

Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed: Reprogramming Wikipedia to Decolonize Classroom Learning

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Abstract:

The purposes and uses of Wikipedia in the classroom are multiple and emerging. From the integral role it can play in the design of classroom assignments to the ways in which the platform enables students to address gaps in the histories of Black, Indigenous, Dalit, women, disabled, and queer and trans people of colour, Wikipedia is being used to redefine both classroom and community-based learning. Adding relevant content to Wikipedia and addressing Wikipedia's limitations, however, are not straightforward tasks. Many people, places, and political struggles have been ignored by history, and not all such individuals and events have "notable" digital footprints for inline citations, a requirement for creating a Wikipedia post. On the one hand, adding underrepresented stories to Wikipedia is a way to write them into history. On the other hand, Wikipedia's structure and core criteria of "notability" and "neutrality" can make such processes both difficult and difficult to "stick" for ongoing pedagogy work.

Building on a set of four critiques of Wikipedia's structural imbalances, namely, colonial erasures (Siobhan Senier); "Great Man" biographies (Shannon Mattern); notability (Lori Brown); and image sharing and circulation (Anasuya Sengupta et al.) in Wiki entries, this discussion-based session will ask two key questions:

- How might we as marginalized peoples build activist and collective coalitions that allow us to create and sustain digital footprints deemed "citable" by Wikipedia?
- How might feminist, queer, and anticolonial sensibilities inform alternate engagements with Wikipedia, including, but not limited to, unpacking its genre of biographical writing?

In addressing these questions, we will go past the conventional use of Wikipedia in the classroom; reflect on its limits and possibilities with and through our institutional experiences; and collaboratively draft guidelines for critical Wikipedia pedagogy.

About "Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed":

Paulo Freire's writings on the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" are foundational to the naming and structuring of this ongoing pedagogy-based practice and process that began in 2017 at DHSI, bringing together individuals from the fields of Architectural Theory, History, and Design Studies; English, Indigenous, and Pilipinx studies; and Information Studies. We are a partnership committed to critical care, kinship, and support, and to

furthering a process of un-learning, re-learning, and always learning together in the context of digital humanities pedagogy. Our praxis is structured around anti-colonial principles, starting with naming our respective positionalities and privileges, as well as continuously working on those positionalities to shape co-liberatory spaces and experiences within and connected to our respective disciplinary engagements. We lead workshops, deliver talks, produce writings, and teach courses. We recognize that, at this point, our work has been quite “North America” focused, and our aim is to work within deeper coalitional frameworks between the Global North and Global South that challenge the overlapping injustices of historically white, upper caste, and patriarchal orders, whilst illuminating the specificities of those injustices and education-centered counternarratives in place.