

# **Fanfiction in the English Department: An investigation into literary studies practices**

## **Abstract**

In this dissertation I explore how fanfiction can be used to challenge hegemonic ideology in English literary studies pedagogy. Teaching fanfiction in English literary studies can leverage the nature and position of fanfiction to uproot foundational assumptions about literariness and literary value that uphold discourses of domination. What I undertake with this elective is challenging certain conceptions of literariness- various articulations of authority, ownership, and value.

Teaching a form of literature that exists on the margins in order to explicitly challenge dominant discourses requires a reconfiguration of the ways in which knowledge is made teachable, including how it is presented in a classroom. I undertake this process of recontextualizing and pedagogizing knowledge to create a seven-week elective curriculum aimed at third-year undergraduates in the *English Studies* Department of Wits University.

I present an elective curriculum and the process through which I developed it to explore the boundaries of what kind of transformative, critical methodologies are possible in the institutionalized learning space. I use a critical pedagogical approach and Basil Bernstein's educational model of pedagogic discourse to navigate the process of curriculum design and construction.

I approach the research overall as a process of reflective self-observation to foreground my political subjectivity, my positionality, and where I am situated in the contexts of teaching and fandom. This research is desktop research.

Ultimately, I aim to illuminate the fraught process of realizing a critical pedagogical approach and contribute to the growing scholarship on teaching fanfiction and to the existing scholarship of literary studies pedagogy.

**Key Words:** fanfiction, fan studies, critical pedagogy, literary pedagogy, higher education, South Africa