

As a scholar, I am interested in how accounts of personhood inform social relations and obligations over time. Through my research and writing, I seek to understand how these shifting accounts are tied to changes in ethical arrangements, and so how people fit together and live collectively. I love teaching this course because I believe that students become more motivated to write when they participate in crucial debates. In my opinion, there is nothing more consequential than when the status of a “person” is thrown into doubt. Indeed, doubts of this kind shape some of the most residual—and harmful—defects in U.S. American history. We might say that the U.S. has been shaped by individuals and groups striving to be recognized as full and complete people. Accordingly, achieving the nation’s founding ambition thus becomes the struggle to embody its most sacred principles.