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Popular Culture and Social Media – Moving Beyond Hierarchy in the 21st Century University

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Whilst many of our students engage with social media and popular culture in their everyday lives, and many IR tutors actively embrace such moves by using examples and readings within their practice, such moves are often done without the reflection they deserve. Students are often shown examples from popular culture, for example, to make complex concepts 'more accessible' yet this effaces a need to systematically reflect on the value of popular culture and social media as learning systems that can be actively embraced to rupture hierarchies within higher educational settings. Yet to do this successfully requires students and staff alike to embrace the messy ambiguities within both popular culture and social media and to acknowledge that engaging with such artefacts requires critical literacy which is attuned to the analysis of visuals, sound, narratives, processes etc. The papers in this panel embrace these challenges and present a number of findings from real-world experience but also open up spaces for dialogue about how popular culture and social media can be used by students and tutors to destabilise hierarchies in the classroom. Our aim is to provoke and invoke thinking in the spirit of mutual learning.

Track Classification: Learning and Teaching Working Group