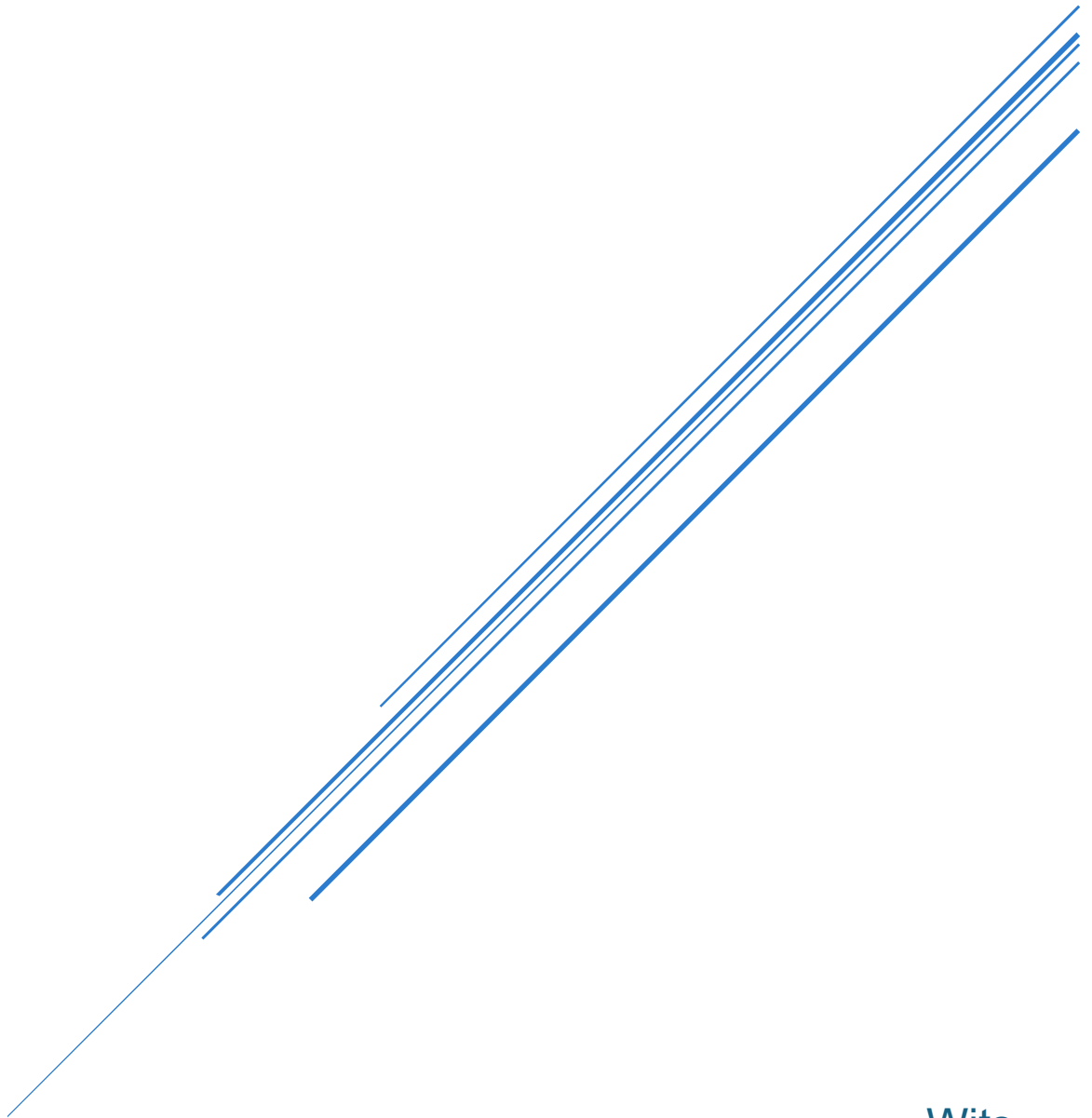


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FAMH4001A

Developing your personal statement



Wits  
FAMH4001A

## Personal Statement: Empathy

My Initial Philosophy Empathy exists for me as being present, to another person's experience." It means listening without fixing, explaining or comparing. It means that I give myself permission to acknowledge the existence of another, even if that other does not fit into my narrative. And while I did study empathy in school, I am constantly practicing by tapping into what I know about how people connect with each other from psychology and communication studies. One is that I value dignity, presence and connection. I practice active listening, which is asking questions that let other people talk and managing my tendency to want to speak or fix. The attitude that helps empathy thrive is one of curiosity, patience, and the comfort with uncertainty. I picked empathy, because I want to form meaningful relationships. I have seen misunderstanding spread like wildfire when people don't feel heard. I want to be a person who helps slow things down enough that others feel like they matter. Post Engagement with Learning Content

Initially, I believed empathy to be an innate quality. So, I thought I either had it or I didn't. However, via articles, group discussions and practice drills, I've realised it's a skill, one that can be developed intentionally and by practicing it. For instance, when I learned Brené Brown's articulation of empathy, I recognised how often we confuse sympathy with empathy. I also learned through Indigenous worldviews that empathy is not about carrying another person's pain but accompanying them as they pick up the pieces while doing so with dignity and respect to heal. This has made me realise that empathy is not just about openness, but also about boundaries.

## Personal Development Reflection After

Reflecting on my original statement, I can see that I conceptualised empathy as a feeling. I now see it as a practice that must always be tended. I have recognised that empathy also means being aware of my own discomfort and sitting in the silence that may arise in difficult conversations. As I learned about community-based care and listening practices from other cultures, one became aware that empathy is contextual. I don't need always to see into the heart of someone. All I must do is be present with them in what they are sharing.

## Personal Statement: Critical Thinking

My Initial Philosophy I think about critical thinking in terms of pausing and wondering what I am observing, listening to or reading." It is the act of being with uncertainty. It means I do not believe everything I hear, and I look for the deeper reasons behind what is being said or done. For critical thinking, however, I need knowledge of systems, how power manifests, how language shapes thought. I stand for truth-seeking, accountability, and fairness. Some of the skills I employ are questioning assumptions, correlating contrasting perspectives, and recognising contradictions. I approach it with an open yet disciplined attitude. I learn critical thinking skills because I want to treat the knowledge I use and share responsibly. So I do not want to repeat ideas simply because they sound good. I'd like to be deliberate and honest about how I think.

## Post-Processing After Engaging with Learning Content

At first, I saw critical thinking as a synonym for fault-finding. I assumed that it was about proving something wrong or being clever with arguments. But then, after spending time with readings on decoloniality and knowledge production, I understood that critical thinking is much more than critique. It's also about recognising who could speak, whose expertise is recognised and what is not uttered. Learning from thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Walter D. Mignolo taught me that critical thinking means not only asking what our ideas are, but also asking where they come from, and who they serve. This changed the goalpost from where individuals are judged to where societies and systems must take responsibility.

## Personal Development Reflection After Reading

In retrospect, I realised that my previous grasp of critical thinking was limited. I used to zero in on logical fallacies or attacking ideas. Now I regard it as a way of being in the world. It means that I ask how it is that I know what I know, and how I might keep myself open to learning in ways that are slow and uncomfortable at times. And part of critical thinking is listening. It is about asking. I learned that silence also reflects.

## Ethical Action: Personal Statement

My Initial Philosophy For me, ethical action, is routinely doing what is right when it is hard or going unnoticed. It means being guided by universal principles that account for

the good of others and myself. It forces me to do the right thing, even when the rules are murky. If I wish to engage in ethical action, I must be knowledgeable on ethical theories and be able to apply them to real-life situations. I respect, care, and prioritise honesty. I have skills that include the ability to identify ethical tensions, to think through consequences, and to speak up when I believe it is appropriate. Use my humility and courage as ground for attitude.

This is the competency I chose, because I want to make the world a better place and that starts with living and working with no harm. I am aware that every step I make leaves a mark. I want to be able to take responsibility for that trace. Engagement with Learning Activity

Ethics had initially appeared to me as rules. I was under the impression there was always a right answer. However, after hearing about ethical theories related to relation and community, I realised that ethical action often is the result of reflection and not something very clear-cut. There are times when there is no right answer, and in those moments, it is important how I conduct myself and how I embody others throughout the process. The ethics of care literature helped me realise that ethical behavior is not just a matter of consistency it's about responsiveness, too. What matters is not rules, but relationships and responsibilities. Reflection of Personal Development After a Period

In hindsight, I realise that when I used to think of ethical action, I in some way saw it as separate, stable, set. Now, I see it as an evolving process. It is influenced by the people and places to whom I am responsible. It demands more of me than just knowledge; it demands presence, self-awareness, and a willingness to be present during discomfort. On this journey, I have come to learn that ethical living is not about achieving perfection. It's about being open to returning, to listening again, to learning still better how to care as honestly as we can.