

## Wellness and Health Statement

Dear Students,

Education is a hopeful endeavor – and it is best done with others as a transformative rather than transactional process. In order to transform in our class, in university and beyond, an attention to wellness - which includes critical reflective practice, mindfulness, empathy, building connections - is essential.

In order to transform, we must be able to stretch ourselves and move beyond our comfort zones; therefore, the course will be challenging– with lots of writing and reading and discussion and debate. By the end of this course, I hope you will understand your role as an essential collaborator and co-designer, not just in your own learning but also in the making of meaning within the community we build together.

However, too much discomfort can jeopardize wellbeing. Working until exhaustion is NOT a badge of honor; finding the balance between work and rest, rigor and reflection, is hard at the best of times, and almost impossible in the midst of a global pandemic. Be gentle with yourselves and others. In this course we will aim to practice an ethics of care where we will make room for uncertainty, discomfort, and messiness. In that messiness, we often find our greatest inspiration and the space to think new, creative thoughts. As we design for compassion, you will find in the syllabus a number of opportunities for flexibility: you can take a pass on a writing reflection or miss a reading quiz, and there are “low stakes” and “no stakes” assignments. The syllabus is forgiving for a reason: we are learning in a time of shared trauma and transformation.

Audre Lorde once said, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Your wellness is an act of power and resilience. If we commit to the wellness of ourselves and others, we can imagine a future that is better than our present and more humane than our past.

Thank you.