<div align="center">

Heather Sue M. Rosen
A Statement of Teaching Philosophy

</div>

My teaching pedagogy takes a student-centered approach to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), emphasizing access and inclusion while incorporating abolitionist and trauma-informed practices to provide an empowering and safe learning environment for all students. My courses are structured to account for the likelihood, not the possibility, that students enrolled in the courses will include people of color, disabled people, international students, students living in poverty, and those facing a variety of other circumstances impacting their academic performance. This involves recognizing and confronting the mechanisms of oppression and inequality within the classroom, including instructor authority, classroom policy, and the historical exclusion of marginalized voices from "mainstream" sociology. I work to accomplish both with the implementation of UDL pedagogy through assignments, my teaching style, and course content.

My approach is informed by my over ten years of experience navigating higher education as a disabled student from a working-class background. First and foremost, I meet students where they are at by asking about their needs at the beginning of every semester because my main goal is to provide a safe and welcoming class environment that facilitates critical thinking and active learning for all students. Sociology should be taught in a way that is consistent with its core principals, meaning that the course structure should account for students' differing backgrounds to the extent that this is possible.

Teaching Preparation and Plans

My training through the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences Writing Intensive Program (WIP) at the University of Georgia emphasized the practical application of skills beyond the classroom, and my WIP training is heavily reflected in my approach to participation and learning assessment. I construct assignments to include as much flexibility as possible, focusing on the learning objective over things like format and formality. I use assignments that allow for flexible and creative presentation formats, including traditional academic papers but also more creative formats like graphic novels, infomercials, Tik Tok videos, and spoken word poetry. I encourage students to critically engage with their readings and assignments by alleviating the threat of grade penalties using "soft" (flexible) deadlines and unlimited resubmissions. This helps normalize mistakes as part of the learning process, and frames assignments as learning tools, not assessments. I view active learning as a collaborative process requiring students have a say in how/what they learn.

Adjusting assignments and course structure to provide students access to the tools they need to participate is rendered useless absent a safe environment for participation. Safety is not just physical, and an emotionally unsafe classroom can be traumatic. Furthermore, Higher Education in the United States is exclusionary by design. Privilege can lead sociologists to imply assumptions about social experiences that do not align with the reality of those experiences. When the assumption is posed as objective fact, which it often is, students are at risk of being othered and teaching loses its effectiveness. To counteract these foundations, I believe we must do more than recognize the emotional trauma associated with racism, sexism, ableism, and other forms of systematic exclusion.

A safe learning environment can be reinforced through course content and small, informal, low stakes, writing assignments. When constructing assignments, I ask myself whether there are

reasons students would be unable or unwilling to participate, and whether the assignment connects with students in a way that facilitates them learning the information in question. I order the topics and reading selections in my courses to emphasize the work of scholars of color, disabled scholars, and other scholars who have been historically excluded from the sociological canon, presenting their work first to establish a basis for understanding the historically emphasized voices of the sociological canon.

I explicitly state to students that they should consider themselves as co-creators of knowledge in my classroom, and I shape lectures and discussions to make it obvious that students' contributions are valuable and vital to the co-construction of knowledge. For example, students in my courses have power to shape their course participation, final projects, and format for submitting all assignments, around their own sociological and career interests. I regularly teach two highly interdisciplinary courses, Medical Sociology and Sociology of Alcohol and Drug Use, in which about half of the students are pre-med or pre-health, rather than sociology, majors. For these courses, I have students perform a qualitative content analysis of popular media, framing their topic using a social problems lens for presentation to an audience who would benefit from their findings. This leaves students the option to engage with formal sociological writing if they find it useful while allowing non-sociology students to explore more career-relevant applications of sociology. In another activity for my Development of Sociological Theory course, students provide their interpretations and critiques by posting to an online class discussion space. The posts resemble "tweets," or posts on the popular social media platform Twitter. They are informal, ~200 word, posts that often include hashtags (#) to designate topic, or memes to emphasize their reaction to the information. This keeps students engaged and excited about the work of scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, Georgian Davis, and Robert McRuer, but also provides them an opportunity to think critically about the work of other sociologists who are considered "foundational," such as Max Weber, Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Pierre Bourdieu.

Online Learning

While the approach outlined above was meant for a physical, face-to-face, environment, it has also proved quite successful in an online environment. I was more prepared to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic than I realized, largely due to the above methods and adjustments. Specifically, my already-flexible grading system and participation/attendance policy were well-suited to the uncertainty surrounding students' life circumstances during the pandemic. Students in my online sociology of alcohol and drug use course (2 sections), deviance and social control course (1 section), and sociological theory course (1 section) reported that the UDL helped minimize the difficulties and frustrations brought by virtual learning.