Subjugated Knowledges and Dedisciplinarity in Cultural Studies Pedagogy

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Chapter Three
Subjugated Knowledges and Dedisciplinarity in a Cultural Studies Pedagogy

Joe Parker

Discussions of the contested politics of academic fields that have emerged from social movements often emphasize course content while deemphasizing the ways that power circulates through specific sites in the academy. Certainly women's studies, queer studies, and the different ethnic studies fields have struggled to maintain links to the social movements that engendered them, and a concomitant focus on social change. In a more complex fashion, the same is true of postcolonial studies. Similarly, cultural studies may be understood as an academic field emerging from class-based social movements that are affiliated in complex ways with various Marxist analyses whose academic lineage is longer and differently constituted. Within and among these different fields, ongoing debates continue over their ability to remain oriented toward social justice in the face of pressures from the academy to align with knowledge protocols and modes of claiming legitimacy that are measured in terms distant from those of progressive social change.

The work of Michel Foucault offers one of the most effective ways of naming, tracking, and developing multiple modes of resistance to the mechanisms in the academy that pressure these and other fields into modern knowledge protocols. Foucault emphasized the seemingly minor but always meticulously observed small-scale ways in which those of us in the academy and in other major institutions of modernity are pressured to subject ourselves and our work to the mechanisms and apparatuses of power/knowledge. In an academic setting, we are all too familiar with demands that we subject ourselves repeatedly to the protocols of the mechanisms of what Foucault termed "the micro-physics of power": the job interview, the department meeting or memo, classroom behavioral micro-regulations, exam and paper grading criteria and hierarchies, the manuscript peer review, the teaching evaluation, the promotion and tenure review, to name just a few of many, many others. Together these mechanisms make up a "micro-economy of perpetual penalty" that has been of interest to cultural studies academics and others writing about pedagogy as resistance to
domination. Through this micro-economy, knowledge/power relations constitute the violence of the modern. This violence is carried out through the seeming sobriety of self-surveillance and disciplinary normalization, rather than through the public spectacles of physical brutalities and the tortured body of the premodern punishment system.

Foucault characterized the violent subjection of the body to these multiple, all-pervasive mechanisms as discipline, discipline forcibly regulated both by those other than the subject (the teacher, the dissertation or department chair, the Dean), but first and foremost by the subject itself through self-surveillance. Disciplines are not enforced only through the mechanisms of professional associations, major journals, canonical texts, and course content, but through the micro-physics of daily interactions in the multiple quotidian sites of the academy. For Foucault, this micro-physics operates as a network of disciplinary mechanisms supported by, and working as relays within, a much larger network of disciplinary mechanisms extending across all the major institutions of modernity: the marketplace and the workplace; the heteronormative family and the state; the courtroom and the prison; the military and the medical clinic. Through discipline, the subject becomes increasingly more productive as it becomes more docile and obedient to the disciplinary regime of uninterrupted, constant coercion through careful partitions of time, space, and movement.

For Foucault, power is invested in the body through the highly specified modes of subjection these mechanisms carry out, thereby producing what he termed "a political technology of the body" which gives birth to a person as an object of knowledge, within an overall political economy of the body, directly involved in a political field of surveillance and discipline. Through this general economy, some bodies are distributed into colleges and graduate schools as students and/or as teachers and administrators, while others find their ways to the workplace or the prison, the military, or the asylum.

Thus, power is something exercised as it traverses and is transmitted by bodies through behavior and a general economy of distribution, rather than a possession some have and others do not, so that power "exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them." In this conception, knowledge does not develop outside of power, but is produced by power, just as power is constituted through knowledge. This is what Foucault termed "power/knowledge": that which is usually seen as the source of knowledge, the "subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge," come to be seen as the effects of power/knowledge (pouvoir-savoir) and its historical transformations. In this sense, education is not a moment of possible modern liberation for students or scholars, since the student, as well as the teacher and researcher, are already in themselves effects of a system of subjection much more profound and pervasive than the individual.

Some have read this analysis of disciplinary society as an all-encompassing caricature of passive souls, but Foucault was deeply interested in resistance to the disciplinary power/knowledge regime even as he emphasized its limits and
its appropriations. Foucault argued that these “micro-powers” could not be overthrown once and for all, but may only be disrupted through localized episodes that have power effects on the entire network in which they are caught up. In the academic setting and more broadly, he argued for the refusal of disciplinary mechanisms through what he called “a common labor of people seeking to ‘de-discipline’ themselves,” which he defined as “a different way of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false.” Foucault’s genealogical method was also developed precisely as a critique in order to open up the re-emergence and insurrection of particular, local, subjugated knowledges that the modern power/knowledge regime works to disqualify. Subjugated knowledges are not opposed “primarily to the contents, methods or concepts” of modern power/knowledge, but “to the effects of the centralizing powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organized scientific discourse within a society such as ours.” These two different goals for resistance to the disciplinary regime—refusing discipline and the insurrection of subjugated knowledges—have been the basis for the considerable writing about education and pedagogy that I build on in the coming sections, where they serve as my double focus.

Foucault’s critique of modern society has a number of important implications for developing a critical analysis of academic disciplines. His critique has been applied to particular academic disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields by a number of scholars and critics in cultural studies, feminism, and other areas. At stake in these critical analyses are modern claims of the discipline fields to political neutrality and of interdisciplinary fields to the reduction of inequality and the promotion of social justice. Yet these arguments about education and the politics of knowledge are also caught up in larger debates over the social effects of the academy and of education more broadly, the nature and role of the intellectual, and the ethics and politics of epistemology and the nature of power.

If we approach cultural studies with this Foucauldian perspective, we can see some important points of intersection that are useful in the classroom. We may summarize cultural studies broadly in the terms of Simon During as “an affirmation of otherness and negation of metadiscourse” that traditionally has emphasized the politics of popular culture, particularly in England and its settler colonies in North America and the Australasia. Gayatri Chakravoty Spivak, bell hooks, Rey Chow, and other women of color practicing cultural studies have extended the cultural studies notion of Otherness to include not only issues of class, but also race, gender, sexual orientation, and nation. This construction of cultural studies centers on critiques of colonization, Orientalism, and hybrid and minority discourses as they intersect with histories of racism, heteronormativities, gender inequalities, and class exploitation. Chow has noted, for example, that the power effects of the displacement, by poststructuralists, of the west as center has brought attention to the history of European violence under imperialism; attention to this violence may work to further dislodge the Eurocentrism of cultural studies and poststructuralist interpretive practices. Rather than arguing that the subversive content and counter-hegemonic resistance learned in the cul-
Cultural studies classroom are somehow outside of these histories and constructions of norms and Others, those in cultural studies who have drawn on Foucault have suggested that cultural studies practices must confront the political limits imposed by the disciplinary formations of modern power/knowledge. These practices refuse the modernist notion that liberatory work makes possible space outside of repression and power. The argument is that the disciplinary micro-economy is active throughout society, including classrooms where Foucauldian resistance is practiced. A dedisciplinary approach to cultural studies pedagogy marks and builds on already-existing sites for resistance beyond the traditional emphases on content and form to include multiple quotidian behaviors as locations for counter-hegemonic practice. This approach to pedagogy directs those interested in cultural studies education as counter-hegemonic resistance to four areas. First, we must pay attention to the presence in the classroom of multiple mechanisms that subject both students and teachers to the modern disciplinary micro-physics of power, through quotidian repeated and meticulously observed bodily and other practices that result in both docility and productivity. These mechanisms may be redirected and their grip loosened through pedagogical techniques that encourage the failure of docility and productivity as constituted under the political and ethical limits of modernity, failures that open space for dedisciplinary modes of governing the self and dividing the true and false. Second, we must make the ways in which knowing constitutes power central to course content and practice, so that knowledge may constitute forms of power that do not replicate the social hierarchies instilled globally by modernity. Third, we must practice a pedagogy that deploys specific naming practices to render intelligible the otherwise invisible power effects of disciplinary society (such as the violence and exploitation of normative social practices), in order to interrupt the disciplinary power effects. Finally, we must acknowledge that the “subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge” are effects of the disciplinary regime of power/knowledge, where the modern disciplinary regime makes its totalizing claims. So a dedisciplinary pedagogy highlights different subject positions and objects of knowledge that diverge from the terms of modernity, while deploying ways of knowing that resist the disciplinary regime—subjugated knowledges being the most central for our purposes. I take each of these areas in turn as they apply to the cultural studies classroom at the beginning level of teaching, the first and second years of college, specifically as applied to writing practices.

Failures of Docility and Productivity in Dedisciplinary Pedagogy

From a Foucauldian perspective, the disciplinary regime coerces its subjects into subjection through a micro-economy of perpetual penalties of time, activity, behavior, gestures, speech, the body, and sexuality, what he termed "a punish-
His analysis of this subjection suggests that it is a form of violence, violence that can only be responded to ethically through critique. This critique asks that the detailed political investment of the disciplined body be interrupted temporarily and partially through classroom practices. Such practices first bring the multiple intersecting systems of subjection and coercion to critical awareness, and then work with the students to perform bodily behaviors that refuse self-subjection, a refusal which is paramount for Foucauldian notions of agency. This practice may also be extended from the coercion of students to the subjection of instructors caught in the same net of power/knowledge.

The proliferation of sites for interrupting disciplinary practices in the Foucauldian cultural studies classroom may seem unwieldy at first, but they may be used selectively where appropriate for different topics and courses. Alternatively, such sites for interrupting disciplinary subjection may be used in a targeted fashion to resist tendencies of particular practices to fall into forms of power/knowledge relations that are readily appropriated back into the power/knowledge regime. Bodily practices, time schedules, and speech all constitute what Foucault termed "minor techniques of multiple and intersecting observations." The possibility of diverging from these practices may at first seem trivial (or what Foucault terms micropolitical), but as students and the instructor experiment with diverging even slightly from these practices, a profound unease often finds its way into the educational space. Habits of raising only one hand rather than two in order to speak, legible penmanship, and the carefully observed physical docility of quietly seated note-taking students are generally valued in a positive way as productive behaviors. Yet Foucault compared proper penmanship in early modern French education to the bodily training of the military recruit in early modern armies as examples of the bodily docility required of the modern subject. In my experience in the Foucauldian classroom, when readings, lecture, or discussion mark productive practices that seem positive under modernity as practices of coerced subjection and docility, students often become defensive, as their modern self-concepts as free individuals are put at risk. Yet students are often highly motivated by modern presumptions to freedom to refuse docility, even as they continue to operate under the sign of modern freedom, so the refusal of docility is still often of interest. On such occasions, I point to examples of well-respected challenges to modern docility, such as bell hooks's adoption of a failure of proper punctuation in her own self-naming, refusing proper linguistic practice even as her books reach wide audiences and her critiques spread well beyond the limits of the academy.

When a class adopts practices that seem to displace the instructor's authority (circular seating, discussion replacing lectures, speaking without raising the hand) or to diffuse authority (students calling on each other, community members selecting class materials), a Foucauldian analysis suggests that the classroom remains a site for disciplinary regulations and self-surveillance. These critiques may provoke some to reject these pedagogical practices, yet peer pressures and the familiarity of the "orderly" classroom make it very difficult to di-
verge even in a small, temporary way from the disciplinary regime. This often induces internal conflicts and provokes modernist questioning of how any freedom may be possible in an educational setting. When this is compounded in discussion of how behaviors are organized into a graded system of gratification and punishment that distributes all behavior in the field of observation, including examination performance, surveillance, and other ways, students may become discouraged about possibilities for resistance. Here, discussions of agency and the limited freedom emphasized in Foucault’s later writings become central to classroom practice.

Yet the behavioral divergence from the disciplinary regime in a classroom or other institutional setting does not disrupt the power/knowledge network of multiple mechanisms for subjection that form the network of power/knowledge that stretches across multiple institutions, including the state. Self-surveillance and instructor observation and regulation of classroom attendance and behaviors are part of a series of other “innumerable petty mechanisms . . . for] progressive objectification and . . . partitioning of individual behavior,” including hierarchical distribution through the examination, records of attendance and lateness, seating for visibility, monitoring of cheating and plagiarism, and grading and tracking. Students receive much more from these objectifying and distribution mechanisms than grades and college degrees, for these mechanisms constitute the individual status of students (linked to the measurements, gaps, and marks that characterize their case) even as students are homogenized in the uniformity of their subjection to the modern disciplinary regime. In this sense, the disciplinary regime constitutes students (and instructors) as effects and objects of power and knowledge. Consequently, this perspective finds the greatest individualization where the power is more anonymous and more effective through comparative measures with the norm. In this way, the anonymous constitution of the individual does not reduce specific features but inserts them into a field of compulsory objectification. Individuals are therefore located in a comparative economy that calculates the gaps between individuals and that is useful for bodily distribution in an economy of subjection.

There are multiple ways to work against the multifaceted enforcement of this hierarchy of student individuation. Because students are often so interested in grades, it is possible to refuse disciplinary hierarchical differentiation by giving all students the same grade. Yet students long-accustomed to grade-based measures of achievement may be driven to expect the highest grade possible, so in an instance where I explored this possibility, the students, after long discussion, agreed that they should all receive a high grade. As you may expect, the resulting high average grade for the class drew the attention of my department chair at the time, since as an instructor, I am also caught up in the net of disciplinary power relations. We encountered similar pressures in various sorts of student peer evaluation, where it is difficult to find students who are not ready to evaluate their peers as generously as they hope to be evaluated and ultimately graded. The refusal of the hierarchical effects of the classroom may be seen as an argument for the rejection of grading, as has been and still is practiced in a
few institutions. Yet I would suggest that more effective pedagogical work takes place with students who are confronting these hierarchizing mechanisms in the classroom as they will beyond the academy. Of course, we can create social spaces where learning occurs without grading and other normalizing mechanisms, and perhaps even where self-surveillance may take a temporary holiday in the classroom and the research arena.

One of the most difficult aspects of the disciplinary regime to dislodge is the persistent emphasis on productivity as a goal, and writing may become a central mechanism for troubling these modern practices of productivity-as-docility. Diverging from an emphasis on student productivity may arouse profound feelings of being unprofessional for instructors, or encouraging inefficiency and even sloth in teachers and students. Often, these deeply felt responses indicate the high stakes of such divergences within the disciplinary regime, and we must work with them actively in the classroom setting, by naming them explicitly, and opening time for students to work with them in the classroom and in other writing and reflection work. Since most of the many mechanisms for instructor surveillance of students depend heavily on student productivity, finding ways to validate failures of productivity (refusing to attend class, not writing assignments, failing to read texts, not participating in discussions) become moments that are very disruptive of the disciplinary regime at work in the classroom, even as they are extremely important and potentially fruitful pedagogically. Tying these moments of failures of productivity to an emphasis on bodily behaviors (dance, emphatic gestures, emotionally demonstrative actions, disruptive passivities, bodily civil disobediences, etc.)30 that are generally antithetical to good citizenship may be particularly effective at creating forms of production that interrupt docility and take students beyond the constricted physical limits of discipline. When applied to writing, such failures at modern productivity may become sites for resistance to subjection to the disciplinary regime. Self-reflexive writing is one such pedagogical technique, as long as it is centered in interruptions of self-surveillance, rather than encouraging students to express their creativity or individualized internal experiences in modern fashion.

Jennifer Gore has suggested working beyond the limits of teacher surveillance as a way to weaken the grip of the disciplinary regime.31 One weakness of her suggested approach is that students carry the deeply ingrained and multiply reinforced habits of self-surveillance with them on these projects. My attempts to carry this idea into practice have also consistently found that the projects students carried out were often readily appropriated back into modernist conceptions of student freedom and activist conceptions. As a response, I have taken to introducing students to critiques of modern conceptions of social change and alternative models taken from poststructuralist, feminist, Foucauldian, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies social theory.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has developed a set of practices that interrupt the presumptions of radical activism within the terms and political limits of modernity in many of her essays. In an essay specifically on human rights work, for example, she argues for educational practices linking work in western uni-
versities with education beyond the limits of the western university system, practices that replace the misguided claims in the global north to right wrongs of the world with work that opens education up to the agency of the subaltern Other activated through democratic structures. By linking her work in the western university system with work in elementary schools where the teacher learns from below, from the children and the subaltern, she displaces the educational effects of children's subjections to docility, modern forms of resistance, modern forms of class apartheid, and nationalist identitarianism. These practices open up room to activate the episteme and ethical practices of subaltern groups through the uncoercive rearrangement of desires, operating in terms divergent from those of modern education but aligned with democratic reflexes. In this model, the terms of learning, authority, expertise, and Otherness are fundamentally rearranged, so that the teacher learns from the students (or from subaltern materials brought into the classroom when the students are not subalterns) rather than teaching in pedagogies that locate universalist knowledge in the instructor.

There is clear congruence here with the work of Paolo Freire in the displacement of the teacher as a source of knowledge, but Spivak also asserts solidarities with the “Freedom Schools” of the American South and the Gopathshala in Bangladesh, the educational writing of W. E. B. DuBois and of Antonio Gramsci on teaching southerners, and other educators who have worked in subaltern education. This pedagogy also suggests an important response to the central problem for a dedisciplinary pedagogy: the decentralized character of power in a Foucauldian analysis and the resulting confusion about where to direct resistance and organizing. If power is constituted through the event of knowing and all of those in the classroom are caught up in the disciplinary regime, no obvious utopian social order may serve as a model for pedagogical relations. Spivak’s pedagogy, which emphasizes democratic reflexes grounded in an encounter with the agency of the global south, displaces the first world university and the experts it legitimates, including herself and virtually all other faculty, from the position of pure radical resistance in a binary opposition to the student. This may be compared to the efforts in cultural studies with the founding of the Open University and, more recently, in adult education all over the European Union, to reconfigure pedagogical relations in the classroom of instructor and student, where adult and working class students bring expertise beyond that of the instructor. Pedagogical approaches that emphasize the politics of location likewise delimit the knowledge of the instructor and the texts within the specific limits of race, class, sexuality, gender, and nation, rather than making universalist claims, which produces openings for more variegated power relations between students, teachers, and course materials. bell hooks’s notion of “talking back” is another way to work to invigorate student knowledges and invite them to talk as equals in a setting where there is so little equality, holding their own against the grain of so many mechanisms and experiences in which they are forced to subject themselves to the disciplinary regime. Writing assignments that invite students to explore their own expertise and authority beyond that of the university and the instructor, or that track and critique the limi-
Constituting Knowledge/Power Relations Other than Those of Modernity

Foucauldian conceptions of power/knowledge suggest that power is constituted through the act of knowing, just as knowledge is constituted through power relations. This opens up a suggestive area for pedagogical reflection on renegotiating the limits of the cultural studies classroom based on critical interrogation of the limits and politics of the field. The limits of cultural studies, particularly in its relations to the Others of a Euro-U.S.-centered modernity, are outlined in Spivak’s critique of cultural studies. In her call for the supplementation of cultural studies (and area studies) by comparative literature, she is critical of cultural studies as “monolingual, presentist, narcissistic, not practiced enough in close reading even to understand that the mother tongue is actively divided.”

Rather than this monolingual, presentist practice, Spivak asks cultural studies to take up an approach to “culturally diversified ethical systems diachronically, through the history of multicultural empires, without foregone conclusions.”

On this point, Spivak agrees with Rey Chow’s argument for an emphasis in cultural studies on critiques of Orientalist constitutions of empire, and the subalterns, hybrids, and minorities that may otherwise be erased through modern modes of knowledge and of epistemic violence. The critique and rejection of erasures, aporias, and epistemic violence draws on Foucault’s critique of the violence of modern forms of power/knowledge, violence through repeated, forcible subjections that are naturalized under modernity to the point that we identify with this violence and defend it. How may classroom education do something other than reproduce such modern power/knowledge relations?

Cultural studies pedagogy in this frame stretches beyond the inherited limits of the monolingual English-language classroom, or even colonizing, language-centered, comparativist practices, to find ways to bring materials in the languages of the global south, particularly colonized and subaltern groups, into the classroom. The traditional centrality of counter-hegemonic popular cultural practices in cultural studies may be readily adapted to this need for non-English language materials. There are many possibilities in this area, such as using visual culture from colonized and subaltern groups, working with local diaspora communities in the metropole from indigenous populations or other colonized groups as students in classrooms, as partners in field work and web-based collaborations, and as supervisors and advisors in developing these materials where they are not readily available.

Spivak and Chow’s insistence on the historicized analysis of popular cultural practices suggests another pillar for the cultural studies pedagogy that maintains its center on the interrogation of the presumptions of gendered, racial-
ized, and class-stratified colonial histories. One danger of presentist cultural analysis is to define culture in terms of the free choices of the individual artist or artistic collaborative. Persistent attention to the ways in which racialized and gendered histories of colonization constrict the range of available cultural practices and strategies of resistance can have surprisingly suggestive implications for representation and solidarities in classroom practices. Carrying out cross-border site visits in a cultural studies class on communities, for example, has allowed my students to uncover collaborations of Latino artists with indigenous squatter communities. By observing how indigenous populations, often operating without full literacy, take advantage of the porosity for U.S. citizens of the colonizing border to work in collaboration to build community centers rich in scarce legal, economic, and cultural resources, students may be exposed to the agency of those whose languages they do not understand. By framing student understanding of this agency in terms historicized both by oral indigenous narratives through interpreters and by readings critiquing “multicultural empires,” the classroom stages contestations between modern knowledges and their violent effects.

Spivak also demands that classroom pedagogy reconfigure the relation of self to Other, thereby transforming the power relations of self-same and Other into new forms. Spivak calls this pedagogy “an institutional calculus recoding or instrumentalizing undecidability,” where the Other of any presumed collectivity (nation, gender, etc.) is rendered undecidable by “really letting yourself be imagined (experience that impossibility) without guarantees, by and in another culture, perhaps. Teleopoiesis.”42 Through this approach “alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away.”43 This can be accomplished by giving attention, in materials we teach, to events “stag[ing] more surprising and unexpected maneuvers toward collectivity,” and by teaching in a way that begs “the question of collectivity, asking again and again “How many are we? Who are they?” as a way of teaching the “recognition of ceaselessly shifting collectivities.”44 This opens up interpretation of specific cultural texts and objects to the multiple solidarities that local marginalized or subaltern communities have found fruitful in their construction of cultural politics. The task for cultural studies pedagogies is to reject unthinking collectivities, such as nation or gender, colonized or colonizer, and instead to allow the classroom to become a site for the recognition of alliances unthinkable within the modern grid of intelligibility.

This pedagogical work may be readily carried out in writing assignments. In-class short and free writing assignments are an important way to intervene in the unthinking “we” cathected by course readings, by students during discussion, and by the instructor herself in unreflective constructions of self/Other binaries. By calling attention to the normalized constitution of questions of “we” and “they,” students may flex their newly found teleopoietic muscles, imagining unexpected alliances (northern underemployed populations with urban southerners; urban first world Chicanas with rural subalterns) and rendering legible unanticipated oppositions within the classroom and beyond. Entire assignments
may be constructed around exercises in critical self-reflection on the subtly racialized and class-stratified politics of the first person subject, eternally present even if often erased, allowing students to recognize undecidability in sites of contradictions (simultaneous privilege and subordination; nation of origin and of citizenship) and ambivalences (multiracial identities; sexualities under question). Most important from this perspective is writing that tracks and intervenes in the tendency in interpretation to inscribe normalized Others installed through epistemic violence, and radically reconfigure self/Other relations from the teleoetically imagined perspective of the erased Others of that same violence.

Attention to the Politics of Naming and Intelligibility

In a dedisciplinary pedagogy, the moment when central objects of knowledge are named and identified, often early in the course of the term or course sections, is profoundly important in the politics of knowledge. Spivak explored the politics of Foucauldian power/knowledge to find that as we know, through language, we are inevitably working with a catachresis or misfit, a naming that includes as it discloses. 45 To summarize Spivak’s reading of Foucault rather dogmatically, every success of rendering something intelligible is an objectification, not only for the object of knowledge, but also for the knowing subject, an objectification that subjects the knowing subject to the political and ethical terms of modernity through language. Spivak’s proposal for resisting this subjectification is to assiduously work with an awareness of the limits of knowing, to make the problems and occlusions and erasures of the object of knowledge apparent and, ultimately, to be critical of every success at rendering something intelligible. 46 In the classroom, this problematizing of every act of knowing may become a central pedagogical goal, rendering what seems obvious more troubling and less familiar while giving central place to a certain indeterminacy of meaning and power/knowledge relations. This indeterminacy destabilizes the fundamental lineaments and power effects of disciplinary power/knowledge, making the classroom a space for rendering intelligible knowing subjects and objects of knowledge impossible under the binarisms (colonizer/colonized, masculine/feminine, student/prisoner) of the modern interpretive grid, as I discuss in my final section. In other words, attention to the politics of naming and intelligibility allows the classroom to become a site for the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, with classroom writing an important site for this attention.

bell hooks likewise objects to the naming of structural domination in ways that may render it innocuous for members of dominant groups through the substitution of ethnicity for race, of difference or the Other for oppression, of hegemony for exploitation. 47 Inherited bad habits in the classroom may domesticate topics otherwise disruptive to racist or exploitative social practices, making
them intelligible under the terms of universalist humanism. As a result, it may come to seem that all of us have ethnicity while whites can escape discussions of race, or that we are all different (under modern liberal individualism) rather than some of us are exploited while others are oppressors. Rey Chow also emphasizes histories of racist practices and exploitation that can confront the theoretical claims to subversion and resistance of poststructuralist and cultural studies theorists.48

Possible applications of the politics of naming and intelligibility may be seen in Foucault’s own naming practices. Foucault’s response to problems with the politics of the innocuous term “knowledge,” for example, led him to render it with the neologism “power/knowledge.” This inconvenient innovation names the power aspect so readily overlooked by academics and others in modernity who produce knowledge: prison policy critiques; school grades; the corporate prospectus; the psychoanalytic session; government ministry reports; public health studies; the court case; and many others. Foucault provides us with many examples of terms that we may substitute for those in common parlance both in academic settings and in colloquial usage. Foucault developed general terms to replace innocuous words such as economies of subjectification (for society), self-surveillance (for identity), technologies of the body (for behavior), or compulsory objectification (for knowledge). The term “regime” may be simply added to terms that might otherwise sound appealing, such as truth (truth regime) or discourse (discursive regime) or discipline (disciplinary regime). This practice is particularly useful even when working within a Marxist or Gramscian frame, as hooks pointed out, so that we may come to render key terms like “structure” or “production” with the Foucauldian “mechanisms of subjection.”

We may develop a similar critique of a number of common disciplinary terms for widespread social and cultural practices that render violence unintelligible. The specific vocabulary that must be reconsidered depends on the discipline of the classroom, of the textbook or journal article under discussion, and of the primary document in the archive or the field setting. Yet each must be interrogated for ease of appropriation in order to interrupt domestication to the extent possible. Social scientists and historians in assigned readings who lapse into descriptive summaries of “social order,” for example, may be interrupted as classroom discussion centers on using terms introduced in a major methodological reading from early in the semester by substituting a term such as “power/knowledge regime.” Humanities discussions of modern individualist proliferations of “interpretation” as manifestations of free will may be redirected to critical analyses of speech and other uses of language as sites for subjection into the modern grid of intelligibility. Claims to objectivity and the political neutrality of knowledge pervade nearly every academic field, and may be interrogated in various ways: through questions about complicity with colonialism (likewise found in most fields), or through cross-cultural analyses of how seemingly objectivist categories produce aporias that silence and exclude. Modernist presumptions of free speech or egalitarian practices in the classroom can be interrogated with readings and discussion of the classroom as a site for docility, either
explicitly with readings or implicitly after an early introduction of critiques of modernity.

In terms of concrete practice, writing assignments might take, as one objective, translation from standardized vocabulary that normalizes inequality and violence into terms and phrases that refuse and critique that normalization, as in the paragraph above. I also begin most introductory classes with a warning that students will encounter many terms that seem neutral but are not, in order to return, again and again, to this reinscribing of putatively neutral terms into a more critical vocabulary when they come up in the readings, and I end the semester with a study guide of reinterpreted "Neutral Terms" as students prepare for the final exam.

In my own teaching on the historicized Others of the masculinized west, I have found that sometimes the simple translation of key terms must be supplemented with the above techniques. For example, when teaching late medieval Japanese culture, students are comfortable with the term "shogun" because of the popularity of samurai movies and other aspects of U.S. popular culture. Some teachers might feel that this term requires translation, but the usual translation as "Barbarian-Subduing Generalissimo" makes little sense to students when they have been trained to see the "shogun" as a head of state that glorifies military violence. A translation with a more appropriate term from political science, something akin to "military dictator," consolidates the premodern kingdom of Japan as identical with the modern nation-state, while also erasing the origins of the office in Japanese history as an office for the maintenance, defense, and military expansion of the people of Yamato (those who claim to be Japanese), with the northern and eastern indigenous peoples named as "barbarians." It is the subjection of these indigenous groups and the expansion of the Yamato people into their territory that makes the coherent entity of past centuries known to our students as Japan possible, yet this violent history must be articulated explicitly in order to identify some of the aporias generated by the term "shogun" or "Japan." Only when such a historical analysis is carried out will questions about the perspectives of those who have been forcibly consolidated into the modern nation-state become possible, opening up room for subjugated knowledges.

Yet effective naming and intelligibility are themselves fundamental criteria for grading and other evaluation, both written and oral, so they present particular challenges for designing assignments and evaluating classroom performance. An important preliminary response to this problem is to recognize that subjection to language through writing and speaking is fundamentally an event of ordering, an ordering that is perhaps unavoidably complicit with social inequalities and the foundational violences of the society in which that order is normative. As Nikki Sullivan has suggested, in an overview of queer theory, "naming something constitutes a form of closure, or of assimilation," where assimilation is not a welcoming gesture of successful integration of queer into the heteronormative, but the moment where, by definition, the queer comes under threat through the inscription of social norms. Rey Chow argues a similar point in her attack on
those antitheory moralists who approach language as instrumental, as something to be rendered clear and transparent for effective communication in the case of the humanities (but not in the sciences or math or such trade professions as medicine or law). If we are to challenge the Eurocentrism of the Western logos and problematize the politics of the production of meaning and value, Chow suggests we must approach language as a type of labor that restores "an originary difference" and acknowledges the implicit ideological and theoretical assumptions of the clear language that claims to be "natural." 

In this cultural studies approach to teaching writing, the simplicity, clarity, and persuasiveness of the perfectly legible sentence and perfectly reasonable common sense argument are pleasures and delusions we "must learn to forgo." Teaching written and oral use of language in a setting influenced by poststructuralist politics and critique takes place through a "profound distrust of literal, naturalized meanings; a persistent refusal or deferral of reference, a determined unmasking of any use of language that seems devoid of semiotic self-consciousness." In this way, the cultural studies classroom may become a site for the practice of "acts of subversion of an unbearable regime (Western logoscentrism and its many 'ideological aberrations,' to use a phrase from [Paul] de Man)," even as it teaches speaking and writing that both "wants to be of the masses yet ends up speaking and writing in such ways that few of the masses will ever understand." In a certain sense, then, Chow suggests that the cultural studies classroom becomes a site for training in comfort and skill at what she terms this "permanent contradiction," perhaps the opposite of how many teach writing as skill at the erasure of contradiction.

For that reason, dedisciplinary pedagogies must take up as one fundamental and necessary practice the disordering, the critical interrogation, the self-reflexive deconstruction of the author or speaker's order and reason, genre and gesture, self and Other. To this end, Robert McRuer has argued for an approach to composition that emphasizes practices of what he calls "decomposition," that clear linguistic space for unruly, disorderly cultural and social practices. In designing assignments and evaluating their performance, the measure of a successful assignment shifts from established notions of clarity and consistency, persuasion and precision, to the successful practice of the critical and the disorderly, understood as a refusal of what McRuer terms "the current corporeality." Classroom performance and written work might then be evaluated in terms of its success at whether the topic has been made queer or crip, whether implicit norms or ideologies or power/knowledge politics have been successfully decomposed and, ultimately, whether order and composure have been effectively lost.

D. Diane Davis develops a comparably reformulated pedagogy of excription and laughter that proliferates sense to allow for illicit styles, impurities of argumentation and truth and, ultimately, unreason (Foucault's déraison) within the limits of "good writing." By refusing domestication of the knowing subject and her Others, dedisciplinary power/knowledge relations in the classroom shift from demonstrating mastery of oneself and one's subject matter towards a site for critique shaped as
a practice of a particular refusal of intelligibility, of objectification, and of subjection. This refusal renders visible the occlusions and violences that acts of knowing and writing and speaking install and attempt to normalize, making visible the political and ethical specificity of the subject and her Others, rather than making possible "the unquestioned transparent ethical subject—the white male heterosexual Christian man of property." In this frame, evaluation centers on the examination of a legible ethics and politics, of "the ways in which the subject 'subjects' itself through 'ability to know' (pouvoir-savoir)," a subjection that is a "success" only when it refuses to conceal or bracket problems with the thing named and with the act of naming itself, the act of constituting reality and its limits, ethics, and politics. Effective writing becomes that which refuses the naturalized meanings and direct references enforced by Western logocentrism in order to explicitly practice subversion of its unbearable regime. Such "success" is displayed not through proximity to normalization, but through what McRuer calls queering and crippling the object of knowledge, the subject, and ultimately power/knowledge relations themselves.

Recognizing Subjects and Objects of Knowledge that Refuse the Disciplinary Regime

As the power effects of disciplinary knowledge/power relations are rendered visible, the classroom may become a site for the insurrection of subjugated knowledges that are under siege in the modern truth regime. An example of this practice is seen when bell hooks begins one response to cultural studies with a saying that recognizes as authoritative a person and a statement that would be unintelligible under the disciplinary regime and is suggestive for pedagogy. A favorite saying of her mother’s mother, Sarah Oldham—"If you play with a puppy he'll lick you in the mouth"—forms the basis for a critique of white scholars who assume familiarity without recognizing that their work is made possible by a history and cultural context of white supremacy. The subject hooks recognizes is one close to her but far from most of the hallways in academe: the southern black rural woman in the 1950s. The object of knowledge hooks recognizes looms large for many in the academy who study race: the many subtle ways in which difference is domesticated and racism made more palatable.

hooks’s critique of the speed by which cultural studies gained legitimacy in the academy, that was and in many ways still is denied to Black Studies and third world studies, is a warning to those working in fields dominated by white academics, particularly white men. She suggests that this rapid success may betray an ease with which the subjects of cultural studies are more readily appropriated into white supremacist and colonizing academic practices and the modern truth regime more generally. As a warning to whites, her grandmother’s saying also serves as a warning to people of color in cultural studies and beyond, who may forget the need for distance and wariness against being surprised when
the visitor in your house takes liberties and treats you with contempt, viz. the hope that easy bonding with whites across racial boundaries is feasible. By introducing her mother's mother's saying into her writing about the academy, hooks clears room to discuss racism, even in a white-dominated field such as cultural studies, and also to engage with forms of intellectual discourse that were and are not traditionally welcome in the academy, such as her own grandmother's. hooks elaborates specific implications of this statement for cultural studies classrooms, focusing on the cultural studies classroom as a place for white students to grapple with race and domination even as it puts the professor at risk of collaboration with racist structures. This is part of a more general argument about cultural studies as a practice that critically interrogates the location from which writing occurs and the role of the educator as potentially supporting colonization and domination.

The concrete practices suggested by hooks are those she carries out herself in this essay: introduction of knowledges and speaking subjects generally excluded from the academy, what we might call subjugated knowledges; and work in the medium of colloquial materials and dialect that rarely, if ever, make their way through the modern machinery of academic publication and into the classroom. Her quoting of her mother's mother, rather than turning to academic press publications and other acceptable documentation, extends the reach of her truth practices beyond the limits of the modern truth regime. Her references to her mother's mother as "grandmamma Aunt Sarah" and "baba" uses colloquialisms rather than the official language of the scientific kinship system of the modern truth regime, gesturing toward the familiar even as she refuses the attempts of the disciplinary regime to regulate her language in discussing the familiar and personal. Yet hooks does not allow the personal and the local to distract her from the rigorous intellectual points she makes about racist social structures and the role of education in supporting domination and colonization.

When hooks interrogates these structures by sharing the local strategies of her mother's mother with those of us who were not able to hear Sarah Oldham's warnings, she draws on the extensive experience of her baba in dealing with racism, while generating an anti-racist practice that is almost as difficult to domesticate as her mother's mother was and is. By bringing the anti-racist practices of her mother's mother into the classroom, her students and readers can taste the effects of their own presumptions to familiarity across the boundaries of difference, and may learn to recoil from these presumptions, even as we might recoil from the friendliness of the slobbering dogs that we all know and that some of us are. This self-critique is necessary both for white faculty and students in a white supremacist society, and for the women and men of color who risk complicity with racist practices and their multiple means of appropriation and domestication, and suggests the central importance of self-reflexive analysis and critique in a cultural studies pedagogy.

While hooks' warning has clear implications for teachers and authors in cultural studies, it can readily be applied as well to rethinking student writing. Many of our students have expertise in non-standard English that they often are
unlearning in the writing classroom, but hooks’s deployment of her own colloquial skills, as well as those of her mother’s mother, suggests a different focus for the writing classroom. Rather than teaching written language as univocal, hooks’s practice asks us to consider teaching writing as a site for multivocality, where those students’ heritages are accorded a respect equivalent to that of standard English. The writing teacher may design assignments that encourage code-switching from standard English to vernacular forms, and experimentation with ways in which the vernacular may displace the standard language form at key moments in building persuasive arguments through logics and colloquialisms that refuse normalization. Students who do not have an expertise in non-standard English, or who lack strong connections to subjugated knowledges, may seem to be at a disadvantage in learning this practice, and they will have to work harder at these assignments in a reversal of the usual advantage of students more familiar with standard English in the writing classroom. Students may also be asked to reflect on folk knowledges of the sort that hooks deploys in building their own critiques of racialized, unequally gendered, or class elitist aspects of the academy, or in addressing other topics relevant to the course subject matter. Advanced work of this sort would entail assignments that draw on folk wisdom and other forms of subjugated knowledges that reverse and displace the legitimacy of the ways in which academic objects of knowledge and course topics are constituted, modeled on course readings, lectures, and discussions that do the same.

hooks’s introduction of her mother’s mother in the classroom is also an example of the revitalization of subjugated knowledges that Foucault argued was central to resistance to the centralized regulatory mechanisms of modern power/knowledge. As a local knowledge that would be ranked very low on the modern hierarchy of reliable knowledges, Sarah Oldham’s local wisdom is marginal to modern power/knowledge, even as it interrogates its racialized politics. Just as Foucault wrote his histories to bring attention to the knowledges of delinquents, psychiatric patients, and “of the nurse, of the doctor—parallel and marginal as they are to the knowledge of medicine,” hooks brings into the feminist cultural studies classroom knowledge that would otherwise be refused entry into the hallways of academe, as Spivak and other cultural studies practitioners have done as well. Foucault suggested that awareness of these subjugated knowledges is fruitful, not because it may be rendered into general commonsense knowledge of modern hegemonies, but rather because it is a local, popular, particular knowledge, “a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything around it.” Focus on subjugated knowledges asks us to rethink the myth of the “silent Other” that ignores the presence of already-formed oppositional voices. But the more general point of pedagogies that support the introduction and vitalization of subjugated knowledges is that they refuse the claim to universality and the logic of modern commonsense, the logic of hegemony.

Cultural studies pedagogical practices have a clear affinity with popular culture that may readily be seen as the re-emergence of these local popular knowl-
edges, but not all such differential knowledges are counter-hegemonic. As Rey Chow has argued, selection of case studies and field sites, classroom videos and texts must be interrogated as to their position in relation to a confrontation with the significance of race, and rejected if they carry out the "persistent denial of racial inequalities" or practice the "reification of culture." Here it is useful to distinguish between two overlapping but contradictory conceptions of the "popular." First is the popular that meets with success in the circuits of advanced capitalist consumer society, the popular that may appropriate critiques of race or erase it altogether, as it may with other forms of Othering. Second is the popular that Foucault emphasized, that is localized and site-specific, refusing claims on the universal or unanimity, surrounded not by consumers eager to hand over cash for its commodified form but by the "harshness with which it is opposed by everything around it." Cultural studies pedagogy must be ever-vigilant for the appropriations of an exploitative society, as Rey Chow reminds us, and refuse those appropriations as it makes the "dogged turn towards the other" that remains at the center of a dedisciplinary pedagogy for cultural studies.

**Conclusion**

The simultaneous focus in a cultural studies pedagogy, on resistance to disciplinary mechanisms and the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, demands that we pay attention to physical bodies as they encounter bodies of knowledge. As students are expected to subject themselves bodily and intellectually to the classroom disciplinary regime, so the scholarship and teaching of the teacher is expected to subject herself to the disciplinary regime articulated through departmental, field, and publication mechanisms. Where possible, the partial refusal of this subjection is the goal of dedisciplinary pedagogy for cultural studies. This allows for new embodied practices and new subject positions in the classroom for teachers and students, as it allows for new objects of knowledge, new logics and ethical practices, new uses of and limits on language and, ultimately, new power/knowledge relations for faculty in their publications and syllabi and for students in their writing and oral performance.

This is one way that interdisciplinary fields like cultural studies can begin to proliferate sites for releasing the stranglehold of multiple disciplinary mechanisms on our students and ourselves. Through work at multiple sites, the subjugated knowledges that have been disqualified by modern power/knowledge may be visible and revivified in the spaces of modernity: our classrooms and research archives, field sites and homes. In a certain sense, then, dedisciplinary pedagogies are training for comfort with being indecorous, illegitimate, immodest, illegible, illicit, and even indecent or improper, at ease in working against these and all the other prohibitions that protect the social hierarchies and disciplinary order of the modern. Successful students and teachers in dedisciplinary classrooms will have learned to be indefeasible, illimitable, and even irascible when
it comes to interrogating, displacing, decomposing, queering, cripping, and interrupting the unbearable regime of modern disciplinary practices.

Rendering intelligible these pervasive gatekeeping and regulatory mechanisms opens the door to new curricular content and research topics, new practices in writing and speech of naming and exposing violences and contradictions. Just as the turn towards class issues and then gender at Birmingham, and then towards adult education at the Open University and elsewhere in Europe, the U.S., and Australasia changed classroom content, this pedagogy recenters course content in ways that refuse Eurocentrism and the logics and politicized limits of modernity. A Foucauldian approach to cultural studies may weaken the exclusive emphasis on Marxism as the only center for left or progressive practice, but the shift to a multi-centered approach to pedagogy that began many years ago with feminist participants at Birmingham must be accompanied as always by careful attention to the multiple, intersecting power issues I have emphasized here. This may seem to some like a high price to pay for the inclusion of subjects many see as marginal, like bell hooks’s baba or illiterate rural subalterns, yet it is a necessary price if cultural studies wishes to face its Others in its journals and its classrooms. The writing practices found in such a cultural studies classroom may not be recognizable as good, clear, persuasive writing to those still effectively subjected to the occlusions and violences that the acts by good modern citizens of knowing and writing and speaking install and attempt to normalize. Yet such practices may allow us to confront the complicities of our departments and our own writing in inscribing and enforcing such subjection, complicities that may be interrogated and disordered at any time through our subversion, decomposition, and agency.

Notes


2. Foucault, *Discipline*, 181.


8. Foucault, Discipline, 27.
10. Foucault, Discipline, 30.
11. Foucault, Discipline, 27.


15. Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 84.


22. Foucault, Discipline, 178, 181.

23. Foucault, Discipline, 170.


25. Foucault, Discipline, 170-94.

26. Foucault, Discipline, 173.

27. Foucault, Discipline, 170-94.
28. Foucault, Discipline, 194.
29. Foucault, Discipline, 190.
30. I am indebted to Lindon Barrett for comments that suggested this analysis.
42. Spivak, Death, 52.
43. Spivak, Death, 73.
44. Spivak, Death, 56, 70, 102.
57. McRuer, Crip, 146-47, 158-59, 238, n. 12.
58. McRuer, Crip, 158, 237, n. 5: Barnard, 99-104.
60. Foucault, “Power/Knowledge,” 39.
63. hooks, “Culture to Culture,” 124.
64. hooks, “Culture to Culture,” 130-31.
65. hooks, “Culture to Culture,” 125.
66. hooks, “Culture to Culture,” 123.
67. Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 82.
69. Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 82.
72. Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 82.