

The Radical Imagination Labs Course Pack

About

The Radical Imagination Labs is a space curated simply for the co-creation of knowledge. We at the FBU felt it necessary to develop a course that not only challenges the systems of harm we live within, but that opens a space and dialogue to challenge the philosophies and knowledges that underpin it. Our first course takes on the foundations of knowledge and we believe this is the most appropriate place to begin the lasting work of radical imagining we plan to do here at the FBU. With this, to give ourselves the permission and authority to collectively imagine alternative philosophies and knowledges for the liberated worlds we vision.

In [The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning for Black Study](#), Fred Moten argues that what Fanon was fighting for was “not to end colonialism but to end the standpoint from which colonialism makes sense.” This is precisely the work that the Free Black University is here to do.

We are living in the imagination of a few White European men, we have taken their standpoint of rationalist fact, and produced it within society as common sense. What may happen when we suspend ourselves in reality and believe that truly anything is possible? When we re-examine some of the foundational philosophies of the Enlightenment that have become the foundations of the society in which we live.

The Radical Imagination Labs are for those interested in radical change, and a world entirely unencumbered by pain and oppression. It is also for those that understand it is not an easy road towards this world – we have been conditioned to feel safety within the suffering of the current model of society. To vision and build these new worlds we will have to ask ourselves difficult questions, invoke possibilities that we may have at times felt impossible, or even undesirable. This course is both about the exploration and building of knowledges but also hopes to act as a journey of self-renewal and healing.

Our minds, our nervous systems, and our bodies are not accustomed to freedom, liberation, and justice. Are you ready to move into a level of imagination that challenges each of us at a profound and revolutionary level? To delve into transformative philosophies, and to understand, then

embrace, spiritual and embodied knowledges? Are you ready to live life in the imagination you design and experience the levels of freedom and liberation alternative approaches to knowledge can provide? Then this is the course for you.

Pedagogy and Assessment

Pedagogy is just a fancy word for teaching practices; have a look at our [Pedagogical Principles](#) to understand the broader pedagogical approach taken by the FBU that will also underpin this course. What is most important to understand about the Radical Imagination Labs, is that the process of knowledge exploration and creation is collective. Melz, our founder, will be the course convener and has designed the route of inquiry for the course as an offering. Though they will act more as a facilitator for the course, the sharing of experience and recognising each person within the space as a powerful knowledge producer is the essence of the Radical Imagination Labs.

There will be no formal assessment for the Radical Imagination Labs. We do not believe the process of external validation is supportive for the process of exploration we will be setting upon. However, we believe it is important that each participant has the opportunity to bring what they have imagined into form in some way. As such, by the end of the course, the aim is for the collaborative production of a journal, related to the inquiry and imagination that has taken place.

In this first session we explore what exactly epistemology is and how we might begin to complicate common understandings and accepted 'truths' about the creation, validation, and justification of knowledge. We look at how radical epistemologies might be a location of possibility when considering creating new worlds and speculating about justice beyond what we are taught is 'possible' within the modern world. We begin by exploring some of the foundational philosophical epistemological and metaphysical claims made by European philosophers at the latter end of the Renaissance period and during the Enlightenment period which have arguably shaped our collective relationship to 'truth' and what is possible for how we might structure and live in a society. We will then explore Radical Black approaches to epistemologies of freedom based on alternative conceptions of truth and the possible. We begin to ask questions around whether we might be able to transform these knowledges and what a world grounded in alternative epistemologies might look

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Phase One: Everything is to be Questioned

Week One: Epistemologies

3rd of October

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Readings etc.

- [Towards an Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology](#) - Patricia Hill Collins
- [Poetry is Not a Luxury](#) - Audre Lorde
- [Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity](#) - Steve Biko

Week Two: Burn Shit Down

10th of October

In Week Two, we turn our attention to abolition and explore what each of our conceptions of abolitionist futures are, we will be taking a deep dive into what is required from each of us to build abolitionist futures. We will be contending with the more uncomfortable aspects of abolition and understanding what transformation is required in both self and society to create the conditions necessary for abolitionist futures to both be realised, and to be sustained. We will explore both the profound possibilities of abolition and explore the fears and concerns that may arise with such radical shifts and changes. We grapple with the difficult truths that our minds, our nervous systems, and our bodies are not accustomed to the freedom, liberation, and justice that abolition may bring about and how we might begin building a path towards these radical futures in an embodied way. So, we will explore what abolition is experienced like in our minds, what it feels like in our bodies, even what it sounds and tastes like, what knowledge we have of it embedded in our spirits and souls. In this vein we begin the process of exploring and embedding knowledges that go beyond the realm of mind and into the parts of self that the 'Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process' as Patricia Hill Collins puts it, would not accept as truth.

Readings etc.

- [Are Prisons Obsolete?](#) - Angela Davis - Introduction and Chapter 6 (pp. 9 - 21, pp. 105 - 115)
- [The Only Freedom We Can See: Imprisoned Queer Writing and the Politics of the Unimaginable](#) - Steven Dillon (pp. 169 - 184) - In Captive Genders Edited Collection (Content and trigger warning; this reading contains explicit references to sexual, physical and state violences. If you would like to discuss the content before you read it, please email Taiwo: taiwo@freeblackuni.com)

Week Three: Time, Temporalities, and Dispelling Linearity

17th of October

In Week Three, we unpack what is considered a universal constant and that is our relationship to time. We will explore how attachments to time impacts our relationship to the possibilities of

expansion and the new worlds we may lean into. To explore this, we begin by delving into decolonial thought and the ways theorists argue colonialism produced the concept of time itself and how that in turn shapes our relationship to ideas of 'progress' in society. We follow this with explorations of contributions to our understanding of time made in the field of gender studies – specifically in the emerging space of Transgender Studies as well as contributions made in the field of Disability Studies, specifically exploring the concept of Crip Time. Overarchingly, we will explore the ways time can be bent, moulded, and done away with all together in service of the broader mission of liberation. We will also explore personal relationships to time, temporality, and linearity and explore how we might problematise time in practical ways in the course moving forward.

Readings etc.

- [Crip Time](#) - Ellen Samuels
- [The Enduring Enchantment: \(Or the Epistemic Privilege of Modernity and Where to Go from Here\)](#) - Walter D. Mignolo

Week Four: In the Wake of the Rationalist Evidence-based Model

24th of October

This week we will explore what it means to transition from accepting the rationalist evidence-based model of knowledge production as the only valid route to knowing, to exploring alternative ways of knowing. We will reflect on the engagement we have had with epistemology over the first three weeks and ground the routes to knowing we want to take into the rest of the course. This includes, but is not limited to; embodied knowledge, spiritual knowledge, knowledge found within self, ancestral knowledge, land-based knowledge, affective (emotional) knowledge, speculative knowledge and so on. We also want to acknowledge that there is often a process of grief related to transitions - we are all taught that rationalist knowledge is the only way to know in this world, so we want to explore and be present to what grief or resistance may come up when we engage in these alternative ways of knowing. It is through the process of this that we move into phase two of the Radical Imagination Labs where we begin to craft and explore alternative worlds.

Readings etc.

- [Racial Fictions, Biological Facts: Expanding the Sociological Imagination through Speculative Methods](#) - Ruha Benjamin
- [Where Did the Dogon Tribe Gather their Knowledge Documentary](#) - History Channel

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Phase Two: Creating Worlds and Knowledges of Freedom

Week Five: Freedom Dreaming and Creating Worlds

31st of October

This week we turn our attention to freedom dreaming and what it may mean to create worlds based in alternative knowledge systems. Robin D. G. Kelley argued that freedom exists in our 'third eye', we will explore Kelley's work and how he allows us to engage with the ways black people throughout history have had to imagine the impossible to move closer to freedom. Our ancestors continued dreaming on planes of (im)possibility to create the world's we live in beyond the trans-Atlantic slave trade, beyond the deepening colonisation of Africa. What worlds do we long to create; so that those whom we are ancestors to may look back in awe and gratitude that we continued to fight for their freedom and liberation? What ancestors do we long to become? We explore the conditions required to create a space in which we can move into the freedom of dreaming and seeing possibilities through our third eyes of what freedom and liberation beyond ourselves may look like.

Readings etc.

- [Freedom Dreams: The Radical Black Imagination](#) – Preface, and “When History Sleeps” A Beginning - R. D. G. Kelley
- Octavia's Brood - Any Story from this collection - Edited by Adrienne Maree Brown and Walidah Imarisha (can be found on app called [Scribd](#) - sign up to one-month free trial)

Week Six: Into the Spirit Realm

7th of November

This session will again turn our attention to our ancestors and explore knowledge produced through spirituality as an alternative way of knowing. When exploring the decolonial there is arguably a deeply spiritual essence that one is guided towards, if we are to challenge the knowledge and truth that holds up coloniality we must explore what coloniality came to upend and in many cases that was knowledge of divine. This week we will openly discuss our own relationships with spirituality and what possibilities may reside in opening up spirituality as a valid site of knowledge production.

Readings etc.

Self-directed research: spend this week speaking to people you know about their relationship with African and African Diasporic spiritualities. Watch YouTube videos about different spiritualities, span the web and see what you may find. We will also hold a watch party for the Film Ancestral Voices.

Week Seven: What Alternative Possibilities?

14th of November

This week will be a participant-led session in which the aim is to explore all that is within us when it comes to the possibility of knowledges beyond the rational and empiricist frame. We will collectively explore what each participant has brought to the session and how these provocations may allow us to further, and unashamedly, unlock what resides in the depths of our hearts when it comes to liberation. Together we will embrace and explore what the possible may look like for each of us.

Readings etc.

This week we will collate recommendations from each participant of something to read, watch, or do. Once we have collated this list each person can choose two items from this list to engage with.

Week Eight: Sculpting Futures

21st of November

This week will follow on from the previous week, and we will draw together the themes that have arisen Week Seven, and the Radical Imagination Labs as a whole. This session will be used to brainstorm responses to the phenomena explored that the participants may want to offer to the journal.

Meditation

Guided Meditation to be sent ahead of session

[No sessions in Week 9, 28th of November, for rest, reading, and reflection]

Phase Three: Creating Knowledge

Week Ten to Eleven: Creation

5th and 12th of December

The final weeks of the course will be used to collectively curate the journal and plan the contributions to it participants want to make. One-to-one and smaller sessions will be offered to support participants in their submissions and as a space to exchange ideas and skills.

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