

Member Spotlight – Sophia Sarigianides

The Bio: I started teaching in Southern California in 1991 in a summer program for 6th-12th grade students. Then I began a Ph.D. program that afforded me the chance to teach college composition courses before I returned to full-time middle school teaching, still in S. CA, at my old Alma mater, where I taught 7th-8th grade ELA. In 2001, I moved to NYC to begin a different doctoral program (I left this first one) and I got a position to support my studies where I taught five MA courses a year at Teachers College, Columbia University. I did that for eight years. Since 2010, I have been teaching undergraduate and graduate English Education students at Westfield State University, a job that I adore.

A Favorite Book: Oh my goodness, for a teacher of literature, I find this an impossible question because I love *so many texts so much for different reasons!* I just checked the publication dates of some of the most recent novels that I have been teaching, and Ann Braden's (2018) *The Benefits of Being an Octopus* seems to be one of the most recent. I love it because the main character, Zoey, who is white and very poor, shows students the ways that social class expectations are enforced in schools, which are middle class institutions, and how all of us inflict class injuries (microaggressions in social class terms) without knowing, given how little is discussed about social class in school or, really, anywhere. Students love this book.



A Strategy: I love silent discussions—via Chalk Talks or by circulating sheets of paper with key quotes or questions about the reading. They give students warm-up time to think, they give quieter students a chance to show their insights, and they give us time to see each other's thoughts more carefully before a whole-class discussion.

An Influence: I fell in love with teaching English and teaching literature in particular because of my junior year English teacher at Warren High School in Southern California. She was confident, funny, loved us, loved literature, and seemed to hold all these analytic secrets about what texts like *Huck Finn* and other books were *really* about. I wanted to hold such secrets, too.

Something Personal: I. Love. To. Cook. And to have folks over for dinner, to entertain. I also love dancing. And I love to travel, with Greece—the home of my family—as my favorite destination because of the beaches, the food, the hospitality, the language, the music, the culture.