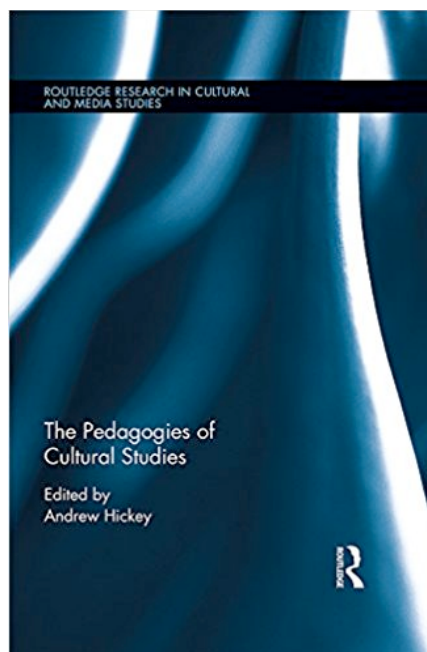


## The Pedagogies of Cultural Studies

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### In Search of the Signature Pedagogies of Cultural Studies

Cultural studies scholars have recently delivered pessimistic diagnoses that the heyday of their discipline is over. As successful as the cultural studies project has been, it has recently been losing its appeal with undergraduates. The established scholars have left teaching, detaching cultural studies from its pragmatist roots and isolating the discipline in an ivory tower where it can, at worst, be reduced to impotent social criticism. Taking these observed shortcomings as its starting point, *The pedagogies of cultural studies* intends to reclaim the relevance of cultural studies by relocating pedagogy within the research tradition. The book reads, thus, as an epistemological and ontological repositioning of the cultural studies' project, or even as a manifesto for the reappraisal of cultural studies.

The book is based on contributions to a symposium hosted by the University of Southern Queensland in Australia in 2014, the aim of which was to give attention to the “serious treatment of pedagogy as both a practice and a conceptual motif through which cultural studies might be (re)imagined” (p. 3). The volume contains eleven individual chapters, a foreword by Graeme Turner, one of those who have lamented the status quo of contemporary cultural studies in public, and an afterword, which is much needed to collect the diverse strains under an umbrella, by editor Andrew Hickey, Associate Professor in Communications at the University of Southern Queensland.

The foundation for the pedagogical approach is wisely found in the classics, such as in Henry A. Giroux, Lawrence Grossberg, and Raymond Williams, who have agreed upon the fact that the deepest impulse informing cultural studies in the old days was the desire to make learning

part of the process of social change itself. In Williams' spirit, Graeme Turner reasserts that teaching has been one of the fundamental ways of "doing cultural studies." As Stuart Hall has remarked that it is practice to bring together theory and practice, the authors want to identify practices in which reflexivity forms the key category for shifting focus from textual critique to social action.

Community-engaged research may not only be a pragmatic choice but also an ethical response in the small regional universities where many of the contributors are employed. However, community-focused modes of scholarly practice are not typically measurable according to the standards of corporate university that the authors frequently criticize. While reading through the articles, I wondered whether the contributors were not marginalising themselves even further by consciously pushing cultural studies further in a direction not cutting favours with the neo-liberalist zeitgeist.

Perhaps for this reason the editor Andrew Hickey puts a considerable effort into arguing for the relevance and meaning of the "signature pedagogy" in cultural studies. Signature pedagogy of a discipline, a concept defined by Lee Schulman in 2005, comprises three levels: the implicit, deep, and surface structure. Consciously dismissing the surface structure, which would imply the concrete methods and didactics for learning and doing, Hickey argues that, by identifying the epistemological and ontological structures underlying the cultural studies project, the discipline can be restructured. According to Hickey, in the formation of the cultural studies identity, three contexts play a crucial role: the scholar-as-self, the discipline, and the institution. No matter how different the positions and approaches on the surface might be, cultural studies scholars subscribe to a standpoint of subordinate positionality and motivation for critical incursion into the world.

"Pedagogy" turns out to be a truly inclusive concept, which may be interpreted against the endeavour to contest the idea of pedagogy in formal education where it is typically limited to the classroom. According to Hickey (p. 3), pedagogy is "something situated within the research act, as demonstrated in academic public engagement, as something writ through scholarly social activism, and indeed as evidenced in the coming-to-be a cultural studies scholar." For Kim Satchell, it is about "recognizing and employing creativity" (p. 74). In that very broad sense in which pedagogy is understood (and, in fact, never clearly and consistently delimited) in the volume, one has to ask what would not be pedagogical, particularly as the multidirectional pedagogical practice can even occur between human and non-human objects.

Without addressing methods, skills, and existing pedagogical practices within the settings of the contemporary university more explicitly, some of the reflections remain quite abstract and the individual authors' accounts relatively idiosyncratic and not generalizable. This, of course, to a large extent boils down to the very nature of cultural studies, which has never been a unified project but rather a loose framework connecting researchers willing to reveal and recognize the structures of power in the cultural order. At their best, however, the contributions reach something very essential of the "becoming-to" aspect of cultural studies that is always implicit in its reflective processes, and deliver an inspiring account of becoming and being a cultural studies scholar.

In this sense, the result of the book is that the signature pedagogy cannot be systematized and must not either be totalized, but it is always up to unique combinations of the scholar-as-self who exercises reflexivity at a crossroads of a multitude of impulses, and it is there that one's individual way of "doing cultural studies" emerges. To borrow Hickey's words, to do cultural studies is "to read the world as it happens according to where it happens" (p. 207). The main virtue of *The Pedagogies of Cultural Studies* is to address cultural studies from the point of

the individual researcher, seen as a pedagogical agent, for it is there where the disciplinary re-articulation begins.