

## Institute on the Public Humanities: Learning Objectives

### Community Engagement, Culture Work, and Public Scholarship

The themes of “community engagement,” “culture work,” and “public scholarship” run throughout the 2008 Institute. “Community engagement” picks up on the problematic of how diverse peoples come to understand themselves as bound together by common locations, histories, beliefs, practices, and modes of inquiry. The second term links this problematic to a focus on the different kinds of “culture work” that can create collaboration and activate potential communities, including academic and non-academic research and teaching that engages with culture and culture-making. The third term considers multiple ways in which research and teaching can be reconceived as “public scholarship,” and does so in an attempt to make the collaborative activities that are central to this type of work visible and valued within and across institutions of higher education today.

As organizers of the Institute, we bring to it two related research questions: 1) *How can public scholarship that engages with arts and culture be used to generate creative and collaborative practices across diverse communities?*; 2) *What should graduate education for engaged, action-oriented research and teaching practices look like and what is necessary to develop, support, and institutionalize these practices?* We add to these questions others that you raised in our June meeting concerning convergences and divergences among diverse vocabularies of public scholarship (“public engagement,” “activist scholarship,” and “community-based research,” among others); the relation between interdisciplinarity and intersectionality; and the nitty-gritty details of how to go about initiating and sustaining community-engaged forms of research and teaching.

We want to use this week to address these themes and questions by considering how we can better connect academic and non-academic culture work and culture workers, to develop collaborative and interdisciplinary capacities for projects and partnerships that build connections across diverse institutions, and to expand our critical understanding of how these connections might themselves generate and nurture new communities of practice. We also want to address professional, institutional, and personal tensions that can trouble simple celebrations of public scholarship and the public humanities. One of our central goal is to make visible career pathways, inside or outside of the academy, that encourage cross-sectoral partnerships and enable the development of research and teaching designed to create more reciprocal, critical, creative, and mutually beneficial relationships, both on- and off-campus.

Your participation in the Institute and the resources you bring to it are central to this process. It requires a commitment to becoming change agents within the institutions in which you are located, even as you become collaborators in community-based practices of teaching and research. This type of learning assumes that the production of knowledge is always a social and institutionally-embedded process tied to emerging communities of practice, including the ones that will take shape on and off campus during the course of the week. Here and elsewhere, the boundaries we draw around who does and does not

participate in a learning community shape not only what we do, but also who we are, how we interpret what we do, and how we imagine possible futures.

### **Learning Objectives for (and beyond) the Institute**

- 1) Gain familiarity with different vocabularies used today to describe “public scholarship” across disciplines and sectors, and begin to understand the ways in which those vocabularies converge and diverge;
- 2) Become aware of how universities and other institutions of higher education are engaging in policy debates and crafting initiatives concerned with the question of how to support and recognize public scholarship and community-based teaching and research as central elements within the professional development of graduate students, staff, and faculty;
- 3) Hone your ability to imagine public scholarship and collaborative culture work across multiple sites inside and outside the university, including an awareness of opportunities for community engagement across the Puget Sound region;
- 4) Assess how the personal and professional skills you possess (and are currently developing) shape your ability to develop public forums, modes of communication, and participatory projects, including alternatives to those that rely on the delivery of “expert knowledge” as the means and end of public scholarship and community engagement;
- 5) Gain a sense of what your next steps will be as you continue to develop your skills and capacities with regard to research and teaching that creates mutually beneficial collaborations across diverse cultural sites and with culture workers across the institutional boundaries of the university.

Compiled by the co-directors and graduate student mentors of the 2007 Institute,

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