Decolonizing Higher Education: An Annotated Bibliography

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HIED 808: Foundations of Higher Education

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June 6, 2021

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Tachine, A. R. (2018). Story Rug: Weaving stories into research. *Reclaiming Indigenous Research in Higher Education*, 64-75.

In this chapter, Tachine recapitulates her dissertation journey of creating a story rug and weaving it into her dissertation work. She describes how stories respond to and address many of the concerns and issues that we, as a society, face today. She lays out the four components of her framework: building the loom (introduction), warping the loom (literature review), gathering of tools (methods), and weaving in traditional oral stories (findings). During her dissertation journey, she familiarized herself with Indigenous methodological scholarship to better understand how to utilize Indigenous methods in her research. Her dissertation focused on the experiential stories of ten Navajo students as they navigated into college, and by placing their stories at the center of her analysis, she decentered the dominant discourse that generalizes the experiences of Native students.

As a Navajo woman, Tachine is aware of the importance of bringing Indigenous symbols and storytelling into formal education contexts in order to reclaim the research space. I find her paper promising and timely, and it connects with my interest in discovering diverse knowledge production perspectives. She is forthcoming about her methods and she supplements her experiences with research, describing in particular two qualitative methodologies that she found useful i.e. Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008) and Narrative Inquiry (Riessman, 2008). I hope to draw from the story rug framework while developing my own decolonization methods and theories for my thesis.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1), 1-40.

In this paper, Tuck and Yang attempt to ascertain what decolonization means and what it requires. They remind readers that social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches that decenter settler perspectives have objectives that may not align with decolonization. The authors claim that decolonization is not a metaphor, arguing that when metaphor invades decolonization, it impedes decolonization; it recenters whiteness, resettles theory, and extends innocence to the settler. They further opine that decolonization cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses and frameworks, even if those are critical or anti-racist. The authors organize their paper well and, borrowing from Janet Mawhinney (1998), meticulously lay out six "moves to innocence," which they claim have the deleterious effect of reconciling settler accountability and rescuing settler futurity.

This paper is timely because although "decolonization" is an oft-repeated phrase at higher education conferences, the concept is often distorted or abused because of its easy absorption, adoption, and transposability. Conference speakers often casually throw around "decolonization" without realizing its implications; without attempting to include and validate Indigenous and minority voices, contributions, and struggles for recognition. Although it might seem as though the authors are critiquing conversations around decolonization in academia, what they are actually attempting is to urge scholars and practitioners to critically examine and dismantle systems that allow for reproduction and maintenance of White power and privilege in order to restructure social relationships.

Shahjahan, R. (2011). Engaging the Faces of 'Resistance' and Social Change from Decolonizing

Perspectives: Toward Transforming Neoliberal Higher Education. *Journal of Curriculum

Theorizing*, 27(3), 273 - 286.

In this paper, Shahjahan attempts to fill existing gaps in the theorization of resistance by

critically analyzing two important books in the field—David Jeffress' "Postcolonial

Resistance: Culture, Liberation and Transformation" (2008) and Arlo Kempf's

"Breaching The Colonial Contract: Anti-colonialism in the US and Canada" (2009).

Shahjahan examines the concept of resistance in both postcolonial and anticolonial

perspectives and applies it to the context of neoliberal higher education. By comparing

and contrasting these two books, Shahjahan explores two themes: 1) the four faces of

resistance, and 2) anticolonialism versus postcolonialism and the question of indigeneity.

Shahjahan concludes that these books expand and enrich the conceptualization of

resistance and social change in neoliberal higher education. His findings are timely

because the question of colonialism is garnering increasing attention in academe,

particularly in curriculum studies, as is evident in the resurgence of books and journal

special issues examining the intersections between colonial relations and knowledge

production, representation, and indigenous struggle. His main takeaway is that as higher

education scholars, we need more intricate, nuanced, and grounded (or context-specific)

understandings of resistance that connect the discursive with material relations of power.

He reminds us that our ways of knowing are interconnected to our ways of being, and

that we need to affirm alternative ways of being in the neoliberal academy.

Mignolo, W. D. (2020). "What Does It Mean to Decolonize?" *On Decoloniality*. 105-134.

In this chapter, which is part of a larger collection on decoloniality, Mignolo attempts to answer the question "What does it mean to decolonize" by exploring related questions: Who is doing it, where, how, and why? Mignolo also sets out the aims of this collection: to explain how to enact decolonization in the academy and envision possible future decolonial spaces. Mignolo introduces readers to the triad of *modernity*, *coloniality*, and *decoloniality*, explaining the connections and differences between the concepts. He distinguishes between *coloniality* and *colonialism* and subsequently between *decoloniality*, *decolonization*, and *dewesternization*. He defines decolonial thought and action as an attempt to delink from the epistemic assumptions common to all areas of knowledge established in the Euro-American world, and as a power struggle within the colonial matrix of power (CMP). He also describes a second stage that follows delinking, i.e. *re-existence*: a sustained effort to reorient our human communal praxis of living. Borrowing from Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *borders*, he advocates for *border thinking*.

The decolonial praxis provided by Mignolo offers a fascinating frame and orientation for research, arguing, doing, and living that I hope to utilize in my own work. Mignolo's scholarship dovetails well with my interest in postcolonial and Global South perspectives. Moreover, Mignolo accepts that no one decolonial project can be regarded as the one true approach, and this admission by him suggests to me the importance of exploring different decolonial projects that are grounded on different assumptions, needs, and experiences.

Stein, S. (2021). Internationalizing the curriculum: Conceptual orientations and practical

implications in the shadow of western hegemony. *US Power in international higher

education*, 1-13.

In this chapter, Stein warns that mainstream approaches to curriculum internationalization

reinforce rather than denaturalize enduring power relations, in particular US power and

exceptionalism in the context of an increasingly interconnected world. Employing a

social cartography methodology, Stein offers a framework for assessing approaches to

internationalization, using US higher education as an example. She begins by reviewing

trends in curriculum internationalization and reflects on how they relate to larger trends in

internationalization. She compares curriculum internationalization today with earlier eras

of this work, linking the present to a history of instrumentalizing higher education in the

service of US hegemony. Finally, she rejects a universal approach to curriculum

internationalization in favor of developing critical literacy around different possibilities.

Stein's work is the need of the hour because despite US universities' ongoing efforts

toward internationalizing higher education curricula, these efforts do not necessarily

interrupt or challenge what Stein describes as "business as usual." Furthermore, while

there is growing recognition that curriculum internationalization is crucial, the concept

means different things to different people, reflecting a more general contestation around

the meaning of internationalization itself. I find the different approaches to curriculum

internationalization that Stein has offered to be useful and eye-opening, in particular

"Curriculum Internationalization for Radically Remaking the World."

Mirzoeff, N. (2017). Empty the museum, decolonize the curriculum, open theory. *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, 25(53), 6-22. https://doi.org/10.7146/nja.v25i53.26403

In this paper, Mirzoeff proposes three tasks for academicians and practitioners of higher education: decolonizing the curriculum; emptying the museum; and opening theory. Each of these categories has both a history in past resistance and liberation movements and a present-day dynamic, and Mirzoeff traces this history from the South African Rhodes Must Fall movement via Occupy Wall Street to the Free University and Antiuniversity. He asserts the importance of learning from the successes and failures of decolonization and of bringing this understanding into academic and creative spaces such as universities, galleries, and museums. He uses Hannah Arendt's formation of politics in the "space of appearance" to pose questions around ownership / disenfranchisement, recognition / dehumanization, and inclusion / exclusion. He reminds readers that British colonialism is not even discussed in UK schools, citing this as a failing of the education system. By providing examples of alternative formats for learning (such as Free University) that have been influenced by decolonial tactics, Mirzoeff highlights the need for radical education.

As a scholar who is committed to equity and social justice, I find this essay to be relevant and enlightening. This type of enquiry represents a crucial step towards transforming our curricula. The biggest takeaway for me was the idea that in order to make "theory" do anti-racist work, it has to be open (anti-occupation), whether in Palestine or the US. This paper also exposed me to the existence of alternative universities that refuse to align with the US military-industrial complex and instead show solidarity with the Third World.