

## Co-Creating the module Decolonising Human Rights

I have been interested in critical pedagogies for some time now and having been given the opportunity to organise a new module, Decolonising Human Rights, I wanted to incorporate some of the pedagogical practices that I had been reading about. Co-creation seemed to be a way to foster real engagement with students so that they could take ownership of their learning. The work of bell hooks has been a true inspiration - viewing the classroom as a place of radical possibilities. The project helped to clarify for me why I am an academic – to think through important aspects of global politics in order to make the future a more hopeful place. Running a course that focused on decolonising the more orthodox human rights narrative, in a collaborative way with students, felt like an academically rigorous approach that would be challenging and offer new ways of thinking for both the students and myself.

Thinking in a decolonial way is a community practice that takes the knowledge and experiences of the global majority seriously. Hence, my wish to co-create the module with our diverse student body. The module began by explaining to the students the module manifesto and rationales behind using critical pedagogies, rather than the standard didactic format that is often associated with university modules. We then set about co-creating some of the topics that would be focused upon in the second half of the module. I spoke to the students about intergenerational solidarity – these topics would remain on the module in the following years, so what did they think was important for future cohorts of students to have some time to read about, discuss, and think through? The topics that the students chose were: Human Rights and Peacekeeping; Climate Change, Colonial Legacies and Exploitation; and Genocide, Displacement and War. The process reminded me how thoughtful and articulate our students are, and there was a general air of excitement at the beginning of the semester. Personally, I was able to read about and think through some topics that I was new to and then learn with and from the students.

Co-creation can be an uncomfortable process both for myself and the students! Relinquishing a certain amount of control and “building the plane whilst flying it” can be anxiety producing. As part of the co-creation process, regular reflection, feedback and evaluation is vital. We did this after week 5, in the final week, and then I ran a paid focus group with some students after the module had been completed. The funding from SoSS Social Responsibility went to paying the students that participated in the focus group for their time. The reflection/evaluation process was absolutely key for the module both this year and for future iterations. After week 5, upon feedback from the students, I was able to adapt aspects such as the structure of the lectures and seminars, the teaching practices that I adopted, and the assessment guidance that was provided to students. The discussions that took place in the week 10 evaluation and focus group will be

invaluable when running the module next year. Some of the things that I will be adjusting include: the semester that I am running the module in, the order in which the course is delivered, and the guidance provided to students for their assessments and the timings of their submissions.

Whilst it would be wrong to give the impression that everything was “smooth sailing,” co-creation was certainly a rewarding way to deliver a module. Due to the nature of the approach, adopting co-creation as a critical, community-led pedagogy, I suspect that this was not simply “teething problems,” and that there will be challenging moments each year. However, co-creation does allow for a dynamism that can reflect our evolving student body and engage them in a truly collaborative way. Aside from being able to take some ownership over the subject matter that is discussed during the semester, I also suspect that the skills developed from participating in this collaboration will be of great value in the students’ future trajectories.