



Rebecca Devers Mazumdar, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, English

Rebecca Mazumdar began teaching when she was eight or nine years old, assigning homework to the assortment of teddy bears she had arranged in rows of silent, attentive students. Never interested in dreaming only half-way, she then completed the students' homework assignments before stepping back into the teacher role and grading the work. Her career at City Tech began in 2010, after completing her Ph.D. in English at the University of Connecticut. She found the students to be slightly less attentive, significantly less silent, and infinitely more interesting. The grading was not quite the pastime she remembered, but it was nonetheless the fulfillment of a calling she had heard all those years ago: she had always been an educator at heart.

In the Department of English, she teaches classes in literature and composition, including Law through Literature, Introduction to Literature – Fiction, Perspectives in Fiction, and an occasional special topics course on graphic novels. She has published two articles on teaching and learning, including one co-authored with colleagues across disciplines. She has also given conference papers about her pedagogy, presented a workshop on effective writing assignment design to math faculty at West Point, and given invited guest lectures on American literature and cold war culture at Smith College, LaGuardia Community College, and Drew University (via video). She has shared pedagogical ideas with colleagues and CUNY graduate students during her years as a co-coordinator of the faculty development program Writing Across the Curriculum (2013-2017 and 2018-2020). She learned valuable interdisciplinary and civic pedagogies through attendance at SENCER (Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities) Summer Institutes, and has participated in City Tech learning communities with professors in Communication Design and Law & Paralegal Studies.

Her approach to teaching emphasizes connection, empathy, curiosity, and transparency. Centering the English classroom at the nexus of students' interdisciplinary experiences of college, she challenges students to connect literary themes and class discussions with their chosen careers and majors. Students might find themselves advocating for new laws or community initiatives to combat food insecurity in New York City, or recording a podcast episode that reveals the untold story of a fictional character. Her students have written multimodal digital texts about immigration, devised proposals for Hospitality Management students to teach kitchen skills and meal planning to local high school students, and written lesson plans for physics courses that use films of boxer Muhammad Ali to demonstrate Newton's laws.

Incorporating long-standing principles of WAC alongside a playful pedagogy founded in what might best be described as controlled cognitive dissonance, Professor Mazumdar coaches her students through the writing process, leading them to write creative, unconventional texts that impact students' thinking long after the semester has ended. A classroom activity where students compete to identify ways that a politician is like a clothes hanger may lead to discussions of how seemingly disparate concepts can illuminate each other through proximal analysis. In such a

classroom, a game of Bingo can lead to close-reading lines from a novel; a game of Jeopardy becomes a discussion about the different ways a text can be interpreted.

Professor Mazumdar embodies City Tech's "dedication to high quality [...] professional education" through her fundamental belief that critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and clear communication are essential in any academic program and every profession. Her approach to the classroom is based on mutual respect and the celebration of unexpected and under-appreciated perspectives.