(Un)thinking Research Practice: Decolonizing Theory, Mobilizing Methodologies, and Open-Ended Becoming(s)

Workshop

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(Un)thinking Research Practice: 
Decolonizing Theory, Mobilizing Methodologies, and Open-Ended Becoming(s)

Lecturer: Dr. Epifania Amoo-Adare
Workshop

Duration: Monday and Tuesday, 9 and 10 May 2016
Time: 11.00 to 17.00 and 10.00 to 17.00 (including breaks)
Venue: Advanced Performance and Scenography Studies (APASS)
1. Workshop Description:

The premise of this workshop is that a critical pedagogy on the space of research knowledge production, and its related forces of (re)production, is a necessary condition for any intervention in (and of) that space. Consequently, we propose to challenge widespread understandings of research space and knowledge production as a binary researcher-researched structure that is given and fixed, in other words: a structure that is developed for and not a context that is developed by the various actors in the research process. We contrast this convention with an understanding of research space as both, a manifestation as well as a vehicle of the productive relations of power-knowledge.

More specifically we will look at the significance of the multiply-identified and mobile “research bodies,” as agents, interacting in various networks of relationships (and things) within, and beyond, a given society. We will utilize conceptual frameworks, derived from critical social theory, de-colonial thinking and being, feminisms, and geography to discuss questions such as: How does a spatially-oriented critical reading of the world inform our social construction of knowledge(s) on it? What is the relationship between spatiality, knowledge and power? How does (hegemonic) knowledge production arise as a consequence of struggles over (academic) place? How is the researcher implicated in appropriating, re-constructing and/or dismantling existing knowledge structures?

Here, we highlight the importance of positionality, threshold theories, and the open-ended becoming of researchers for better contestation of power-knowledge regimes that reify and universalize context-specific ontologies, cosmologies, ecologies, epistemologies, philosophies on existence, etcetera. Additionally, we will discuss critical perspectives, with a focus on border consciousness, positionality, the mobility paradigm, and decoloniality; all of which work to enhance our development of a more critically conscious research praxis. This will also include brief discussions on research method, as relates to questions of mobilizing and decolonizing methodologies, plus other modes for enabling the development of threshold theories as part of a process of (un)thinking hegemonic research practice and moving towards open-ended becoming(s), beyond the binaries of the researcher and the researched.
2. Workshop requirements:

**Reading of Literature:** Please try to read all of the obligatory readings in advance of the workshop as these will form the basis of the class presentations and discussions. You can also try to read some of the suggested literature, time permitting. The same goes for the suggested viewing, although some of these YouTube videos will be shown during the workshop. Additionally, a Critical Response Guideline has been provided at the end of this syllabus in order to facilitate your process of critically reading the literature (see page 7).

**Workshop Presentations:** For the first day of class, please bring in a ‘cultural artifact’ that represents some aspect of your life. This artifact can be something inherited, bought or found. It can be a photograph or any other object that is significant to you and forms a part of your identity, role, and/or heritage. Be prepared to share the meaning of this artifact with other workshop participants as a way of introducing yourself and one of the things that is important to you.

**Workshop Participation:** It is expected that all will participate in the discussions. This is seen as an opportunity to explore ideas, make connections, and share a collective questioning curiosity with each other in ways that encourage us to flourish, while also being challenged. In other words, during discussions we should aim to create a learning community within which we challenge each other’s ideas and positions with utmost sensitivity and respect so as to enable mutual growth.

3. Workshop outline:

**Monday, 9 May 2016, 11.00am – 1.30pm (2.5 hours)**

**Welcome to Postnormal Times: Critical and Decolonial Readings of the World**

**Obligatory Reading:**


**Suggested Viewing:**

US Shocked Andorra Not in Africa - Onion News. YouTube Video retrieved at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q_iqrvnC_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q_iqrvnC_4)

**Suggested Reading:**


Monday, 9 May 2016, 2.30pm – 5.00pm (2.5 hours)

Positionality and the Situating of Knowledge(s)

Obligatory Reading:


Suggested Viewing:


Suggested Reading:


Tuesday, 10 May 2016, 10.00am – 12.00pm (2 hours)

Social Construction of Space-Time, Place and Gender

Obligatory Reading:


Suggested Viewing:


Suggested Reading:


**Tuesday, 10 May 2016, 1.00pm – 3.00pm (2 hours)**

**The Mobility Paradigm and its Politics**

**Obligatory Reading:**


**Suggested Viewing:**


**Suggested Reading:**


Tuesday, 10 May 2016, 3.30pm – 5.00pm (1.5 hours)

Academics of the Heart: Mobilizing and Decolonizing Methodologies

**Obligatory Reading:**


**Suggested Viewing:**


**Suggested Reading:**


4. Critical Response Guidelines

A text can convey information to us, but usually when we read a text we respond not to the information (or facts) but to the ideas (interpretations, conclusions, assertions) that the author presents. When we respond to a text critically we are questioning the author’s ideas, methodology, assumptions, techniques, strategies or choices.

A critical response, then, results from questioning. Here are some **general** questions that you can use as a model to formulate specific questions about a specific text.

* What is the problem or question that motivates the author?
* From what context is the author writing?
* What argument is the author putting forth? What is the thesis?
* What contradictions do you find in the text? Why are they there? How do they affect your understanding of the argument?
* What evidence does the author use to support his or her assertions? Why?
* How is the text structured? How does the structure affect your understanding of the author’s argument?
* What kinds of connections can you bring to the text? How has your own experience informed your reading of the text?
* What do you see as the key passages in this text? Why are they important? How do they work with the rest of the text to convey the author’s meaning?
* What assumptions do you bring to the text? To what extent has the author considered your needs as a reader?

**Note:** You do not need to use every single question, plus you might have questions of your own making.