Decolonising Research and Academic Skills

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My background

- Community Organizations
- Applied Linguistics
- Public Policy
- Research Methods
- English for Academic Purposes
Decolonizing Research Methods

Background

- Western philosophy
- Research practices
- Student assessments
Current workshop themes:

1. The Enlightenment
2. History
3. Borders
4. Religion
5. Language
6. Education
7. Gender
8. Capitalism
9. Democracy
10. Progress
• Generate and reflect on ideas and experiences.

• Discuss attitudes, assumptions and motivations that underpin academic study and research practices.

• Engage with marginalized peoples’ writing/ideas.

• Analyse our values related to these contexts.
“epistemic disobedience”

Mignolo 2011

- Critically responding to and disrupting norms
- Highlighting and deconstructing Western epistemological foundations
- Challenging hierarchies of legitimacy
“Rewriting and rerighting”

Smith 2012

• Make visible
• Allow to be heard
• Change how meaning is made
• Ideas, experiences, values, relationships, individuals, groups
Pedagogy

- No PowerPoint slides or prepared talking points
- Directed tasks to generate/link ideas
- Individual reflection and small group discussion
- Discussions mapped out on whiteboard
Subject object

Exploitation of ideas
Destruction of knowledge
Introducing a specific way of life
Forced assimilation
Western Christianity
Women's bodies, marriage, sexuality
Progress
Civilization

Extraction
Apartheid
Demoralized
West
Teleological

Subjective
Understanding
Permits control
Purpose
Objective

Equality
Manipulable
Superiority
Not reciprocal

Powers
Ideology
Extracting resources
Capitalism
Economic imperative

Strategic use
Practices

Research
Suppression

Inferiority
Prior knowledge

Continuities of discourses
Privilege
Social media
- legitimate as atopic
- source for set of opinions
- justifies - peer review - other academics - gain accolades, recognition, invited

Our brains are built to reason - antiquity - Greek philosophy - different - built on exclusion

Academy - who created this vocabulary? - mind/brain/body - conceptual basis for understanding the world

German, French, English - translations

Question common sense: Freedom (for some - White European men)
- automatic underlying assumptions
- uninterrogated
- naturalization - power
- institutions, structures, education

Who is validated - who is invalid

Credibility
- does it fit into the case

Identify a niche (gap in research)
- what already exists
- purpose: understand, learn, perception of acceptability
- what is already known
- continuity, rupture
- practice-based research
- indigenous research
- 7 dominant perspective
- money

Prior research done by researchers
- extraction of empirical demands
Positive Outcomes

- Re-centre the classroom interactions
- Remove the authority of the lecturer
- Allow many voices to be heard and validated
- Link participants’ ideas and experiences to theory
- Classes are actively co-produced
Challenges

- Vulnerability of removing academic authority
- Managing student expectations
- Highly personal responses and disagreements
- Classes are unpredictable
English for Academic Purposes Background

- Pre-sessional Courses
- International Foundation Certificate
- Graduate Diploma
- Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
- Institute for Management Studies
EAP and Academic Skills

- Artificial differentiation in practice

- Discipline-specific EAP and Academic Skills provision

- Use texts, materials and assessment types from module, programme or department as basis for provision

- Focus on the essential conventions and expectations of academic study, research and assessment in UK HE
Decolonizing Academic Skills

- Interrogates perspectives, theories and concepts underpinning accepted disciplinary approaches and boundaries
- Based on students generating ideas about a theme from their module
- Students’ ideas and experiences form the basis of class discussion
- Non-traditional theorizing/writing introduced to develop and consider assumptions and values in relation to the theme
- Critical reading and writing strategies and practices integrated into the engagement with both text and discussion
Indicative Modules/Programmes

- Contemporary Arts and Cultural Theory
- Perspectives on Capital
- Entrepreneurial Modelling
- Open Book/YOI ISIS
- 21st Century Legal Skills
21st Century Legal Skills

These classes aim to develop critical reading and writing skills within the subject of Law at Goldsmiths. They are based on ideas and assessments types from core modules, and also involve discussing attitudes, assumptions, motivations and values related to their theoretical and practical contexts. Rather than focusing on traditional legal texts, they will instead use decolonizing texts to deconstruct moral, ethical and epistemological positions. This approach reflects the innovative nature of the programme and facilitates critical research and writing practices.
Critical Reading Strategies

- Understand the structure of academic texts
- Distinguish main ideas from supporting details
- Read critically and evaluate the texts
- Identify relationships with other theories or practices
- Relate ideas in the text to your specific areas of interest
Critical Reading Strategies

Generate ideas: What does law mean to you? Who are the participants in the legal system? Who benefits from the legal system? Who is harmed?

Discuss in small groups.

Discuss as a class.
Decolonization and the Challenge to International Law

Decolonization and the efforts of new states and scholars to present a different vision of international law consisted of a set of rules with a geographical basis (it was a European law), a religious-ethical inspiration (it was a Christian law), and economic motivation (it was a mercantilist law) and political aims (it was an imperial law). How then could such an international law accommodate new states which had very different cultures and traditions? Even more pointedly, could international law be used to negate the exploitation and subordination which it had previously effected? Was international law a neutral set of principles that could be deployed to fashion a new international system? New debates and controversies emerged in international law as a result of these questions (Anghie 2016:1).
Critical Writing Strategies

- Deconstructing essay titles
- Choosing a position and developing an argument
- Essay and paragraph structure
- Signposting and coherence
- Writing analytically rather than descriptively
- Using evidence effectively to support your claims
‘Authority amounts to no more than the possession of power.’ Discuss how this claim relates to the imposition of legal punishment.

- Identify key words
- Identify key concepts (explicit or implicit)
- Identify possible ‘real life’ examples
Deconstruct the Essay Question

- What are the key words?
- What are the key concepts?
- What have you learned about already?
- What do you need to learn more about?
- What relevant examples can you think of?
- What do you think about the topic?
Responding to the question

1. Do you agree with the claim that authority is no more than the possession of power?
2. Do you think that this claim is linked to the imposition of legal punishment? In what ways?
3. Can you think of any exceptions?
4. Can you think of any alternatives?
5. What examples can help you to explain your response?
jury - citizens - peers

legitimate right to exercise political power
everyone - contextual

power imposition legal punishment

voting

democracy vs. dictatorship

follow procedure

non-citizen - no UK passport
gendered rules

social norms morality

force military

get someone to do something
stop someone from doing something

suppression - remove privileges, access preemptive conditions for decision-making

WE put force something

criminal innocent person

constructs definition

influence over others - persuasion

familial
Which of these ideas from last week’s discussion could be relevant?
Critical and Analytical Writing

- Structures information in order of importance
- Identifies the significance
- Argues a case according to evidence
- Show why something is relevant or suitable
- Shows the relevance of links between ideas
- Draws conclusions
Academic practices

- Expectations of classroom interactions
- Structure of curricula
- Classification and categorization of knowledge
- Historical and ideological orientations
- Perpetuation of epistemological hierarchies through expectations in written assessment
Decolonizing research and academic skills:

- Motivates a necessary intervention
- Reconsiders the classifications of knowledge
- Disrupts the hierarchies embedded in research and writing
- Reimagines social identities and relationships
- Encourages students to engage with ideas and construct knowledge that is meaningful to them and their lives
Reference List

