Professor Amy Cooke is a teaching assistant professor in the environmental ecology and energy program. She has taught ten different courses for the department, ranging from large lectures to small seminars. Professor Cook has excelled in all her teaching responsibilities, finding ways for students to feel safe discussing sensitive, controversial, and contemporary topics. A combination of humility, broad experiences, background knowledge, and uncanny ability to connect with students make Professor Cooke an instructor who profoundly impacts students’ lives.

One recommender wrote, “Students find her classes to be both entertaining and informative, enhanced by her effective use of personal stories to illustrate concepts and empirical relationships encountered in the courses.” They also note her “characteristically clear, logical presentations and effective visuals,” and that she went out of her way to facilitate flexibility in how students engaged in the course when pandemic-related health or family issues made it difficult for students to show up in person.

Professor Cooke also spends a tremendous amount of time and energy exploring ways her work and her students can make a meaningful impact on the Carolina community. A colleague summarized this point perfectly, stating:

“For more than 10 years, she has taken extra, unpaid time, on top of her full teaching and service load to help students liaise with UNC administration and staff in the pursuit of creating a more sustainable food system on campus and giving students the opportunity to explore how large scale food systems operate…In the process, students expand their research networks with each other and with the professional community that they meet.”

Professor Cooke takes an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research and has a unique ability to draw connections across disciplines and topics. In doing so, she has made an incredible impact on students’ academic journeys. For example, a student nominator wrote:

“I took every class Dr. Cooke taught and joked to my friends that I had a minor in Dr. Cooke. I took all her classes and followed her to the Galapagos Islands for her study abroad course because Dr. Cooke teaches courses that cover a wide range of topics in sustainability but have such wide-reaching impacts. She teaches classes about food, water, energy, textiles, and garbage and knows so much about those topics individually as well as how they all connect.”
Professor Carla Merino-Rajme is an assistant professor in the Philosophy Department. She teaches courses on the metaphysics of time and phenomenology of time, which can present significant intellectual challenges as students wrestle with abstract, complex, and rarely seen-before content. Despite these hurdles, Merino-Rajme masterfully sees students’ ideas and helps them build, clarify, and expand them, which ultimately helps students succeed in the course and throughout their time at Carolina and beyond.

Students frequently commented on how Professor Merino-Rajme stretches them intellectually while ensuring they feel supported, which a colleague aptly summarizes by stating: “Many of Merino-Rajme’s students have commented that they emerged from her courses with a much clearer understanding of how to develop a philosophical idea over the course of several months, as opposed to simply completing a disconnected sequence of assignments” and that her “feedback is designed to help students push their ideas forward, rather than to cut them down.” In addition to producing better philosophical work, this process of feedback and revision makes Merino-Rajme’s students into “better writers and analytical thinkers – skills that they bring with them to their other courses and their lives outside of Carolina.”

Another student noted that Dr. Merino-Rajme taught the most informative class of their undergraduate education and helped them decide to pursue philosophy. They wrote: “Weaving the historical richness of Descartes and Locke’s musings on mind and identity, the immense explanatory power of Lewis’s modal realism, Susan Wolf’s incisive commentaries on responsibility and freedom, and dozens of other elements into a cohesive narrative of what we take the nature of our reality to be, Dr. Merino-Rajme’s class was, far and away, the most edifying undergraduate course I have taken.”
**Professor Cherie Rivers Ndaliko** is an assistant professor in Geography. Professor Ndaliko has taught a wide range of courses at Carolina, including Agriculture, Food, and Society; Physical, Economic, and Cultural Environment in the South; Geography of Africa; Contemporary Topics in Geography; Social Geography; and Liberations Geography. Her unique approach to teaching, ability to connect students to communities outside the university, and focus on mentoring have made an indelible impact on students.

Professor Ndaliko’s approach to teaching blends two progressive practices – active learning and slow scholarship – that have helped students excel in her courses. The active learning approach emphasizes engaging students in applied, hands-on exercises and activities, often student-driven and student-led. Slow-scholarship practices provide students more time to think, write, read, research, analyze, and edit their work. As a result of this pedagogical combination, Professor Ndaliko engages the class with “challenging coursework that necessitate[s] extraordinary self-reflection and vigorous grappling with historical and current real-world issues.”

Many students commented that Professor Ndaliko engages students with course content by connecting it to the individual, community, nation, and world. One student nominator wrote:

> Professor Ndaliko teaches with an extraordinary depth and breadth of understanding of not only course material but the connections between history, the present global moment, and the systems and structures that humans govern in modernity (or, rather, that govern us). Her capacity to reach the hearts of her students was an experience I hadn’t before experienced. Through writing exercises and thought activities, project presentations, challenging (both) niche and interdisciplinary readings, and experiential methods, Professor Ndaliko encouraged students to consider how to incorporate ideas discovered in class into their daily lives, the lives of others, the community, and the world at large.”

Professor Ndaliko’s commitment to mentoring her students inside and outside the classroom has had a profound impact on their experiences at Carolina and beyond. For example, one student wrote:

> “I experienced her instruction, wisdom, and mentorship as none other than radically transformative. Regarding all of the concepts, theories, life skills, and insights I learned about through Professor Ndaliko, I apply each and every one to my daily life. Always willing to have rich, philosophical, and concrete conversations with her students about creating a better world for everyone, everywhere (and then willing to act on those same conversations in practical, real-world experiential pedagogy), Professor Ndaliko instilled in me a drive to reach for the stars in my education, in my vocation, in my interactions with others, and with my life going forward.”
**Professor Katherine Turk** specializes in the histories of women, gender and sexuality, and social movements. She teaches a wide range of courses, including Laboring Women in Global Perspective; Women in the History of UNC-Chapel Hill; U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Histories; and Gender and Law in United States History. She is a master teacher, pushing students to think analytically, to grow academically, and to challenge conventional narratives.

Professor Turk challenges her students to think critically about how the past has shaped the present, and what the past tells us about how we might shape the present ourselves. By helping students understand the power of historical narratives, she unlocks how important it is to learn histories that are often overlooked. In doing so, Professor Turk has inspired students to pursue similar opportunities outside the classroom such as volunteering for the National Museum of Women’s History, writing elementary education lesson plans about significant female figures in U.S. history, and researching 20th-century women’s activism for honor theses.

Great teachers inspire and without a doubt, Professor Turk inspires her students. One student commented:

“Professor Turk inspired my college roommate to become a History teacher with no persuasion other than her sheer ability. She inspired me to go to law school -- even just to try it. She will look you in the eye and tell you that you can do something you never thought you could. She will inspire you to improve, and she is there to aid in problem resolution should one occur. I have been abandoned by professors before as they are swallowed by a sea of paperwork. Professor Turk always found a way to be present for each student.”

In the classroom, Professor Turk also ensures students feel a part of the classroom community while also pushing them to grow academically, even if at first they are apprehensive. One student nominator wrote:

“I remember walking into the classroom and feeling out of place because I was one of two Freshmen, and I wasn't officially part of Honors Carolina yet. Morehead-Cain scholars and senior history majors surrounded me, and I wondered if I could keep up with my impressive classmates and the demands of the course. Dr. Turk immediately put my fears at ease. She made sure all students got a chance to contribute to classroom conversation and praised everyone for speaking up…Dr. Turk was warm, friendly, and always kept the atmosphere lighthearted and welcoming by chatting with students about their lives and their interests before and after class. She gave constructive feedback on assignments, always encouraging and pushing us to be better with each draft or each submission. By the end of the course, I felt that I belonged there as much as anyone else.”
**Professor Sidney Wilkerson-Hill** is an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. He teaches Organic Chemistry I and II, which are notoriously challenging courses for students, even those who major in Chemistry. Despite the challenging subject matter, Wilkerson-Hill elevates student learning to a higher level, pushes students toward mastery, and empowers students to wrestle with complex subject matter. His ability to balance these dimensions led one colleague to write, “Sidney Wilkerson-Hill is one of the most incredible chemistry professors in the history of our department!”

Professor Wilkerson-Hill creates an incredibly supportive classroom environment even when the classroom is a lecture hall, the topic is organic chemistry I, and there are more than 300 students enrolled. For example, one student nominator wrote: “Dr. Hill made a room of 300+ students feel like a small room in which we could be comfortable, encouraging us to participate even if we were confused... In organic chemistry, this is so amazing and not seen often. He respects everyone’s questions, even if it is an obvious answer, and he doesn’t get frustrated when he has to repeat himself. He is the best teacher in the STEM department because he makes time and cares for all his students.”

Professor Wilkerson-Hill has a tremendous ability to meet students where they are in the learning process and then push them toward mastery from that starting point. Reflecting on their own experience in the classroom, one student commented that Professor Wilkerson-Hill helped them through problem sets by first asking simple questions and then successively building on those questions until they not only reached the answer but, more importantly, reached understanding.

Along similar lines, another student wrote:

“He made organic II fun!! He gave wonderful lectures and made difficult material possible to understand. It is hard to describe this quality, but having Dr. Hill as a professor is almost like speaking with a friend who happens to be an expert in chemistry. He is open to your ideas and invites the opportunity to follow your train of thought and then guides you in the right direction. Sometimes the teacher/student relationship can feel cold and business–like, but Dr. Hill was very enjoyable to learn from. I would love to have the opportunity to take another course with Dr. Hill. #TeamHill.”