

## Peter M. Rule – Diversity Statement

Working in theatre puts us in the business of telling stories, and working in American theatre means telling those stories in a deeply flawed system that selects only stories and storytellers it deems palatable. Theatre artists have a responsibility to do better, to challenge the privileged ideal of what theatre can be. My goal as an educator is to create an affirming space where every student's story and perspective is uplifted, regardless of gender expression, race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, age, socioeconomic background, or political alignment. My students should leave my classroom confident in their ability to effect meaningful and positive change to the culture of our industry, and to champion voices which have historically been silenced. As a professor, my accountability to anti-racism and equity is vital to creating a safe classroom, and I hold myself to a high standard of self-education and openness to criticism.

In practice, my commitment to diversity is apparent in how I structure my classes. I recognize that learning styles are as diverse as my students, and the paradigm of standardized coursework tends to fail neurodiverse students and students of the global majority. Though I do outline syllabi with standard assignments, I encourage students to be advocates for their own success, and have collaborated with students to find alternative ways to meet the same learning objectives. For instance, one neurodiverse student approached me to express that they were struggling to meet the pace of discussion in class and were concerned about the participation requirement outlined in the syllabus. We discussed this and agreed on making private discussion available during my office hours, where they could take the time needed to fully articulate their thoughts.

I have also deeply considered the current pedagogical thinking surrounding content advisories. I recognize that detractors suggest that content advisories 'prime' students to be upset, but I also feel that informed reading is essential for individual students to avoid harm. Where applicable, I offer a balanced approach to content advisories, providing them digitally for each course text so that students may decide for themselves whether to utilize them. I also recognize that my understanding of what necessitates an advisory may vary from my students' needs, and I endeavor for my students to feel safe in expressing specific triggers so I can tailor advisories to the makeup of each class. Should a student express an inability to engage with a text due to its content, it is my responsibility to accommodate their use of an alternative text and excuse them from classes which may trigger them, while still meeting the learning outcomes I have outlined.

I teach from an intersectional understanding of privilege and oppression, and a recognition that no single approach will be right for every student. It is my goal to be a trustworthy collaborator in my students' education, holding class as a safe space for learning to be a joyful, challenging, and rewarding process.