



# Graduate *Teaching* *Certification*

Congratulations to our incoming  
2021-2022 cohort



# ALDO BARRITA

Ph.D. student,  
Department of  
Psychology

Faculty Advisor: Dr.  
Gloria Wong-  
Padoongpatt



Aldo Barrita received his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley in 2017 with high honors. His research focus includes how different forms of discrimination, primarily microaggressions, impact the well being of individuals from marginalized communities. In 2020, he received the President's Citation from the National Latinx Psychological Association (NLPA) for his service and commitment to LGBTQ+ and student members. Aldo Barrita has 5 years of experience working in clinical and social psychology research labs.

# KAY DOXILLY



**M.S Accounting  
Student,  
Department of  
Accounting**

**Advisor:  
Dr. Blanca Rincon**

Kay Doxilly is a Certified Forensic Accountant with over 20 years' experience in Industry. She has provided auditing and accounting services in the private and public sectors in various countries including Canada and the United States.

Kay has a strong passion for community service and serves in many areas of community outreach including as a Rotarian.

This extends to being an adjunct faculty at the College of Southern Nevada. Kay hopes to help facilitate her students' learning by bringing real world scenarios to the classroom. Kay is interested in improving her students' overall learning experience by incorporating high impact practices (HIPS) into her course. Kay endeavors to deliver the same quality of teaching virtually and in-person.

Through the Graduate Teaching Program, Kay hopes to make connections with other educators and obtain resources to improve:

- (a) student engagement,
- (b) the learning environment for her students, and,
- (c) her teaching pedagogy.



# AMIT GAJUREL



**Ph.D. Student, Civil and  
Environmental  
Engineering**

**Advisor: Dr. Erica J. Marti**

I am a second year Ph.D. student in Civil and Environmental Engineering. My research is focused on disinfection byproducts and their precursors in water systems.

I aspire to pursue my career in academics after my graduation. I have traveled a long way to achieve my career goal of being a professor in water science engineering and I think this program is a good fit for that aspiration. I hope the teaching certification program will help me hone my skills and knowledge to teach the students successfully.

I am optimistic I will learn about the lesson planning, student-teacher interaction, conduction of classes, and grading the students in this year-long experience.

# ARGIE MENDOZA



**M.Ed. Student,  
Higher Education**

**Advisor:  
Dr. Blanca Rincon**



Argie Mendoza earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Nevada State College and is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Higher Education at UNLV. She started her journey within higher education during her second year of undergrad when she became a student worker. At the moment, she works full time as a First Year Recruiter at Nevada State where she focuses on building relationships with high school students in order to encourage them to get started with their own collegiate journey. Ultimately, this became a catalyst for her to explore teaching on a college level.



As a participant of the Graduate College Teaching Certification program, she hopes to develop essential skills and knowledge needed in order to teach in a post-secondary classroom. She wants to learn the best practices and strategies in order to cultivate a learning environment where students feel engaged and empowered. As she continues to grow within the realm of teaching, she looks forward in making a difference for the next generation.





# CANDACE SUH-LEE



**Ph.D. student,  
Computer Science**

**Advisor: Dr. Yoohwan  
Kim**



Candace Suh-Lee is a Ph.D. student at Department of Computer Science. Her dissertation topic is AI-enabled cybersecurity for cyber-physical systems. She is a non-traditional student with years of professional experience as a cybersecurity practitioner in the energy sector, specializing in critical infrastructure and renewable energy systems.

Candace holds B. Sc in Computer Science and Mathematics from the University of Toronto (2002) and M. Sc in Computer Science from UNLV (2016). Most recently, she led cybersecurity researches at Electric Power Research Institute.

Through the Graduate Teaching Certificate program, Candace seeks to develop her teaching, mentoring, and guiding skills in the post-secondary setting.

# DAVID WADE



**Ph.D. Student,  
Learning Sciences,  
Department of  
Educational  
Psychology and Higher  
Education**

**Advisor: Dr. Jonathan  
Hilpert**



- I am a first year Ph.D. student in Learning Sciences. My research focus will likely be centered around cognitive apprenticeship and processes that support high performance through more individualized teaching, such as internship and apprenticeship models. I have experience teaching within the public and private sectors in large classroom and individualized settings.
- My interest in the Graduate Teaching Certification is to be engaged in a formalized learning experience where I receive guidance and feedback on my teaching performance; to understand the concrete and intangible components of teaching within a university system; and to build my contacts and resources within UNLV.
- It is my intent, post-graduation, to obtain employment within a university system engaged in teaching, research, and writing. I am open to the opportunities that life offers to be inspired and engaged with others.

# NEEKA WITTERN



**Master's of Science  
Student of Couples  
and Family Therapy**

**Advisor: Katherine  
Hertlein, Ph.D.**



Neeka Wittern is a second year Graduate Student in the MS Couples and Family Therapy program at UNLV.

She is currently pursuing a Sex Therapy Certification, and a Play Therapy Certification.


She earned her Bachelor's of Science in Psychology and Family Science, with a certification in Positive Psychology from the University of Utah.

Neeka has worked closely with children of all ages in the past, and has experience with teaching at an Elementary School level in Salt Lake City and a Middle School level in Las Vegas.

The GCTC program will broaden and expand my teaching abilities so that I will be able to apply them to a more advanced level of teaching. With this knowledge, I will one day be able to pursue a higher level of teaching in higher education and provide better care for my clients.




**ELENA ANGELKOVA**




**M.S Student,  
Department of  
Psychiatry and and  
Behavioral Health,  
Couple and Family  
Therapy Program**


**Advisor: Dr. Lawrence  
Jackson**



My research interests are focused on how first-generation immigrant families adjust to a diagnosis of a chronic illness and what barriers impact family functioning. Specifically, I would like to focus on families that have moved from a collectivist to an individualistic culture, and how the culture impacts the changes of the roles in the couple and/or family system.



I am excited to be a part of the Graduate College Teaching Certificate because it will allow me to gain the knowledge and tools that are necessary in order to become an extraordinary educator for future generations of mental health practitioners. I want to acquire instructional skills that will help me develop innovative ways of conducting lectures, facilitating group discussions, and creating questions that inspire ingenuity.



**GUQI ZHANG**

**D.M.A. student, School  
of Music**

**Advisor: Dr. Timothy  
Hoft**



Guqi Zhang is a second-year D.M.A. piano performance student in School of Music. She earned her M.M. in piano performance from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio and her B.A. in Music Education from Xi'an Conservatory of Music, China. Her research topic focuses on the combination of folk music elements in the piano works of Asian composers and western composition techniques.

From the GCTC program, she hopes to gain more experience with effective teaching strategies, as well as getting insight on best teaching practices. She is passionate about teaching and excited about the opportunity to learn different teaching strategies on her way to become a more effective musical educator.



# HANNAH GODFREY



**M.S Student,  
Department of Couple  
and Family Therapy**

**Advisor: Dr. Brandon  
Eddy**

Hannah Godfrey is pursuing a Master's of Science in the Couple and Family Therapy program. As a student therapist in the program, she loves helping clients identify their strengths and progress in their growth journey. Being part of the Graduate College Teaching Certification Program will allow her to continue these actions in a different, instructional setting.

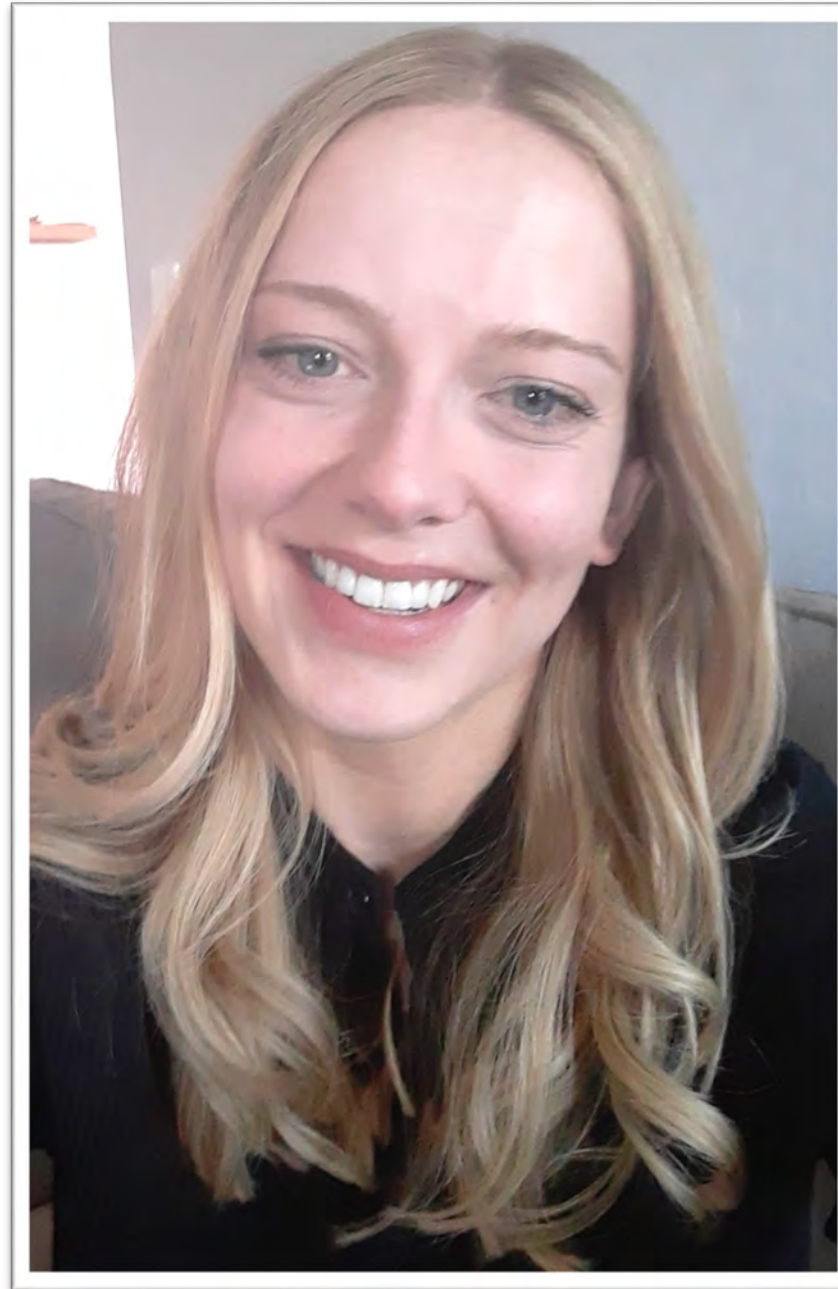
During her time as an undergraduate student, Hannah had the opportunity to become a teaching assistant in a child development course. This experience was the kindling to her desire to pursue teaching at a university level further. Hannah is excited to further develop her skills as an instructor in the Graduate College Teaching Certification Program. Through her participation in the program, Hannah hopes to learn the skills needed to be supportive and inspirational as an instructor.

# HEATHER PHELPS



**M.S Student,  
Department of Couple  
and Family Therapy**

**Advisor:  
Dr. Katherine Hertlein**



Currently I am working on my master's thesis on mindful exercises to improve couples sexual satisfaction.



I have always loved teaching and originally wanted to be a collegiate level teacher. I did not pursue this option initially because I realized I had a strong passion for mental health and was fascinated by psychology. Being a part of the Graduate College Teaching Certification (GCTC) Program gives me the opportunity to have both of my passions. Ultimately teaching psychology/CFT courses while in my private practice would be my ideal goal. I am excited to be a part of this program, and I hope to acquire the skills to become an accomplished instructor who can effectively motivate students to be passionate about the learning process, regardless of the subject matter.





# INDIA STARKS



I am a Couples and Family Therapy graduate student. Aiming to become a sex therapist and educator I have participated in varying degrees for various research surrounding the topic of sexuality but am still debating on whether or not I will do research for my program capstone. The teaching certificate provides me with an opportunity to further explore my desire to be a sex educator outside of my years as a teaching assistant. Within those years I found a passion for educating. I hope to gain a better understanding of teaching practices, strategies, and my personal teaching philosophy from the GTC program.

**Masters Student,  
Couples and Family  
Therapy**

**Advisor: Dr.Sara  
Jordan**

# JACOB STIPE



**M.F.A candidate,  
Technical Direction**

**Advisor: David Shouse**

Originally from Marquette, MI, I pursued my higher education at UNLV to submerge myself into a city and university that are both incredibly diverse.

I am a very spiritual person, and often employ my empathic and communicative skills to uplift and support those around me. I consider myself a non-traditional learner, having a spotted undergraduate history and valuing hands-on experience and human connection over books. As I continue to learn more about myself in this academic environment, I have learned that I enjoy using these skills and my own experiences to help teach. After consultation with peers and advisors, I applied to the program.

My goal is to help create positive learning habits that employ mindfulness and compassion, while also using the skills developed in this program, to create powerful and uplifting learning environments for all. Especially my fellow cohorts in the arts.



**JAIMIE KAREKAHO**



**Masters of Science  
in Hotel  
Administration**

**Professor Billy Bai**



As someone who grew up and lived in multiple countries with a passion for hospitality and tourism, I have experienced hospitality at most levels including where the quality of service is lacking. After graduation I intend to move back to Uganda, to build up food and service quality within the hospitality industry. Coupled with my degree and this certification, I plan to train employees on basic food handler safety. The goal is for employees to take a course with me, which they will leave with skills and knowledge that has been ignored, and most importantly a food handler certification. Based on my observation and experience in this context, these skills are lacking in such developing countries, and I would be honored to shift this narrative. I hope this certification equips me with the capacity and skills to advance the quality of service in this industry in Uganda.



# JIHYUN KIM

go by JENNET



**Dual MS Student,  
Management  
Information Systems  
& Hotel Administration**

**Advisor: Dr. Tony  
Henthorne**

When I began graduate school here at UNLV, I firstly began with a single program, Hotel Administration.

● However, a hotel elective course that I took in the first semester called Information Systems in the Hospitality Industry, taught by Dr. Mehmet Erdem, changed my perspective of the hotel business. Then, I admitted myself to dual in MIS and HOA.

A teacher may not be able to change the world, but I believe a teacher can change one's world.

● As how Dr. Erdem helped me open another eye looking at the hotel business, I want to be someone's mind opener.

Even if I do not become a Full-Time teacher after I graduate, I know a teaching skill is always an important skill to not only knowledge others, but also help them grow.

Through this teaching certification program, I hope I develop a teaching skill and can confidently deliver my knowledge and message to my future students and change one's world.

● Thank you ☺



# JORGE REYES



**Ph.D. Student  
Mathematical Sciences**

**Advisor: Dr. Monika  
Neda**



Jorge Reyes is a third year Ph.D. student in Computational Mathematics. As a first-generation Hispanic student, he has earned his undergraduate and M.S. in Applied Mathematics at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and an Associates of General Studies from the College of Southern Nevada. Jorge's research focuses on Partial Differential Equations (PDE's) and those related to computational fluid dynamics.

Hoping to work in academia, Jorge believes the GTC program can help refine his teaching. He has always had a passion for teaching and strives to give students the "ah" moment when they fully understand the concept since most people have always struggled with mathematics. Jorge is also aware of the lack of diversity in higher education, in particular the STEM fields. With the help of this program, he hopes to serve as inspiration for future students from both as an alumnus and as an instructor.

# JOSHUA WOOLDRIDGE



**Ph.D. student,  
Kinesiology and  
Nutrition Sciences**

**Advisor: Dr. Kara  
Radzak**



Joshua is a third year PhD student in the School of Integrated Health Sciences. His research has focused on injury prevention and improving healthcare-seeking behaviors for musculoskeletal injuries.

He is interested in the GTC program because he believes that university professors should be knowledgeable in effective pedagogy and a variety of instructional methods alongside their research skills and knowledge in order to provide best possible learning experience for students.

Joshua received his MS in Kinesiology from Illinois State University in 2019 and his BS in Athletic Training and Kinesiology from The College at Brockport in 2017. He is a certified athletic trainer and a National Strength and Conditioning Association certified strength and conditioning specialist. Joshua has worked for UNLV's ROTC program providing rehabilitation for musculoskeletal injuries since 2019.



**JOY VALLE**



**Graduate Student  
EMBA Program –  
Cohort 20 – Lee  
Business School**

**Advisor: Nikkole  
Liesse**



My background is a combination of real estate, restaurants, large-scale trade show, and events, so the focus of UNLV and their undeniable thought leadership in the hospitality and business realms make it an exciting and dynamic campus to be a part of right now. Prior to my current role, I worked with Vornado Realty Trust and Merchandise Mart Properties. I also held previous sales and operational roles at Dell, The Patina Group and Sotheby's International Realty in Los Angeles, all of which have provided valuable experience and a perspective that pushed me towards my present role today as VP of Leasing for International Market Centers. I have benefitted a great deal by working for and alongside some truly exceptional leaders and innovators and am as proud of the leaders and individual colleagues I've worked with as I am of the companies themselves, most recently of the amazing team at IMC.



My teaching interests revolve around communication and organization alongside the field of neuroscience as it relates to leadership and community- more specifically how leaders can best navigate both their teams and client bases through crisis and build more resilient communities on a consistent basis. Thrilled to have discovered the Graduate College Research and Teacher Certification programs, I hope to refine my research and teaching interests, and pursue a Ph.D. focused on these areas of research.



**JUEER WANG**



**Master student  
Management of  
Information System &  
Hospitality  
Management**

**Advisor: Dr. Rhonda  
McElroy**



I am an international master student of UNLV now. This is my second year of graduate study and my sixth-year study at UNLV. I graduate from UNLV with hospitality management major. I am glad that I participate this program and wish I can learn something from this program. My draft research topic would be hospitality technology and I want to get inspired within this program. I also want to pursue a Ph.D. degree after my graduation, and I might teach some lessons when I complete my Ph.D. degree, so I want to learn some knowledge from the teaching certificate program.





# KRISTIN VIERRA



My research focuses primary on the development of critical consciousness, motivators of critical action, and gender roles. I am excited to participate in the Graduate College Teaching Certificate because I am currently teaching a general psychology course. As a new instructor, I am interested in learning new approaches to bettering my teaching style.



**Ph.D. Student,  
Psychology**

**Advisor: Dr. Rachael  
Robnett**

# LYSSA PARK



MFA Candidate, Fine Arts

Advisor: Wendy Kveck




Lyssa Park is an interdisciplinary illustrator based in Las Vegas, her work expands from picture books to female erasures in South Korea. Her work can be found in La Cocina SF, and Believer Magazine. In 2019, she was shortlisted for the Name International Picture Book Concours.

*“The Graduate College Teaching Certification program at UNLV is a chance for me thoughtfully guide my future students. The workshops and the supportive community will help me develop a strong vocabulary and knowledge in teaching successfully at the college level. My background as a freelance illustrator aspires me to teach illustration courses, and I look forward to utilizing the tools I learn in this program.”*



**MICHELLE NICOLE  
JANEO**



**Master's Student,  
Couple and Family  
Therapy**

**Advisor: Dr. Katherine  
Hertlein**



My research interests are centered around the mental health and wellness of healthcare professionals. Specifically, my thesis aims to identify individual, organizational, and social factors that influence burnout to analyze the functionality of social support from various networks as a resource to increase the well-being and quality of life for medical students.


The Graduate College Teaching Certification will provide me with the necessary information about what it takes to build a well-rounded curriculum with relevant and impactful material. I aim to improve my leadership skills to create more engaging lectures to amplify team-based learning and problem solving that encourages creativity and critical thinking. Educators are leaders, role models, and pioneers for innovation in a diversifying world. I hope to inspire and mentor students to develop leadership, professional and interpersonal skills transferable beyond the classroom context.

# MOHAMMED ABDALLAH




**Ph.D. student,  
Department of  
Chemistry &  
Biochemistry**


**Advisor: Dr. Paul  
Forster**



Mohammed Abdallah is a Ph.D student in the Department of Chemistry and will enter his fourth year in the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year. He works under Dr. Paul Forster synthesizing porous, zeolitic materials, particularly novel faujasite compounds, for the purpose of use in gas separations and storage through the process of gas sorption.



He hopes to gain a new perspective on pedagogy through the GTC Program through the diffusion of information between like-minded individuals. He believes that a quality education is essential for most people in order to contribute and function accordingly within society. He is enthusiastic and finds meaning within teaching and the interactions with students; he sees this as an opportunity to make a positive impact on their livelihoods and impart life-long knowledge. He sees the GTC Program as an opportunity to bolster his credentials as an academic and augment his overall ability in scholastic instruction.



He graduated from UNLV with a B.S. in Biochemistry and a Minor in Mathematical Sciences.



# SAMANTHA SCHAFFER



**M.A. student,  
Communication  
Studies  
Advisor: Dr. Natalie  
Pennington**



I am currently a graduate student studying in the Communication department. I graduated from UNLV with my bachelor's degree in 2018 where I focused my studies on adoption communication. In my current studies, I enjoy researching interpersonal relationships and family communication. My particular research interests are parent-child communication patterns and adoption communication. My ultimate goal is to teach an adoption communication course that spreads awareness about adoption and improves communication patterns in families formed through adoption. Throughout my entire education, I have been fortunate to be guided by some amazing instructors and professors. It is important to me that I develop the critical skills necessary to become an awesome teacher and mentor myself. I believe that process begins by immersing myself in a program like the Graduate College Teaching Certification in hopes of giving my students the instructor they deserve.

**SARAH M. WELLS**

**Ph.D. Educational  
Psychology  
Assessment &  
Quantitative Analysis  
Student**

**Department of  
Educational  
Psychology & Higher  
Education**

**Advisor:  
Dr. Alice Corkill**



Sarah is entering her third year in the PhD Educational Psychology AQUA program. She works as a graduate research assistant for Dr. Daniel Wright, funded by the Dunn Family Foundation. Her educational research interests surround motivation, metacognition, mindfulness, and measurement. In addition, she researches the effects of participatory arts programming on pediatric cancer patient quality of life.

Sarah is thrilled by the opportunity to participate in the Graduate College Teaching Certificate.

She writes:

*As our 12th librarian of the US Congress Daniel Boorstin once said:*

*"Education is learning what you didn't even know you didn't know".*

*There is nothing more satisfying than the look of pure discovery on a student's face, or the feeling of it within yourself. It is my privilege to step forwards into the role of educator in higher education. The Teaching Certificate program is a wonderful opportunity to invest in the development of that role.*



# TORISHA STONE



PhD Student,  
Sociology Department

Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth  
Lawrence



I research the intersections and constructions of race, gender, and the body. I am currently interested in contemporary experiences of parenthood, primarily focusing on how parents make sense of their body and embodiment before, during, and after becoming parents and in relation to interpersonal and institutional interactions.

I am excited to be part of the Graduate College Teaching Certificate to further enhance my teaching methods and pedagogy. I want students to always have a fun and engaging learning experience. I am excited to share this space with colleagues to also learn from one another.

# ZAHRA MOJTAHEDI



**Degree: Ph.D. student,  
School of Public  
Health**

**Advisor: Professor Jay  
Shen**

- I am going to pursue a career as a lecturer and professor after my graduation. In my journey as a PhD candidate, I need to equip myself with certain skills and abilities. Teaching and research skills are fundamentals for such a career and for effective communication with students. We need to impress students and encourage them with our teaching skills. The teaching training program at UNLV is one of the tools that will help me to equip myself for my future career.
- I am going to learn from experience of other expert people in this area and not just use a try and error method for my teaching career.

