

(Adopted November 23, 2020)

Whitman College's English Department recognizes that Black students, Indigenous students, and students of color have faced terrible barriers whose existence at any point in history should outrage every person, and the persistence of which we must identify and remedy. This racism feeds as much on hatred as it does on silence and inaction; the English Department faculty are therefore moved to speak and to act in solidarity with the protestors and activists whose voices have reminded the world of the plain truth: Black lives matter.

Though we as teachers, artists, and scholars have each, in our own ways, sought to make our classes open and welcoming for every student to learn and to thrive, we acknowledge that higher education (as one among many systems) requires constant scrutiny for and revision of unjust and exclusive practices. The tactics of white supremacy and the affordances of white privilege too often linger in the norms, structures, and histories of American academia, and we therefore commit to take concrete actions immediately and hereafter that will make the English Department a place where everyone--colleagues, students, visitors, and alumni--will thrive and grow.

We applaud the leadership from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation and students of the Indigenous People's Education and Culture Club who recently led the Whitman College administration to adopt a statement of acknowledgement honoring the Indigenous inhabitants of the land on which Whitman College sits. We recognize that the *Natitayt* faithfully uphold the treaties of 1855, and that Article 8 secures our right to work, live, and learn peacefully on campus and in the surrounding region. For such a declaration to really mean something, the College must address the entwined legacies of colonialism that complicate so many elements of Indigenous and Black lives across the globe. To that end, the English Department continues to bolster its offerings in our recently-adopted Underrepresented Literatures requirement, which include courses addressing colonial and anti-colonial literature, American Indian Literatures, and global Black writing. We seek to draw clearer connections between works by historically minoritized voices and the rich history of arts and philosophy that define writing in English, from the Medieval period up to the present.

Furthermore, we are carefully investigating our hiring practices and policies, working to embrace new strategies to improve our outreach to historically underrepresented communities, and to update our idea of what a professor of literature looks like, sounds like, teaches, and studies.

We know that failing to reflect on our shortcomings, change, and state our hopes publicly is tantamount to endorsing the conditions that brought the current state of iniquity into being. Though we are aware that these changes in our actions and attitudes alone will not resolve the issues our campus community faces now and in the future, we commit, to continuous, substantial work toward building a truly antiracist Department of English.