Reading Group: *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work*

Schedule

- Wednesdays, 3-4pm EDT:
    - **August 5: Preface, intro, ch 1**. Discussion leader: Siqi Tu (PhD, Sociology, 2020 and concluding Futures Initiative Graduate Fellow)
    - **Aug 12: Ch 2-3**. Discussion leader: Andrew Viñales (PhD student, Cultural Anthropology, and PublicsLab Fellow)
    - **Aug 19: Ch 4-5, conclusion**. Discussion leader: Christina Katopodis (PhD candidate, English, and Futures Initiative Graduate Fellow)
- RSVP on Eventbrite

A note on the private/public nature of this conversation: We invite everyone to expand this discussion by taking notes in this document and by posting on twitter with the hashtags #phdtowork, #fight4edu, and/or #phdchat. Please share questions and ideas, but do not share anyone else's personal stories without their consent. If you have a question or thought that you do NOT want anyone to share, please say so. Today's session will not be recorded or streamed.

Agenda and Notes

Aug 12: Ch 2-3. Discussion leader: Andrew Viñales (PhD student, Cultural Anthropology, and PublicsLab Fellow)

Bio: Andrew Viñales was born and raised in the Bronx, New York by proud Puerto Rican and Dominican families. He is a twin and practitioner in the Lukumí Afro-Cuban Orisha tradition, as well as an oral historian and cultural worker passionate about highlighting the experiences of queer Afro-Latinx politics, culture, and spirituality. Currently, he is approaching his third year as a PhD student in cultural anthropology at CUNY GC.

In the interest of hearing from an array of voices, we are facilitating this conversation a little differently.

- **3:00-3:05: Introduction**
    - Welcome (Katina)
    - Introductory remarks and facilitation style (Andrew)

- **3:05-3:15**: **Participants engagement**
    - A brief word to welcome folks into the space. Name, affiliation, and a keyword that stood out in either chapter 2 or 3. (VERY BRIEF PLEASE)
        - Words that resonated:
            - Inclusivity
            - Change

- Conservatism
- Generative x3
- Collaboration
- Success
- Access
- Tacit knowledge
- Equity & innovation
- Contingent
- Systems
- Scholars/hip
- Mentoring

- **3:15-3:30 Chapter 2 "Inclusive Systems, Vibrant Scholarship"**
- "Rather than attempting to bring more scholars of color into an environment that is stacked against their success, faculty and administrators wishing to make a change must examine the ways in which the structures of the academy reproduce the conditions that privilege whiteness and maleness**." (50)**

    - Let us hear from current PhD students first. Have you noticed any "diversity efforts" from your department/program? Do they fall in similar traps Katina highlights? What can you do as a student?
        - Economic challenges of doing a PhD in New York for students with less resources drive them to Ivy leagues or private universities outside NYC
        - The CUNY system/structure is not well-known by undergraduates
    - Next let us hear from faculty; How might you be able to talk back to your department about discussions of vibrant scholarship AND inclusion as interconnected topics.
        - Student-led diversity initiatives
        - Inclusion and curriculum conversations should be connected to each other
        - Traditional dissertation formats v. innovative thinking
        - Anxiety about change, fear of risk
        - Adjunctification, younger faculty in precarious positions, tenure denial
    - Anyone else want to share?
        - Narrow definitions of diversity
        - Generosity
        - Emphasis on funding problems at public universities, losing students to institutions with more funding resources
        - Student-run university (ie Cuny)
        - Student v admin : who decides what diversity is?
        - Problem of student access to admin
        - Conservatism in various programs
        - Separation of skills-based, theory, historical (implied Western), and then "ethnomusicology" ("everything else") programs (in Music)

- Governance structure discouraging collaboration
- Centers and initiatives: unencumbered by disciplinary expectations
- Evaluation and gatekeeping
- outsourcing of diversity to centers related to the outsourcing of multiple career path services for grad students to centers
- Spanish: literature, linguistics, cultural studies - mish mash of projects and research, separation from English departments, Cold War era structures, not discipline but placeholder for anything "not white" to be studied. Heritage speakers get left behind. Structure incentivizes people ending up in various departments.
- Diversity and inclusion question tied to innovative work - how are we changing the structures -- balance of receiving/giving

- **3:30-3:45 Chapter 3 "Expanding definitions of Scholarly Success"**
- If scholarly work that has a clear public value were held in higher esteem within this economy of prestige, graduate programs might also become appealing to a wider range of students who aspire to many different goals. And, if the emphasis on public engagement and applied research was connected with an inclusive approach to recruitment and support, doctoral programs could become a very different kind of community, with a much broader understanding of what constitutes excellence and rigor. **(71)**
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    - From Students: What initiatives have you seen your department take up to foster public scholarship, or how has public work been silenced?
        - Production and value: reframed in a positive way in this chapter
        - Process v product, connecting that with teaching, v. research as product (Veronica Barrera-Kolb), akin to valuing property over labor in capitalism
        - Different outcomes for accessible work: access to reading material, complex digital formats, creating active reader v consumer
        - Public work and redefining scholarly success: for the public good
        - Being an authority in a given subject : how do you get there? Doing public scholarship early on helps with building credibility. Building authority that doesn't rely on academia.

    - Same question for faculty. What ways can you support students, and shift departmental norms and values to broaden measures of scholarly success?
        - Emphasize thinking about research as process and not just think about outcome
        - Encourage students to write op-eds, organize exhibits, etc. -- think broadly about how to put their work out in the world, be imaginative
        - Giving public talks

- **3:45-3:55 Challenges in shifting "conservative" Academe**

- What conversations need to be had in order to beat against the old guard?
    - What can we do for change now?
    - https://chicagounheard.org/blog/what-if-we-radically-reimagined-the-new-school-year/
    - UVA also has great examples of pedagogy oriented toward acknowledging what's happening in our community - on the 3 year anniversary of the Charlottesville white supremacist rally & attack, it's worth looking at faculty like Jalane Schmidt and students like Zyahna Bryant as leaders & models for that q
    - Universities' responsibility to their local communities in decision-making, building trust on both ends

Links and Resources

- *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work*, Duke University Press: https://www.dukeupress.edu/putting-the-humanities-phd-to-work (Note: 30% off using code E20ROGRS)
- The Futures Initiative
- PublicsLab