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Teaching Cultural Studies: Curriculum Design, Training and the Myth of ‘Undisciplinarity’

Cultural studies has challenged the idea of academic disciplines, on occasion congratulating itself for being an ‘undiscipline’. The paper discusses this orientation in relation to the teaching of cultural studies. It argues that in many locations undergraduate curriculum design and the disciplinary preparation received by graduate students – especially those working within a British model where there is no substantial program of taught courses—is in effect disciplinary in its thematic orientation and frame of reference, but not in the inculcation of the protocols of research, argument and criticism. Consequently, as a teaching program, cultural studies has acquired some of the negative aspects of a discipline – a more or less explicit set of boundaries—without enough of the positives—a fully developed epistemology that can be taught and operated as method. The paper then considers the effects this may have on the disciplinary training scholars in cultural studies now receive.