

Decolonising Politics Curricula: Pedagogies, Strategies and Reflections

Wednesday, 17 June 2020 10:30 (1h 30m)

Making sense of contemporary politics is not only a challenge for scholarly research, but equally for teaching and learning in International Studies. Both the composition of the classroom in UK universities, and the complexity of recent political developments provide key drivers for critical understandings that engages with wider social structures, recognises the global interconnectedness, and moves away from Eurocentric, masculine and heteronormative perspectives in knowledge and knowledge production.

This roundtable features a range of university teachers who are engaging with the challenge to diversify and decolonise the curriculum by offering critical perspectives on power relations, inequalities, and marginalisation. This session aims to speak to a large constituency of conference participants by bringing together scholars from quantitative political scientists as well as critical political economists and political theorists. In doing so, all of the participants address the need to disrupt and reconceptualize key concepts and historical narratives.

Sahra Taylor and John Morris argue that decolonization of social, political and economic theory and history requires more than the simplistic insertion of more brown, black and queer voices. These participants will open up a dialogue about how to go about disrupting narratives of world history through an attention to violence, a fracturing of the colonial world and western economic norms. As such, this requires a retheorizing of the history of thought through authors such as Madlingozi, Fanon, Bhabha and Modiri.

This means that authors and topics cannot be merely injected into a traditional curriculum, nor can they be emphasized as 'other' through a positioning as the 'exotic.' Sahra Taylor argues that decolonization cannot be simply subsumed into the pre-existing neoliberal academy. She provides a critical reading of the traditional and most commonly used plan for teaching International political theories which places power-pragmatism before institution building and relegates (morality and emancipation to after-thoughts in the more poorly attended latter half of the term. Women and people of colour tend to be marginalised because people of colour feature in the week on post-colonialism (in response to white colonialism) and women appear in feminism (in response to patriarchal norms).

John Morris focuses on his attempts to reshape IPE teaching by undergirding the story of the historical development of capitalism through the intimate relationship between liberalism, markets and Empire, the gendering of credit and gambling during the financial revolution and the role of reproductive labour through the gendered nature of primitive accumulation. He is keen to present initial findings from his Ongoing teaching innovation project "Trans-gender Inclusive Curriculum Design in Politics and International Studies" which brings in transgender history and scholarship into this disruptive history of capitalism.

Neema Begum, Nadine Zwiener-Collins, Rima Saini, Juvaria Jafri and Tabitha Poulter bring to bear their different expertise, experiences and perspectives on the potential for critical approaches to quantitative research to be incorporated into undergraduate teaching of statistics in the social sciences in the UK. The focus of this discussion is conceptual innovation. This requires a careful and sensitive re-centring of framing and operationalising research questions and concepts which are concerned with social and political inequality and transformation. These participants are keen to discuss the understanding and measurement of concepts such as democracy, gender inequality, and humanitarian aid as examples, and aim to supplement those theoretical suggestions with considerations of feasibility and practical aspects derived from 16 semi-structured interviews with academics. The panellists will also consider and discuss the need to encourage methodological pluralism which best fit the aims of the research question at hand and do justice to the population(s) in question.

Track Classification: Learning and Teaching Working Group