

COLLEEN KELLY POPLIN

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION

My commitment to stories that address inequality is what brought me to teaching. I focus on increasing the visibility of inclusive media work, and I am actively engaged in the mentorship of female-identifying and non-binary production students.

My early work with young people of color laid the groundwork for my inclusive approach. Upon graduating from UT Austin, I was accepted into the Digital Arts Service Corps, the public media service division of AmeriCorps. In this role, I sought out ways to increase the media literacy of socio-economically disadvantaged youth, partnering with multiple inner-city community organizations and public schools in the Boston area. I taught media literacy, production skills, and personal storytelling to young people of color. In addition to fostering a critical eye toward mainstream media, I encouraged these young people to disrupt the mainstream by creating and distributing their own personal narratives. Beyond the innate value of self-inscription, these media projects inspired peer mentorship programs and served as powerful tools for nonprofit funding and political advocacy.

Throughout my own media production education, I recognized that women were systemically excluded from advanced technical and directing work. Now in its seventh year, my course in intersectional feminist media production is a clear example of my goal to increase diversity within media production programs, and directly addresses the nationwide gender gap in advanced technical courses. My course also culminates in a public screening—providing exposure for student artists and giving the public access to intersectional feminist work.

My article *Applied Social Justice: Integrating Theory and Practice* was recently published in the *Antiracist Strategies for Inclusive Film and Media Education* issue of the JCMS Teaching Media dossier. This article outlines my strategies instructors and advisors can use to support underrepresented groups in the classroom and beyond. I have also developed an online course entitled *Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood*, a senior-level media studies capstone. The course is a deep dive into contemporary issues around race and gender in American film, television, and digital media cultures. It integrates feminist theory, critical race theory, industry texts, and personal narratives from industry specialists to understand the complexity of Hollywood's past and present. The course culminates in a research paper and media presentation in a topic chosen through collaboration between me and each individual student, ensuring a personal connection to the assignment.

My dedication to diversity and inclusion extends to all classes I teach, regardless of primary course subject. I purposefully select readings and media examples from women and people of color. I also regularly shift the way I present course material to accommodate the multiplicity of learning styles and educational backgrounds present in a typical classroom. Empowering people to tell their own stories is the best way I know to celebrate diversity and promote equity and inclusion.