

Why this program?

by René Deutschmann

Let's say all things relevant to Dependency and Slavery Studies form a vast ocean. The Master program with its seminars, its tropes, its research is the (scholar)ship. The people who navigate pull the ropes, and dive into subjects are the crew. There are those crew members who were there before us students, the new mates, came on board. And I will say that all professors, researchers, and the whole staff were on deck at all times. Everybody has their own perception of time! They offered us expertise, food for thought, room for discussion and exercise. They very much encouraged us to present our own takes on topics, follow our own projects, and they offered help whenever it was necessary. Even in a somewhat surreal Covid Zoom world they were open, and approachable. I appreciated that a lot. Since us students were a rather small group of about a dozen people and we took almost all courses together, I felt we became a good, diverse group quite soon. Different folks, with different strokes. I will not deny that we had and still have our differences. Different opinions on topics. We saw different goals and different ghosts. But I felt everybody weighed in with good intentions. People were ready to listen and check on their own attitudes. I am sure many of us gained a lot of personal growth on the journey. Cherish diversity. At least that's how I see it. Would I recommend the Master program at BCDSS? Most definitely, if slavery and asymmetrical dependencies rock your boat. Is it a lot of work? For sure. Is it worth it? Absolutely. This is my reflection in the water.

What's with all the seagull cries? What courses did I actually take? What are asymmetrical dependencies to begin with? Well, what do you think? I won't tell you. You need to bring your own interest and learn for yourself. Be open. Be brave. In that order maybe.

Endeavour. Prepare one space on your desk to stack all required readings, prepare another space for all the stuff you want to read to gain a deeper understanding of aspects that are up your alley. And make some coffee.

Which disciplines should cover Slavery and Asymmetrical Dependency studies, do you think? Sociology, History, Psychology, Anthropology, Law, Archaeology, Politics, Theology, Philosophy, Gender Studies? All of them? None? Something entirely different?

Whose writings should be read? Which areas of the world should be covered? What times? Surely slavery is a thing of the past, right? No?

By the way, what is slavery exactly? Well, that is easy! Is it?

What is the deal with this (thought-) provoking BCDSS slogan to go "beyond slavery and freedom"?

And, to add my own first rough sea experience on the voyage: What is agency? This was an instance when my belief system collided with the science for the first time. And that's okay.

Don't quit just yet. Signs are not for everybody, some like the foot trail. I am going to say, for me agency is a verb more than a noun. But that's my creative abc.

So, when you are thinking about all these questions already, and beyond, then I guess your journey has started. Intrigued? Rig up here. Because agency is a verb.

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