

We see this moment in the history of the SUNY New Paltz English Department as a true inflection point and this search as an opportunity to hire scholars eager to participate in a re-envisioning of the study of literature, informed by current methodological, theoretical, and archival developments in the field. Scholars in literary studies are producing work on BIPOC, non-Western, and LGBTQ writers from all historical periods, and such teaching and research have transformed the canon and the grand narratives of literary history in important ways. We recognize the need to complicate national traditions by expanding and intensifying our students' exposure to different canons and ethnic traditions and to cultivate an understanding of literary study as an inclusive practice, one that complicates narratives that privilege the experiences of white settlers from northern Europe. To this end, we are looking for faculty who will contribute not only to the teaching of historically underrepresented writers but to the production of scholarship on writers of color. We are welcoming of all representations of diversity and intersectionality, but we recognize the urgency to re-center the perspectives of Black and Latinx scholars and the ways in which that representation is critical to innovation and a more integrated curriculum.

The English Department contributes to the university and influences its students in wide-ranging and meaningful ways that go far beyond the English major. We educate students across many disciplines and—crucially—shape future teachers. We do so by providing first-year writing courses, general education courses—four of which are diversity-designated (including American Women Writers of the Twentieth Century, Contemporary Issues and Literature, Introduction to American Literature, and Multiethnic & Diasporic Literature)—and content courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels for students in the School of Education. A cadre of diverse teachers and scholars would benefit the whole campus as well as our students in the department. We see this as an excellent opportunity for the department to expand its purview and develop a more outward-facing presence that would serve the university and the region by building interdisciplinary connections with other programs and forging stronger links with the vital literary community of the Hudson Valley.

Over the past 8 years, our department has done all we can using existing resources to transform our program from Western and Anglocentric to global, multiethnic, and diasporic in content and design. We did so in part in response to our 2013 program review, which found a need for “a greater diversity of literatures” in our curriculum supported by the hire of scholars trained in the study of the intersections of race, ethnicity, and literature. We need to prepare our students for job opportunities in today’s diverse world, for engaging with urgent issues of diversity and equity in their lives and our society, and to prepare them for graduate specializations in English, as future educators and as professionals. In 2014, we overhauled our core survey courses (previously four courses in British and American Literature), requiring English and Education students to take Transnational Literature (ENG343) and Multiethnic & Diasporic Literature (ENG353) as foundational courses, alongside two courses in British and American literature. Then in 2020, we designated two of our required core courses (Introduction to American Literature and Multiethnic & Diasporic Literature) as general education diversity offerings, which serve not only our majors but students in the university at large.

Since our 2013 program review, English faculty members have made a concerted effort to revise course syllabi to incorporate more writers and scholars of color. Our program review from 2020 found that that “[u]ndergraduate students especially appreciated the diversification of the curriculum and remarked on the fact that they were encountering texts and literary traditions they had been unaware of in their secondary education.” At the advanced undergraduate and graduate levels,

however, our curriculum does not adequately reflect the exciting work around race and ethnicity that is taking shape in literary and writing studies, and a recent survey of graduate students found a yearning for more diverse literary content. To continue the momentum of curriculum transformation, especially after losses in critical areas, we seek the participation of colleagues whose teaching and scholarship is grounded in the study of race and ethnicity. A new cadre of teachers and scholars whose work would focus on Black and Latinx literatures would be an invaluable spur to the structural changes we have already begun. The scope of our department's reach needs both the support of BIPOC faculty and the increased bandwidth for all of the faculty to continue to expand their consciousness and work toward achieving a more diverse curriculum.

We are sensitive to the labor of change that often falls disproportionately on BIPOC faculty, but best practice also supports that being intentional in a cluster hire program will create connections that better inform the changes and help to support retention. Candidates for this search would not only teach our DIVR offerings and help us to think through issues of race and identity in our existing courses, but they would also bring their scholarly expertise to expand our upper-division and graduate offerings with the introduction of new courses. Broadening our curriculum in this way would significantly enhance the position of our program in the region and serve students who might otherwise seek graduate studies elsewhere. In the SUNY system, for example, only SUNY Stonybrook regularly offers graduate-level classes in Latino/a Literature of the United States. Given the role our English MA program plays in training secondary education teachers in the region and the growing numbers of students of color in area high schools, these positions would address a vital need for the region, and not just for SUNY New Paltz. There is no doubt that a more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse faculty—mirroring the increasing diversity of our student body—would enable our department to better meet the needs and concerns of its undergraduates and graduates. These hires will also contribute to SUNY New Paltz's commitment to building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive campus community. Currently 26% of our majors identify as Asian-Pacific, Black, Latinx, or multi-racial. While our department's student population is not as diverse as our campus population (of which 36% presently identify as students of color), the English Department might attract more diverse students if our coursework and faculty were more reflective of demographic shifts we are seeing in higher education. We also recognize that many interdisciplinary programs and departments like Black Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies rely on the faculty and offerings of larger departments like English in order to deliver greater choice in their own curricula.

In 2021, our external reviewers noted “the minimal racial diversity among the faculty,” recognizing that the major problem is one of staffing. Hiring freezes and several recent retirements have left the department understaffed in key areas, including literary studies, Composition, and Creative Writing. Our department is eager to make its ranks more inclusive with the addition of faculty whose teaching and scholarship are committed to the literature of historically dispossessed or underrepresented groups. Our two most recent tenure-track searches have been diversity hires, including a specialist in critical race theory and 19th-century black women’s fiction, who joined the department in 2017 as part of the Faculty Diversity Program, and a specialist in Latinx Literature. The latter colleague, who was nominated as a SUNY PRODiG (Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion and Growth) Scholar in 2021, moved to another institution for family reasons, but expressed real reluctance to leave the department. Both of these appointments have helped us to make productive connections with other programs like Black Studies and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Moreover, our recent visiting professors have included a dramatic writer whose work focuses upon LGBTQ issues, a queer Filipino scholar of early modern literature,

and a specialist in global Shakespeare whose scholarship focuses upon performances of his plays in contemporary India. Our Creative Writing Program has also sought to introduce diverse voices by inviting authors from historically underrepresented groups to give readings, speak with our students about their professional experience, and teach in our annual Writer-in-Residence program. As a member of the campus-wide Diversity Board, Professor Kris Jansma, our Creative Writing Director, has actively worked to develop pedagogical standards for the university's general education requirement in Diversity and to expand the university's inclusive course offerings.

Moreover, Professor Michelle Woods and Professor Sarah Wyman initiated an ongoing campus-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Fellows Program for academic faculty and professional staff (11 Fellows in the inaugural 2020-21 program who have worked on diversifying curricula, staff, and programs). This initiative joins other recent undertakings on our campus. For example, the Art Department overhauled curricula across their programs; a public Disability Studies Annual Lecture program was established, alongside student-led seminars on Disability Studies (and the development of a potential TA-run Disability Studies focused Composition course in the English Department); anti-racist resource guides were produced for the library; new courses were developed, such as Anti-oppressive Pedagogies and Practices; the Office of Campus Sustainability intentionally recruited a diverse cohort of Sustainability Ambassadors; and the Counseling Center led a number of Anti-Racism 101 workshops.

Beyond expanding our curriculum and diversifying our faculty, the English Department invites new perspectives in how we carry out our most fundamental work on campus: teaching students to write, think critically, and become more empathic citizens; producing scholarship that contributes significantly to national and international discourse in our areas of expertise; serving on committees that carry out the unseen but essential work of the campus community; contributing to conversations and actions that move us toward the ideals of anti-racism. With the vision offered by this cluster hire, we can see how our new colleagues would contribute significantly to new ways of bringing awareness to the social and emotional needs of our students, revealing the inherent biases in our hiring and governing structures, and modeling more collaborative and inclusive forms of scholarly inquiry.

The English Department is an environment in which BIPOC faculty will thrive. As a department steadfastly committed to fostering inclusion in its curriculum, faculty development, and mentoring, it is a place that can fully support and embrace diversity among students and faculty. The department recognizes the important role that mentorship, from guidance about professional development to university service, plays in supporting faculty through the tenure process. One of our faculty members Professor Sarah Wyman has organized a number of events through the Faculty Development Center that have focused on mentoring early-career BIPOC scholars. BIPOC faculty have opportunities for pre-tenure leave, whether funded internally through the institutional Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher Leave or externally through organizations like the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Career Enhancement Fellowship. Moreover, we are sensitive to the ways in which faculty of color often face disproportionate burdens of service, and so we work closely with them to set reasonable expectations for departmental and university service that do not exceed what is equitable in order to afford them the necessary time and energy to produce the requisite scholarship for tenure. Additionally, the SUNY New Paltz Black Lives Matter at School Collective and the People of Color Network (POC-N) are committed organizations on our campus that support BIPOC faculty across departments and disciplines.