



MPhil IN THEORIES OF JUSTICE AND INEQUALITY

**Workshop on inter/transdisciplinary research, theory and practice
27 – 28 September 2018,
HUMA Seminar room, Upper Campus, UCT**

Program and workshop description

Recent demands for curriculum transformation have foregrounded questions of epistemic justice and injustice. Calls for reconsidering whom we regard as knowers, what is regarded as knowledge, who is regarded as an adequate theorist and what is regarded as theory have been prominent. In response, the MPhil specializing in Theories of Justice and Inequality seeks to facilitate informed interrogation of the dominant paradigms that have guided our understanding of postcolonial social, political and judicial institutions and practices. It calls for attending to the histories of these institutions and practices, movements and struggles that they have emerged from, associated intellectual traditions and literary and artistic forms. We aim to especially highlight how ideas and ideals such as equality, sovereignty, democracy, secularism, humanism and justice that are central to the conceptual infrastructure of contemporary life have been re-worked and re-imagined in these multiple sites of the global south. The question of how such iterations from postcolonial locations can be mobilized to generate new concepts and theories that can help grasp the nature of our modernity is central to the program.

Framing a curriculum that can address these concerns calls for a multi-disciplinary dialogue. It calls for examining how ideas sedimented in intellectual works, lived experience, popular and vernacular idioms of the past and the present can be drawn out and re-assembled as new frameworks to think with. We thus invite members of various faculty clusters to reflect on and discuss different approaches to doing inter/multi and transdisciplinary research and teaching in ways which will help realize the programme's goals. The workshop seeks to identify intersections, overlapping debates, arguments and resources that for instance sociology could bring to law, environmental studies to education, philosophy to arts, politics to literature, film to urban studies and vice-versa.

Workshop overview and programme

The two-day programme is structured as follows: There are four sessions on day one and three sessions on day two, with each session being 1:30 hours long. Facilitators have been encouraged to design their sessions to be interactive and engaging. As such, some sessions will include practical activities and/or demonstrations. The programme is as follows:



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Day 1: 27 September 2018

08:30 – 09:00	Registration and opening
09:00 – 10:30	Session 1: Ayanda Nombila - Making Sense of the CODESRIA pan-African debate on Democracy
10:30 – 10:45	<i>Tea /Coffee</i>
10:45 – 12:15	Session 2: Camalita Naicker - Disciplinarity and its discontents
12:15 – 13:15	Session 3: Jameelah Omar - Law, protest and the limits of state use of force
13:15 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:30	Session 4: Nomusa Makhubu - Creative Pedagogies in Social Practice Art
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>
16:00 – 16:30	Reflections and closure

Day 2: 28 September 2018

09:30 – 10:00	Registration and opening
10:00 – 11:30	Session 1: Ari Sitas and Sumangala Damodaran – Have disciplines reached their sell by date?
11:30 – 11:45	<i>Tea /Coffee</i>
11:45 – 13:15	Session 2: Trevor McArthur and Denisha Anand – Ethnographies of people, plants and pedagogy
13:15 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:30	Session 3: Rike Sitas and Shari Daya – Imagining Southern Cities
15:30 – 16:00	Reflections and closure



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Working titles and brief summaries

Ayanda Nombila

Making Sense of the CODESRIA pan-African Debate on Democracy: the struggle for human freedom, justice and “progress”

My presentation will be focused on the current PhD project I’m doing on the critical investigation of the pan-African intellectual debates at the Council for the Development of Social Sciences in Africa (Codesria), established in 1973. The actual paper will take up the debate on democracy, which occurred in the Africa Development journal, continued in the 1989 Codesria Bulletin and with responses from subsequent bulletin issues.

Camalita Naicker

Disciplinary and its discontents

In the aftermath of Rhodes Must Fall and calls for the decolonisation of the curriculum, especially in the humanities, there has been much contestation over what we mean by decolonisation. Debates about who we read, how we read, what we read and what language we read them in become of particular importance. Yet, the very idea of knowledge production in the university is premised on methodology and methods, themselves embedded in a disciplinary logic. In his paper, *Africana Philosophy, Race, and the Geography of Reason*, Lewis Gordon discusses the work of W.E.B Du Bois, and in particular, what he called the “The Study of Negro Problems” and the “challenges it posed to positivistic science.” In other words, “what does it mean to be a problem?” For Gordon, this question has an “implicit methodological position: people should be studied as human beings, but what do we do when the humanity of some groups are challenged? We need in other words to find a way to study black people without black people becoming problems in themselves.”

This session will reflect on my own approaches to teaching, learning and writing in the context of interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary conversations. In particular, it will explore the limits of disciplinary primarily through conversations about methodology or Fanon’s assertion that “there is a point at which methods devour themselves.” Framed around what Gordon has termed ‘disciplinary decadence’, the session will focus on how we think about the way in which disciplinary methods shape knowledge production, and how in-built epistemologies create canonical knowledge. How would the shifting the geography of reason look for us?



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Jameelah Omar

Law, protest and the limits of state use of force

The content will focus on protest law, particularly the scope of section 17 of the Constitution and the Regulation of Gatherings Act, 1993. The balance between the right to protest and the state interest to police protests, including through the use of force will be the specific focus of the presentation. Contemporary examples that illustrate the difficulty of striking this balance will be employed, including, Marikana and the SJC case.

Numosa Makhubu

Creative Pedagogies in Social Practice Art

Social practice art is a broad grouping of inter-disciplinary, process-based and socially engaged art forms. It is what Gregory Sholette (2018: 1) calls “an emerging interdisciplinary field of research and practice that pivots on the arts and the humanities while embracing such external disciplines as urban, environmental or labor studies; public architecture; and political organising among others.” Artists and art collectives whose art is based on public intervention, community engagement or service and advocacy have come to define a number of genres in social practice art such as participatory art, dialogic art, community mural art, live art, and art activism or artivism among others. Through a discussion of artists collectives and individual artists whose work is based on collaboration and public engagement, I define social art practice as a form of teaching and learning through articulating changing senses of community at different scales (local, national, transnational or global), and through popular agency. Artist collectives and popular agency movements such as Laboratoire Agit Art and Set Setal in Senegal and the Crystalists in Sudan among others, were important in constructing radical art discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. They laid foundations for Contemporary itinerant art collectives and schools such as the Pan-African Circle of Artists and Invisible Borders in Nigeria, Cercle Kapsiki or Collectif Autodafé in Cameroon, Gugulective in South Africa, and the itinerant Àsikò art school. These interventions question colonial habits in art institutions and conventional curricula. They are aimed at not only working collaboratively but also locating art as a way of teaching and learning across disciplines and social classes in pursuit of meaningful social change.

Ari Sitas and Sumangala Damodaran

Have disciplines reached their sell by dates?



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Trevor McArthur and Denisha Anand **“Ethnographies of People, Plants, and Pedagogy”**

In our session, we contend that the relationship between people, institutions and landscapes are best understood through an inter/transdisciplinary framework. By drawing on our work as both practitioners and researchers in poorly resourced communities in the Western and North Cape provinces respectively, we present case studies to illustrate our proposition. Our presentation has two parts, part A explores the utility of research grounded in a pedagogy of hope, and in part B, we examine Indigenous knowledge circuits of plant practices.

In part A, Trevor locates current theoretical, methodological, and ethical debates related to what is commonly referred to as either critical, emancipatory, activist, social justice, or feminist research with so-called marginalised/vulnerable groups. Drawing inspiration from bell hooks' Theory as Liberatory Practice, he argues that interdisciplinary theorising-and-practice (praxis) not only opens new possibilities to conceptualise social realities, but it provides a comprehensive basis for pedagogic intervention and change. Drawing on his school-based ethnographic study at a poorly resourced school in the Northern Cape province, Trevor considers the possibilities of ethnographic research grounded in what Paulo Freire coined A Pedagogy of Hope, and how through pedagogic encounters, ethnographers s/could agitate for social justice.

In part B, drawing on her work as an environmental educationist in Lavender Hill, her work in community radio in the Boland region, as well as her current research in anthropology, with a project entitled: Plants and their people: Indigenous knowledge circuits of plant practices in the Leliefontein Communal Reserve, Denisha contemplates “How working in restoration and rehabilitative urban conservation in a low-priority biodiversity area with a strong social proximity to impoverished communities tie itself to confrontational engagement?” In observing this dialogue, or confrontational engagement, between person and plant as well as plant and person, Denisha suggests these co-evolutionary processes creates circuits of knowledge through interaction and constant confrontation by what could be classified as a plantscapes, rather than a landscapes.

Rike Sitas and Shari Daya **Imagining Southern Cities**

The global South is urbanising at roughly twice the rate of the global North, yet dominant narratives of 'the city' continue to privilege London, Los Angeles and Paris over Lagos, Johannesburg and Mumbai. In this session we will reflect on our new postgraduate course that aims to explore how cities of the global South are generating new bodies of theory, new forms of social life, and new imaginaries. The course unpacks urban theory through novels, films and other textual and visual representations of everyday urbanism, drawing on contemporary writing from the global South to help make sense of these discourses. Situated within the rapidly evolving field of Urban Studies, we aim to open up conversations across disciplines about the cities we are in and the cities we desire.



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