisciplinary program, I knew most students in the seminar would not be familiar with archival research. To further complicate matters, sources on black girls are difficult to locate in archives. By meeting in advance with archivist Molly Schwartzburg, I was able to design a series of discrete project components. The students learned important skills in managing a complex project, working with others, and contributing to a shared product. At moments, they got incredibly frustrated, but then pulled together and took the project to a higher level.

Because they knew this exhibit would be available to the general public and discussed by visiting scholars, they developed a level of commitment and mutual support that is truly rare—in undergraduate seminars and in workplaces more generally.

Over the past year, I have explored new teaching methods by enrolling in the Course Design Institute, the Ignite Program, and Engaging Students' Perspectives. These programs encouraged me to try an even wider range of active learning exercises in my lecture course this year. Some proved remarkably effective, while others met strong resistance from students who felt forced to participate too much at a moment when debate over gender and sexuality has become extremely divisive on college campuses. Given the current climate of increased polarization, I plan to use strategies from the Ignite Program to offer students more choices in how they demonstrate participation and engagement with the reading. Next year, I will teach "Feminist Theory" for the first time and redesign the syllabus for "Introduction to Gender and Sexuality Studies." In both classes, I will encourage students to take the intellectual risks necessary to develop their own perspectives and communicate their views to others. These skills remain vital for living a productive, civically engaged, and fulfilling life both during and after college.