Title: **Can Assessment be Democratised? A Reflection on Implementation**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

(i) respond to the rationale and process we used for, and our reflections on, the changes we made to LIT204 (which has been running in its modified form in Autumn 2017)
(ii) interrogate the possibilities (and limits) of democratically-spirited assessment and curriculum design
(iii) think through the practical challenges of student-led assessment and curriculum design

Session Outline

We will be talking about the following three areas in terms of our project:

(i) Rationale:
We conducted research into how to build a progressive relationship between lecturers and students, co-existing as researchers in a pedagogical space of possibility. We set out to investigate what barriers there are to building these relationships, to the development of an 'Institution of the Common,' (Neary 2012) particularly in terms of assessment: we aimed to examine and re-imagine assessment as a practice in which students become active participants and, as a result, transform the assessment practice of LIT204. We hoped to realize a different conception of the student experience, one in which students negotiate the content and delivery of their course with their teachers.

(ii) Process:
We ran three workshops in Spring 2016 in order to produce a proposal for reforming the LIT204 assessment, informed by a semester-long process of dialogue and deliberation between staff and students. We sought, as far as possible, to engage all students in the School who had taken or would take the module, that is, students from all three undergraduate levels, giving them the space and critical tools to examine prevailing assessment practices and propose new ones. The process of dialogue would, we hoped, demonstrate that staff can (and must) learn from students' practical knowledge, giving students the confidence to co-create, debate and (re-)negotiate academic practices.

(iii) Outcome:
We will reflect on the outcomes of the project (the modified LIT204 assessment, which also entailed a considerable change to the module curriculum and which ran, in its changed form, in Autumn 2017). We will be reflecting, on the one hand, about the 'success' of the renegotiated module, whose

revisioning resulted in a decolonisation of the theory curriculum and, on the other, about the partial, and multifaceted, failure of the assessment 'regime' that resulted from our student engagement project, the ways in which one part of the assessment destabilised some classes taught by Teaching Assistants, particularly those taught by women of colour. By the time of the conference, we will have had student feedback, as well as full feedback from the teaching team, giving us the tools to assess whether we managed to fulfill our aims with respect to the exploration of alternative, more democratic models for learning and teaching design: allowing students the latitude to negotiate modules, curricula and assessment practices.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

- Presentation of our project, including rationale, process and outcome. (15 minutes)
- Structured discussion of our findings: participants will be split up into small groups to discuss our findings, guided by key questions. (20 minutes)
- Round-up: groups will feed back their discussion of the key questions and presenters will respond. (10 minutes)

References

Brookfield, S. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools & Techniques for Democratic Classrooms.* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2005).
Derrida, J. 'The University Without Condition', in Peggy Kamuf (ed & transl.), *Without Alibi*. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002), 202-237.
Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin, 1996).
Neary, M. (2012). Student as Producer: An Institution of the Common. *Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences* [online]. **4** (3), 1-15. [Viewed 18 October 2017]
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