

A Departmental Statement on Social Justice

The study of literature and culture should involve a reckoning with historical violence. In reference to our local history, we begin by acknowledging that Saint Louis University rests on the ancestral lands of the Osage Nation, Missouria, and Illini Confederacy, who were removed unjustly; and that our community is the beneficiary of that removal. We honor their heritage and what they teach us about stewardship of the earth.

We also acknowledge that enslaved people contributed to the building of Saint Louis College, which became Saint Louis University, and that the Society of Jesus participated in the institution of slavery. We would encourage our community to explore this history through the Jesuits' Slavery, History, Memory, and Reconciliation Project [<https://www.jesuits.org/our-work/shmr/>]. In our commitment to social justice, we must consider the place where we learn, work, and gather, just as we consider the texts and voices that we bring into that place.

The English department engages issues of economic justice, racial and gender equity, LGBTQ+ rights, and ecological thought at every level of our curriculum. Our courses include texts and voices that have been historically marginalized. When reading canonical works, we examine the colonial context in which much literature in English was produced. Our courses often include advocacy projects and service-learning components that connect students with issues of social justice in our city and region.

Beyond the classroom, our faculty and graduate students work toward social justice through scholarship, service, and community engagement. For example, members of our department have been involved with the Prison Education Program of Saint Louis University [<https://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/prison-program/index.php>] as administrators, teachers, and volunteers. Notably, our department is home to *African American Review* [<https://archive.slu.edu/colleges/AS/aar/>], a scholarly journal on African American literature and culture.

In closing, we recognize that opportunities for higher education in the United States are not evenly distributed. This is particularly true of a private institution such as Saint Louis University. In light of this inequity, the English Department welcomes opportunities to share our resources, expertise, and love of learning with the community at large.