My project examines American ethnic literature and world cinema since 1970, exploring the ways in which authors and filmmakers construct ethnic identities through narrative. Throughout, I am concerned with how gender, social class, religion, and sexuality inflect ethnic identities, and place these American novels and international films in dialogue with the larger, transnational conversation around immigration, exile, and identity in world literature and film. I aim to combine theoretical frameworks from world cinema and the study of American ethnic literature to illuminate the construction of ethnicity in the contemporary American context and to critically explore the disciplinary divide between literature and film.

Although the critical discourses on world cinema and American ethnic literature have historically been distinct, they share similar preoccupations with cultural identity. My goal is to bring them together to illuminate the construction of hyphenated identities in the contemporary world. Film and literature have shared a close relationship since the earliest cinema. The overlap and difference alike between the two fields lie between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image. In narrating a story, the sequence of images on a screen are similar to the sequence of images conjured by words on a page; the study of literature illuminates meaning in film, and the study of film illuminates meaning in literature. Novelists and filmmakers investigate and narrate themes of identity, meanwhile, in ways that are characterized by the specific properties of each field.