

**The Education Academy**

**Decolonising DMU Toolkit**

# **Examples of Good Practice**

## **Cross Faculty Case Studies**

# Decolonising DMU: Cross Faculty Examples

## Dr Jonathan Coope

### Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development

Among the 'systems thinking' concepts students encounter in the PG 'Leading change for sustainability' module are: 'subjectivity', 'perspectivism' and 'social constructivism'. One way we have introduced these ideas is by reading, co-performing, and reflecting on the story of the 'The blind men and the elephant': an ancient tale found in Buddhist, Sufi Islam, Jainist and Hindu traditions. Pedagogically, the task draws on oral traditions, story and performance. Content-wise, it helps students grasp the inevitable limitations and partiality of all knowledge and aids student comprehension of: positionality, perspectivism, and social constructionism; the importance of active listening and, not only listening to, but listening out for alternative perspectives, alternative voices; and the inevitable partiality of any person's – or any culture's – claims to 'impartiality,' 'objectivity' or definitive 'truth'. While we deploy the task on a PG module in sustainability, I have previously found this exercise just as relevant to religious studies students and undergraduate historians (for introducing post-colonial and postmodernist historical theories, for example).

## Dr Natalie Hayton

### Library & Learning Services

#### 'Pride and Prejudice in the Archives: issues with representation and access'

The aim of the session was to provide a behind-the-scenes look at how GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) professionals


manage problematic collections through a short talk and handling exercise, which included materials that come with a content warning regarding their representation of race. Specifically, discussion focused on the challenges of describing and providing access to artefacts and documents with racist content, a strategy for acknowledging and reviewing legacy catalogues where descriptions are outdated and often offensive and how we can strive to make archives a space for everyone through decolonisation and 'archival activism'. This latter phrase covers a host of activities from acquiring collections that represent the whole of society, updating catalogues, not whitewashing or erasing offensive content, reviewing our collections for 'hidden histories', working with community archives and many more.

The handling exercise proved to be an 'eye-opening experience' for some who were surprised by the more recent examples of overt racism in the archives. Discussion also focused on the scale of the work to be done and the hindering responses of discrimination denial. Not to be deterred by such challenges, we say: activism in the archives, bring it on!

## Edita Zieniute

### Global Mobility Office

Our team is continuously working on creating a more diverse and accessible programme. In order to accommodate the needs of different students #DMU Global strives to offer opportunities that vary in duration, focus and location. Programme entails a wide range of opportunities for DMU students to study, work and volunteer overseas



as part of their degree. Students can choose from spending a year to a week or even few days abroad. If going abroad is not suitable, students can join one of the established and meaningful range of international experiences, that are offered right here, on campus instead. Options from taking on a challenge of studying a foreign language, obtaining Teaching English as a Foreign Language or Intercultural Awareness certificates are available.

We have also partnered with The Freedom to Achieve: Reducing BAME attainment gap project for a number of trips where students were able to explore identity and the success of black and minority ethnic communities in New York City and Silicon Valley.

Since the programme launched in 2015 students from BAME backgrounds engagement grew from 34% to 44% in 2019. Despite the positive shift we have seen throughout the years we recognise that there is always room for improvement. In attempt to further support students from underrepresented groups we have set up a special fund for students that need additional financial support. Over 20 students have benefitted from Widening Participation funding this academic year and we hope many more will in the future.

For further information, contact  
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