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### Introduction to “Teaching Writing at the Border”

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#### TEACHING WRITING NOW: DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

A virtual symposium hosted by the Texas A&M Department of English throughout the spring of 2021 that featured a series of talks and workshops on the topic of how practitioners can better teach writing now by addressing diversity, inclusion, and social justice in the writing classroom. The event was aimed at bringing together scholars doing research in social justice pedagogies, cultural rhetorics, and composition/professional writing in our rapidly changing media landscapes. Events were free and open to the public.

#### Teaching Writing at the Border

Laura Gonzales, “Ni de Over Here, Ni de Allá: Bilingual Professional Language Practices on the Mexico/US Borderland.”

Victor J. Del Hierro, “Culturally Sustaining Border Pedagogy.”

Marlene Galvan and Randall W. Monty, “You’re Not Listening, or I’m Not Saying it Right: Reflecting on Borderland as Method.”

Delivered Wednesday, January 27, 2021, from 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm.

The following proceedings initially formed the panel “Teaching Writing at the Border,” which took place on January 27, 2021. The presenting scholars explored then and continue now here in this special Issue of *Open Words* to explore what it

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means to be of, from, and at the US/Mexico border: What are the forces at work in and on learning and teaching at this border (and by implication, other borders)? What hegemonies, conquests, resistances, and rewritings can be identified there? To whom are the silences and effacements there, and how does the teaching of writing play a part in finding pathways to expression and presence?

In “Ni de Over Here, Ni de Allá: Bilingual Professional Writing Practices on the Mexico/US Borderland,” Laura Gonzales, an Assistant Professor of Digital Writing and Cultural Rhetorics in the English Department at the University of Florida, provides two cases examining acts of “linguaging” at the El Paso/Juarez border. Through these examples, Gonzales argues that “as writing programs (broadly defined) continue working to embrace and practice bilingual and multilingual communication, we should look to the fluid linguaging experiences of borderland communities, who consistently teach us that 1) language fluidity and translation is survival, 2) language constantly moves, shifts, adapts, and changes, and 3) language is always connected to race, power, and positionality.”

Also focusing on the El Paso/Juárez border, in “Culturally Sustaining Border Pedagogy,” Dr. Victor del Hierro, Assistant Professor of Digital Rhetoric and Technical Communication in the English Department at the University of Florida too, explores both his own experience as a learner growing up in the area and as a teacher of other learners during his time on faculty at the University of Texas–El Paso. Del Hierro argues for a pedagogy that encourages students to express themselves through their own cultural experiences/materials/contexts. This culturally sustaining pedagogy shifts attention from the conclusions of a white supremacist gaze that disempowers learners to focus attention on an empowered awareness and critique of that gaze, itself.

Finally, in “You're Not Listening, or I'm Not Saying It Right: Reflecting on Borderland as Method,” Marlene Galvan and Randall Monty of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley explore “the thing that many border institutions are doing: appropriating the immediate and advantageous aspects of the proximal border but ignoring *la frontera*.” Galvan and Monty argue for an intentional “pedagogy of attending”—a pedagogy that encourages teachers and students to critique existing power structures and create their own theoretical narratives. They assert that this pedagogy applies both in writing classrooms and in writing centers, and they ask us to consider the implications of this practice for students, instructors, and institutions at the border.

All of these scholars invite us to question what writing has been and what it can be if we learn and teach what borders really are and how they have been

hegemonically constructed. Further, these scholars urge us to consider how self-reflection on/of lived experiences, cultures, and languages can circumvent, cross, or tear down the white-supremacist, capitalist, monolingual border constructs that have, for too long, walled out both learners and teachers.

### About the Author

**Claire Carly-Miles** is an instructional assistant professor in the English Department at Texas A&M University. She is the coordinator of Technical and Professional Writing and the co-coordinator of Introduction to Writing about Literature, and she has worked collaboratively since 2019 to create open educational resource (OER) textbooks for both of these multi-section writing courses. Currently, she continues to participate in the revision of these OER as well as in the writing of a new OER for the department’s Science Fiction and Fantasy certificate (soon-to-be minor).

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