Liberal Education in Era of Migration, Refugee Crises, and Decolonization

Liberal Education Conference 2020
May 1st and 2nd, 2020
Mount Royal University
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

The present realities of decolonization, immigration, and refugee migration require critical enquiries into the provision of liberal studies in higher education. The aims and methods of liberal education as a pedagogical exercise and a cultural practice need to be examined within the dynamic intellectual, social, economic, and political contexts created by today’s unprecedented movement of peoples and intersections of cultures. Variously seen as forced migration, exile, dislocation, statelessness and even environmentally-induced displacement, the issue of the refugee crisis is multilocalational and multilayered. The conference aims to create a focused debate around not only the phenomenon of refugee migration, but also seeks to understand the crisis as located within a continuum of other constructions of the refugee as the non-Western Other. This construction leads to the near necessity of speaking of decolonization as an imperative located possibly within liberal education and its practices. The intertwining of the refugee experience with the indigenous communities’ lived experience calls for intervention and thought. Can liberal education aid in this so-called process of decolonization? Is it a singular process or are there multiple ways in which decolonization can occur? What does this decolonization(s) look like?

The aims of liberal education are variously articulated as: an instrument for the teaching of transferable practical skills; the making and enabling of responsible citizens; or the cultivation of virtue, self-knowledge, and broad, general wisdom. These aims and the means of achieving them all need to be reassessed as our wider society is transformed by both by the infusion of new peoples and the increased engagement of Indigenous communities.

The Department of General Education at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and its partner, Medicine Hat College, in Medicine Hat Alberta, Canada invite papers and panel presentations for our fifth Liberal Education Conference on the theme of Liberal Education in an Era of Migration, Refugee Crises, and Decolonization. Broad topic areas related to this may include, but are not excluded to:

- the challenges to the historical grounding of liberal education in a time of increased cultural heterogeneity.
- the place of liberal education in the construction of a common meeting place in society embracing diverse, distinct cultures.
- the experience of arrival and purposes of liberal education for refugee or recent immigrant.
- the possibility of a coherent programme of liberal education in the absence of a common culture.
- liberal education as a progressive instrument in the face of hostility to migration, decolonization and cultural diversity.
- the aims of liberal education in a multi-cultural society.
• Intersectionality of the refugees and the indigenous communities

• International refugee law and the overlap with liberal education

• the curriculum of liberal education: which are the great books; or is liberal education dependent on canonical texts, whatever they may be.

• Decolonization and canonization

• pedagogical practice in the presence of cultural diversity — the problems “language proficiency,” cultural capital, and behavioural norms in the classroom.

• contending cultural norms and the possibility of a general, liberal education.

• should liberal education be an instrument of social and cultural integration?

• trauma, memory and identity formation and how liberal education might address the issues

• liberal education and the building of intercultural solidarity.

• immigration and the infusion; inspiration; and transformation of liberal education.

We seek abstracts for high quality papers on the conference’s theme, some of the topics we have suggested, or any matters related to ‘liberal education in an era of refugee migration and decolonization’. Please prepare your abstract of no longer than 300 words for blind-review by February 29, 2020. Send your abstracts, suitable for blind-review, to either Karim Dharamsi (kdharamsi@mtroyal.ca), David Clemis (dclemis@mtroyal.ca) or Navneet Kumar (nkumar@mhc.ab.ca). Decisions will be announced by March 7, 2020. Please include a separate cover page with

• the title of your paper or panel

• Name of presenter(s) or panelists

• Institutional Affiliation (if any)

• Contact details

Please send documents in PDF or Word format.

Full registration will be $300.00, $150.00 for one day, and graduate and undergraduate students can attend the entire conference for $100.00. All funds are Canadian. Registration, conference venue, and an announcement of keynotes are forthcoming. Our intention is to publish a selection of papers from this conference as we have in the past.

Affordable accommodations will be available on campus. More information is forthcoming.

This conference is sponsored by the generous support of Medicine Hat College and Mount Royal University.