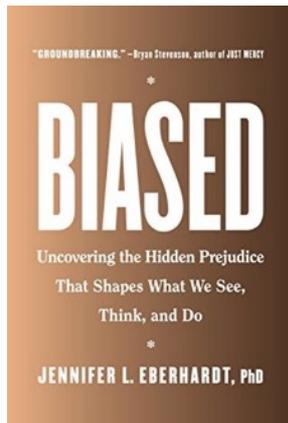


Decolonising my reading list: An organic process

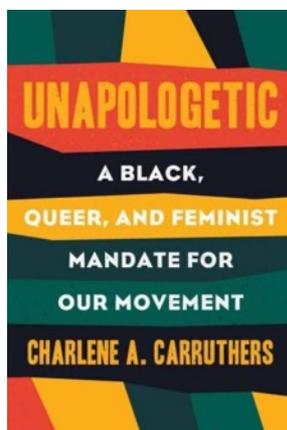
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All lecturers use reading lists when course planning. In 2021, I worked on the team which successfully planned a series of cross-campus events, celebrating Black History Month. Our work prompted me to reflect deeply on the reading lists I am responsible for, and the dominant voices in the chosen texts, since the choice of those texts can inevitably highlight or elevate some voices and ideas over others; even excluding some voices entirely and giving students a narrow, incomplete perspective of the subject. Working with BGU librarians, who were also fellow members of TILIIs, I decided to work on an activity to decolonise one of my module lists.

I picked a module that did seem like an obvious choice for this, 'Leadership and Professional Practice', a Level 6 module. It is the first one undertaken on the Professional Studies year-long degree, and as such, had the potential for making a great impact on the entire curriculum.

Students enrolled in the Professional Studies degree are already all working with children, young people and families in a variety of educational, social and/or health care settings. They are all on the front-line and a number are managing complex caseloads. For me, due to the students position in the children's services workforce it is imperative that they are exposed to a broad, representative range of reading material as soon as possible.



I began by reviewing the existing reading lists and was surprised to discover how male-dominated and western-centric the texts were. Given the fact 'global perspectives' feature on the module assignment brief, I questioned why I had not undertaken this task earlier!

Drawing on best practice from other institutions and colleagues who had undertaken the process of decolonising their reading lists, (thank you University of Kent and University of Derby), and after conversations BGU librarians who were developing a decolonising toolkit [<https://libguides.bishopg.ac.uk/>

SJD], I began to work my way through existing literature. This was a daunting task and one where I set aside a full day to undertake. Once I had created a space to commence the review, I found I effortlessly generated pace and purpose.



Through a review of the existing literature, I was also able to identify resources that would not traditionally be found on our reading lists, for example, theatre performances. I felt these non-traditional resources would appeal to the Professional Studies students given the many demands on their time. I particularly liked the short TED talk by Dr. Tiffany Bowden entitled 'What my colouring book taught me about racism'. Bowden (2018) discusses how the simplicity of humanity is made complicated by human constructs of race and racism.

If you are interested and keen to make a start on your reading lists, ask yourself the following questions as a starting point:

- **What** are the dominant voices and narratives in your areas of study?
- **What** voices and narratives are excluded, and how can they be identified?
- **Are** the texts Western-centric, or Euro-centric?
- **Are** bodies of knowledge distorted? Can discourse affect the way that we look at groups of people?
- **Who** is the author of the work? Are the majority of the authors the same gender and ethnicity?
- **What** is the relevance of the author's identity in this context?
- **Who** is talking about whose experience and/ or culture?
- **What** is the place of publication and geographic coverage of the text?
- **What** is the language of the text? Is it a translation or in its original language?
- **What** kinds of sources do we perceive to be of most academic value and why?

They are from the [University of Derby](https://www.derby.ac.uk/) and I found that in addition to similar prompts on our BGU Library [Toolkit](#), these helped me. I would advise you take one question at a time to enable a systematic approach. My own list along with others that went through a similar activity can be seen here:

<https://libguides.bishopg.ac.uk/c.php?g=699370&p=5022906>

Decolonising reading lists is an organic process, and I am not quite there yet! It is hoped that all reading lists will be reviewed over the course of the next year and our students will have the opportunity to develop a decolonisation perspective in order to be a positive agent of social change.

References:

Bowden, T. (2018). *What my colouring book taught me about racism*. https://www.ted.com/talks/tiffany_bowden_how_my_coloring_book_taught_me_about_racism

Schucan Bird, K. and Pitman, L. (2020). How diverse is your reading list? Exploring issues of representation and decolonisation in the UK. *High Educ* 79, 903–920



This article has been published TILIIs, an interest group at Bishop Grosseteste University engage in discussion, debate, and sharing of useful education resources that address the corrosive effects of inequality in our contemporary society. <https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/student/research/telling-it-like-it-is-teaching-resource-group-tiliis>