

## **Pedagogue Bonus: Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices (w/Jason Tham)**

Pedagogue podcast

*Transcript*

Welcome to Pedagogue Bonus, a short episode that covers a single topic or question. I'm your host, Shane Wood.

In this bonus episode, Jason Tham talks about the anti-racist scholarly reviewing practices.

Dr. Jason Tham is a faculty member in the Technical Communication and Rhetoric program in the Department of English at Texas Tech University. He is interested in design thinking practices in technical and professional communication. He teaches courses in user experience research, information design, instructional design, and digital rhetorics. He currently serves as an associate editor for IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication and book review editor for Composition Studies. He is also vice president of the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication. He can be reached at [jason.tham@ttu.edu](mailto:jason.tham@ttu.edu).

Jason, thanks so much for joining us.

*SW: I was hoping to give you some space and time to talk about the Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices you contributed to. There are a lot of scholars and teachers who contributed to this project. What were its origins? Can you talk about the heuristic guide and how you hope this work gets taken up by reviewers in the field?*

JT: Sure. And thank you for giving us this space. I want to say this is a coalition and it's a collective work. I'm thankful to be invited to contribute to it, but I really want to give credit to the scholars who initiated this project, especially Lauren Cagle, and Emma Rose, Rebecca Walton, Miriam Williams. So, they were the one who spearheaded this effort, and I thank them for seeing this as a pressing need for the field. From my perspective, it is a very useful guide for anyone on the spectrum of publishing. So, whether you're an author or an editor or a publisher, I think this can benefit all of us who are thinking through how we provide feedback, that is, and the whole workflow and process of publishing to not marginalize any particular community of scholars.

Transparency, I think simply here just means communicate, right? Frequently and always with your authors or even reviewers, letting them know the state of the project and where it's at. So, it's mostly just technical to help, especially I think junior scholars needed that sort of information a lot more than senior scholars in reporting of their work and their faculty appraisal, those kind of things. I think it helps to make it easier for reporting, but transparency definitely also helps I think with, in the commenting process or the feedback process for authors, giving them an understanding of here, here's the heuristic or the, here's the rubric that has been used by the journal for reviewing purposes. Rather than keeping it as a hidden sort of requirement that all the authors have to find it out themselves about it. I think making that transparent and available to the authors are helpful and the reviewers as well to be trained to provide feedback that are constructive and targeted.

And it's not just assuming of somebody's linguistic background or somebody's racial ethnic background. So, you want to keep the work as the work and not any sort of assumption about either part of the party. And that's my perspective on it. I think the heuristic is really open-ended as well in some ways to be interpreted by its users. And some editorial boards already do really well in ensuring transparency, providing timely and useful feedback. I know I've been on asked to do reviews for some technical communication journals where I get, as a reviewer, I get informed of the publication outcome, I get informed of other reviewers comments, they're synthesized for me so I can see where I am at the place when I'm reviewing, knowing where I stand. I think that helps too, as part of my own professional development. So, I'm not just being exploited for service, for providing a service to the field.

In terms of uptake, I want to say that thankfully it has been given attention to, and I am noticing that some journals have officially included it as part of that reviewer guideline for their own reviewers. And that's very nice. And that was the goal that for us initially, but most recently, I also noticed that CCCC has just passed two new position statements on editorial ethics and also citation practice. I think they did cite this work as part of an influencing artifact for those new position statements. So, I'm glad that the larger feel is starting to see this as well outside of technical and professional communication. And my hope is that it penetrates even further outwards into other adjacent fields like communication studies or media studies, rhetoric in general, that sort of use this as a launching point for their own practices. I mean, a lot of the things were very reflective in nature in building of this heuristic. I think it needs to be a living document. It needs to be evolving to kind of recognize some of the outlier right practices that we may have not, we have not given attention in the current version of the heuristic.

So, I invite and welcome, and I think I speak on behalf of the coalition that helped form this document—heuristic. That feedback, it's definitely welcome for us and tell us how we can do better in building a stronger heuristic that supports all kinds of scholars.