

Intersections Fellow Highlights: Tao Zhang, Chris Babits, and Rana Abulbasal

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Research Fellow



Tao Zhang, a postdoctoral teaching fellow, approaches teaching and research with an intersectional lens.

CIGSR: How has intersectionality shaped you as a teacher?

My awareness has been sharpening regarding what diversity entails through learning from my students and reflecting on my own lived experiences. Such awareness not only helps improve my understanding of the complexity of U.S. society, but also enables me to become a better critical intercultural communication scholar, as well as a more mindful human being who strives to develop constructive relationships with others in the shared learning community, an environment abundant with

cultural differences such as gender, class, race, sexual orientation, ability, national origin, political views, religion, and age.

CIGSR: What is the most important lesson you have learned about inclusion?

To me, diversity does not merely refer to the display on campus of people from different cultural backgrounds. Rather, it means that everybody's difference is accepted and respected through everyday, mundane communication. As an intercultural communication scholar, I feel obliged to explore uncharted waters in the seemingly familiar world. Further, I take every possible chance in classroom discussions to encourage students to share their stories and voices. I believe it is an ethical choice to develop a collective awareness that our standpoint is always partial, and that only through listening to and recognizing other possible and marginalized experiences and voices can we become more open-minded and united.

Department website

Recent publications:

Zhang, T. (2021). Undoing the "non's" within English hegemony: Teaching intercultural communication as a transnational teacher. *Communication Education*, 70(3), 339-341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2021.1912792>

Zhang, T. (2021). "Your English is 'accented!': Surviving with otherness while approaching positive becoming. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 13(4), 476-496. <http://www.doi.org/10.1177/1940844720943510>

Teaching Fellow



Chris Babits, a postdoctoral teaching fellow in Modern U.S. History, further specializes in histories of sexuality, religion, and psychology.

CIGSR: How has intersectionality shaped you as a teacher?

My teaching is based on the best practices of culturally relevant teaching. It has always been my goal to spotlight the experiences of myriad racial, religious, gendered, sexual, and ethnic identities in lectures, course readings, films, and in-class activities. This includes incorporating historians, religious studies scholars, and writers from various backgrounds in order to decenter the cisgender, straight, white male voice that all-too-often determines what counts as historical knowledge. By taking this approach in the past, I have ensured that my classroom is a space where students simultaneously see themselves in the curriculum and are exposed to the lived experiences and beliefs of others.

Department website

Links to selected research & writings:

- <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1903161>
- <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2018/6/06/horror-ex-gay-therapy-once-involved-ice-pick-lobotomies>
- <http://www.quarterlyhorse.org/2019/babits>
- <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol5/iss1/15/>

Graduate Fellow



Rana Abulbasal, a PhD Candidate in sociology, focuses on social inequality and had one goal entertaining graduate school, which she relayed as “learn[ing] what academia has to say about ‘diversity’ and how we can fix the lack of it, specifically in the workplace.”

CIGSR: How has intersectionality shaped you as a researcher and student?

I’m an immigrant, Arab-American, Muslim, Hijabi woman, and for far too long, I struggled to rank all those sides of me. I struggled to understand which one was responsible for the weird look I got, or the not-so-funny joke I was told. Then I got to sociology, and I found out that it’s the intersection of all my identities that shaped my experiences, and that it made sense that I couldn’t rank them. I also learned that the right name for what I want to learn, and fix is “inequality.”

CIGSR: Can you share one specific practice you use in your research that is impactful?

One impactful practice that I’ve been using in my research is to cite women scholars of color where possible. Academia is another area where women of color are

severely underrepresented, and intentionally citing their research is one way to amplify their voices.

[Department website](#)