

# WESLEYAN PROFILES

## Spragley Named Head of Teacher Education, Diversity & Inclusion Liaison

Kelvin Spragley, 52, has joined the Wesleyan faculty as the new Director of Teacher Education and will assume a position as the college's new Diversity & Inclusion Liaison.

He comes to Wesleyan from Louisburg College where he taught history and education and served in a number of administrative roles, including interim academic dean and director of the two-year college's education program.

An army veteran, Dr. Spragley taught social sciences in Wake County schools for seven years and, among other positions, he was Executive Director at the North Carolina Foundation for Public School Children, a non-profit that supports needy children.

The Whitakers native earned an A.A. in history from Chowan; a B.S. in education from East Carolina; and an M.E. and Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from NC State.

He lives in Rolesville with his wife of 26 years, Tracey Spragley, and their 18-year-old son, Kelvin Jr., who, after completing a two-degree at Wake Technical Community College, plans to transfer to East Carolina University to study engineering. Their daughter, Kelsey, 25, earned a B.S. and M.S. in microbiology at ECU and now is employed as a scientist at ThermoFisher Pharmaceutical.

The Decree interviewed Dr. Spragley about his new roles, his teaching and his interests outside of work.

**Q.** Describe a favorite childhood memory.

**A.** My favorite childhood memories surround large family gatherings during Christmas. When I grew up in rural Edgecombe County, our Christmases were the best. Extended family members would stay around for days on end. There was church, Motown Christmas music and, of course, lots of food—in particular baked turkey and a wide variety of cakes and pies. I miss those times, as so many of the people who shaped my view of the world have since passed away.

**Q.** Tell us about your experiences in the service.

**A.** During my senior year in high school, I signed up for the delayed-entry program so that I could enter the U.S. Army as soon as possible. Three weeks after I graduated from high school in 1986, I was in basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. It was easily the most challenging experience of my life to that point, as I was pushed mentally and physically in a manner that I had never experienced. While challenging, I enjoyed the experience so much that I graduated with honors out of the more than 300 troops in my battalion. From there I was stationed at Fort Lee, Virginia and finally Fort Hood, Texas, though I did train at many other military bases in the U.S. and

abroad. I stayed in the U.S. Army for three years while attaining the rank of sergeant. After leaving active duty, I continued my time in the military by staying in the reserves for another four years. As a result of my time in the military, I qualified for the Montgomery G.I. Bill where I received funds to pay for my first four years of college.

**Q.** What's the most valuable lesson you learned in the military?

**A.** It's that self-discipline can help one overcome almost anything. Discipline became a form of muscle memory as it allows me to do what I need to do during times of stress and fatigue.

**Q.** What did you learn about yourself while in the military?

**A.** I learned that I hate being average, and that if I callous my mind to move beyond the hatred and fear that exists in the world, I can achieve great things.

**Q.** What did you like most about working at Louisburg College?

**A.** The Louisburg experience was wonderful in that it gave me a chance to work with a large number of first-generation college students. As a first-generation student myself, I was able to sympathize with many of the challenges that the students were experiencing and provide meaningful guidance.

**Q.** What attracted to you to NCWC?

**A.** I'm an educator by training, but have spent time as an education lobbyist and

researcher, and later as a college professor and dean. When I saw the posting for Teacher Education Director at NCWC, I was very excited because I saw it as an opportunity to give back to the profession that has given me so much over the course of my professional life. To be able to work with pre-service teachers, while helping

them form their theoretical framework regarding education and learn what it means to be a teacher, was an opportunity that was very appealing. I was humbled to learn that I had earned the opportunity to work at NCWC in this capacity.

**Q.** Describe your duties as Director of Teacher Education.

**A.** I'm responsible for the following: maintaining accreditation; providing

reports to state and federal agencies; managing the courses taught and ensuring the instructors who teach in the program are qualified to do so; helping students matriculate through the teacher education program; evaluating teacher education program offerings; responding to program inquiries; and recruiting and retaining teacher education candidates.

**Q.** Relate your previous teaching experiences.

**A.** I was a public-school teacher for seven years, teaching history and economics courses. I've been a college



Dr. Kelvin Spragley

## Wesleyan Profile: English Professor Doreen Thierauf

By Joel Inzerillo  
Decree Staff Writer

Dr. Doreen Thierauf is an English professor at North Carolina Wesleyan College whose roots are in the far-off land of Germany. Her classes, focused on critically examining works of literature and sharpening students' understanding of them, are often small and personal. Though the first class I had with her was a general education literature class, I still remember the emphasis she placed upon each student's interpretation.

Though the assigned readings were varied and all held my interest, my favorite was about the heart-wrenching story of Omayra Sánchez, entitled "And of Clay Are We Created." Fast forward to my next semester, and I was in a much smaller class that functioned similarly, but was more in depth. There, we read full books rather than condensed tales and short stories. That semester, my favorite book was Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights," which instantly struck me with its mysterious opening and memorable characters.

Such readings have made Dr. Thierauf's classes some of my favorites at Wesleyan, and in turn, led me to interview her. Clearly well read, Dr. Thierauf was an obvious choice. I emailed her asking if she was okay with answering some questions, and she quickly affirmed that though busy, she was willing and able.

Dr. Thierauf was born in the 80s in the City of Rostock, Germany, which she describes as dazzling. "It's a beautiful medieval coastal city in Northern Germany," she explained. One only needs to look at a few images of the city to see the truth in that statement—it sits serene and stately upon an estuary of the Warnow River, which stems from the Baltic Sea.

Dr. Thierauf reflected that her childhood was a good one. "Oh yes! My childhood was very happy," she said. Though an only child, she recalls an abounding family life. "My parents always made me feel like I was the center of their universe."

She also mentioned that she had a large extended family that she would often see on special occasions. "Most family members lived in close driving distance—and we continuously visited each other, celebrating birthdays and holidays together," she said.

As a child, she spent the weekends with her family and friends at the beach, which was not far from her home. She likens the beaches back home to North Carolina's Outer Banks, noting that people from around here who have been to northern Germany often compare the two. "The beaches are incredibly beautiful," she said. "It's not too

hot in the summer, there are miles and miles of coastline where the sand is white and fine, and the water cool. I went to the beach every weekend to soak up the sun, swim, and, obvious for a bookworm like me, read."

A rigorous college student, Dr. Thierauf attended the University of Rostock (established in 1419) as an English and German double major. When asked if any professors had a great impact on her, she responded that there had been many. One was a linguistics professor named Dr. Birte Bös. "She was a fantastic teacher and a brilliant scholar," Dr. Thierauf said. There was also Dr. Gustav Klaus, who was her advisor for both her bachelor's and master's theses. "He was a huge influence on me as well, as his courses drew me to British literature, especially Victorian fiction," she said.

Throughout her time at the University of Rostock, it was professors like these that inspired Dr. Thierauf to become a professor herself. About the aforementioned Dr. Bös, she said, "I remember sitting in her course and thinking, 'I want to be like her.'"

Even now, Dr. Thierauf said that she tries to emulate Dr. Klaus in her own teaching. Beyond individual professors, Dr. Thierauf fell in love with academia by her second year of college. "I thought, 'this is my world,' and I wanted to stay a part of it, if possible," she said. "I love learning, I love teaching, and it's an incredible and rare privilege to be able to follow this calling."

Though she fondly remembers her time in college, she also noted that her decision to become a professor was often discouraged. "Tons of people discouraged me from getting a Ph.D. in literature," she said. "Especially since the financial crisis of 2008, there are only a handful of professorships in my concentration every year. Things look even bleaker now in the wake of the pandemic." She described unfair hiring practices for those with PhDs seeking to become professors nowadays. "Universities and colleges too often hire them as adjuncts on a course-by-course basis to staff classes," she said. "These positions usually come with no benefits or job security and are not well paid. I feel these hiring practices are ethically wrong. We must invest in teaching and create secure jobs for the many gifted teachers and scholars who often devote more than a decade of their life to become experts in their field."

Of course, the big question is why did Dr. Thierauf move to the U.S.? She related that the University of Rostock had a student exchange program with the University of Georgia, and in 2006, she was chosen for one of the two available spots. She made clear that she

enjoyed her time there. "My exchange year at UGA was just amazing. I got to know American academia this way," she said, adding that she made friends, tried out Southern food, and attended all of Bulldogs' home games.

While at UGA, Dr. Thierauf met another figure of importance in her life—Dr. Tricia Lootens. "She's an important mentor for me, both as a scholar and teacher, to this day," she said. Dr. Lootens was one of the professors that Dr. Thierauf was assigned to serve as a research assistant as part of the exchange program. "Both professors encouraged me to pursue graduate studies in the United States," Dr. Thierauf said. She went back home to complete her Master's in English and History in 2007, and then moved to the U.S. to enroll in the Ph.D. program at Chapel Hill in 2009. "I've stuck around—I like it here," she said.

After moving to the States, she found herself called to Wesleyan for the same reason students are—small classes. "You get to know your students so much better than at a large school and you can build actual mentoring relationships with them without feeling rushed or overwhelmed," she said. Dr. Thierauf's classes take advantage of this, and each student can have their voice heard. She pointed out that at other larger schools, that is rarely the case. "At NCWC, our seminars have the perfect size for rigorous discussion and authentic exchange," she said.

Moving from Germany to the U.S. was a big leap, and Dr. Thierauf found that there was a bit of adapting to do. "In my region of Germany, many people—even those who are open-minded—are known to react to new things with skepticism," she said. "We're also very, very direct, even blunt." She attributed this to the unstable history of Germany as a nation. "I realized soon that I often came across as overly critical... I definitely worked on becoming more diplomatic and patient since moving to the United States," she said.

She also noted significant differences between the two countries in the method of education, noting that Germany's high schools have three different tiers. The first tier, called Hauptschule, trains kids to work at hands-on jobs and then has them work as an apprentice at a company. The second is Realschule, which prepares kids for mid-level jobs. "This

is the closest thing we have to the American high school," Dr. Thierauf explained. Dr. Thierauf took part in the third tier, Gymnasium, which, she said, is very rigorous. She said that her curriculum included German, math, physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, art, music, physical education, geography, social sciences, history, and at least two foreign languages. "In ninth grade I took 18 different subjects!" she said.

Dr. Thierauf noted that there is a limited number of private schools in her home country. She thinks that while German schooling is exhaustive, it also offers a huge assortment of classes, letting students find their passion. "I wish more Americans had access to the wide variety of courses I was taught as a child," she said. "I took it for granted then, but now, looking back, I'm very

grateful I received this kind of schooling." At Wesleyan, Dr. Thierauf likes most of the classes where she gets to read novels and short stories. Her favorite classes so far have been about Afrofuturism, Dystopian literature, British literature, and a writing course, English 112, where she helps students with their research projects. "For students in English 112, the goal is to get their paper published in 'Omnium,'" she said, referring to the undergraduate research journal at NCWC that she started with Drs. Keely Mohon-Doyle and Julie Perino in 2019.

Though she enjoys teaching, learning is a large part of being a professor as well. In this area, the Victorian era has always fascinated Dr. Thierauf. "We probably never left the Victorian age," she said.

Though the Victorian era ended in 1901, Dr. Thierauf believes that the revolution of thought in those times continues to affect us today. "So many cultural, social, artistic, technological, scientific, political, and environmental changes that marked the 19th Century continue to shape our own lives, and we have to understand these changes to make sense of our present—and to plan for the future," she explained. "I find it fascinating that something that people decided to do 200 years ago still structures our own choices today. This is what keeps pulling me back to the 19th Century."

**Q.** Current works centers on the creation of a diversity plan for NCWC. In light of recent events throughout the country, and on campus, it's clear that the institution needs assistance in addressing issues related to diversity, cultural awareness, and respect of thought among students, faculty, and staff.

**Q.** Let's talk about Kelvin Spragley outside of work. What are your hobbies and other interests?

**A.** I enjoy gardening, reading, and exercising. A favorite pastime is participating in martial arts tournaments and classes. I also enjoy spending time with my wife, children, and extended family members.

**Q.** Describe your social media habits.

**A.** I have Facebook and Twitter accounts. I rarely make any posts to either, but I do check them once each day.

**Q.** Identify favorites for the each of the following:

**Food:** A vegetable salad, with baked salmon and brown rice.

**Movies:** I'm a science fiction guy. My all-time favorites are the Freddy Kruger series of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

**Book:** "Can't Hurt Me: Master Your Mind & Defy the Odds," written by David Goggins, a former Navy Seal.

**TV Shows:** "The Cosby Show" and "Married with Children."

**Favorite Musical Genre:** R&B/Motown/Philly Soul (1955-1980).

**Sports Team:** Army West Point Black Knights

**Favorite place:** My back yard. There I have my garden; my patio; peach, apple and pear trees; and over one acre of natural area where I see all types of forest creatures.



Dr. Doreen Thierauf

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