

March 2022

## Regard(less) as a Feminist Pedagogical Practice

Kelly W. Guyotte  
*University of Alabama*, [kwguyotte@ua.edu](mailto:kwguyotte@ua.edu)

Stephanie Anne Shelton  
*University of Alabama*, [sashelton@ua.edu](mailto:sashelton@ua.edu)

Kelsey H. Guy  
*University of Alabama*, [khguy@ua.edu](mailto:khguy@ua.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/feministpedagogy>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Guyotte, Kelly W.; Shelton, Stephanie Anne; and Guy, Kelsey H. (2022) "Regard(less) as a Feminist Pedagogical Practice," *Feminist Pedagogy*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/feministpedagogy/vol2/iss1/4>

This Critical Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at DigitalCommons@CalPoly. It has been accepted for inclusion in Feminist Pedagogy by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@CalPoly. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@calpoly.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@calpoly.edu).

### Regard(less) as a Feminist Pedagogical Practice

In 2020, COVID-19 became a global pandemic that shifted everyday life, spatially, temporally, and affectively. The world was ostensibly upended. Feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2020) wrote, “Many of us are struck about how, in the middle of this pandemic, Spring is advancing, flowers are blooming, the earth keeps on growing—regardless. Humans are not the centre of creation” (p. 468). *Regardless*—we were struck by this phrasing and how it signals a continuing of processes, practices, temporality. As much as we, humans, felt as though everything had stopped amidst the pandemic, seasons all came and went. From a human perspective, when the academic year moved online, we continued teaching and students continued coursework, regardless. As teachers who care(d) for students simultaneously navigating uncertain pandemic terrain, we found ourselves changing our practices to accommodate the varied complexities we all faced, and how those complex identities were already embedded in a sociopolitical landscape *within* a pandemic. With regard to these students, we adapted our teaching. Regard(less), we carried on.

Braidotti (2020) explained, “The relevance of feminist thought in times of crisis is to emphasize the multiple perspectives that emerge from attention to embodiment and lived experience...[it] also adds an intersectional approach that stresses the inclusion of axes of analysis” (p. 467). In this article, we think with regard(less) as a pedagogical concept and practice that playfully, though necessarily, shifts between regardless and regard. Though *regardless* we kept teaching, we did so with *regard* to and for students in our classes. We narrate regard(less) as a feminist practice within two qualitative inquiry courses Stephanie and Kelly co-taught with Kelsey in 2020.

#### Spring 2020

“What in the hell are we gonna *do*?” We, Stephanie and Kelsey, stare at one another’s Zoom boxes and the blinking cursor in the now-deleted latter half of the course syllabus for the introductory qualitative research course we are co-teaching. The list of previously planned assignments seems disconnected from students’ and our own new realities: no external childcare, varying internet access, and raging uncertainty. All while the semester should continue, regardless. “Okay, what’s actually *necessary* for them to learn? What *must* they know, take with them?” Laptop keys click as our shared screen shows edits, deletions, additions. “Okay, this final paper? I’m thinking that’s unrealistic now. They don’t have access to research participants, won’t have any more in-person classes. But they need to reflect on their researcher identities, their subjectivities, whether we keep that or not. Regardless.” With regard to students’ suddenly upturned lives, in near defiance of the institution’s expectation that classes move forward *regardless*, we delete the whole section. “What will they do instead?” The cursor blinks, waiting.

“What if we still ask them to do this reflection, the point of the assignment, without the paper itself?” “Um, okay. What’s that look like?” The cursor begins to move. “What if we ask them to do something creative? Something that gives them flexibility when we don’t know what their lives look like right now? And, it all has to be online because, well, lockdown.” “Right.” As the cursor drifts, the words “online comic strip” replace “research paper.” “Virtual video reflection” replaces “reflection on subjectivities paper.” We smile in our Zoom boxes. “They’ll still do the thinking that they need to, still engage with the literature and the assignments before the world fell apart, and it’ll be fully online. This should help them to find joy in doing the work, and they’ll still do the same kind of thinking, regardless.” We save the new, heavily edited syllabus, attach it to a class email, and hit “send.” Emails begin chiming in our inboxes. “Thank you,” they read, “thank you for thinking about what life is like right now. Thank you for helping me to stay safe with family in my home, while still learning.” The semester continues, regardless, but in having regard for their needs, they and we find hope and connection.

### **Fall 2020**

It is now fall 2020, and we, Kelly and Kelsey, look at our intermediate qualitative research students in their various Zoom forms: plain walls for some, scattered books and papers for others, and for a few, black screens offer a semblance of privacy in a world that has digitally invaded their homes. Our class has reached a pause in our group discussion, and we can sense a shift; seeing their exhausted expressions etched with stress and worry, we can tell that, regardless of our lesson agenda for this next time block, the conversation needs to change. In this moment, regard, care, and connection overtake curriculum.

Up until this point in the semester, we worked hard to act as pillars of consistency for the students. Even though the world in which we live is uprooted and filled with uncertainty, we are still expected to teach, and our students are still expected to learn, *regardless*. In this shifting, virtual classroom moment, though, that “less” falls away. We understand that our presentation has worked almost too well; sometimes, students need to see us not as obelisks of stone, consistent though they are, but as vulnerable, *tired* humans who are also struggling through the pandemic version of academia. In this moment, we take down metaphorical black screens showing only our names, and instead show students the mess that is truly behind us: the mess of teaching, working, and living in our homes, of pandemic anxieties, of academic stress. In our respective homes, Kelly and Kelsey share vulnerable stories of struggle and anecdotes of perceived inadequacy, focusing on the regard that will foster connection beyond the virtual. We abandon virtual backgrounds, opening our living spaces and ourselves, no longer constrained to the sterility of a campus classroom, and taking advantage of teaching online.

As we share our personal experiences, our students' expressions change. Stress and worry remain because, regardless of this shift in conversation, the pandemic continues amidst our homes, but now they are intermingled with splashes of relief and even a smile or two. Later, in a breakout room with Kelsey, a student thanks her for her vulnerability. "It's nice to know that y'all still feel imposter syndrome and are kinda struggling, too, that it's not just us." "No," Kelsey replies, "it is definitely not just you."

#### **Coda**

Through these two examples from spring and fall 2020, we explored the productive tensions between regard and regardless as pedagogically enacted by us three. From a feminist perspective, a pedagogy of regard(less) created fluid spaces in which we could shift back and forth with the stability and resolution of regardless, and the precarity and relationality in practicing regard. For Stephanie and Kelsey, regard(less) meant continuing to provide rich online learning experiences for the students, with thoughtful regard to the socio-technological realities of the pandemic and students' individual challenges. For Kelsey and Kelly, regard(less) was providing consistency and unwavering support throughout the semester, while showing regard for the unexpected moments when the messy backdrop of life needed to be foregrounded and discussed. Therefore, our collective teaching experiences deemed it necessary to confront the ways in which home and academy were colliding, for all of us. Pre-pandemic, we, the authors, thought of ourselves as pedagogically attentive to student needs; however, the pandemic impelled us to regard students in more complex, nuanced, and holistic ways, and to regard our interactions with students as a way to build new means of regard for them. Thinking with Braidotti (2017), this feminist pedagogy allowed us to unthink the boundaries of the classroom and remember that we are always already affected by what takes place outside of it. In fact, we have a responsibility to not pretend that these spaces are distinct. Thus, when we take the time to "focus...on the force of relationality" (Braidotti, p. 217), we see regard(less) as a feminist ethical imperative that emphasizes the necessity to respond, not ignore, the confluence of forces and identities that converge in our classrooms. Regardless, we show regard. Regard(less), we carry on.

### References

- Braidotti, R. (2017). Posthuman critical theory. *Journal of Posthuman Studies*, 1(1), 9-25. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jpoststud.1.1.0009>
- Braidotti, R. (2020). “We” are in this together, but we are not one and the same. *Bioethical Inquiry*, 17, 465–469. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-020-10017-8>