CAAS 2017 Panel Proposal

Proposed Panel Title
Racism and Language in Classics Today

Individual Presentation Titles

- "From Greeks and Barbarians to Race and the Classics: Classics for Whites Only?"
- "Three Case Studies Addressing Racist Language in the Translations of Classical Literature"
- "Positionality and Transitivity: The Syntax and Semantics of Intentional Action and Inclusion in the Language of Diversity Statements on Classics Websites"

According to the 2014 Society of Classical Studies' Departmental Census, a mere 5.7% of full-time tenure professors in Classics are minorities. The 2015 Survey of Doctorates Earned by the National Science Foundation also reported that no doctoral degrees in Classics were awarded to African-Americans. The lack of racial diversity in the field of Classics is well documented. And recently, there has been an increase of blog posts and articles that have publicized the obstacles faced by the few people of color in Classics including the 2017 post, "Being a PoC in Classics: Some Thoughts" by Nadhira Hill. Although these issues have become more widely recognized in the last several years (particularly on social media), more research is needed that offers theoretically and methodologically founded measures to breakdown the barriers blocking diversity in Classics. To fill this gap, the panel will present pedagogical and linguistic insights that spotlight race-related issues of immediate concern in Classics today. These presentations aim to provide K-12 Classics educators as well as college and university students and faculty with the information and tools to combat and prevent the spread of racist attitudes and language. The three presenters will demonstrate how to facilitate challenging discussions in a Classics classroom, critically analyze standard translations of classical literature, and formulate inclusive diversity statements that are specific to Classics. Because all presentations have dialogue and language as central elements in their research regarding race and Classics, the panel is titled, *Racism and Language in Classics Today*.

The first presentation is titled, "From Greeks and Barbarians to Race and the Classics: Classics for Whites Only?". This presenter will discuss why it is important for students of the Classics to be confronted in a course that ostensibly claims to fulfill any college or university diversity credit with the role that Classics itself has played in feeding the hydra of racism and anti-Semitism in America. The presenter advocates for the development of courses that engage with racism. The goal is to make students aware that the discipline of Classics has both a racist and anti-racist history from which we can learn. In "Three Case Studies Addressing Racist Language in the Translations of Classical Literature," the second presenter will focus on part of a larger project and will ask for audience participation and feedback. This presentation will begin with a look at the entry in Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary* for the word *Aethiops*. From there, the presenter will analyze Juvenal's *Satires*, translated by Peter Green, and examine a letter of Cicero, translated by D.R. Shackleton-Bailey. To highlight, the impact of translation on the work of scholars of color, the presenter will conclude with a discussion of a Haitian scholar, Michel-

Rolph Trouillot (1949-2012). In this presentation, a broader question will be addressed about outreach in the Classics and the impact of such translations upon people and students of color who are already marginalized in Classics classrooms.

For the final presentation, "Positionality and Transitivity: The Syntax and Semantics of Intentional Action and Inclusion in the Language of Diversity Statements on Classics Websites", the presenter will offer a linguistic analysis of over fifty online diversity statements from Classics programs and departments. The data has been collated anonymously and will be presented without any institutional identifiers. The presenter will focus on how Classics departments situate themselves linguistically in the narrative of diversity and what messages they communicate. This presentation will demonstrate how positionality and transitivity in language reinforces inequity through the exclusion of minorities as agents of the experience. Positionality refers broadly to what roles the author constructs for the participants in a narrative and transitivity reflects more specifically the degree of agency for these participants regarding their presence as a subject and/or object of a clause. At the end of the presentation, the speaker will illustrate how programs and departments can get closer to demonstrating intentional action by constructing statements uniquely suited to Classics that include minorities as agents. It is the hope of this panel to offer to the audience new information to contemplate regarding the state of race in Classics as well as present ways in which educators can take action to improve their classrooms and the field.

Thank you for your consideration.

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