

Decolonizing Pedagogies: Co-Learning & Co-Teaching the Standing Rock Syllabus

Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2018

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Project Overview

“Decolonizing Pedagogies” is a faculty group dedicated to co-learning and co-teaching the Standing Rock Syllabus.

We came together as a community of faculty and lecturers around the project of decolonizing our various pedagogies.

Participants

Hakem Al-Rustom (LSA History)

Andrew Herscher (Taubman College)

Stephanie Hicks (IGR)

Elizabeth Keslacy (Taubman College)

Ana María León (History of Art)

David Temin (LSA Political Science)

Joe Gone (LSA American Culture)

Ana Sabau (LSA RLL)

Amy Schulz (School of Public Health)

Arland Thornton (LSA Sociology)

Kathy Velikov (Taubman College)

Key Insights / New Questions

As conversations continue about diminishing institutional support for the humanities, detractors have justified these actions by arguing that the field is detached from student needs and contemporary job market pressures. In this context, projects invested in inclusion through co-writing, co-learning, and co-teaching offer opportunities to challenge and contest assumptions on the humanities supposed irrelevance or detachment.

We have witnessed how our contemporary politics have turned academic campuses into sites of struggle, with widespread poster campaigns denigrating people of color and persistent attempts to lecture in academic contexts by outside groups espousing pseudo-scientific theories attempting to institutionalize racism. Sexual harassment and predatory behavior are finally starting to be held accountable. Whether we want it or not, politics are present in our classrooms, and yet the disciplines of art and architecture history are still struggling on how to reconcile these pressures with the gender bias and racism embedded in our canons.

Ultimately, if we understand our disciplines as histories of how we represent ourselves and shape our built environment, we understand them as far from elitist or isolated from our contemporary moment. No matter what our geographic or temporal specialty, the history of art and architecture is linked to the history of power and capital, and as such it offers ways in which our students as well as larger publics can engage in much-needed conversations on the shape of our society.

As teachers, we can choose to participate in these conversations or ignore them at our peril. If we are committed to a path of action that leads to our collective liberation, we need to understand teaching as an active site of political struggle.

Resources

NYC Stands with Standing Rock Collective. 2016.
“#StandingRockSyllabus.”

<https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/>

Artifacts

Ana María León wrote an essay reflecting on this and one other similar experience of crowdsourced knowledge, it is forthcoming as "Crowdsourcing Knowledge: Co-Writing, Co-Teaching, and Co-Learning" at the Art Journal Open. The above insights are extracted from this text.

Next Steps

We have re-organized ourselves as a Rackham Working Group:

<https://sites.google.com/umich.edu/decolonizing-pedagogies/services>

Upcoming events are updated here:

<https://sites.google.com/umich.edu/decolonizing-pedagogies/services>