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| Title | NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit - an Irish approach to emancipatory pedagogy beyond prison walls and borders |
| Authors | Swirak, Katharina;Maruna, Shadd;O'Neill, Maggie;White, Kathleen;McNaull, Gillian;Cronin, James G. R. |
| Publication date | 2025 |
| Original Citation | Swirak, K., Maruna, S. O'Neill, M., White, K., McNaull, G. and Cronin, J. (2025) NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit - an Irish approach to emancipatory pedagogy beyond prison walls and border. Cork: University College Cork. |
| Type of publication | Report |
| Rights | © 2025, the Authors. |
| Download date | 2026-11-13 13:08:21 |
| Item downloaded from | https://hdl.handle.net/10468/18363 |



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# North South Together Toolkit

**An Irish approach to emancipatory pedagogy beyond prison walls and borders**

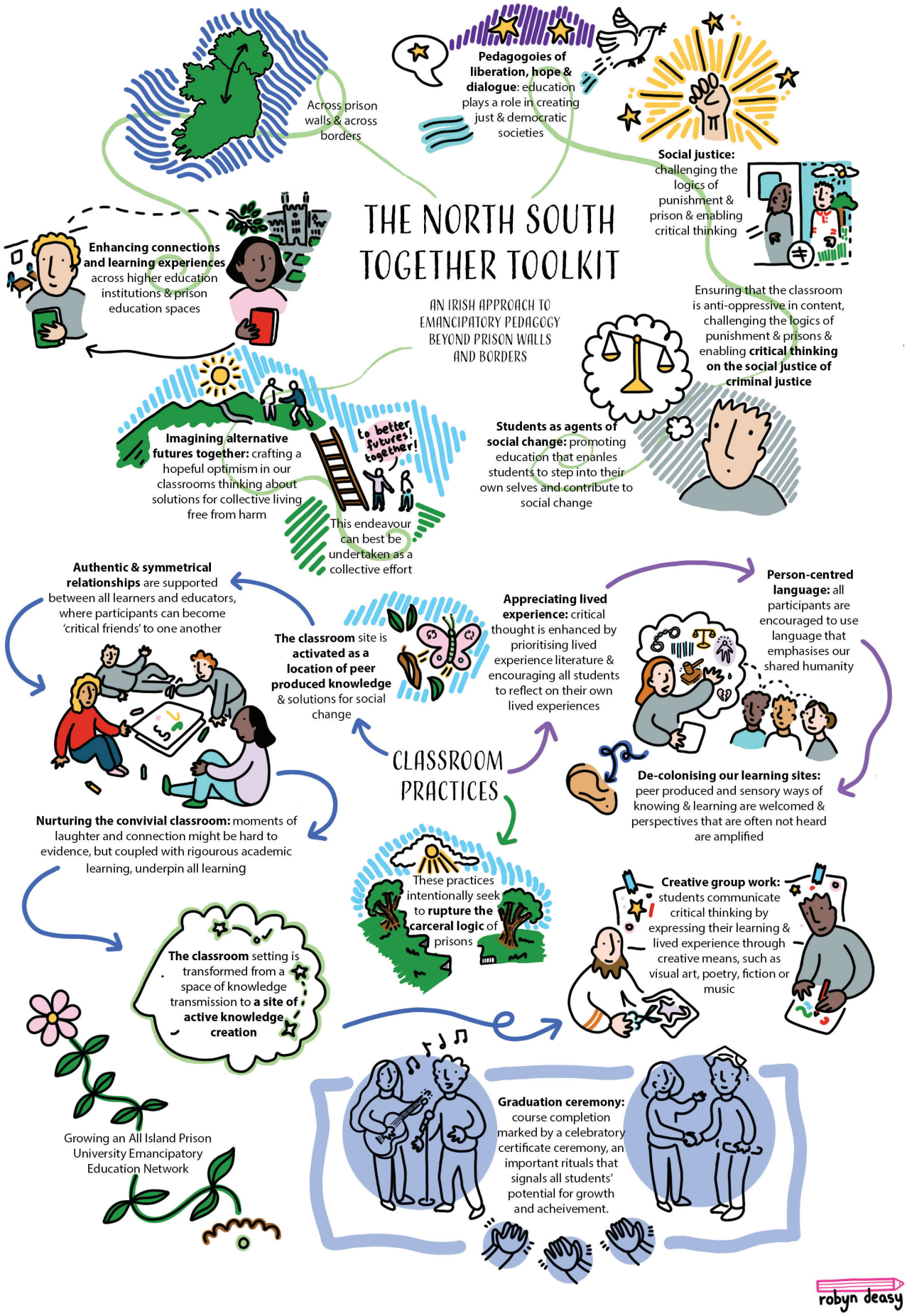
## About The Cover Page

The cover page is a collage of prison and university students' creative group work projects completed between September-December 2023 in their university-prison classrooms in Cork and Belfast. As a fine art practice, collage has a rich history and consists of assembling different materials into a new creation. Freya Gowrley (2024) highlights that collage, tied to the invention of paper in China around 200 BCE, is an enduring and powerful visual tool for storytelling and explorations of identity. We deliberately chose to depict students' creative works as collage, as it underpins our approach to the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit. Collage can also be understood as a 'borderlands' way of knowing the world (Harding, 1996) and one that appreciates diverse ways of knowing, thinking and learning (Vaughan, 2005). The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project as well as this toolkit, are very much examples of such 'borderlands' collaboration. Our collaboration transcended two different types of borders: the political and physical Irish border as well as the borders and walls of prisons and universities.

## We Are Thankful To The Following Partners For Collaboration.

**How to cite this report:** Swirak, K., Maruna, S. O'Neill, M., White, K., McNaull, G. and Cronin, J. (2025) NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit- An Irish Approach to Emancipatory Pedagogy beyond Prison Walls and Borders.

**ISBN 978-1-0369-7001-7**


THE NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER TOOLKIT
AN IRISH APPROACH TO EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY BEYOND PRISON WALLS AND BORDERS
Across prison walls & across borders
Pedagogoies of liberation, hope & dialogue: education plays a role in creating just & democratic societies
Social justice: challenging the logics of punishment & prison & enabling critical thinking
Ensuring that the classroom is anti-oppressive in content, challenging the logics of punishment & prisons & enabling critical thinking on the social justice of criminal justice
Enhancing connections and learning experiences across higher education institutions & prison education spaces
Imagining alternative futures together: crafting a hopeful optimism in our classrooms thinking about solutions for collective living free from harm
to better futures together!
This endeavour can best be undertaken as a collective effort
Students as agents of social change: promoting education that enables students to step into their own selves and contribute to social change
Authentic & symmetrical relationships are supported between all learners and educators, where participants can become 'critical friends' to one another
The classroom site is activated as a location of peer produced knowledge & solutions for social change
Appreciating lived experience: critical thought is enhanced by prioritising lived experience literature & encouraging all students to reflect on their own lived experiences
Person-centred language: all participants are encouraged to use language that emphasises our shared humanity
De-colonising our learning sites: peer produced and sensory ways of knowing & learning are welcomed & perspectives that are often not heard are amplified
CLASSROOM PRACTICES
Nurturing the convivial classroom: moments of laughter and connection might be hard to evidence, but coupled with rigourous academic learning, underpin all learning
These practices intentionally seek to rupture the carceral logic of prisons
Creative group work: students communicate critical thinking by expressing their learning & lived experience through creative means, such as visual art, poetry, fiction or music
The classroom setting is transformed from a space of knowledge transmission to a site of active knowledge creation
Graduation ceremony: course completion marked by a celebratory certificate ceremony, an important rituals that signals all students' potential for growth and acheivement.
Growing an All Island Prison University Emancipatory Education Network
robyn deasy

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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

# Introduction




**Photo:** Belfast team members Shadd Maruna and Gillian McNaull visiting the Cork Inside Out classroom, pictured outside Cork Prison.

## What Are We Doing And Why?

**In this NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit, we share our learning from two university-prison education classrooms in Cork and Belfast, where prison based and university based students learn and study side-by-side in the prison education classroom.**

The University College Cork/Cork Prison and the Queen's University Belfast/Hydebank Wood Secure College were the inception of these emancipatory in and of themselves or are we just saying that the intial partnership/set up and delivery of education in prison for each university happened at that time - show how we took what were exisiting prison ed classes and honed in on the emancpatiry parts of them and then also made them fit for the student and Irish contexts were both set up in 2019 and were the first types of university-prison partnership classrooms on the island of Ireland, both enabling university based outside students to study alongside prison-based incarcerated students for an on-going, semester-long, module.

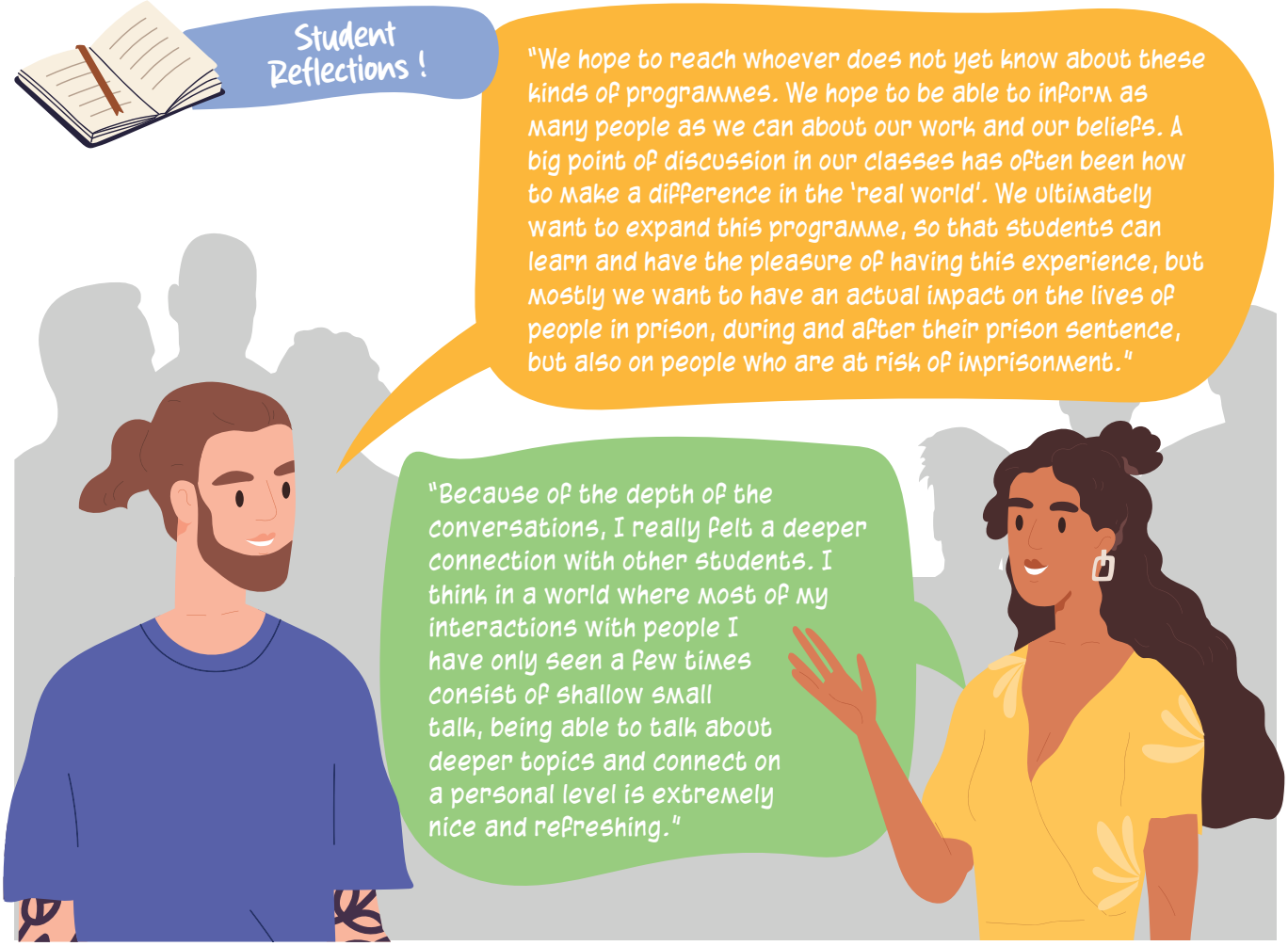
The UCC Cork course "From Criminal Justice to Social Justice" is based on the US "Inside-Out Prison Exchange Programme" and is delivered by the Department of Sociology and Criminology as part of the BA Criminology degree in Cork Prison. Cork Prison is a closed prison for adult males from counties Cork, Kerry, and Waterford. The QUB Belfast module "Reintegration After Prison" is affiliated with the UK based "Learning Together" model and delivered by QUB's School of Social Sciences, Education & Social Work as part of the BA in Criminology in Hydebank Wood Secure College. Hydebank Wood is a unique facility in that it houses both women and young males (between the ages of 18 and 22, primarily).

Our two classrooms joined forces as part of the HEA North South Programme funded TOGETHER- beyond prison walls and borders project (2022-2025) with the aim to document and share with others the rich and deep learning that we encounter in these spaces.

The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project was undertaken as a collaborative enterprise with our students, using participatory and creative

approaches in both learning and research. This toolkit is therefore, above all, a distillation of our students' voices and diverse perspectives on their learning experiences in the prison based university classrooms. The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is also underpinned by pedagogies of liberation, hope and dialogue. Emancipatory and liberatory pedagogies are approaches to education, which are founded on the notion that education should play a fundamental role in creating just and democratic societies. They are represented amongst others in the work of thinkers such as Angela Davis (2005), Paulo Freire(1970/2005), Ivan Illich (1971), Henry Giroux (1983), bell hooks (1994), and Patricia Maguire (1987).

It is our hope that the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit will be useful to educators, learners and administrators interested in building meaningful connections and learning experiences between higher education institutions and prison learning spaces on the island of Ireland. We also hope that the toolkit will contribute to further strengthening a community of learning and collaboration between higher education and prison based education providers and students on the island of Ireland - across prison walls and across borders. In this way, we hope to build connections and understanding across social divides to minimise the stigma often attached to those entangled in the criminal justice system and evolve society's responses to harm and wrongdoing. We also hope this toolkit, and the work of NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER more broadly will help grow the pipeline of students from prison education into Irish universities.



## Who Is The North South Together Toolkit For?

We have designed this toolkit for a range of audiences who might find it useful when setting up or further developing their own prison-university classrooms and programmes, including: higher education teaching staff, prison education staff, prison and university administrators and imprisoned student collectives/think tanks on the island of Ireland North and South. It is our hope that the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit will therefore contribute to reflective praxis when engaging higher education in prisons. For those already teaching and learning in prison education contexts, our approach to the classroom is underpinned by principles and practices that foster learning, liberation, hope and dialogue across social and spatial divides might reinforce their already existing practice. Beyond this, we hope that this toolkit will also offer a foundation for further knowledge exchange with our many sister programmes across the world engaging in similar types of work and indeed, anyone who is interested to learn more about the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project and emancipatory prison-university education on the island of Ireland. Both NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classrooms in Cork and Belfast are Criminology classrooms, engaging with themes such as the meaning of critical education for democracy; labelling and stigma; person-first language; desistance; families of the incarcerated; masculinities; transformative and abolitionist futures of justice to name a few. Readers will therefore note that many parts of the toolkit use examples based on these themes. However, we hope that this toolkit's guiding principles and educational practices can be applied across a wide range of academic disciplines.



## How To Use The North South Together Toolkit?

The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is not meant to be a technical guide. That is, it is not a strict 'how-to' instruction manual as every prison university partnership will by necessity plough a unique path. Rather, we want to use this toolkit to share our enthusiasm and learnings from our sustained prison based classrooms on both sides of the Irish border. Anyone who has engaged in similar educational settings will know that these classrooms are filled with many intangible moments of learning, laughter and connection, that are difficult to capture as 'evidence', but which are the very fabric that makes these learning experiences special. These are the moments that have informed the development of this toolkit. Our findings are based on, or emerge from context specific experiences, so readers can take whatever is needed when setting up or growing your own higher education projects in carceral settings. We hope that you will take inspiration and knowledge from this toolkit, but we encourage you to adapt our findings locally for what works best for your own local communities of students and their needs. We have organised the toolkit around five main building blocks. Each of these building blocks will be shortly defined and explained, followed by examples of exercises and other practically useful ideas for putting these building blocks into practice. Throughout, we also let the voices of learners, teachers and administrators who have participated in our classrooms or observed them from the sidelines speak to their experiences of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classrooms.



**Photo:** The anonymous circle of students' and teaching staff shoes- representing the weekly classroom circle formed with inside and outside students alternating and supporting each others learning.

## North South Together Ethics Of Care

Inspired by the Walk Create project (Heddon et al., 2024), NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER developed a shared set of principles of ethical practice and care, which became foundational to the two projects, as well as, the formulation of this toolkit (McNaull et al., 2023; North South Together, 2025). We propose that an ethics of care is particularly important when working within the hierarchical institutions of the university and prison, both of which foster the disciplinary power/knowledge regimes that situate us and can be reproduced by our very actions (Foucault, 1975/77). We believe that by reminding ourselves of our intentions and philosophical foundations, our praxis will be enriched and we will be supported to navigate steadily what often can be a complicated and emotionally intensive and rewarding journey. Our ethics of care has the following elements, each explained below: a focus on social justice; non-hierarchy, solidarity and appreciation of all learners equally; recognition of existing power structures.

## Focus On Social Justice

The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is underpinned by a commitment to social justice, recognising the dignity and value of all people and respecting diversity, equality and human rights. This is actioned in the toolkit by ensuring that 'unheard, silenced or trivialised' voices (Bhambra et al., 2018:209) are given agency and foregrounded at all times, while creating opportunities for inclusion, equality and diversity in the classroom. This is achieved through the provision of a variety of sensory and creative interpretive tools to enable inclusion and participation of all learners with different experiences and levels of education. A focus on social justice also entails continuous reflection on power dynamics including disparities between inside and outside students, and between educators and students. The focus on social justice also extends to the commitment to use non-stigmatising and person centred inclusionary language and create a participatory and enjoyable space for knowledge production where students and teachers engage and learn together as equals to the extent possible. This also entails ensuring that the classroom is anti-oppressive in content, challenging the logics of punishment and prisons and enabling critical thinking on social justice.

## Non-Hierarchy, Solidarity And Appreciation Of All Learners Equally

THE NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classroom is based on principles of non-hierarchy, inclusion and conviviality (Illich, 1973). Conviviality means that we create classroom environments that become 'joyful gatherings' (Peyrefitte, 2021), where relations are based on authenticity and mutual understanding, and co-creation of classroom dynamics. As much as possible, decisions are made in collaboration with each other and as a collective. The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER theory and pedagogy are rooted in anti-oppressive practice that locates all group members within the harms of structural oppression and violence and strives to produce solidarity and symmetrical relationships throughout the learning experience, from classroom interactions to assessments and beyond. Symmetrical relationships means that we try to reduce the hierarchies that often exist in classrooms between educators and learners and between learners of different levels. Rather, we emphasise that the classroom can benefit from the diversity of talents, skills and strengths of all learners and educators. Authentic relationships between learners, educators, and other participants are based on mutuality, trust and respect between all members of the learning community. Compassion and solidarity with people in prison is underscored by the commitment to reducing stigma and harms associated with imprisonment.

## Recognition Of Existing Power Structures

The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is underpinned by the recognition that both academic and prison institutions are sites of hierarchy, privilege and potentially oppressive internal logics. We are committed to education that challenges these hierarchies and the logic of punitiveness as a response to social issues. We also acknowledge that new possibilities emerge through education as we believe in every person's capacity for growth and transformation. By including the lived experience of criminal justice and injustice in various parts of this toolkit, the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER pedagogy aims to platform perspectives historically excluded from discourse, policy and practice. Throughout the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit, the knowledge produced by those with lived experience of criminal justice and injustice is valued. The classroom site is activated as a location of peer produced knowledge and solutions for social change. This also includes continuous reflection by educators and administrators to consider our own positionalities within them.

## Building On What Has Come Before Us

The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit builds on the work undertaken by colleagues internationally, in particular the foundational Inside-Out Exchange Programme (USA), as well as Learning Together (UK), Walls to Bridges (Canada) and the Open University prison education programme (UK/Ire). We have also greatly learned from the university-prison programmes at Pitzer University, the University of Milan, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and Westminster University. We also acknowledge the foundations of emancipatory pedagogy in the participatory methodologies of indigenous communities and social movements of the Global South (see Freire, 1970; Fals Borda, 1999; Illich, 1973), the activism and engaged pedagogies of feminist abolitionists (Davis, 2005; Afary, 2022; Davis, Dent Ritchie, Meiners, 2022) and the educational activism of political prisoners during the Conflict in Northern Ireland (e.g. McKeown, 2019).

## Why A Specifically an Irish (North And South) Toolkit?

Despite superficial similarities, countries around the world have vastly different penal landscapes, and Ireland is no exception (Maruna, 2007). Most notably, imprisonment rates in Ireland, North and South, have remained consistently lower than that of our closest neighbours in Great Britain, and the overall culture of the prison systems in Ireland differ significantly from those in England and Wales as well. Indeed, in Crime, Punishment and the Search for Order in Ireland, Kilcommins and colleagues (2004) argue that much of what makes Ireland's relationship to the prison unique, historically, can be attributed to Ireland's relationship to Britain. Ireland's prison system was and is embedded in the colonial and postcolonial history of the country. As Rogan (2011) discusses, English penological practice underpinned the prison system inherited by the Irish Free State, and the enmeshment of prison with security implementation continued for the duration of the post-treaty Civil War. Among the most important differences between Ireland and the UK to emerge, was the huge number of political leaders in the early years of the Republic (and more laterally in Northern Ireland), who had themselves been incarcerated for war activities. One of these, Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice for the Republic of Ireland from 1922-1927, argued:

> **"I think everyone here would agree that we should aim at improvement and reform in the existing prison system. There is not a member of this present government who has not been in jail. We have had the benefit of personal experience and personal study of these problems, and although we have never discussed them, I think we would be unanimous in the view that a change and reform would be desirable. Personally I can conceive nothing more brutalizing, and nothing more calculated to make a man rather a dangerous member of society, than the existing system (Kevin O'Higgins, Minister of Justice for the Republic of Ireland from 1922-1927, cited in Kilcommins et al. 2004, p. 41)."**

What unfolded at the end of the Civil War was a period of prison closure, low prison populations, and the development of penal welfarism (Rogan, 2011). However, in parallel to this, the country has seen the disproportionate punishment and containment of women via coercive establishments exemplifying the close relationship of church and state in the region (see Black 2024). Equally, in line with other post-colonial regions, Ireland disproportionately incarcerates its indigenous population, the Mincéirí (Joyce et al. 2022). Meanwhile, a country that has prized its 'leniency' regarding incarceration rates now faces prison overcrowding and prison expansionism (see IPRT 2025). In this post-colonial context, it seems important not to replicate and import the models of English and US counterparts, but to generate an Irish prison-university education model that resists coloniality, and is responsive to the distinct needs of incarcerated people in this region. At the same time, prisons and prison education spaces operate under different jurisdictional arrangements on either side of the border on the island of Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland, the Irish Prison Service operates as an Office of the Department of Justice. Prison officers and internal prison staff provide work training whereas non-vocational prison education services are provided by external educational agencies (Warner, 2022, p.1). In Cork Prison, the Education and Training Board provides a variety of educational services ranging from literacy and numeracy, along with art, woodwork, home economics, among others (Cork ETB, 2025). In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)

is an agency within the NI Department of Justice. Under 'Learning and Skills', prison education focuses on literacy, language and numeracy skills, and employment training and has been delivered since 2015 in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College and the North West Regional College.
On both sides of the border, access to higher or third-level education is delivered via distance-learning programmes of the Open University (OU) or is delivered by third level staff in prison education spaces without outside students present. The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit expands this existing higher education portfolio through provision of education that allows prisons students to learn alongside peers from their higher education counterparts, simultaneously enriching educational opportunities and building community within and beyond the prison space in particular local contexts. Building stronger connections between prisons, prison education units and their local higher education and university counterparts, on both sides of the Irish border, can contribute to reducing the social distance between universities and prisons and meaningfully enhance connectivity between prison-impacted learners and higher education learning communities.
The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit hopes to make a contribution towards such a vision of inclusive and connected higher education on the island of Ireland North and South.



## Pedagogical Intentionality & 'decolonising' Irish Higher Education

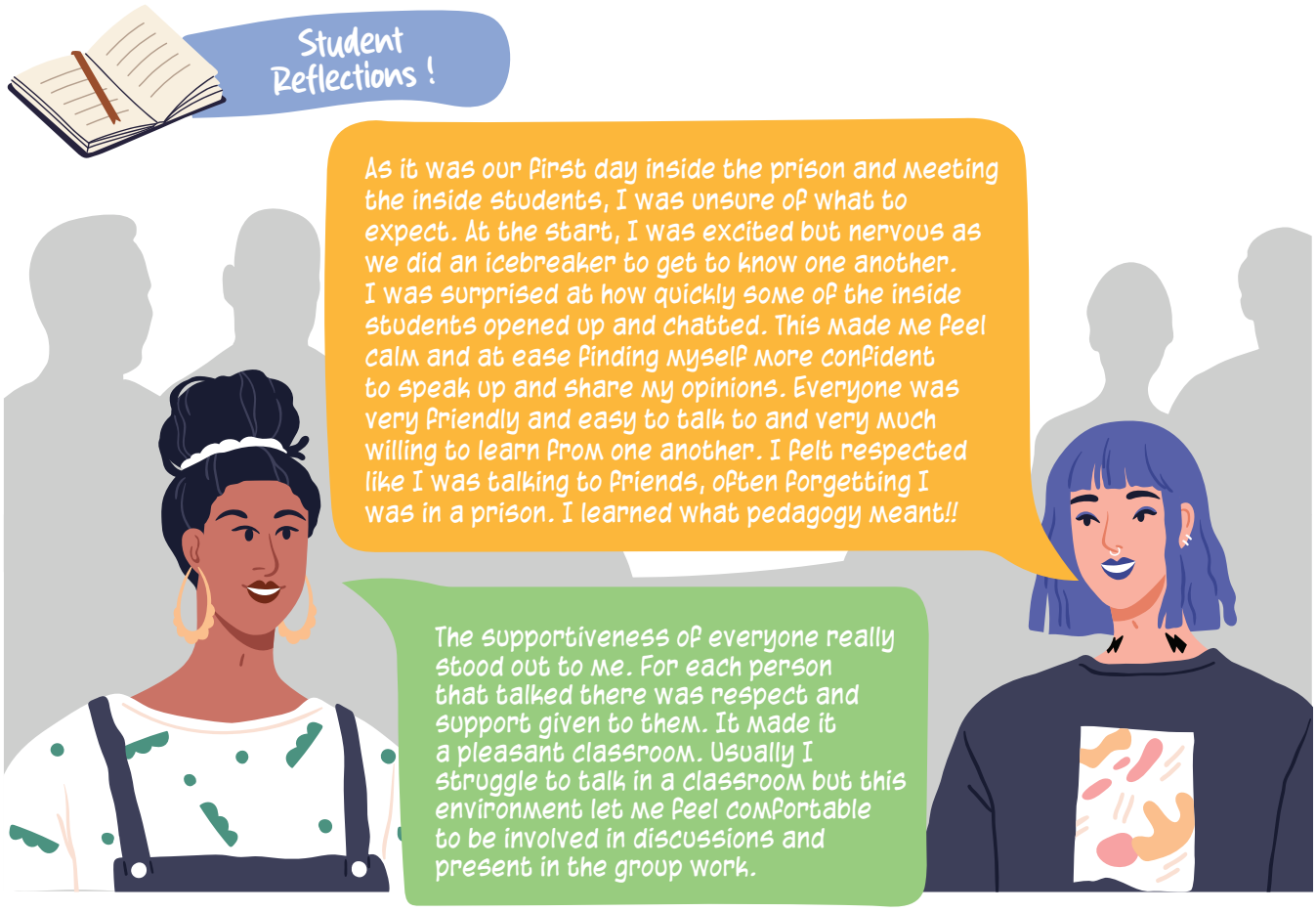
Our two educational partnerships also share a recognition that the emancipatory and liberatory approach to higher education in universities and prisons needs to be explicitly named and actively fostered. The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit's focus on emancipatory education seeks to counter educational practices that only emphasise employability and economic self-interest and in addition looks towards creating spaces for human relations that produce, reproduce and repair the world relationally (Lynch, 2022 ). This toolkit emphasises an educational approach that centres dialogue across physical and social divides and lived experience perspectives in the higher education prison based classrooms, with the overall hope and aim to reduce the social distance between prison and university based learners. This endeavour can best be undertaken as a collective effort. This NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit, while developed on and for the island of Ireland, also joins global efforts that challenge the position of the university as the privileged site of knowledge production (Bhambra et al., 2018; Moosavi, 2023). It also challenges traditional criminological knowledge production through the centring of lived experience based epistemology, both through theory and the pedagogy utilised. Our participatory research collaboration across prison walls and across the Irish border, has shown us how there is potential for further developing some of the educational and administrative practices on our campuses to foster more supportive, inclusive and diverse ways of teaching and learning, particularly for prison impacted learners.



## How Did We Develop The North South Together Toolkit?

This toolkit has been developed through collaborative and participatory research praxis with prison based and university students in our respective classrooms in Cork and Belfast. Participatory Action Research (PAR) (see O'Neill, 2001 and O'Neill et al., 2005) is a methodology utilised across multiple fields, focused on integrating the voice of lived experience in research conception, design, implementation and dissemination. PAR aims to transform 'research participants' into 'co-producers of knowledge' (Schubotz, 2019). Participatory methodologies have developed 'in the trenches' of social movements (Fine, 2013, p. 688), particularly in the Global South where participatory 'people power' was foundational to social justice and labour movements and a key aspect of emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2005; Fals Borda, 1999; Illich, 1973).

As such, the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is not only informed by the experiences, needs, and stories of those who have lived experience of the Irish criminal justice system North and South, but it has been created by and with them. Throughout this toolkit, it is therefore particularly our learners' voices - both prison based and campus based students which we hope will offer vivid insights into what we believe offers added value and holds generative potential for university-prison education classrooms to learners, educators, institutions and communities.



## Who Contributed To The North South Together Toolkit?

The development of this toolkit was made possible in particular through the patient, generous and thoughtful contributions from Inside-Out and Learning Together students from both UCC/Cork Prison and QUB/Hydebank Wood Secure College. The TOGETHER project team are incredibly grateful for their generosity with their time, insights, knowledge, and collaborations throughout this project.

The TOGETHER research team wants to acknowledge the fact that prison based students do not have the option to be mentioned by full name in publications, often only with their initials. This was much discussed in our classrooms and reflected upon by one of our Cork think tank members in a valuable contribution published as part of the UCC Cork Prison Education think tank reflective booklet Balancing the Scales of Injustice (University College Cork Inside Out Think Tank, Writing Collective, 2024).

# The Together Project Team Members



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## James G. R. Cronin

James G. R. Cronin is a lecturer in teaching and learning enhancement at the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning, University College Cork. Since 2017, he has been involved in a partnership between UCC and Cork Prison by fostering visual thinking strategies as a pedagogy aimed at disrupting power imbalances and by promoting a convivial learning environment in the art studios

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## Acknowledgements

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the work of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER Project Advisory Group, who have generously given their time, insights, and advice: Ruth Armstrong, Cormac Behan, Anne Costelloe, Edel Cunningham, Marianne Doherty, Joe Garrihy, Sinead O' Malley, Michael McCusker, Maria O'Neill and Kevin Warner. Particular thanks also to Hannah Healy and Michael O'Leary for valuable feedback and to our co-facilitators, James Windle at University College Cork and Michelle Butler at Queens University Belfast. Michelle has taken over the leadership of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project at Queens University Belfast and we thank her for supporting the completion of this project.

# NOTES

# 2

# PEDAGOGIES OF LIBERATION, SOCIAL CHANGE, DIALOGUE & HOPE

# Pedagogies Of Liberation, Social Change, Dialogue & Hope

In Ireland North and South, we can observe a 'school-to-prison pipeline' (Wald and Losen, 2003), where educational trajectories characterised by early school leaving and other negative educational experiences are reflected in prison learners' profiles. In the Republic of Ireland, 70% of people in prisons are early school leavers, i.e. have left school by the age of 14 (Central Statistics Office, 2020). In Northern Ireland, of those entering prison, 34% have a literacy ability equal to that of a nine year old, and 51% have numeracy skills equated to that level (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). Compounded by experiences of extreme social and economic disadvantage, higher and third level education has been out of reach for most prison based learners. In addition, the physical constraints of any prison site loom large over all interpersonal dynamics and practices in prison education classrooms, inserting unequal power dynamics and hierarchies of knowing.
To soften the edges of these challenges, this NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is informed by various strands of liberatory, emancipatory and engaged pedagogy. With origins in the Global South as well as feminist and abolitionist schools of thought, these pedagogies focus on transcending 'rote, assembly-line approaches to learning' (hooks, 1994:13). Rather, they focus on students' empowerment and liberation, by encouraging experimental, dialogical and negotiated relationships in dialogue with all learners. Liberatory and emancipatory pedagogies also chime with efforts to 'decolonise the university' (Moosavi, 2023), by encouraging the amplification of 'a plurality of perspectives, worldviews, ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies' (Bhambra et al., 2018:3). Liberatory and emancipatory approaches to education also offer pedagogical resistance to neo-liberalisation of higher education and inspire a hopeful optimism that we can contribute to social change through the way we design our learning spaces.

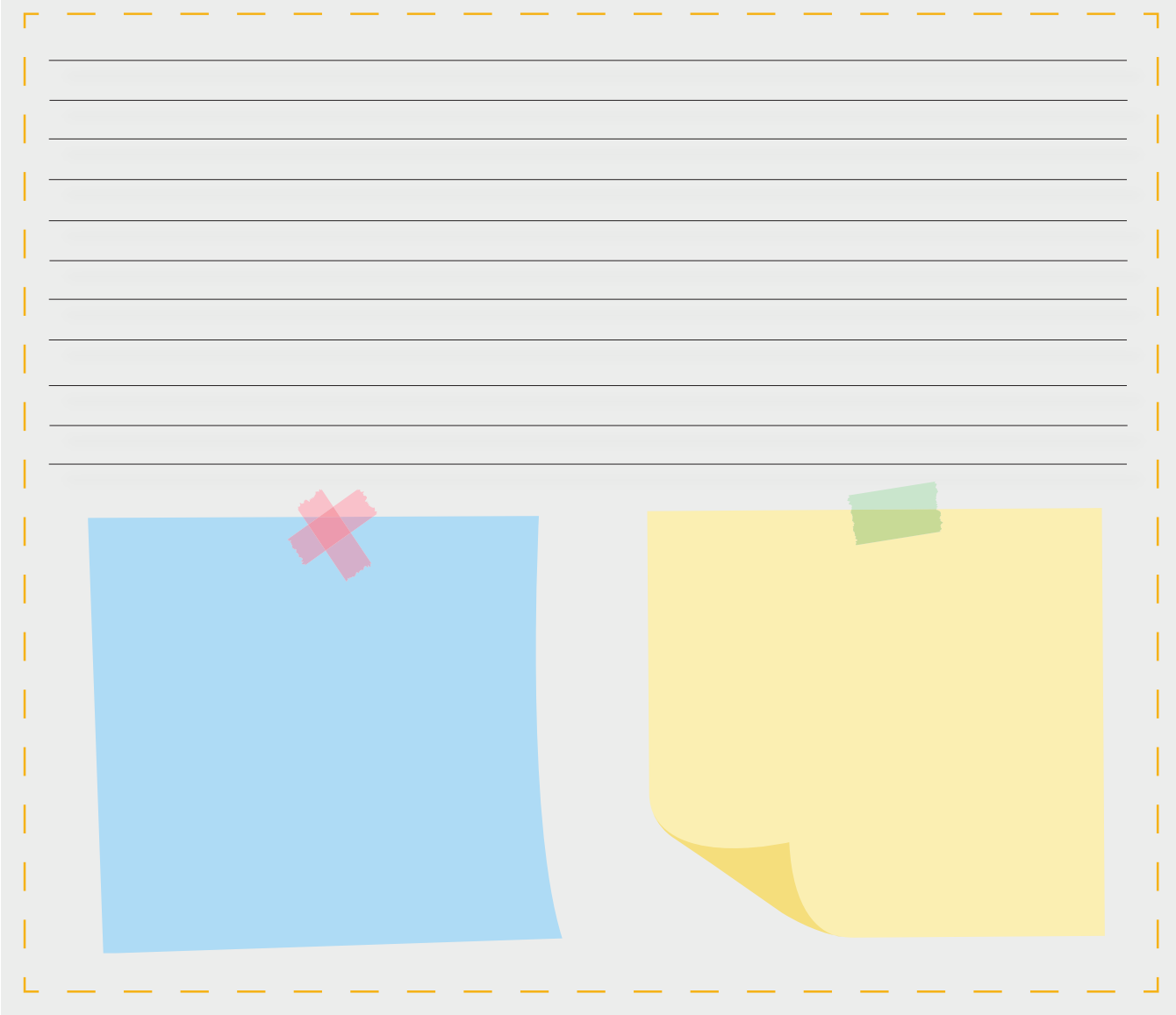


## Education For Liberation And Social Change In Practice

The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit aims to bring about social change through the forming of intentional and collaborative learning spaces - creating social change 'one classroom at a time' (Pompa, 2013). By continuously connecting the microcosm that is the classroom to larger socio-political debates, interdependencies between individual and wider social change are reinforced in educational practice. The NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit builds on previous research on Inside-Out and similar classrooms, that shows their liberatory and transformative potential- by impacting on participants' thinking, relationship building, and planting seeds for the questioning of systems of power and inequality (Butin, 2013; Pompa, 2013; Ward, Gray, and Fogarty, 2019). These liberatory and transformative educational experiences are further fostered through dialogue with peers and educators in the classroom, which can enable "deep-reaching self-transformation" that is "inseparable from the aforementioned social transformation", because participants can bring in their own personal perspectives (McLaren, 2015:372-3). In addition, education for liberation

and social change also repositions students as creative “cultural producers”, rather than passive consumers of knowledge and ideas (Giroux, 2022). The classroom becomes a space of generative and collaborative activities that move beyond already existing knowledge. Individual liberation and empowerment are therefore intrinsically linked with students’ potential to contribute to wider social transformations - including in their families, communities or other social circles.

## NOTES



A possible avenue for introducing students to the central principles of 'education for liberation and social change' is to engage students explicitly with materials that discuss the importance of such educational approaches. Here is an example of an in-class small group discussion we undertook to explore the topic in Cork and Belfast:

## Group work

## Small Group Work Exercises On Pedagogies For Liberation and Social Change

Students spend **20-30 minutes** in **small groups of 4 to 6 students,** reading the **selected quotes** out loud one or two times and then engaging with the questions.

**Students then record their main discussion points on flip chart paper. At the end of this period, one inside and outside student are invited to provide feedback on the collected discussion points.**

**Quote 1**

**"Pedagogy of the Oppressed refers to the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation. It is rooted in the concrete situation of oppression and based on the oppressed people's 'quest' for a fuller humanity. The pedagogy sets itself the task of demythologizing and dislodging the prevailing oppressive myths and replacing them with autonomy and responsibility." (p. 53-54)**

**Quote 2**

**"Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow." (p. 80)**

Freire, P. (1970/2005). Pedagogy of the Oppressed (30th anniversary edition). Trans. M. B. Ramos. Foreword by D. Macedo. New York: Bloomsbury

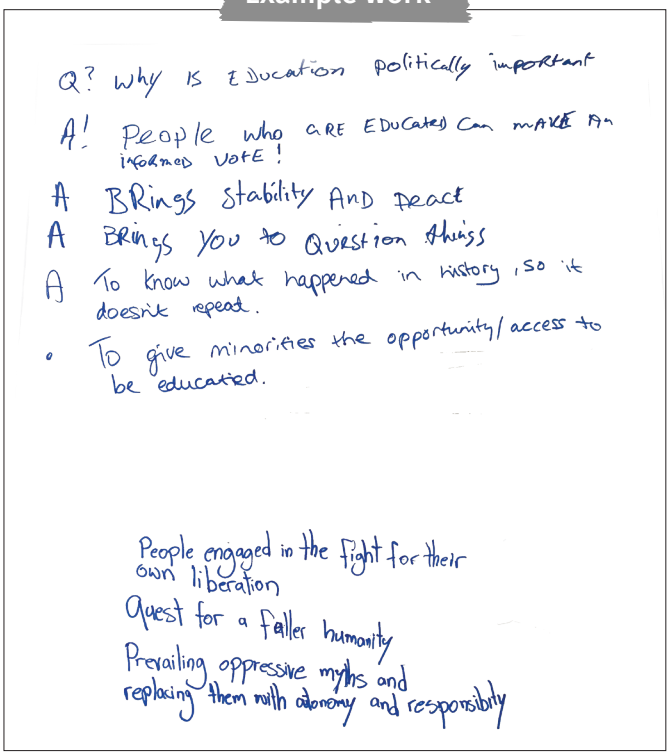
### Questions For Discussion

**1.** Are there any words you don't understand?

**2.** What are the main elements for Paulo Freire when he talks about pedagogy of the oppressed?

**3.** Does any of this resonate with your own educational experiences?

**Example work**



**Quote 3**

***"An education for empowerment should provide a classroom environment that is intellectually rigorous, critical, while allowing students to give voice to their experiences, aspirations, and dreams. It should be a protective and courageous space in which students should be able to speak, write, and act from a position of agency and informed judgment. It should be a place where education does the bridging work of connecting schools to the wider society, connect the self to others, and address important social and political issues. It should also provide the conditions for students to learn how to make connections with an increased sense of social responsibility coupled with a sense of justice. It should also give educators control over the conditions of their labor. This is a pedagogy that relentlessly questions the kinds of power relations, and forms of knowledge, social relations, values that are enacted in public and higher education.***

***An education for empowerment should combine a language of critique and a vision of possibility in the fight to revive civic literacy, civic activism, and a notion of shared and engaged citizenship. Democracy loses its emancipatory possibilities if it cannot present the educational conditions for enabling students and others to think against the grain, and realize themselves as informed, critical, and engaged citizens. There is no democracy without an educational system capable of awakening consciousness, challenging common sense, and creating modes of analysis in which Canadian students discover a moment of recognition that enables them to rethink the conditions that shape their lives."***

"No democracy without education" By Henry A. Giroux (2022)

## Questions For Discussion

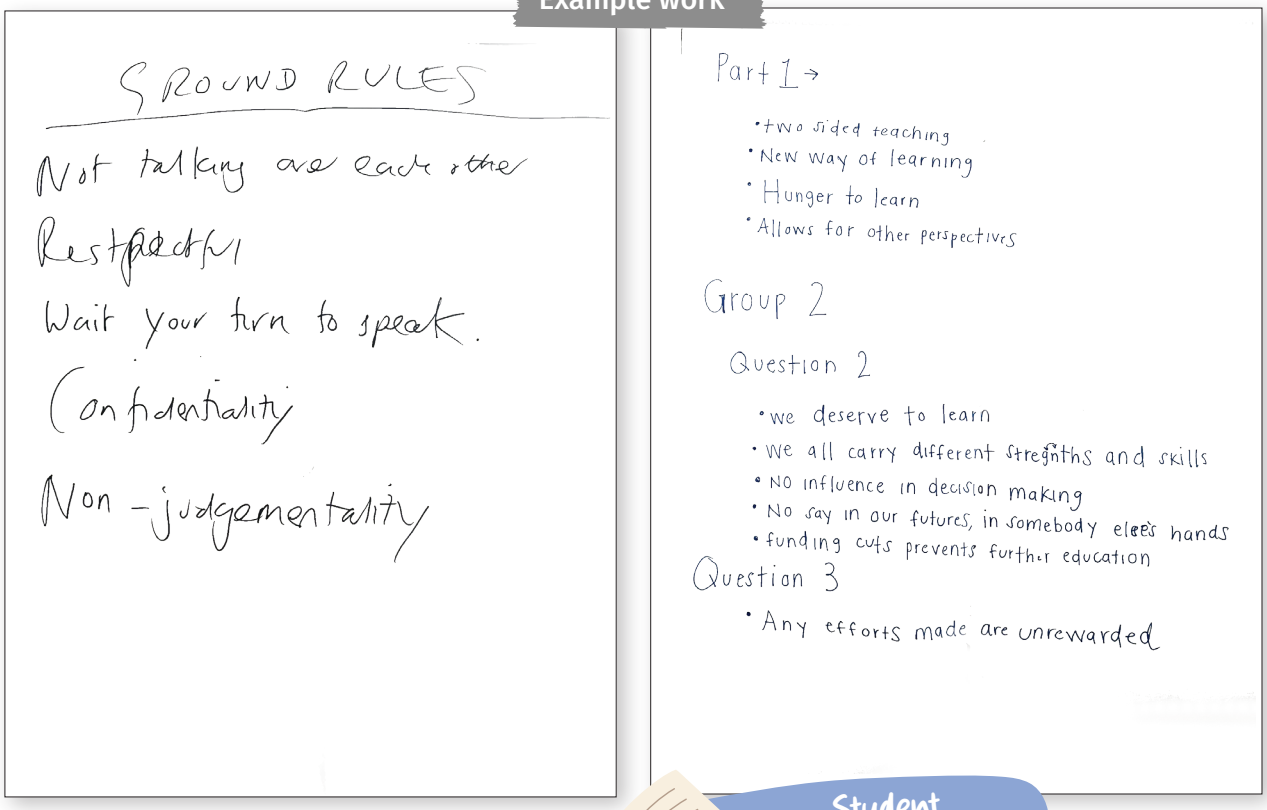
**1.** Are there any words you don't understand?

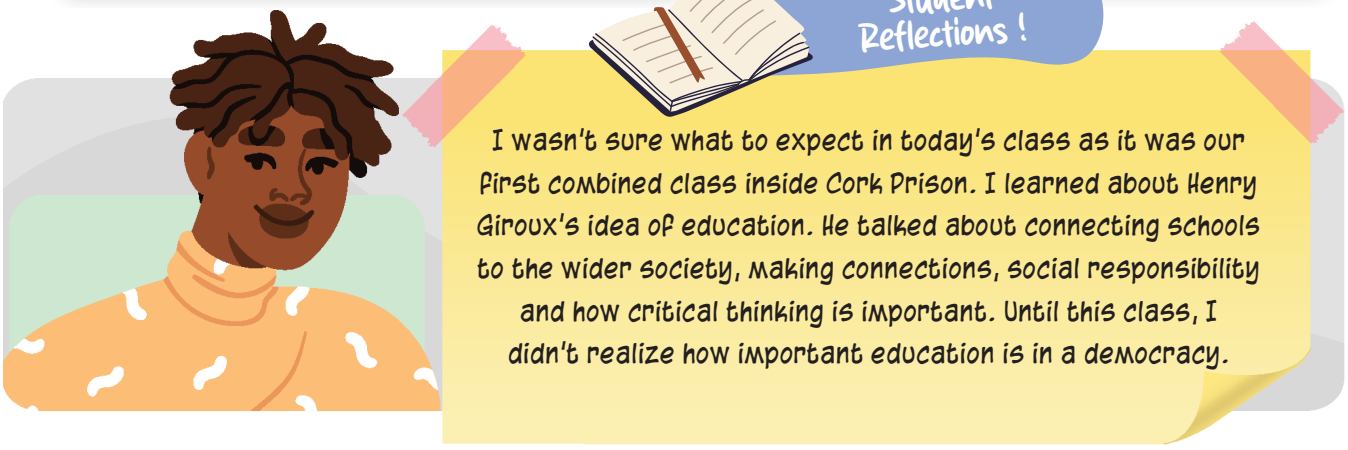
**2.** Giroux connects education with democracy. Do you think he has a point about this connection and in what way?

**3.** Did your experience any part of your education as educating you for democracy, like Giroux describes?

## Belfast Students' Summarised Discussions On The Links Between Education And Democracy

Example work




## Education Through Dialogue And Relational Engagement In Practice

Education through dialogue and across social divides is at the heart of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit. Each individual in the classroom is seen as having inherent worth, regardless of their past, bringing a range of experiences and skills into the classroom. Learners and educators are enabled to engage in dialogue with each other and to explore ways of learning collaboratively. The trust produced by dialogical and relational practices is particularly important, and emerges as "a relational good" (O'Neill et al., 2019:133). A relational good is produced by members of a collective 'to generate a relationship from which benefits derive for all those who participate in it' (Donati, 2019:238). Importantly, the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit understands the relational good here as an ethical practice in itself, rather than as an

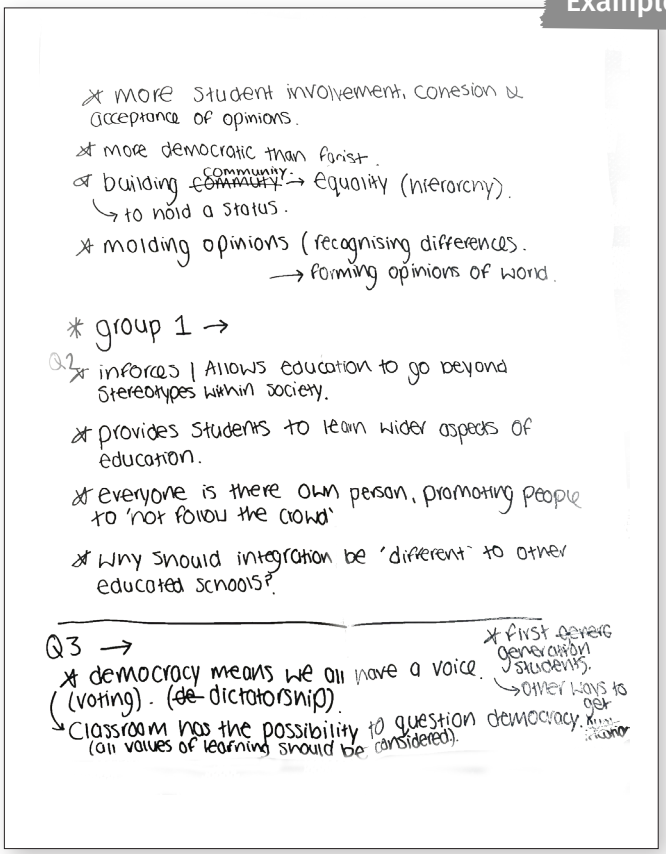
instrumental mechanism to achieve preconceived learning outcomes. Dialogical and relational teaching and learning practices also encourage trust, which is particularly important in low-trust environments, such as prisons, which are invariably dominated by power differentials. Teaching and learning practices that encourage dialogue also reduce the social distance between prison and university students and between students and educators. Facilitators, professors or teachers are in dialogue with students why also learning and transforming their own views of the world. Both students' and educators' lives are equally enriched and a learning community is formed, which is more than the sum of its parts. Through dialogical and relational praxis, the classroom setting is transformed from a space of knowledge transmission to a site of active knowledge creation Dialogical and relational praxis is built into all the elements of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classroom structure and students are continuously in conversation with each other.

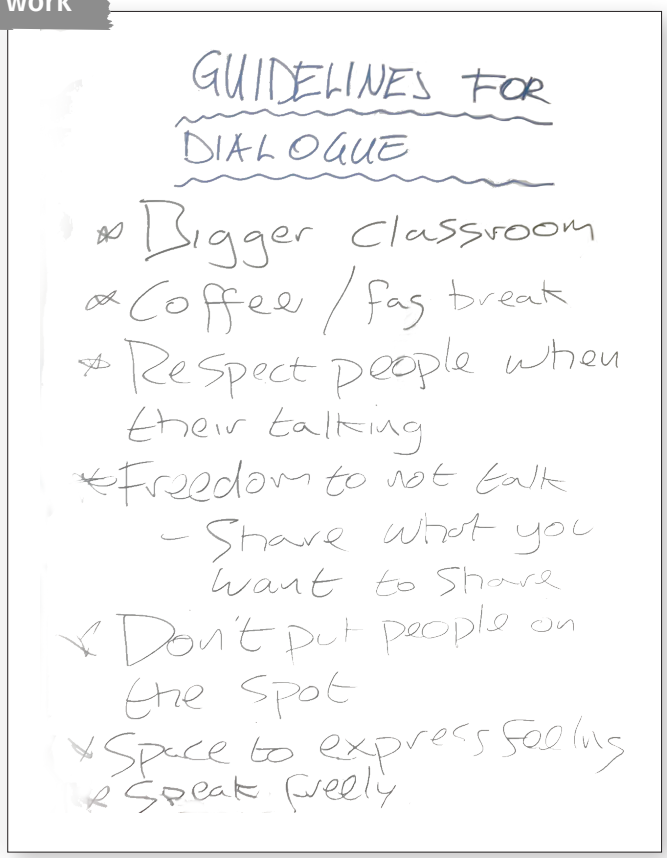
**Dialogical and relational praxis is facilitated by three simple, yet impactful routines, including:**

- Consultation and agreement between all participants on 'guidelines for dialogue'
- Flipped classroom and small group work throughout the module
- Collaborative final group work project, applying learning and communicating through creative or other student-directed means

## Guidelines For Dialogue

Example work




Students and educators spend time during the first joint session to brainstorm together on 'guidelines for dialogue' that set the tone and serve as a reminder during the semester. In this way, students and educators collectively decide on how to create a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom.

## Student Reflections !

"The supportiveness of everyone really stood out to me. For each person that talked there was respect and support given to them. It made it a pleasant classroom. Usually I struggle to talk in a classroom but this environment lets me feel comfortable to be involved in discussions and present in the group work."

"It also confirmed my previous belief that education should be a cooperative experience between teachers and students."

" I felt it was also important that we created the environment to say that it was okay that we did not understand everything in a way. I feel that in itself is something to learn and that it is okay to not always have the answer."

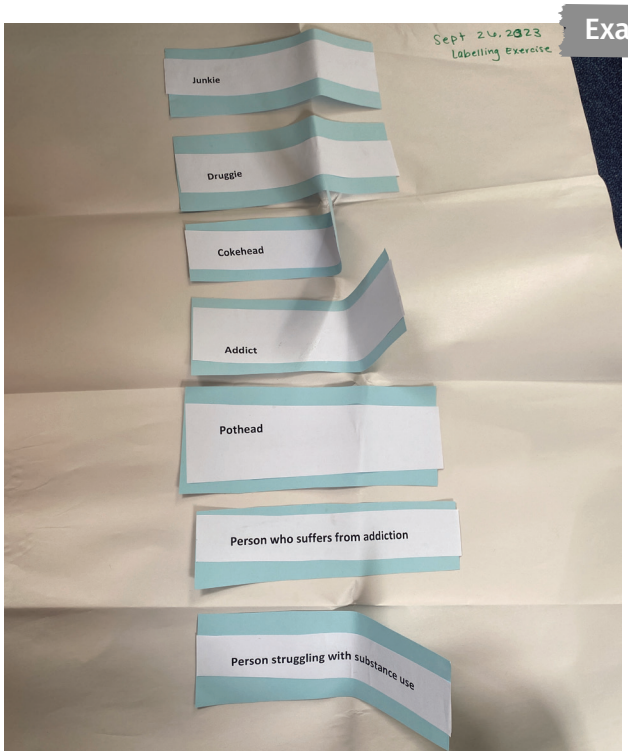


## NOTES

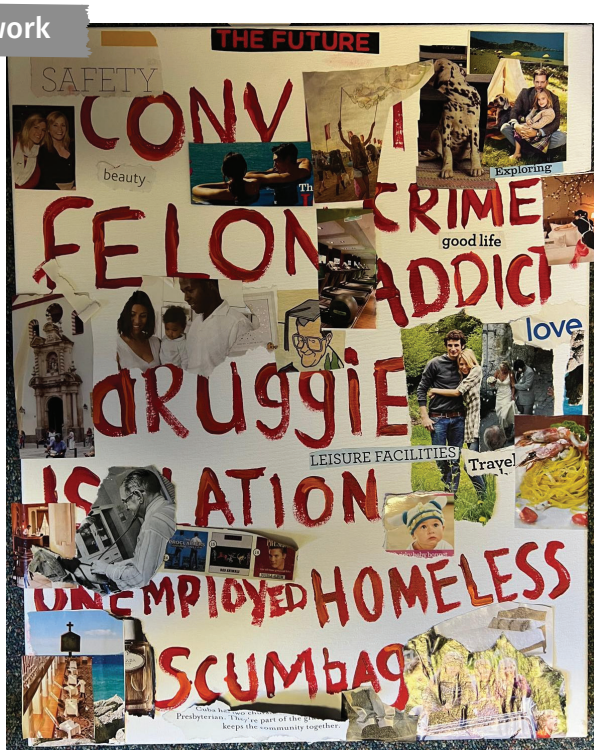
# Flipped Classrooms And Small Group Work Exercises

Traditional lectures or powerpoint presentations are kept to a minimum or are all together avoided- although they are sometimes appreciated by students to become familiar with key concepts and ideas. Rather, ideas are explored through close reading of textual excerpts in the classrooms, followed by small group discussions and exercises designed in such a way to allow for the exploration and deeper understanding of key concepts.
Students regularly collaborate in small groups in each classroom session to complete a variety of exercises. This allows all students to engage with each other meaningfully, particularly also those who may be more quiet in the larger group. When small group work takes place in a NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classroom, the sound level rises extraordinarily as students debate seriously, interspersed with laughter, and prepare their feedback for the bigger group.
For example, to engage students in a discussion on 'labelling' and debates on the use of 'person-first' language, students were asked to order in small groups certain terms from 'most' to 'least' stigmatising, leading to lively discussions, compromises and further questions to be explored in future.

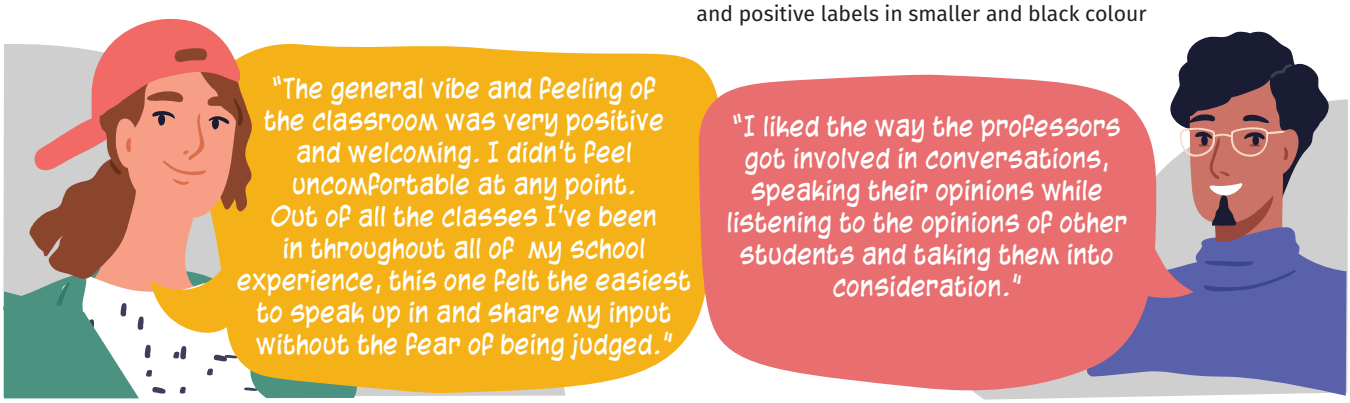
**Example work**




A group of students' ranking different terms for 'drug users' from most to least stigmatising




A group of students created a labelling collage assembling negative labels in 'threatening' red and large letters and positive labels in smaller and black colour



## Creative Final Group Work Project

The final three weeks of the TOGETHER classroom are reserved for creative group work. Students can choose any topic from the syllabus that emerged for them throughout the course of the semester and also choose a means of engaging with it. It is particularly during the group work projects, where students report increased opportunities for conviviality and generativity.

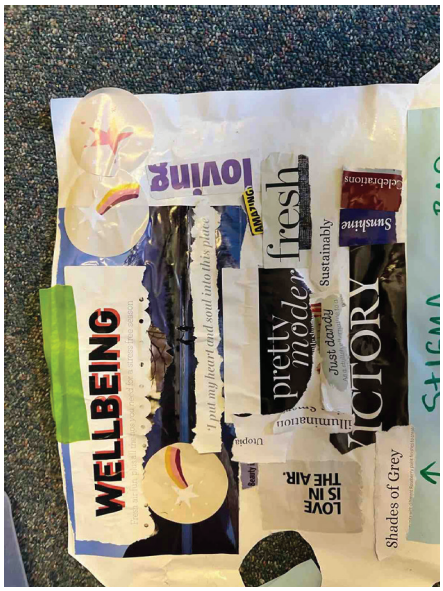



**One of the groups designed this image as cover-art for a podcast episode they scripted and recorded on the topic of rehabilitation and the revolving door of prison.**

### Student Reflections !

I really enjoy the environment we have created in our group. Even by the fact that we are always talking and there is never a silent minute, you can tell how much the dynamics work. We are always laughing and we all feel comfortable. I couldn't help but notice how none of us is ever looking at the clock and how surprised we are when we are told the session is over.

In Belfast, the groups worked collectively to produce a collage responding to a substantive module theme that was meaningful to them. This group explored the pains and gains of imprisonment, working together to select and compile visual images that spoke to the harms incarcerated people experienced and their hopes for release:







This process of co-creation allowed students to discover their commonalities and shared humanity.

"Ultimately, we hope and dream for the same things, like family and friends and safety, security and support."

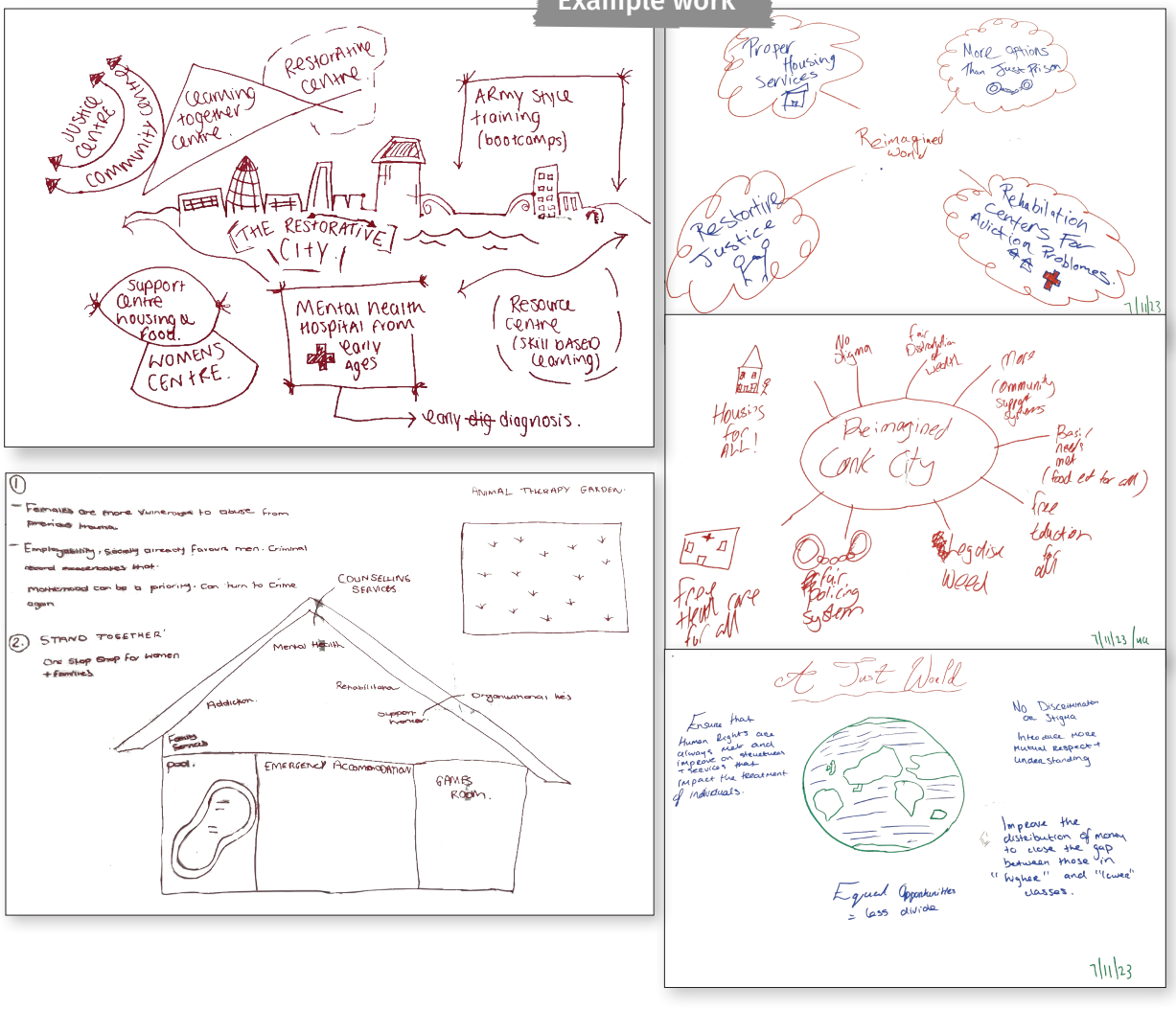
"Art helped us talk about how people feel. In group work we were able to see that."

## Education For Hope In Practice

The emancipatory ethos underpinning the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is underpinned by a hopeful optimism. Through critical thinking and collective enterprise, the toolkit encourages educators and learners to think about 'how things might be otherwise' (O'Neill et al., 2019: 132) and to imagine alternative and better futures for individual and collective living. An education of hope also chimes with an education that is decolonised; it is '....one that exceeds the confines of the school, college or university to intervene in the reinvention of the world' (Bhambra et al., 2018: 99). We take seriously the wish of all of our students to secure their personal aspirations in life - by pursuing work, further education and other opportunities. At the same time, the liberatory and emancipatory classroom seeks to equip students with critical-thinking skills necessary to change more than their own or their families' lives, but to consider their role as social-change agents in society more broadly.

In smaller groups of 4-5, students discussed what a 'restorative city' or a more supportive 'homecoming environment' would look like after prison. The concept and practice of 'hope' weaves itself throughout the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit. Although this will look different in each classroom, the starting point for putting hope into practice is the simple practice of 'imagining' how we might do things differently in relation to a particular topic under discussion and reflecting on the role that each one of us can play as individuals or collectives.

**Example work**



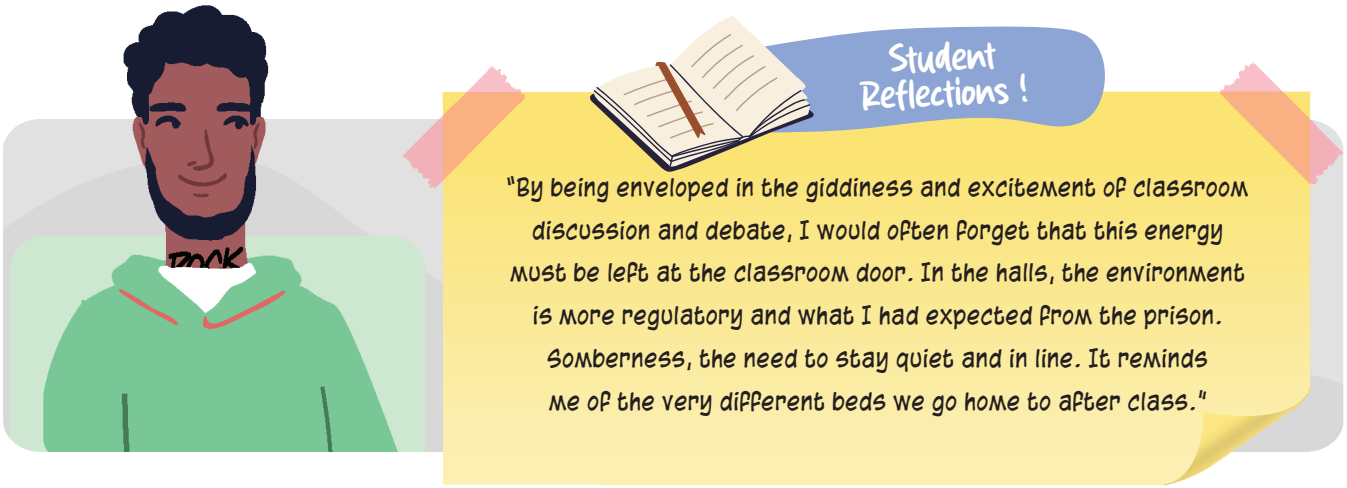
## NOTES

# 3

# CONVIVIAL CLASSROOMS & CO-PRODUCTION

# Convivial Classrooms & Co-Production

A core focus of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit is the creation of convivial classroom environments that can help reduce the social distance between educators and learners and between all learners in the higher education in prison classroom. To achieve symmetrical relationships in the classroom (Fals Borda, 1999; O'Neill et al., 2019), the traditional hierarchy between teachers and students and the expertise of the 'instructor', is de-centred. Rather, the focus shifts towards dialogical praxis and the collaborative enterprise in the particular classroom setting that becomes the site of knowledge creation (Freire, 1970/2005; Armstrong and Ludlow, 2016; Pompa, 2013). Authentic co-production becomes possible because of the convivial nature and symmetrical relationships fostered while also further promoting each. In combination with a critical and anti-oppressive syllabus, these practices intentionally seek to rupture the carceral logic of prisons.




## Conviviality In Practice

In practical terms, our classrooms focused on the knowledge emanating from the lived experiences of all students, reflective and dialogical learning and creative practices, allowing students with different prior learning experiences to participate in the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classrooms. Some simple, yet effective strategies to achieve this include:

**Circle work**

Every week, we arranged our classroom into a circle, wore name tags (simple address labels suffice) and always had an inside student sit next to an outside student. The instructors also join the circle as equals. The unbroken continuity of the circle forms the important symbolic beginning and end of each class, the space where we can hold meaningful conversations and connect beyond different worldviews or experiences. When working in smaller groups, we always make sure to return to the larger circle to remind us that we are part of a bigger whole.

**Ice breakers**

Simple ice-breakers at the beginning of every class help students to get to know each other in a relaxed setting along, bringing in sensory reflections and connections to the physical space. Where possible, ice-breakers can be connected to the particular theme or sequence of the session in the module.

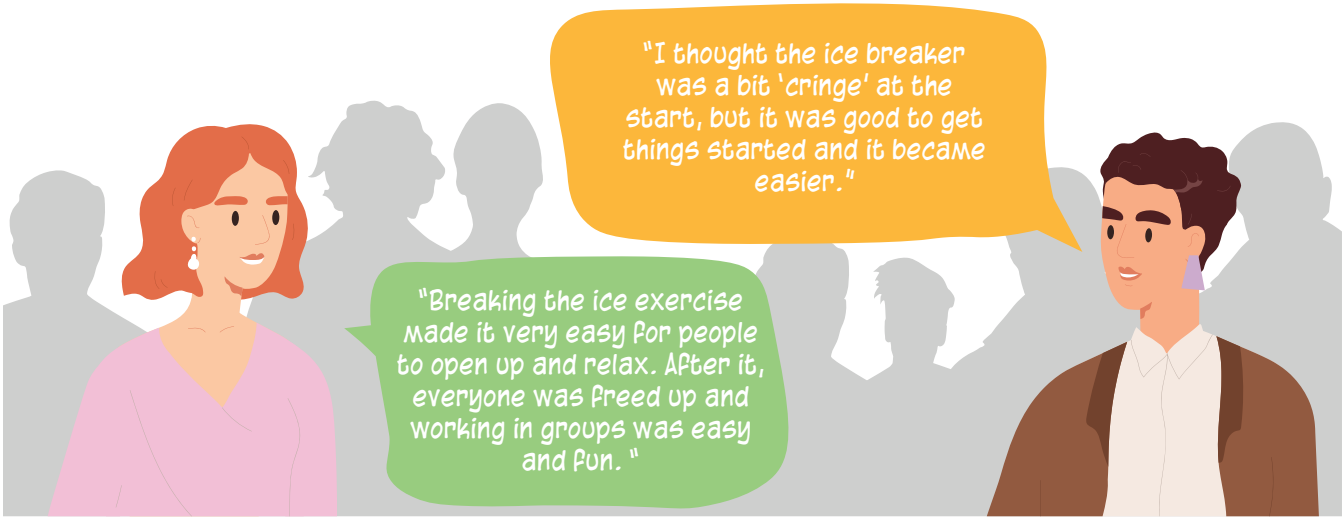
# Ice-Breaker Examples

## Labelling Ice-Breaker

Students sit in small groups in circles and are handed address labels that they stick on their foreheads without seeing what is written on their own label. Each of these labels assigns particular instructions to students such as 'ignore me', 'laugh at me', 'question me' and so on. Students are instructed to treat each other according to these instructions on the labels, now stuck to their foreheads. Students were then given topics to discuss together. During the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project, we chose for example humorous topics such as "Do you think 'Dirty Dancing' is the greatest movie of all time", which brought much amusement into the discussions. Some students found that no matter what they said, people would ignore them, question them or laugh at them, as per the instructions on their labels. After a few minutes, students are asked to sit back in the larger circle, guess their own assigned labels and reflect on how they experienced being treated in that one particular way. The ice-breaker serves as a useful entry point to different readings and exercises on 'stickiness' of stigma and labelling processes.

## Final Ice-Breaker - A Line Of Appreciation

For the final week, a useful ice breaker that remind students and facilitators of their strengths and how they appreciate each other. Each participant receives a blank sheet of A5 paper, writes their name on the top and then passes it to the person on their right in the circle. This person writes a short sentence of appreciation at the bottom of the sheet and folds it up before handing it to the next person in the circle. The ice-breaker stops when a sheet has been folded up completely and only the person's name can be seen on the very top. Everyone gets to read and keep their own sheet with multiple expressions of appreciation. Students and instructors alike enjoy taking the completed sheet home with them and hang it above their desks and beds as reminders of their strengths and appreciation received from their peers.



# Learning Atmospheres Of Joy, Humour And Laughter

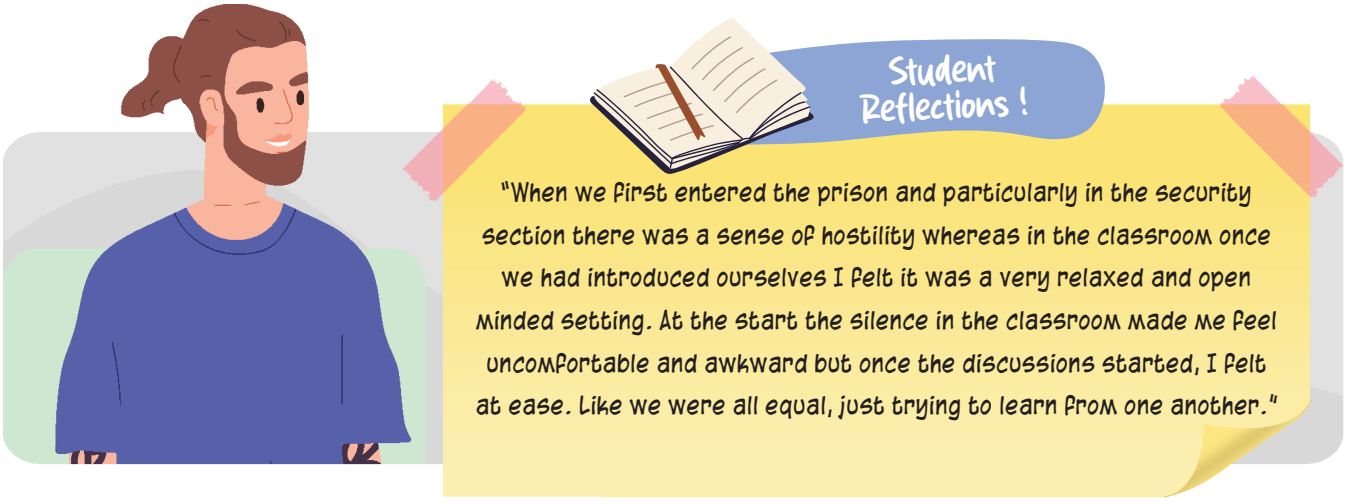
### Closing circle

To mirror the ice-breaker, each class is closed by a 'closing circle'. Students may have been working in smaller groups or pairs and the closing circles reminds everyone of the collective effort of everyone in the classroom. A simple yet powerful exercise for the closing circle is the very quick naming of one thought or emotion that comes to mind at the end of a class. Typically, a mix of terms such as 'hungry', 'confused', 'intrigued', 'relaxed' makes the room giddy with laughter, while towards the end of the module terms such as 'melancholic' and 'sad' might create a more sombre atmosphere in the closing circle. In any case, these closing circles are also a great way for instructors to regularly feel the pulse of the classroom.

### Learning atmospheres of joy, humour and laughter

Sensory reflections and embodied practices help to create classroom atmospheres that are a contrast to the rest of the prison environment. Our classrooms were routinely filled with laughter, friendly greetings, loud conversation, safe sharing, and familiarity building over time. This was in stark contrast to the coldness of much of the rest of the prison, such as the experience of going through security or walking through the corridors, which were often accompanied by an atmosphere of tension and suspicion. (Importantly, 'coldness' does not capture the atmosphere in the education wings of the two prisons, where the climate was often as convivial and positive as the Together classrooms).

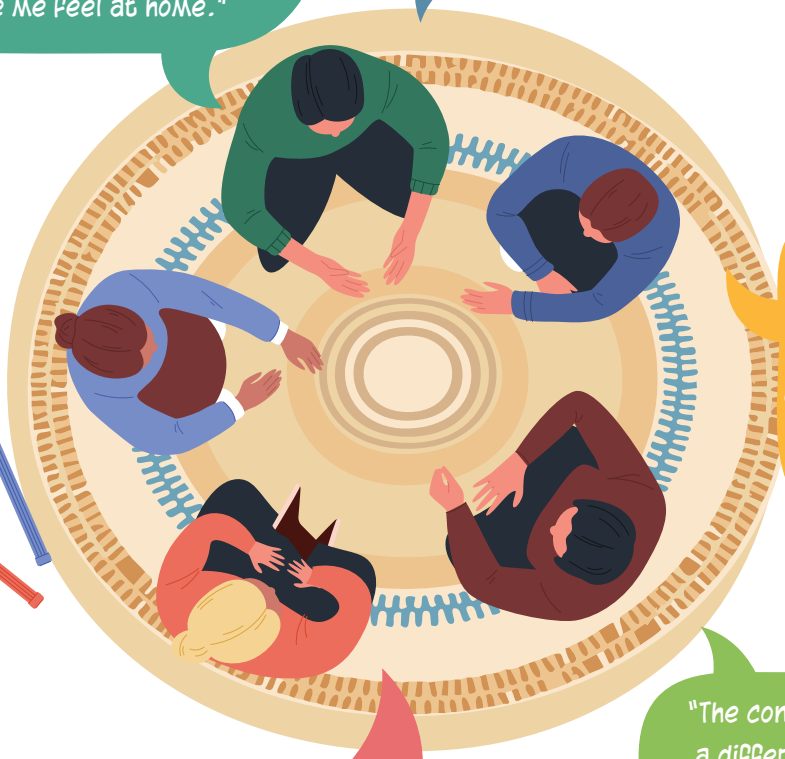
The nature of conviviality fostered in the classroom, paired with rigorous academic learning, creates the environment in which students become "critical friends" to one another. As such, students became "a supportive person who can ask difficult questions using critical thinking to judge a situation" (Costa and Kallick, 1993: 50).



## Student Reflections !

"I took on this course as I was curious to understand what criminology looked like from a learning perspective. It was really encouraging to see that the course was run on a non-judgemental basis. It was a safe space to open up and share our lived experiences. Barriers were broken down on both sides for students both inside and out. There was a level of respect and a chance for all to give their valid opinions, discussing important topics within criminal justice and social justice."

"Towards the end of the course my expectations changed so much that I couldn't wait to come to the group to speak to everyone. The sense of community and belonging was profound and made me feel at home."



"Inside-Out is different from traditional classrooms, it creates community and continuation to keep thinking and working together."

"I didn't feel uncomfortable at any moment. Even when presenting to the class (which usually makes me uncomfortable) I feel confident and supported by everyone in the class. I feel like these classes have a group of people who don't judge others and their opinions. All of the discussions today were engaging and I felt as though the inside students exceeded in articulating their opinions and experience which allowed the rest of us to really see their perspective."

"The connections made through a different type of learning – this class brought things and research concepts to life. There was a messiness to it that shakes things up and makes it all real."

## NOTES

# 4

# CURATING AN ANTI-OPPRESSIVE SYLLABUS

# Curating An Anti-Oppressive Syllabus

**Many of our contemporary approaches and institutional arrangements for higher education remain reliant on hierarchical power structures and reward/punishment models of incentivising behaviour. Liberatory and emancipatory pedagogies based on principles of dialogue, conviviality, and hope challenge educators to abandon these outdated modes of engagement and to instead provide opportunities for everyone to participate in the learning experience on a relatively equal footing. In order to stay true to this commitment, educators must start thinking about the design of the learning environment priort to engaging with students in the classroom including the curation of the syllabus.**

The collation of an anti-oppressive syllabus is particularly relevant for prison university classrooms that teach criminology or similar classes, as prisons, the criminal legal system and criminalised persons are central themes of our research and teaching. Criminological knowledge production is increasingly critiqued for being exploitative of and reproducing objectifying narratives of criminalised persons (Ahearne, 2021; Honeywell, 2021; Saleh-Hanna, Williams and Coyle, 2023), characterised by pathologisation, paternalisation, oversimplification and 'extractive exotification' (Yarbrough, 2020: 58). As a result, students can be confronted with materials that do not do justice to the complexities of imprisoned people's lives, or their experiences of the criminal legal system and which offer little hope in terms of individual and collective healing.

With the emancipatory ethos of our classrooms in mind, we located our respective criminology syllabi within traditions that challenge individualising narratives on crime and punishment, that support students in recognising structural explanations of the origins and impacts of 'law and order' and which provide hopeful perspectives on both individual as well as societal transformation. Curating an anti-oppressive syllabus in the university prison education classroom is also an integral element of the larger endeavour of decolonising higher education. From this perspective, designing a anti-oppressive syllabus in itself is an act of 'socio-political struggle' in pedagogical terms (Bhambra et al, 2018: 99).

## Lived Experience Readings and Person-Centered Language

**Foregrounding lived-experience voices:** In both classrooms, we prioritised the inclusion of readings by those with experiences of the punishment system. Ensuring that such lived experience scholarship is woven into the curriculum sends a signal that validates students' insights as transcending their own individual experiences and demonstrates their voices are central to knowledge production. Valuing lived-experience perspectives can also support classroom-based exercises, also support classroom-based exercises, modelling experiential knowledge and encouraging all students to participate. While not being prescriptive, an anti-oppressive curriculum typically centres person-centred language throughout its syllabus so as to avoid further epistemic violence and stigmatisation. In line with the liberatory methods of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit, terms such as 'prisoner', 'inmate' or 'criminal' are replaced with terms such as 'student' and 'learner', adding emphasis to what all learners share in common in the classroom, regardless of their histories and backgrounds. Even when it is central to discuss for example experiences of being imprisoned, the use of person-first language can be encouraged, such as: imprisoned person; punishment impacted person; person with lived experience of prison and so on. There are wide-ranging, complex and nuanced debates around the use of person-

centred language, not only in the context of prisons, but also in relation to disabilities and other minoritised experiences (Cox,2020). Creating a dedicated session at the beginning of a module to critically reflect on different perspectives of language use and its specific histories and connotations around prison contexts can be particularly instructive and lay an important foundation for university in prison classrooms.

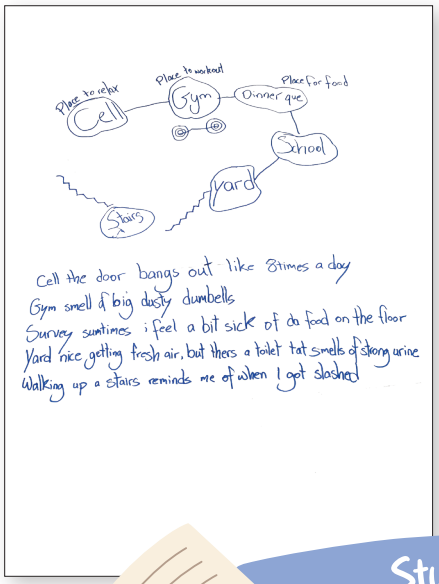
## Group work

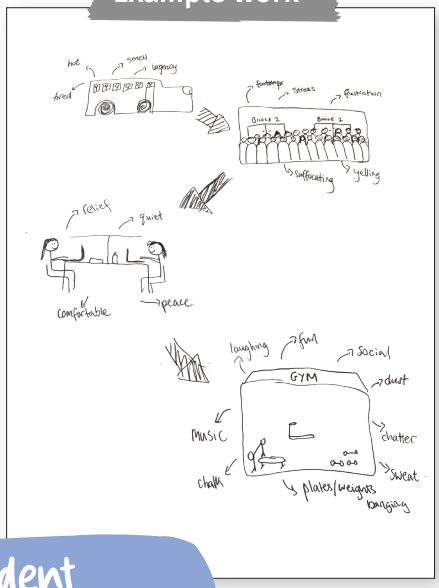
**Small group work exercise encouraging lived experience reflections for all students**

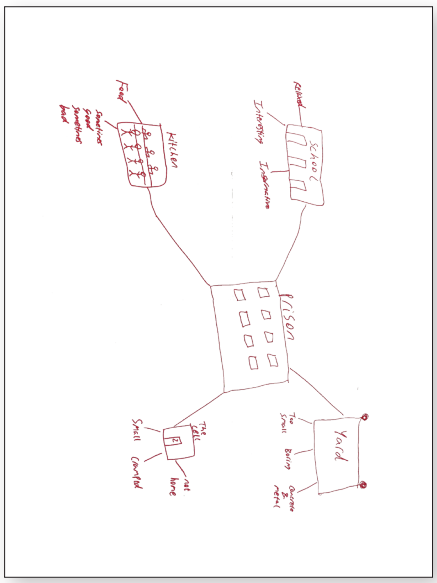
**Map your daily life** within the institution that you are currently in (e.g. university and/or prison) and map out locations and places, describe shortly how they look, and do a sensory description of places of goodness, freedom, pain, stress etc. Describe feelings, smells, sights, etc.

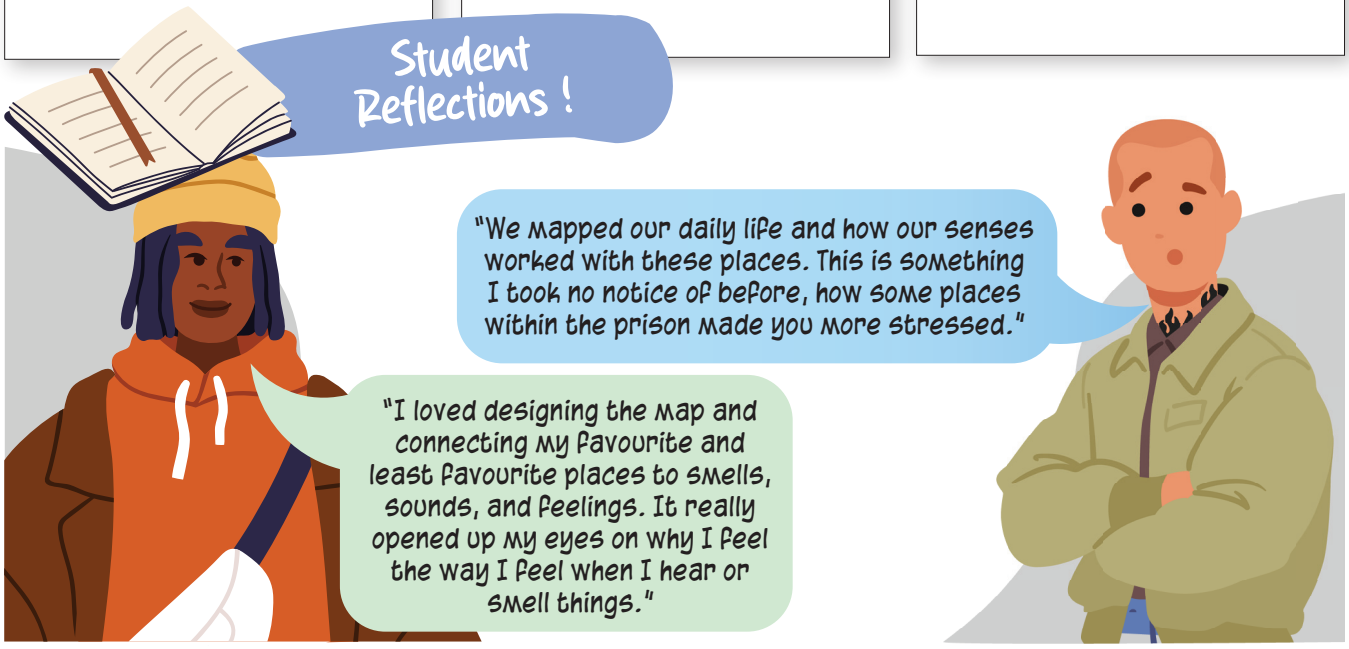
**If you don't want to map your life in your present institution, you can choose another one from your past...**

**Example work**



## Providing The Tools To Critically Evaluate Knowledge Sources

Privileging lived-experience voices also encourages students and instructors to pay attention to the diversity of voices available on particular topics covered. One of the features of designing an anti-oppressive classroom, is to equip students with the tools of analysing and reading information through a critical lens and understanding that knowledge is always situated in particular contexts. This can be done by supporting students in asking questions such as:

- Whose voices are facilitated in particular text/idea/concept/visual representation?
- What is not being said, represented or left out?
- Are there alternative positions that could be adopted?
- What types of representations can be chosen to convey ideas effectively?





**Student Reflections !**

"I think using 'people first' language is helpful in my view, not only because it humanizes me but it shows that people are willing to try to change in a positive way and look past the stigma. Also, it shows empathy and just as words have stigma attached to them, 'people first' language has empathy and change attached to it. It is a very powerful thing that words can have this kind of impact in shaping a human's identities, actions, and behaviors."

NOTES

## Using Different Types Of Readings And Learning Materials

Appreciative of different learning styles, it can be useful to mix and match different learning sources both in the classroom and as assignments. In addition to traditional academic texts, shorter texts such as newspaper articles and online blogs, geographical maps, short videos, poems, music and visual arts can be useful entryways into different preferences for learning. In line with the creative pedagogical elements that we encourage throughout the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit, the active use of these different modes of learning resources in the classroom, can foreground reflective assignments and creative group work projects that offer particularly inclusive assessments for non-traditional learners. In particular, supporting students to pay attention to their sensory experiences and reflections on the variety of learning themes is refreshing. In this way, the privileging of predominantly intellectual ways of knowing over other types of knowledge (embodied, sensory), is also challenged. Paying attention to sensory experiences is also particularly apt for prisons, which are typically interwoven with experiences of trauma. Encouraging different types of knowledge as valid- experiential knowledge, artistic knowledge and lived experience of the punishment system, also encourages students to draw parallels between what may appear as abstract learning materials and their personal experiences. In this vein, non-traditional modes of learning can surface, privileging voices which are often silenced.

## Sensory Ice-Breakers Can Help To Encourage Students To Reflect On How The Observation And Description Of Different Sensory Experiences Can Enhance Their Reflective Writing And Critical Analysis

### Sound ice-breaker

Students are asked to close their eyes and listen to selected sounds such as a cow bell, a slamming door, a ping pong ball (these can be downloaded online for free). The last 'sound' selected was silence, creating a long and uncertain silence in the room- providing an opportunity for everyone to reflect on feelings of discomfort and whether they paid attention to any other sounds in the classroom.

An inside student described the silence as "cacophony of silence" and the realisation that inside prison one becomes quickly desensitised to certain sounds.

### Memory of smell ice-breaker

Students are asked to pair-up and describe their least and worst memory of smell and what they associate with it.

"I felt as though I really related to others in the classroom. One of the exercises we did in a group was our favourite smells. One of the inside students mentioned his grandmother's cooking and how he always found joy in that. I also specifically remember my grandmother's cooking and how that brought me joy. It once again reminded me of how we all have a lot more in common than meets the eye."



## NOTES

# 5

# CREATIVE AND EMBODIED PEDAGOGIES

# Creative And Embobied Pedagogies

A core element of emancipatory pedagogies is promoting education that encourages, and enables, students to step into their own selves and become agents of change and critical thinking (hooks 1994; Freire, 1970/2005; Illich, 1971; Giroux, 1983). This NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit encourages reflective, creative, and embodied pedagogies through which students can bring abstract theoretical concepts to life. These pedagogies have the power and potential to enhance teaching and learning while also subverting restrictive features of traditional prison education through encouraging students to bring in their lived experience, sensory reflections, and mutual learning (White et al., 2025).

## Creative Pedagogies

Through the implementation of creative and visual thinking pedagogies and strategies, the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit encourages students to critically reflect on the links between their own experiences and observations of a particular phenomenon and more abstract theories. Students are encouraged to think deeper about criminological topics via creative methods including sensory and reflective practices (Seal and O'Neill 2019; Swirak et al., 2025). As argued by Herrity, Schmidt, and Warr (2021): "Foregrounding the sensory, by thinking about sounds, smells, taste, and touch, and utilising these sources of information as a mechanism for understanding, presents a new way of exploring phenomena which has long been the focus for criminological inquiry." (xxi-xxii). In our classrooms, we found that critical thought can be enhanced by encouraging students to bring in their lived experiences and engage their senses in their reflective learning.

## Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) encourage students to reflect on relevant topics through asking questions of images and representations, such as:

- **What do you see?**
- **How is it made?**
- **What questions would you ask of the work**?

Using visual thinking strategies in the classroom has benefits including supporting critical thinking in new ways that can be transferred among different subjects, providing accessible ways of learning among different educational levels, fostering communication and conversation while learning, and emotional development (Housen, 2002; Yenawine, 2013; Cooper and Cronin, 2021).

## Embodied And Sensory Practices

In addition to incorporating creative and visual thinking practices, this toolkit encourages educators to root their pedagogies in decolonial and emancipatory frameworks. As highlighted in the introduction, decolonising education requires us to not only think about the topics we are studying within the context of "colonialism, empire, and racism" but also to "offer alternative ways of thinking about the world and alternative forms of political praxis" (Bhambra et al, 2018, 2). As such, reflective classroom based work as well as reflective assignments, such as weekly feedback forms and encouraging students to bring in lived experiences and sensory mapping into their assignments, are central to the emancipatory prison education classroom. The latter can be reflective writing, creative, and arts based assignments among others - but what is central to them is that these forms of knowledge encourage students to transcend what are essentially 'disembodied and necessarily asocial ways of knowledge production' (Miller, 2022, p. 286).

In the case of our Criminology classrooms, just like in many other social sciences, we have become accustomed to consider 'the mind and the body – and, by extension, scientific and partisan thought' as 'different things', often undertaking every effort to 'ensure distance from their own passions and the passions of the people they study' (Miller, 2022, p. 284). However, these 'scientific' forms of knowledge production are considered as 'disembodied and necessarily asocial' (Miller, 2022, p. 284) in radical black or feminist epistemologies and are not conducive to educational praxis that is inclusive, convivial and empathetic. In criminology and criminal justice research, the sensory turn has arrived only relatively recently, but importantly also encourages us to 'account for these multifarious sensorial experiences and their effects' (Herrity et al., 2021, p. xxiii), particularly when we research places or processes of social control – and as we claim spaces of education in prison institutions. As such, the emancipatory prison education classroom's encouragement of 'sensuous knowing' enacts a 'politics of feeling' (O'Neill, 2008, np.)

Through reflective journals, feedback forms, and essays, we encouraged students to reflect on what sensory connections they can make to the readings, discussions and classroom experiences - drawing connections to what significance sights, smells, touch, tastes, and sounds may hold.

NOTES

## Cork Weekly Reflective Feedback Forms

In Cork, each week we distributed and collected a form that includes reflective questions on your experiences and feedback on the class. We included the following prompts in the course reader to encourage students to engage with their sensory reflections:

**Questions for before the class**

What are some of your expectations for the class today?
What are some of your reactions to the reading you have done for the class?
How are you feeling about the topic to be discussed today?

**Questions for after the class**

What were some of the things that you observed going into and or during class that were significant to you?
Where did the conversations and experiences of the day take your thinking?

## Belfast Reflective Diary Entries

In Belfast, students submitted five reflective diary entries throughout the semester. In these diaries, students were asked to write about their personal observations, thoughts, emotions, and reactions to the readings and/or events in class. Specifically, we encouraged students to think about the following questions each week:

**Questions**

What are some of your reactions to the reading you have done for the class?
How are you feeling about the topic to be discussed today?
What were some of the things that you observed during class that were significant to you?
Did any classroom experiences trigger your senses?
Did the conversations and experiences of the day influence or shape your thinking?

## Creative Group Work

The final three weeks of NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classrooms are reserved for group work. Students form small groups of four to five persons and choose a topic covered throughout the semester with which they want to engage further. In Cork, due to the strong art resources in the education unit and existing partnerships between UCC and the prison art teachers, students were given the opportunity to work with professional artists who supported the development of their projects. In Belfast, the last two weeks of the semester were spent working with two members of the Array artist collective on collage group work projects that explored the critical criminological themes of the semester and were not formally assessed. However, group work can happen in any setting and it is inspiring to see how creative students will be when just given the time and space to work collaboratively in the classroom. Group work is another way of practicing emancipatory and student-led education, particularly in a confined space that is the prison education classroom. During one of our think tank sessions, when students were asked whether they would be happy with more prescriptive options for creative group work projects, very strong views were expressed that options in prison are so limited anyways, that the choice of group work theme and method of expression was very much welcome. Observing the enthusiasm, vigour, creativity and passion with which each and every group smartly designs their final group project is the most humbling experience for tutors to watch. The classroom turns into a hive of movement, activity, laughter and hard work- even more so than the usual weekly classrooms- and literally every corner is taken up with students sitting on the floor and tables, drafting and developing their work. Students are encouraged to choose any mode of creative outlet they prefer, such as for example

- **Song-writing, rapping or performance**
- **Designing and performing a game show**
- **Designing a board game**
- **Writing a podcast or radio episode (with or without recording)**
- **Write and perform pantomime, comedy sketch, role play, theatre piece**
- **Writing a newspaper article or a research report**
- **Design a teaching or training exercise**





**Student Reflections !**

"I love how comfortable everyone is in our group. Even though the topics we talk about can be heavy and opening up can be hurtful, probably because of the bond we have created, the inside students are always happy to inform us about how things actually work. At the same time, outside students don't feel embarrassed to share their views and ask questions."

# Example: instructions for group work

## From Theory To Action And Practice

Over the past few weeks we have covered the following topics in our classroom:

- **Critical education and education for democracy**
- **Language, labelling and stigma- person first language**
- **Masculinities**
- **From crime to social harm**
- **Desistance and Reintegration**
- **Penal abolition, social change and hopeful futures**

## Large Brainstorm Group

**What did you find was most interesting/controversial/inspiring that we have learned about together over the past few weeks? (You can name several ideas)**

Are there any topics that you think are worthwhile communicating to a larger audience?

Can we agree on 1 or maximum 2 topics- possibly they could connect?

### Small Group Discussion Around Group Work Project

**Based on the above brainstorm in the larger group, try to think about different ways you could work on communicating your ideas to a wider audience: general public, policy makers, politicians, journalists.**

Can you think of a practical project that you could come up with to achieve change in the real world?

What mission is your project intending to achieve?

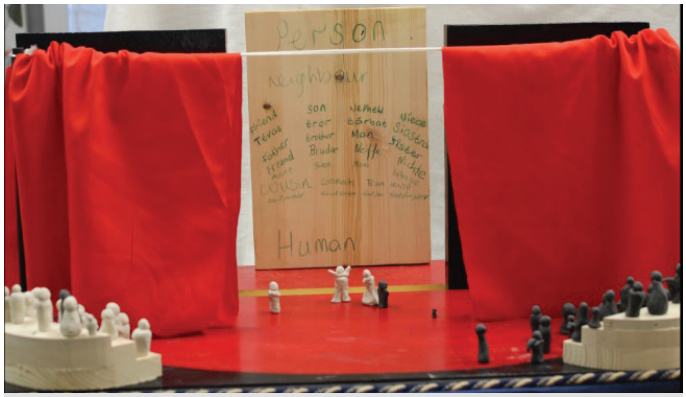
What values do you want your project to reflect?

What are the specific goals of the project?

# Putting The Different Parts Together

The creativity of combining visual and other types of creative expression with the thematic content of our classes, knows no bounds.

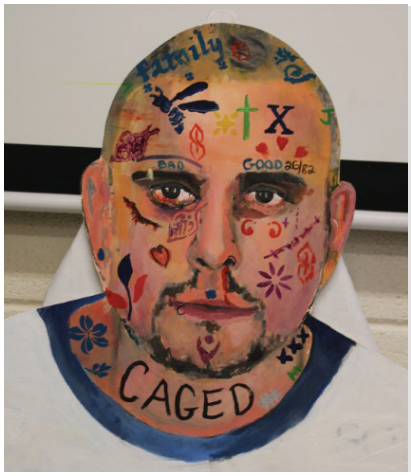
## Examples of creative group work projects




*"The World's A Stage" the impact of stigmas and labeling by society.*



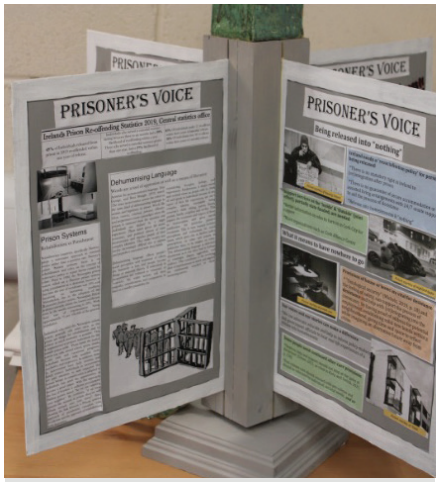
*Students in the Belfast Learning Together classroom used collage to explore the themes of the semester.*




*Students painted a picture of commonly held stereotypes of people in prison. The audience watched as students washed away the stains of stigma to show the 'real person' underneath the layers of negative labels.*




*"Masculinities and Identities," used collage to depict a range of types of masculinity.*




*The "Revolving Door" which demonstrates the difficulties of reentry that often lead to people returning to prison.*




*Cover of the group work podcast on rehabilitation and reintegration entitled "Welcome Not Home".*



*"The Dormant Volcano" symbolises the intense pains of imprisonment that can build up for someone in prison over time - constantly threatening to erupt, but unable to due to the consequences.*

## Students' Reflections On Group Work

"I felt unity as we all shared similar ideas of desistance. It was emotive when some students were explaining their artwork and discussing how they missed family."

"Everyone and all groups were able to bring something of their own thoughts and opinions towards the artwork based on the chosen topic. I noticed that everyone allowed each other to discuss and provide opinions, ideas and thoughts freely with the aim of coming to an equal group decision. For example when ripping out and selecting cut outs for my group piece I noticed that we sought the approval and relevance from the group as a whole before sticking it down."

"Group work was really beneficial to reignite my artistic spark and engage creatively through visually understanding some of the previous prison and criminal justice topics and concerns through breaking some of the topics/ concerns and visually understand them through a means of collage and drawing challenges/activities etc."

"There has been a surge of confidence and excitement amongst the groups [while doing the group art work]"

"Usually I struggle to talk in a classroom but this environment let me feel comfortable to be involved in discussions and present in the group work."

"I am genuinely excited about our group project. We decided to use a volcano to symbolize the pains of incarceration prisoners often have bubble up feelings of anger and frustration in order to keep themselves from erupting. There is only so much pain an individual can endure before letting it boil over. But if they can let it out they would feel the consequences of it via the loss of their liberties and autotomy."



## NOTES

# 6

# LIVED-EXPERIENCE & REFLECTIVE APPRECIATIVE LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

# Lived-Experience & Reflective Appreciative Learning & Assessment

## Reflective Learning And Writing

In line with the liberatory ethos of the TOGETHER toolkit, reflective and lived experience appreciative learning and assessment are encouraged throughout. The emphasis on 'lived experience' is not only an ethical practice of unearthing often unheard or marginalised voices, but it also demands empathetic and diverse modes of engagement and assessment.

In the higher education prison classroom, the emphasis on reflective and lived experience appreciative learning and assessment, provides a bridge and an opportunity for people from sometimes very different walks of life – university students and prison based students. But equally for all students, it encourages the transition of students as learners to students as active contributors of new knowledge. The emphasis on appreciating what each and every student brings to the classroom, also works as somewhat of an equaliser, at least in the microcosm of the classroom.

Importantly, a praxis that values lived experience and reflective work of students, does not assume uniformity of experiences. Neither prison based nor university based students can ever be described as homogenous groups, on the contrary, emancipatory teaching praxis demands the inclusion of 'dissenting voices, narratives of critique and perspectives from dropouts' (Fine and Torre, 2006, p. 263). The emancipatory prison education classroom offers a space where different experiences and perspectives as well as uncomfortable truths can be explored and discussed in a safe and mutually respectful manner.

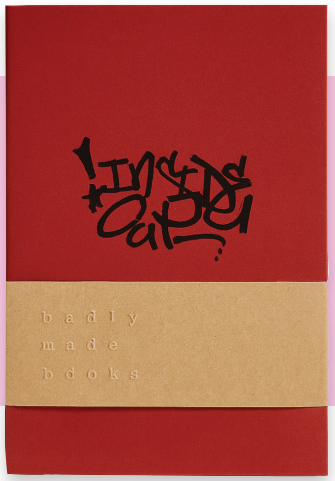
For example, while prison students have often suffered disproportionate disadvantages in deeply unequal societies, university students have to grapple with the institutional power of the neo-liberal university. Rather than negating these apparent differences, they can be used as teachable moments of teasing out how some of our experiences are universally shared, yet structured differentially.

Reflective exercises, practiced throughout the classroom, and then again as individual assignments outside the classroom, allow for students to also choose other than 'lived experience' perspectives, which can be tiring, re-traumatising or simply not appropriate in relation to a particular topic or learning outcome. The liberatory classroom as a collective space for knowledge gathering, sharing and creation, can oscillate between different priorities, as described here by bell hooks:

> ***On another day, I might ask students to ponder what we want to make happen in the class, to name what we hope to know, what might be most useful. I ask them what standpoint is a personal experience. Then there are times when personal experience keeps us from reaching the mountaintop and so we let it go because the weight of it is too heavy. And sometimes the mountaintop is difficult to reach with all our resources, factual and confessional, so we are just there collectively grasping, feeling the limitations of knowledge, longing together, yearning for a way to reach that highest point. Even this yearning is a way to know*** **(hooks, 1994:93).**

Engaging in reflective practice, is an essential element of the anti-oppressive emancipatory higher education prison university classroom, ensuring that content and methods do not reproduce and reinforce harmful constructions of criminal justice reality, but instead allow subjugated and critical knowledge to challenge and dismantle carceral world views. Reflective and lived experience praxis holds the promise to enrich the prison-university classroom and to transform the life-worlds of the collective and all those within.

## Reflective Questions During Small Group Exercises In The Classroom Get Students Used To Connecting Their Own Experiences And Personal Views With More Abstract Concepts




Students are given a note-book at the beginning of the course and are encouraged to keep notes of their thoughts, sensory experiences, feelings and reflections during each class and in between classes. These can be used for essay writing, for the final group work project or just as a personal memory of one's own thought development during the course.

## Sensory Writing

### Reflective Essay Writing- Example Of Instructions For An Assignment

**Mapping your sensory experiences and observations on social control/confinement/freedom**

**Map your daily life** within the institution that you are currently in (e.g. university and/or prison). Map out locations and places, briefly describe how they look. Describe feelings, smells, sights, sounds, feels etc.

You could do a **sensory description** of any places of goodness, freedom, pain or stress. Use your map to critically discuss social control and confinement (or feelings of freedom!) You can use Joseph's Dole prison diary to compare your own experience to his, but this is not a must.

## An Example Of Sensory Writing...

In the introductory part of the syllabus, students are provided with examples of reflective and sensory writing.

| | |
|---|---|
| An Excerpt from "Hearing order in Flesh and Blood: Sensemaking and attunement in the Pub and the Prison" by Kate Herrity in Sensory Penalities: Exploring the Senses in Spaces of Punishment and Social Control (2021) | **In this column are some comments showing how the sensory reflections develop** |
| "I take a seat at the bar. I know how a lone woman at a bar stool can be interpreted – but these are my spaces. I am at home here. Huddled male bodies gather around, nursing warm pints and sharing work-weary reflections. The smell of brick dust and excessive, lingering fabric conditioner released by the rustle of shell-suit fabric; the scent of a someone-at-home, signalling relative stability, safety. I contrast that with the memory of individuals who spent a great deal of time in pubs I worked in. The smell of bedsits – or their more modern and palatable, studio equivalent; cooking oil, stale fag smoke, neglect and simmering rage. Cranky in booze, volatile and bruised. Too many hours spent alone. I smell and listen to my surroundings and the chorus of individuals and groups who comprise it, measuring my spaces in delicately negotiated inches. I feel and listen to learn the environment, drawing on my intimate acquaintance with these processes to gauge the social climate, familiarising myself with the rhythms of the general hubbub as I settle in my seat, and into the social space in which it sits." | **In this excerpt, the writer reflects on a particular place, in this case the pub, and connects it to her sensory reflections including the power of scent/smell with the feelings and emotions that it brings up for her.**<br><br>**The writer highlights the smells around her and connects them with the feelings that those smells hold for her.**<br><br>**Again, the writer is connecting specific smells to feelings and associations that she has.**<br><br>**The writer highlights the sensory reflection of listening to her environment, with a focus on the rhythms of the room, and observations she makes.**<br><br>**The writer demonstrates the connection of the environment (sight/feeling) and events to particular smells and feelings.** |

## Excerpt From A Student Reflective Essay On 'Everyday Abolition'

*Many times in my life I felt the punitive response were the wrong approach by the gardai and the justice system especially when I was convicted for possession of cannabis being sent to prison doesn't do anything to solve the issues for me and many others living in prisons. There is a reason most people use drugs and behave in violent ways, which could be helped with counseling, physiology, education, and some guidance as well as some structure in their lives.*

*I do think there are other ways to deal with these issues other than the justice system approach, the most important fact in that is support people need to support each other for there to be a world without the need for prisons as we know them today, that might be harder for most people to do as showing compassion for others it is much easier to lock them up in a cage and forget about them.*

*Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us, "Abolition is not simply about getting rid of prisons, police or systems of surveillance and punishment; abolition is about what we build in their place."*

*I think this is something humanity needs, a positive change, something new and an open minded approach such as everyday abolition. "Everyday abolition means in-doing the cultural norms and mindsets that trap us within punitive habits and logics."*

*I personally think everyday abolition is a great idea but achieving it would be much harder since all of us were born into this world the way it is now, there would have to be a revolution or something chaotic to change it although the more thought I give it maybe not. I had a hard time in school for many reasons, standing outside the principal's office for minor things and I never obviously never connected those encounters with punitive logic and I'm sure not many others would have either over the people dealing with the punishment.*





## NOTES

# 7

# BEYOND THE NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER CLASSROOM

# Beyond The North South Together Classroom

The work of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project extends beyond the weekly classroom work. The way a course ends plays an enormous role in the lasting impact it will have on participants, so it is vital not to just leave participants feeling abandoned after they have invested so much during the weeks of the class.

## Completion Ceremony As Closing Ritual



**Photo:** UCC Outside Students after their graduation, pictured with TOGETHER project team members outside Cork prison.

A “graduation” or course completion ceremony to formally recogonise and celebrate a semester of learning together in the prison education classroom marks an important closing ritual of the emancipatory higher prison education classroom (see Maruna, 2011). It provides an opportunity for students to present their work and think about how they can effectively communicate their ideas to a larger audience, reinforcing their agency as cultural producers of ideas and critiques.

The closing ritual of a graduation ceremony is also particularly important as after completion of the course, students and instructors will not meet in the same set-up again. Inside students often get transferred to other prisons or are sometimes due to be released, and outside students often move away from their place of study for a variety of reasons. Graduation ceremonies are therefore often emotional events with mixed feelings of joy, relief, pride as well as sadness.

The graduation ceremony usually takes place in the prison education unit with about 20-30 guests attending, including University colleagues and supporters, prison leadership and education staff, family members, and other supporters, and other invitees. The graduation ceremony is student-led, with inside and outside students leading through the programme of the graduation, including delivering

graduation speeches and formal presentations of research projects to the assembled guests. The anticipation of the graduation ceremony and meticulous planning and preparation by students is testament to their semester-long commitment of sharing and developing their knowledge and talent. Course completion ceremonies also involve inspirational graduation-type speeches. In Belfast, invited graduation speakers were always individuals with lived experience of criminal justice who had achieved success in education, including authors of some of the semester's readings such as Andi Brierley (2023), David Honeywell (2021; 2023), Michael Irwin (2022), and Wayne Hart (e.g., Hart & Healy, 2018).

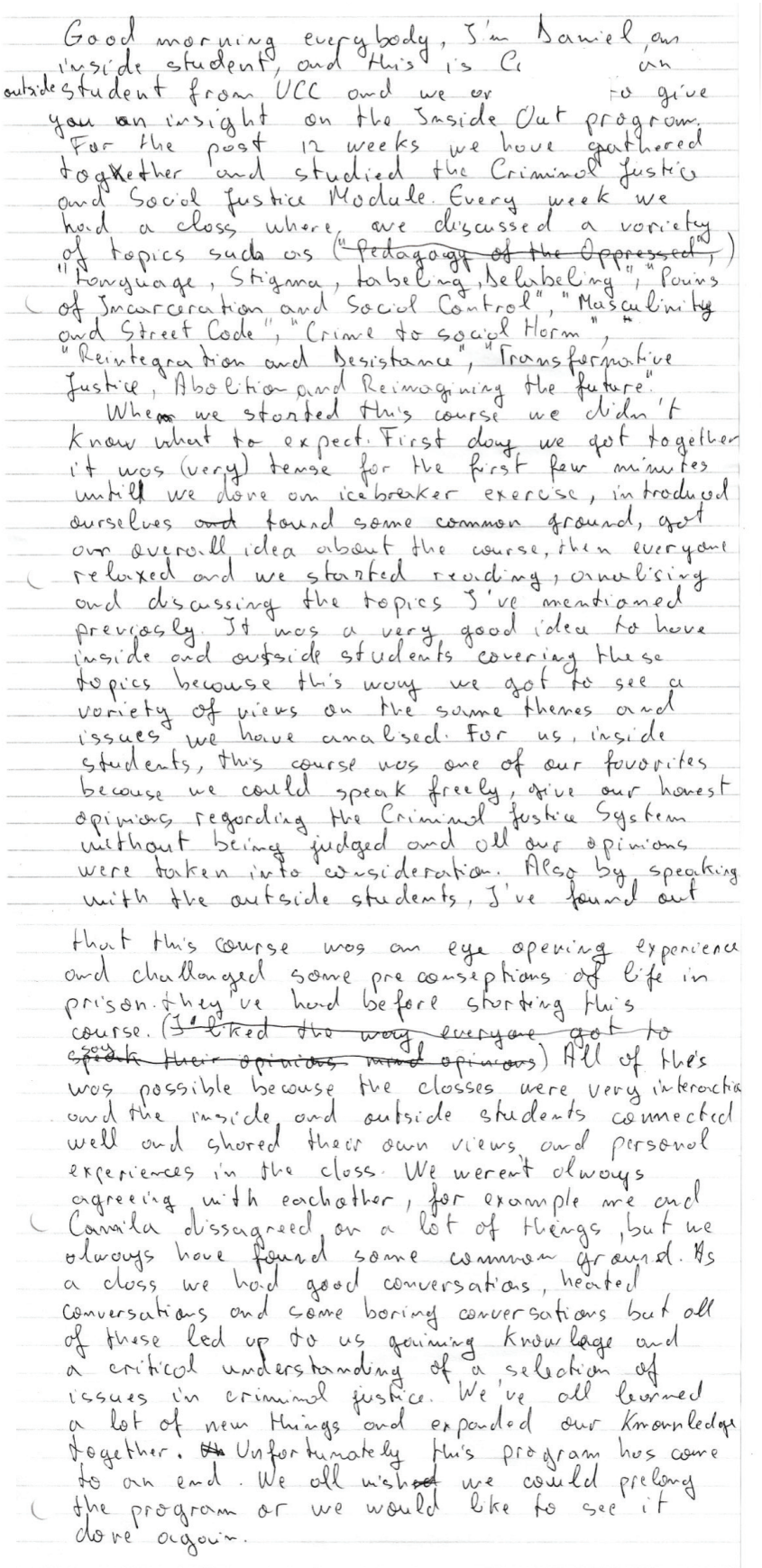
Crucially, the ceremonies also involve the distribution of certificates of completion as well. In Cork, these include University accredited 'microcredentials'. In Belfast, these include recognition of the number of CATS points (Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme). These are transferable credits that can be applied to future university degree courses were the student to pursue further higher education. The certificate, then, is not a university degree, it represents only the completion of a single university-level course. Yet, the value of such a document for inside students, in particular, is not at all measurable in credits. Students talk about their CATS credits with enormous pride, knowing that they have received the same amount of credit as did the fee-paying university students. In Belfast, inside and outside students all also receive individualised letters of recommendation (addressed as "To Whom It May Concern") outlining the nature of the course and the individual student's specific strengths and contributions through the semester. These letters, given in triplicate, can be used in various ways by the students, and again are highly valued by both inside and outside students.

The benefits of participating in something like NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER classrooms cannot easily be captured on a piece of paper, and students do not attend just for the university module credits. However, these certifications play a vital symbolic function, especially for inside students, in the process of re-labeling. Incarceration experiences saddle students with the label of the criminal record that can follow them throughout life. Educational certificates and letters of recommendation cannot fully counter such labels, but they do play a countering function in signalling a person's potential for growth and achievement.

As educators, we can be cynical about such rituals. After all, as university staff, we sit through an endless number of graduation ceremonies and prize givings in our careers. However, it is crucial to not underestimate the value of these sorts of celebrations to someone in prison, many of whom have achieved very few such celebrations, and are far more familiar with what are known as "degradation ceremonies" in the sociological literature (Garfinkel, 1956). Inside students are not at all cynical about the certificates they receive. Several talk about how they prominently display them in their prison cells or how their parents have had them framed at their homes. One particularly enthusiastic group of Belfast Learning Together students used their art skills to make graduation caps like those worn in university graduations to mark the occasion of their course completion. A recent Cork completion ceremony received considerable coverage from national and regional news media and led to articles in the press, further reinforcing the significance of the students' achievements and boosting the esteem of all participants.



# Excerpt from a Closing Speech of Students



Good morning everybody, I'm Daniel, an inside student, and this is Ci an outside student from UCC and we ar to give you an insight on the Inside Out program. For the past 12 weeks we have gathered together and studied the Criminal Justice and Social Justice Module. Every week we had a class where we discussed a variety of topics such as ("Pedagogy of the Oppressed", "Language, Stigma, Labeling, Delabeling", "Pains of Incarceration and Social Control", "Masculinity and Street Code", "Crime to social Harm", "Reintegration and Desistance", "Transformative Justice, Abolition and Reimagining the future".

When we started this course we didn't know what to expect. First day we got together it was (very) tense for the first few minutes until we done an icebreaker exercise, introduced ourselves and found some common ground, got our overall idea about the course, then everyone relaxed and we started reading, analising and discussing the topics I've mentioned previously. It was a very good idea to have inside and outside students covering these topics because this way we got to see a variety of views on the same themes and issues we have analysed. For us, inside students, this course was one of our favourites because we could speak freely, give our honest opinions regarding the Criminal Justice System without being judged and all our opinions were taken into consideration. Also by speaking with the outside students, I've found out that this course was an eye opening experience and challanged some pre conseptions of life in prison they've had before starting this course. (I liked the way everyone got to speak their opinions mind opinions) All of this was possible because the classes were very interactiv and the inside and outside students connected well and shared their own views and personal experiences in the class. We weren't always agreeing with eachother, for example me and Camila dissagreed on a lot of things, but we always have found some common ground. As a class we had good conversations, hearted conversations and some boring conversations but all of these led up to us gaining knowledge and a critical understanding of a selection of issues in criminal justice. We've all learned a lot of new things and expanded our knowledge together. Unfortunately this program has come to an end. We all wish we could prelong the program or we would like to see it done again.

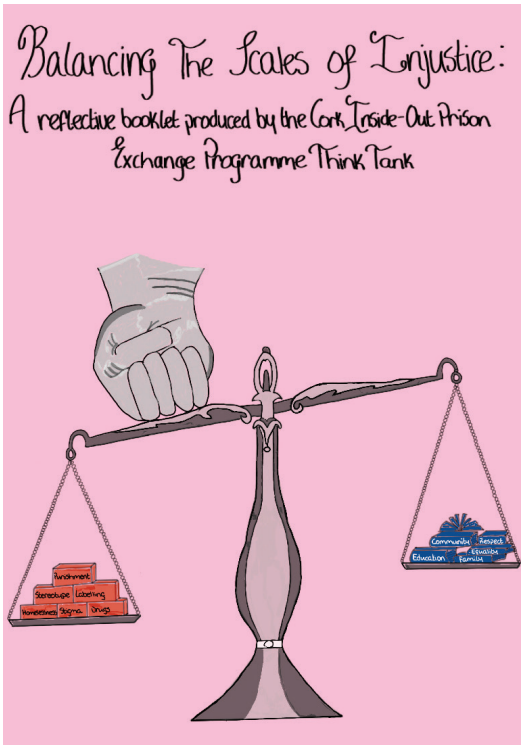
## Think Tanks

One of the hallmarks of the Inside- Out programme is the 'think tank' model, which aims to create spaces where discussions and collective learning extends beyond the semester-long module (Pompa, 2013:4). Both in Cork and Belfast, think tanks have been in operation since 2019 with varying degrees of continuity, due to factors such as pressures on staff resources both within the prison education unit and university, a changing student body both inside and outside the prison as well as timetabling and other practical challenges.
The UCC Cork think tank has so far worked together for two semesters in varying constellations of students. The first think tank (2022/2023) formed a book club that met weekly in the Cork Prison Education Unit and studied Ruben J. Miller's 'Halfway Home' together. The think tank also wrote and circulated a press release about their graduation from the module. The second think tank (2023/2024) expressed the enthusiastic wish to share with others their learning from their classroom. As a result, the Cork think tank designed a reflective booklet- with funding support from the Irish Department of Employment and Social Protection - full of fascinating classroom and think tank artefacts (University College Cork Inside Out Think Tank, Writing Collective, 2024).

**The UCC Cork think tank formulated the following aim and hope for the reflective booklet:**

> ***We hope to pass the message that this type of education across prison walls, where inside and outside students learn as equals side by side, is beneficial to everyone involved, and we hope to make you feel what we felt when we were working together. In this booklet, you will read our own words and you will look at our own work, and hopefully this will make you understand how much this programme actually means to us and how much it actually makes a difference.***

**The UCC Cork think tank also created a piece of cover art for their reflective booklet - portraying imbalanced scales to juxtapose the 'scales of justice' with experiences of unjust experiences that surround imprisoned and criminalised persons.**




The UCC Cork think tank also advised the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER research team on the design of the research tools used for the project and provided valuable feedback on the running of the classroom. Prior to developing the curriculum for the Autumn 2024 semester, we held pre-semester think tanks with previous students and where we brought in prints out of the previous semester curriculum and

went through each week to get student input on the curriculum, delivery, and general feedback. This was essential in ensuring that our pedagogies were reflective of the needs and learning styles of the students. Specific feedback included the value of the ice breakers, the need for lived experience readings and content, feedback on specific themes we should and should not include (e.g. no more covid specific lessons!), and the importance of group work among others. In Belfast, a think tank consisting of inside and outside graduates was created following the second year of the course to reflect on previous learning experiences and provide lived-experience-based feedback on the curricula, pedagogy and implementation of the Hydebank Learning Together classroom. Three sessions were held weekly to help inform the content and design of the new curriculum and classroom learning tools, with former students reflecting on what had worked well and what they thought could be improved.

During the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project, we also benefited from learning from one of our Australian sister programmes, The Beyond the Stone Wall Advisory Collective (BSWAC), who run well developed think tanks. A BSWAC panel member from the University of Melbourne visited our classrooms in Belfast and Cork and shared with us amongst other learnings, how the work of think tanks looks like in Australia. Starting with designing their own logos, names and group identity, some have now become so regularised that local and regional policy makers consult with the think tanks on important criminal justice policy decisions. While we are not there yet in Ireland, these inspirational think tanks serve as great examples of the potential of university prison education classrooms and their power to create opportunities for the expansion of civic space between higher education units/universities and prison education units and indeed could form another avenue for meaningful community building between punishment impacted persons and civil society.

While we have seen first hand the power and possibility of think tanks to foster bonds beyond the semester, it is important to acknowledge the challenges related to the practicalities of delivering and sustaining think tanks (King, et al., 2022). In Cork and Belfast, we faced challenges related to capacity of both university and prison staff to be available regularly to deliver the think tanks, the challenges of the transitory nature of both prison based students moving facilities and university students graduating, and communication with students after the class ended.

## Supports Needed For Higher Education Prison Based Think Tanks

- **Ongoing time commitment by higher education staff to dedicate time to think tank work**
- **Ongoing time commitment by students inside and outside to stay involved**
- **Continued access to prison education units beyond the classroom graduation**

## Challenges In Setting Up And Maintain Higher Education Prison Based Think Tanks

Some of pointers for thinking about several systemic issues with regards to the sustainability of higher education/university in prison classrooms.

- **Once a semester is finished, access to prison based classrooms becomes harder as education units also work on reduced timetables**
- **Inside students are often moved to other prisons or released- and unless initiated by the graduates, contact is lost**
- **Outside students equally move on**
- **Administrative support is needed to maintain contact with inside and outside students**

We believe that the think tanks are a worthwhile pursuit and an important element of emancipatory prison pedagogy. It is our hope that by being transparent about these challenges, those seeking to implement and adapt emancipatory pedagogies and think tanks can plan in advance for these challenges in order to overcome them.

In line with the overall aim of the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project- to document and share with others the rich and deep learning that we encountered in the spaces beyond prison walls and beyond borders- the think tank model offers opportunities to build communities of learners beyond the higher education prison education classroom.

Such collaborative spaces where prison experienced learners, other higher education students and staff can continue to meet together beyond the confines of the higher education prison classroom and develop opportunities for learning, social action and 'community', are a gap which the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER project has identified. We intentionally include our yet unfulfilled vision of think tanks on the island of Ireland in this toolkit, with the hope that we might join forces with others undertaking such work already or keen to develop such spaces in the future.

NOTES

## Nurturing Connectivity and Hope Beyond Walls And Borders

We invite readers to take from the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit whatever may be useful for their own learning. As mentioned in the introduction, our toolkit is not a prescriptive document, rather it aims to capture the spirit, ethos and methodology of emancipatory prison higher education classrooms to enable those working in the field to reproduce dynamics of conviviality and solidarity within sites of confinement. Recognizing that conviviality and solidarity may look different depending on the local context of the classroom, we understand that the application of emancipatory education may look different and encourage users to adapt the practices in this toolkit as necessary. We are always happy to share more of our experiences and learning with those interested, please contact us at any stage for more information or if you want access to more technical aspects of our work such as security and risk protocols.

We look forward to the NORTH SOUTH TOGETHER toolkit fostering connections with like-minded classrooms, both within Ireland and internationally, in the spirit of further opening our educational institutions to prison-based learners—during their time in prison and beyond. Prison based classrooms offer extraordinary opportunities for higher education learners, within prison and from university settings, to partake in pedagogy that fosters community and affords transformative learning experiences. Furthermore, we believe in the power of collaboration and shared knowledge, and that there are opportunities to grow emancipatory prison education networks amongst those involved on the Island of Ireland North and South and beyond. Ultimately, prison-university classrooms are sites that can nurture connectivity and hope - in times of uncertainty and fracture, these are important and timely features for teachers and students alike.



## NOTES

## Appendix 1: Timeline And Steps Of Toolkit Development

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# Appendix 1: Timeline And Steps Of Toolkit Development

**Phase 1- January-June 2023 Consultations and preparation of participatory research process feeding into toolkit design**

- Consultations with 'think tanks' in Cork Prison and HMP Hydebank Wood Secure College. Think tanks were developed by the Inside Out Programme and consist of former graduates- prison based and university students to pursue further commonly decided activities after completion of a course. The Cork and HMP Hydebank think tanks reviewed and suggested changes to the existing curricula (reading choices, ice breakers, classroom exercises) and provided feedback on research tools (evaluation documents, reflective feedback forms).

- Inclusion of feedback into course curriculum development for Autumn 2023, in particular: inclusion of more readings from people with lived experience of criminal justice systems, building in an overarching theme of sensory reflections and writings, and continuing to build in an array of creative educational methods.
- Development of feedback forms to provide opportunity for students to offer reflections on their expectations, learning moments, challenges, and anything else they wanted to highlight after each session and upon completion of the module.

**Phase 2- September-December 2023 Participatory research phase**

- Collection of weekly ethnographic observations of the Inside-Out and Learning Together classrooms both North and South.
- Collection of weekly reflective student and educator feedback forms and classroom artefacts North and South.
- Stakeholder interviews conducted with facilitators, prison-based artists collaborating with our classrooms and prison education unit staff who were involved in the classrooms North and South.

**Phase 3- Toolkit finalisation**

- After the end of the semester, the team transcribed, sorted, and analysed all of the ethnographic fieldwork observations which included 11 observations conducted in Cork and 8 conducted in Belfast.

- The team analysed 125 student essays, 128 classroom artefacts and 205 feedback forms that were collected throughout the semester both North and South. We also analyzed 10 interviews that were conducted with project stakeholders.
- The toolkit has been brainstormed and developed based on the empirical data, insight, and contributions from student participatory action researchers. Using this information, the Together project research team designed and developed the toolkit that you see on the following pages.

- In the final stages of toolkit development, we invited previous students from both universities and prisons to be the first people to review the toolkit and share their feedback and edits, which are reflected in this final version.

# Appendix 2: Example Information Flyer For Prisons And Student Recruitment

## New Class:

**UCC Department of Sociology and Criminology**
**Inside-Out Criminal Justice & Social Justice 2023-2024**

Would you like to study a BA Criminology module on Criminal Justice and Social Justice with UCC College students and lecturers? We believe in discussion across prison walls and would love for you to join us for this exciting class!

**You will learn**

- How do social scientists think about the criminal justice system and social harm?
- How we can relate personal experiences to concepts that criminological literature would typically use?
- How can we use creative methods to reflect on our experiences and what we learn?

**Some themes covered will include:**

- The power of words and labeling
- Should we study crime or social harm?
- Masculinities, crime and identities
- Reintegration and desistance from crime
- Transformative Justice: Can we imagine a world without prisons?

**What are the prerequisites for joining the module?**

This module is designed for students who have an approximate level of junior cert reading and writing skills. The emphasis of the course however is on course participants talking and collaborating through a number of exercises, rather than traditional academic work of heavy reading and writing.

**How will the weekly sessions look like?**

10 BA students from University College Cork will be joining you every week (for 12 weeks, starting in September) and under guidance of two UCC facilitators, and one UCC researcher, we will explore the weekly themes, discuss the readings, collaborate on interactive exercises and create new ideas together.

**What do assessments look like?**

All assessments will be handwritten and are of a reflective nature. This resembles writing a diary, rather than traditional academic writing, with a focus on sensory reflections. We will learn this skill together in class, as this is new for UCC students also. We will work together in small groups to creatively explore our ideas in more depth. We will also provide individual support as needed.

**Who teaches the course?**

Katharina Swirak and James Windle from the Department of Criminology and Sociology in UCC will facilitate this course. Kathleen White, a UCC researcher, will also be in the course to support the TOGETHER project.

**What do I gain from participating in the course?**

In addition to lots of new skills and experiences, you will receive a Certificate of Attendance from UCC Department of Sociology and Criminology at our Closing Ceremony at the end of the course. Furthermore, this semester will include the option to be a part of the HEA funded North South TOGETHER project and co-produce a toolkit for prison-university education partnerships in Ireland. Students will also have the option to join a Think Tank after the course ends where they can continue to meet, discuss ideas, and identify collaborative activities. Please contact Edel, the head teacher in the school to learn more about connecting with past think tank members.

**How can I access the materials for this course?**

All course participants will receive a study pack with all readings and weekly handouts will follow.

UCC
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland

*TOGETHER: All Island Prison-University Partnership*

**To get involved or learn more, please contact Edel, the Head Teacher in the school**

# Appendix 3: Ucc Semester Timetable

UCC Department of Sociology & Criminology and Cork Prison Education Unit
CR2022 Inside-Out Criminal Justice and Social Justice

**AUTUMN Semester/2023-24**

| Date | Week | Content | Venue | Assessments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12/9 | 1 | Security Briefing and Outsider Orientation 10am - 12pm | TBC | |
| 12/9 | 1 | Inside Orientation 14:00 - 15:30 | Cork Prison | |
| 19/9 | 2 | Introduction- 1st combined class- Pedagogy of the Oppressed | Cork Prison | |
| 26/9 | 3 | Topic 1 – Language, Stigma, Labeling, Delabeling | Cork Prison | |
| 3/10 | 4 | Topic 2- Pains of Incarceration and Social Control | Cork Prison | Hand in Reflective Essay No.1 |
| 10/10 | 5 | Topic 3 - Masculinity and Street Code | | |
| 17/10 | 6 | Topic 4 - Crime to Social Harm | Cork Prison | Hand in Reflective Essay No.2 |
| 24/10 | 7 | Topic 5 - Reintegration and Desistance | Cork Prison | |
| 31/10 | 8 | MID TERM BREAK | No Class-Reading & writing time | |
| 7/11 | 9 | Topic 6- Transformative Justice, Abolition, and Re-imagining the future | Cork Prison | |
| 14/11 | 10 | Group work | Cork Prison | Hand in Reflective Essay No.3 |
| 21/11 | 11 | Group work | Cork Prison | |
| 28/11 | 12 | Group work | Cork Prison | Hand in group work portfolio |
| 5/12 | 13 | Graduation, Evaluative Art Workshop, and Feedback | Cork Prison | |

# Appendix 4: Qub Semester Example

| WEEK | LEARNING DIARY | TOPIC | REQUIRED READING |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 1<br>22 Sept | NONE | **What is a Learning Together course?<br>Introduction to Together** | Werts (2013) |
| Week 2<br>29 Sept | | **Pedagogy of the Oppressed:<br>Transformative Learning** | Inspired Minds (2016) |
| Week 3<br>6 Oct | DIARY ENTRY 1 DUE | **Overcoming Stigma and Reintegration:<br>Stigma, Labelling and Delabelling** | Carey, Grant & Tompkins (2022) |
| Week 4<br>13 Oct | NONE | **Impact of Imprisonment: The Pains of Incarceration & the effects of** | Bliss (2015) |
| Week 5<br>20 Oct | DIARY ENTRY 2 DUE | **Leaving Prison and Desistance: Thinking About Desistance** | Maruna (2017) |
| Week 6<br>27 Oct | NONE | **Gender and Desistance: Exploring Gendered Differences in Desistance** | Harriot (2017) |
| WEEK 7<br>3 Nov | DIARY ENTRY 3 DUE | NO LECTURE/NO TUTORIAL | No required readings |
| Week 8<br>10 Nov | DIARY ENTRY 4 DUE | **Nothing About Us Without Us: lived experience and criminal justice** | Aresti & Harriott (2018) |
| Week 9<br>17 Nov | DIARY ENTRY 5 DUE | **Reimagining the Future: Transformative Justice & Reimagining the Future** | Kaba (2020) |
| Week 10<br>24 Nov | NONE | **Visualising our Knowledge: Part 1** | No required readings |
| Week 8<br>1 Dec | NONE | **Visualising our Knowledge: Part 2** | No required readings |
| FINALE<br>8 Dec | NONE | **Celebrating Success**<br><br>*instead of the normal diary entry, students should prepare brief remarks on 'what I learned in this course' | No required readings<br>2000 word ESSAY DUE BY 15 DECEMBER |

## Appendix 5: Ucc Example Of Session Overview

**Week 2- First Combined Class inside Cork Prison 19/9/2023**

This is our first session as a whole group and we anticipate that there will be anxieties and concerns for everyone. This class is designed to help all students get to know each other and create a working framework for the rest of the module. This class will help everyone settle in to how the module will operate. We will also jointly decide on some principles of communication for our classroom interactions that everyone will feel comfortable with. Additionally, we will introduce and discuss some principles of emancipatory education and how these challenge existing education systems.

**Readings:**

McKeown, L. (2019) 'From D102 to Paulo Freire: An Irish Journey', in Mehigan, J. and Earle, R. (eds), Degrees of Freedom: Prison Education at The Open University, Bristol University Press, pp. 179–190 [Online]. DOI: 10.46692/9781447353096.019 (Accessed 28 August 2023).

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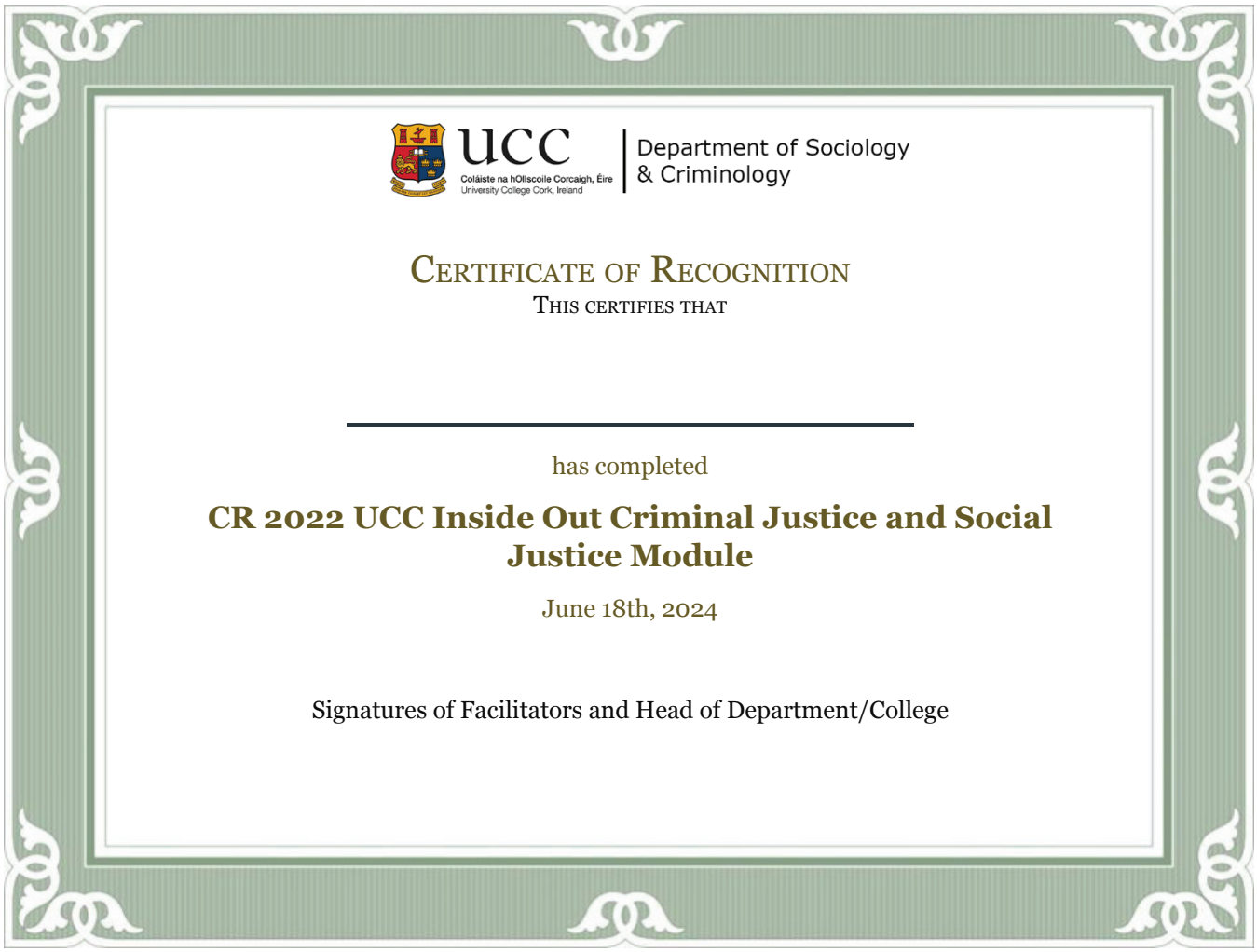
Journal of Prisoners on Prison, 25(2), pg 136 - A manifesto by men who are incarcerated: http://www.jpp.org/documents/back%20issues/JPP%2025-2.pdf

## Appendix 6: Example Graduation Ceremony Programme

**Programme of Inside Out Graduation Ceremony 5th of December 2023**

MCs/Programme Chairs: Inside Student and Outside student
10:00-10:05 Welcome by Governor and the Head Teacher
10:05-10:15 Inside Student and Outside student- Speech on behalf of the Class
10:15-10:40 Group Work Presentations
Group 1 The dangers of being dormant (8 minutes)
Group 2 Reimagining Rehabilitation (8 minutes)
Group 3 Behind the Scenes (8 minutes)
10:40-10:45 Past Inside Out student, Inside Out Facilitators - Thank you and reflections
10:45-11:10 UCC Professor and AdministratorAddress to the
Class and Handing out of Certificates, Photos
11:10-11:45- Teas and Coffees

# Appendix 7: Example Graduation Certificate



UCC
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

Department of Sociology
& Criminology

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

has completed

**CR 2022 UCC Inside Out Criminal Justice and Social Justice Module**

June 18th, 2024

Signatures of Facilitators and Head of Department/College


Community
Respect
Education
Equality
Family
Sunshine
Sustainably
FUTURE
Welcome
Exploring
CRIME
good life
ADDICT
family
CAGED
PAINS
AND
GAINS
LOVE
HERE'S YOUR CHANCE
Introduce
Mutual Respect
Understanding
Improve the
PRISONER'S VOICE
Being released into "noth
Statistics 2019, Central statistics office