

## Statement of Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is absolutely imperative for my work as a scholar and a professor. My field of Religion and Culture, with an emphasis on the anthropology of religion, centers on the lived experiences of religious adherents around the world. My work would be meaningless without attention to the myriad aspects of diversity and the inclusion of voices from the margins of societies.

The theology courses I teach afford me the opportunity to bring my research findings among the Latino/a community to bear on important public issues of faith, ethnic identity, and immigration. I assign contextual theological and ethnographic literatures which voice the internal self-understanding of various and different struggle-laden communities in order to foster cultural literacy and empathic understanding. Exposure to these materials challenges students to articulate concrete approaches to addressing difference within their own contexts.

My approach to introducing world religions centers upon the cultivation of respect for variegated religious expressions as living and vibrant aspects of human cultures that should be explored, appreciated, and celebrated. By drawing many different religions into comparative perspective, I work to identify similarities and differences in the ways various cultures address questions of ultimacy, the human condition, and distinct approaches to social and ecological ethics. Identifying the many resonances between religious views deconstructs notions of “strange” or “exotic” practices, uncovering distinct ways of addressing a shared humanity across boundaries of difference.

My work at Richland College and collegiate high school has given me opportunities to teach students from many races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, languages, religions, and learning abilities and disabilities. I work to be certain these students have the attention needed to help them succeed and develop a passion for learning in an environment where they are safe to express themselves honestly. I incorporate empathy-building exercises to cultivate an embracing classroom culture, and I use materials students can identify with from their diverse social locations. Richland also has a large percentage of low income students, so I provide alternative reading materials to spare students the cost of purchasing textbooks. Simple steps such as these make my classes more accessible and affordable for diverse and low-income students.

Finally, for the past four years I have volunteered at the Oscar Romero Center for Community Health and Education which focuses on impacting the health, education, and well-being of children and their families in the North Texas area, and in El Salvador. I have participated in organizing events, and I have accompanied the director of the center on two trips to El Salvador. I am deeply committed to carving out a space for the muted voices of the marginalized, and finding creative ways to make education accessible to the underprivileged.

David Luckey  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Southern Methodist University