

## DeLisa D. Hawkes

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As a teaching assistant and scholar, I aspire to make my research in nineteenth-century African American literature relevant to audiences beyond the confines of academia. In this fashion, I invite students to consider how their academic interests contribute to or challenge societal ideas.

Working as a TA has inspired me to develop an interdisciplinary approach to pedagogy that highlights the importance of a humanities education in understanding society. I designed my African American Literature and Culture course around the theme of how individual acts impact group movements. By incorporating texts from across the humanities, my class guides students towards understanding the complex challenges facing minoritarian communities in their efforts to establish political movements, from antebellum abolitionism to Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter. The fiction we studied, from W.E.B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* to Dwanye Smith's *Forty Acres*, featured characters struggling with creating a personal space within collective struggles toward racial uplift and social justice.

My final assignment asks students to analyze a novel through their major's perspective to understand how different perspectives shape a person's view of societal issues. Assisting my students to craft more probing questions about their disciplines in relation to social issues has also helped me refine the critical approaches to my research. For instance, my research seeks to expand the understanding of the black-white color line by exploring colorism in relation to different forms of racial passing. Inspiring students to consistently engage with and critique ideas and practices in society is my goal.