Becoming Cosmopolitan:
Critical Cosmopolitanism as a New Paradigm for Global Learning
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global learning: for what end?

common curricular frameworks and emphases

neo-mercantilist emphasis
  - priorities: vocational or pre-professional preparation, training for a global economic market that prizes flexibility and adaptability, cultivation of market-friendly skills and competencies

intercultural emphasis
  - priorities: cross-cultural awareness and inquiry, the development of intercultural competencies that will serve students in culturally diverse settings at home and abroad

liberal-aesthetic emphasis
  - priorities: personal and intellectual enrichment, broadened exposure to cultural and aesthetic experience

cosmopolitan emphasis
  - priorities: the ethics and practice of global citizenship, civic and personal action in the interest of the global public good, attention to global social change and problem solving

defining and refining cosmopolitanism

the cosmopolitan ethic is marked by:
  - a desire to “think and act with strong concern for all humanity” (Craig Calhoun)
  - an acknowledgment that we have obligations and commitments that don’t stop at national borders
  - an explicit concern with transnational social justice
  - the prioritizing of both awareness (i.e. perspective-taking) and action

critical cosmopolitanism aims to:
  - mediate between the local and the global; reconcile a heightened care for the world with local obligation and attachment
  - resist abstract universal truths (about humanity and the global)
  - maintain “a purposeful concern for all humanity without ignoring difference” (Scott Malcolmson)
  - complicate and decolonize ways of thinking about identity, difference, and power
critical cosmopolitan teaching and learning

key paradigms

an understanding of the local and global as mutually constitutive and relational

marked by:
- an unsettling of the local/global binary
- a reluctance to fetishize, or unnecessarily privilege, either the global or the local
- a rethinking of place and place-attachment (i.e. what does it mean to belong to the world?)

an enlarged and invigorated conception of citizenship

marked by:
- an understanding of citizenship as broad and active engagement in public life (including informal participation in civil society, citizen networks)
- an acknowledgment of one’s multiple allegiances and sites of responsibility (local, national, transnational, global)
- a willingness to question models of citizenship that encourage accommodation rather than deliberation and dissent

a complex engagement with otherness

marked by:
- an understanding of otherness as a conceptual field (other people v. others v. otherness)
- an unsettling of the self/other binary and exclusionary models of identity
- a recognition of the otherness, or alterity, of the other (the ‘stranger’)

key sensibilities

self-reflexivity

marked by:
- the capacity to critically examine and reflect upon one’s habits of thought and feeling (‘perspectival consciousness’)
- an exploration of the ways in which one’s selfhood is situated, or in conversation with its context (i.e. the self both shapes and is shaped by its world)
- an openness to critical and transformative self-understanding

a sense of cosmopolitan responsibility

marked by:
- the expansion of one’s ethical concern or moral horizons (to include the stranger, future generations, the natural world, the non-human animal)
- an understanding of responsibility that stresses the mutual implication and relationality of persons (‘mutual learning’ rather than mere ‘benevolent recognition’ or rescue)
- a critical examination of the nature and scope of one’s responsibility to the other (i.e. what are the social structures, material realities, and histories that have created the other’s need? what is the right relationship between privilege and obligation? what is the value of compassion, empathy, or solidarity?)

a willingness to challenge cynicism and complacency

marked by:
- the belief in one’s capacity to effect meaningful personal and social change
- an engagement with—rather than withdrawal from—the complex demands of social justice
- an openness to the future and its transformative or utopian possibilities