

# **Critical-Creative Pedagogies for Reimagining Higher Education**

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# Where am I coming from

- 20 years teaching in International Development in US, New Zealand and UK
- Similar student reactions: 'nothing works, I am becoming disillusioned and cynical'
- How can I teach critique and foster imagination, instill questioning and nurture hope?
- Introducing them to alternatives to development

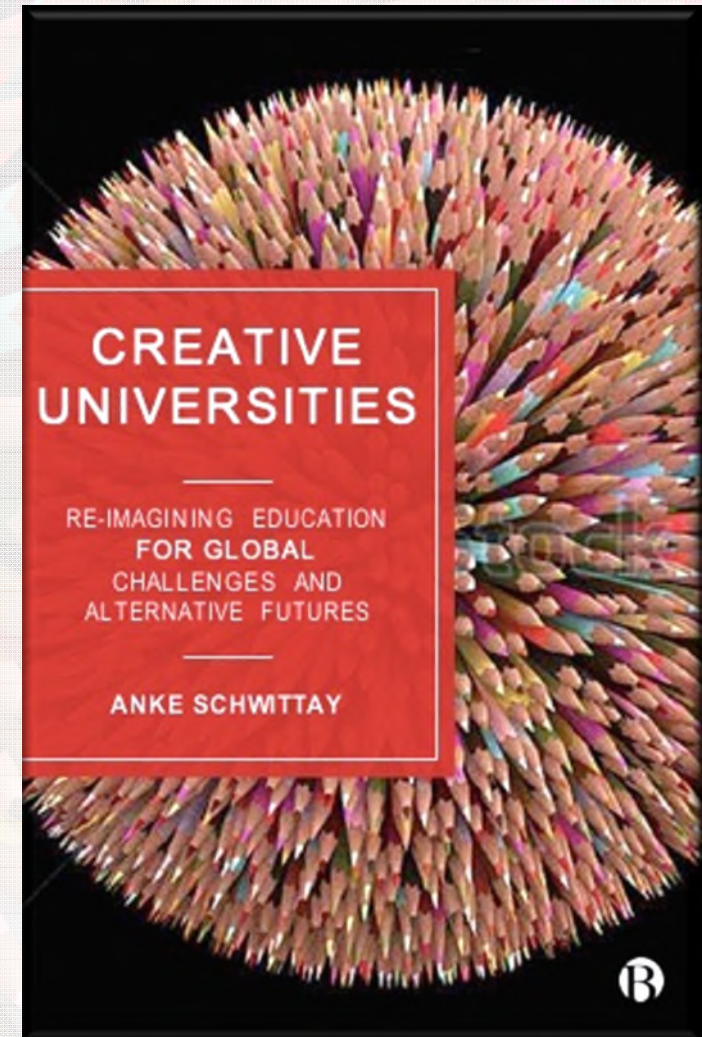


Teaching Urban Future students at Sussex



# Complement critique with creativity

- 3-year research project Sussex Global Studies (2016-19): interviews, teaching material review, in-class observations, pedagogical experimentations
- Developed critical-creative pedagogy for students to better understand global challenges and imagine alternative responses to them
- Also research at Bolivian universities
- Book with Bristol University/Policy Press
- [www.creativeuniversities.com](http://www.creativeuniversities.com)





# Pedagogical inspirations

- **bell hooks**
  - teaching to transgress
  - classroom as most radical space in the academy
- **Paolo Freire**
  - pedagogies of hope
  - courage and persistence
- **C.K. Gibson-Graham**
  - academic subjects of possibility
  - generative theorizing
- **Sarah Amsler & Keri Facer**
  - Dreaming in steps rather than leaps
  - Futurity and regimes of anticipation
- **Arturo Escobar**
  - designing pluriversal alternatives



Image source: [www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com)



# Academic creativity

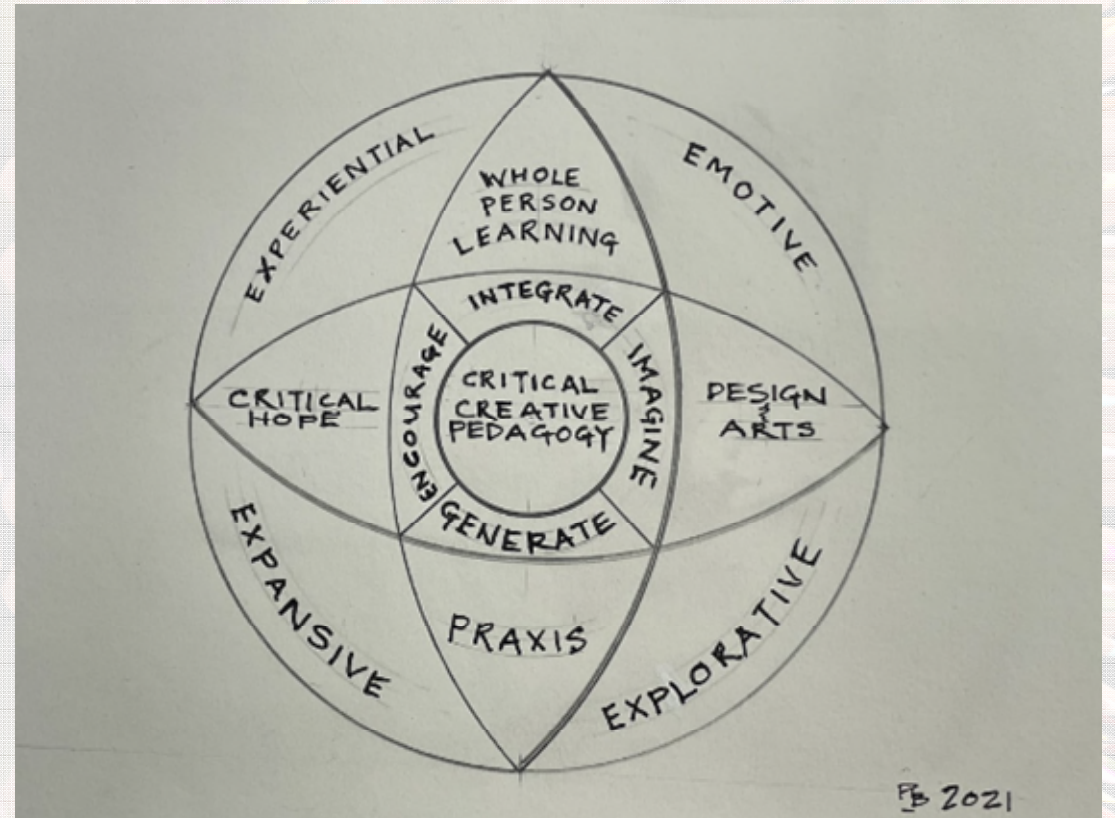
- Ken Robinson - 'ability to leap out of familiar habits into new ideas spaces'
- Alison James and Stephen Brookfield - 'move away from the well-trodden, to sniff out the subtle indicators of possibility and to move sideways and beyond'
- Ronald Barnett – 5 forms of creative university
- Not corporate-managerialist creativity (Rob Pope)
- Everyday creative potential
- Continuum between critique and creativity





# Critical-creative pedagogy

- Whole-person learning
- Creative design & arts methods
- Praxis
- Critical hope
- 4 strands interweave into an expandable sphere

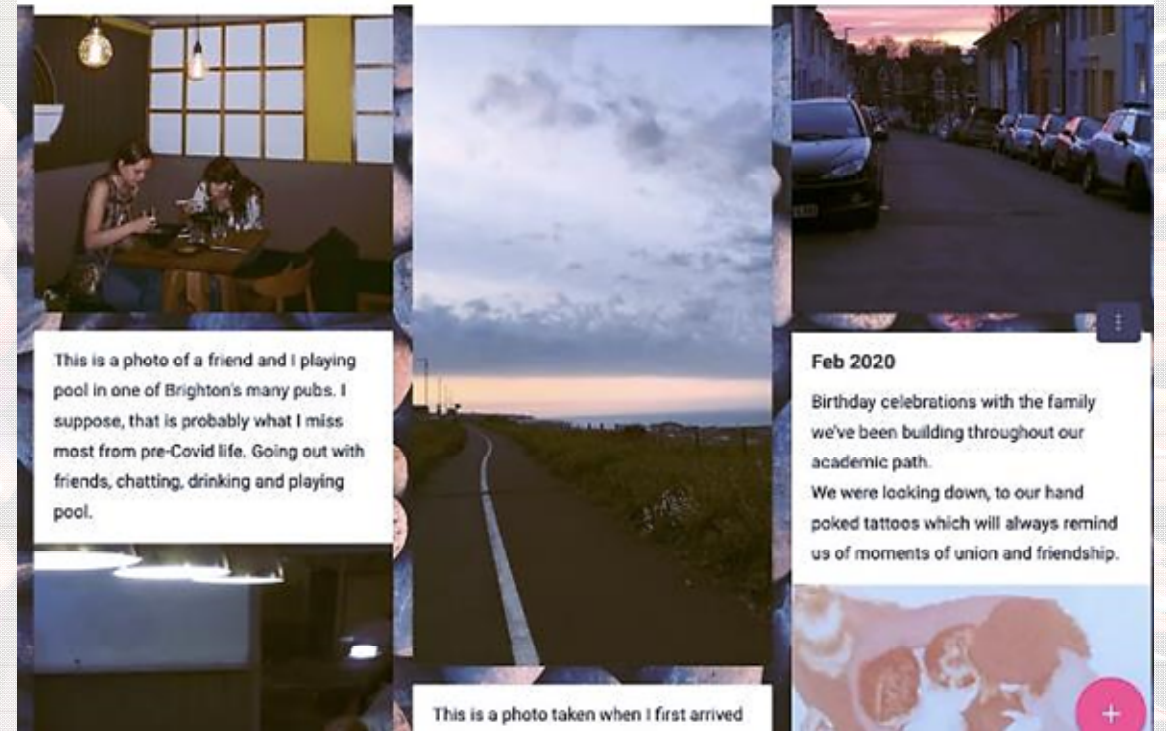


Critical-creative pedagogy guiding star  
Source: Paul Braund & author



# Whole-person learning

- Invite students to bring not only their intellects but also bodies, emotions and senses into classroom
- Experiential learning
- Safe spaces, clear structures, caring facilitation
- Body mapping, serious games
- Students collectively write Brighton Manifesto based on their own experiences of living in city



Padlet created by students about their pre/post Covid lives in Brighton  
Photo: Author, used with students' permission  
<https://creativeuniversities.com/2021/02/13/teaching-urban-futures-again/>



# Design and arts methods

- Global challenges as wicked problems
- Capacity to imagine, experiment, empathize
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be comfortable with ambiguity
- Materiality and resource politics of teaching
- Students building scenarios of desired urban futures for Brighton 2050

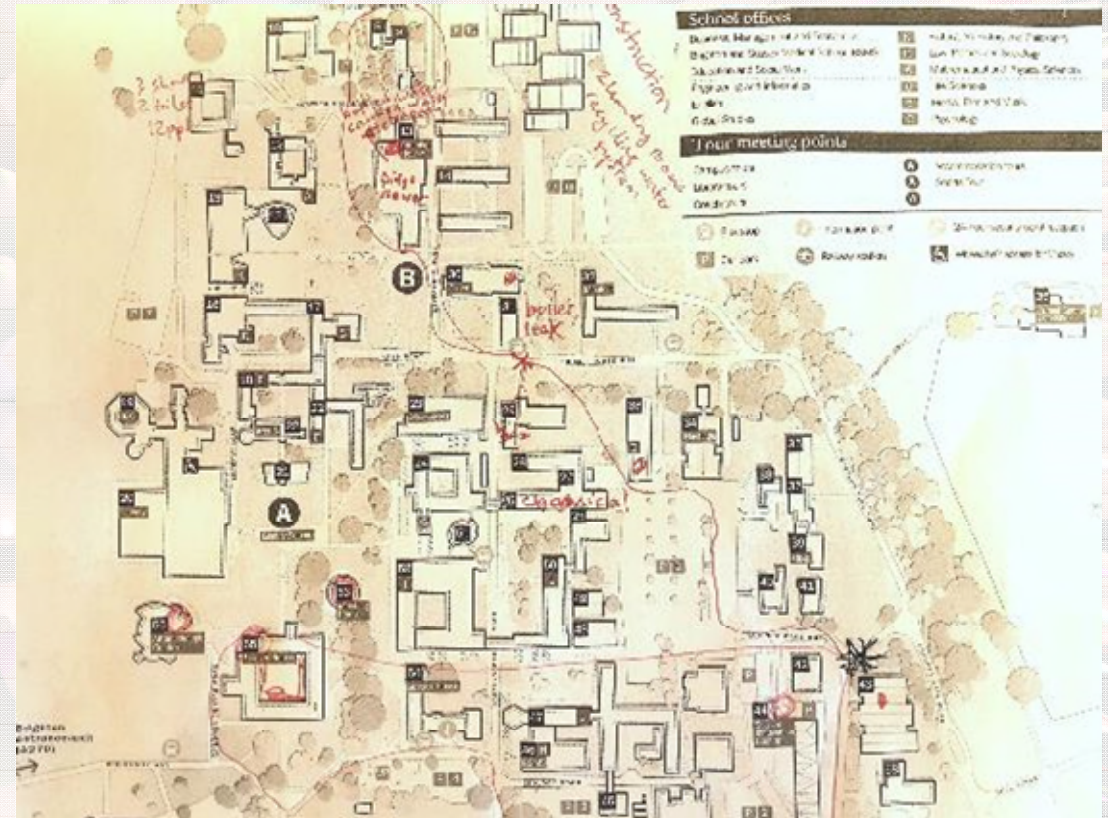


Scenario of a hospitable and welcoming city built by students  
Photo: Author, used with students' permission



# Praxis

- Paolo Freire: practice informed by theory, reflection, dialogue
- Not saviorism
- Applied learning
- Problem-focused learning
- Learning by doing together
- Students mapping campus infrastructures, developing sustainability plan



Campus map showing water infrastructure  
Photo: author, used with students' permission



# Critical hope

- Cultivate an aware, hopeful stance
- Not naiveté or fantasy
- Reflexive, reparative, active
- Sussex students organizing Brighton school climate strikes
- Students designing activism campaigns on issues they want to change
- Student housing cooperatives



Mural at ESHC, Photo by author



# Alternative responses to 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges

- *Remaking academic subjectivities* (generative theory, decolonizing and decentering)
- *Reclaiming economies* (degrowth, diverse, community and solidarity economies)
- *Repairing ecologies* (deep ecology, systems and complexity thinking, *Buen Vivir*)
- *Prefiguring alternatives* (teach outs, co-creation, activism)



Diverse economies iceberg, image from CERN



# Thank you & Questions

- Book with Bristol UP
- Open Access articles in *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, *Progress in Development Studies* and *Housing Studies*
- [www.creativeuniversities.com](http://www.creativeuniversities.com)
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