Pedagogy

Why Public Scholarship Matters for Graduate Education

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If you were a graduate student fellow in the University of Washington's Certificate in Public Scholarship program, you would encounter this exercise in the first meeting of the gateway course, Scholarship as Public Practice, which we coteach each fall:

> As you read the definition of public scholarship cited below, write through it in a way that makes it meaningful for you and your institutional location. You might find it useful to circle terms and phrases that pop for you and cross out those that fall flat. Use the vocabulary that surfaces to create a definition you can own.
>
> Publicly engaged academic work refers to scholarly or creative activity integral to a faculty member's academic area. It encompasses different forms of making knowledge about, for, and with diverse publics and communities. Through a coherent, purposeful sequence of activities, it contributes to the public good and yields artifacts of public and intellectual value. (Ellison and Eatman 2008: iv)

Next we would ask you to write your definition of *public scholarship* on a large sheet of paper, tape it to the wall, and share it with the others in the room. We would follow up with a couple of questions: What audiences or publics did you have in mind as you wrote your definition? What examples might you provide of that sort of public scholarship? If you were one of the twenty fellows who entered the certificate program between 2011 and 2013, you would have heard your peers describe intellectual and political commitments ranging from prison abolition to participatory museum curation to community-based educational reform as they reworked language from the document.

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We begin this essay on public scholarship and why it matters for graduate education with a description of this exercise because we want you to understand the local context in which we have developed the general claims and recommendations with which we conclude. As we detail below, our ten years of experience in designing, assessing, and redesigning graduate education for publicly engaged scholarship has convinced us that claims made on, about, and through the category of public scholarship are always local and situational, as are the obstacles and opportunities for their actualization. In this sense, public scholarship might best be characterized as organizing language, in the mobilizing, coalition-building sense typical of community organizing and movement activism. Like the exercise described above, it serves to align and articulate convergent interests rather than standardize or normalize them. This approach to public scholarship usefully cuts against the disciplinary-professional mandates of most graduate curriculum and cocurriculum since it requires both diversified forms of professionalization and pragmatic commitments to institutional change. It also runs counter to the discourses of crisis that have framed so many polemics about graduate education over the past two decades. We return to the limits of crisis talk in our conclusion. To get there, we begin by tracing the institutional contexts in which we have developed our approach to graduate curricula that can foster public forms of scholarship and then detail the pedagogical strategies we have deployed in our specific context. Our hope is that this grounded discussion will allow the insights we have developed to be useful to readers seeking to adapt our approach and claims to organizing in their own contexts.

Institutional Background

Housed in the University of Washington's Simpson Center for the Humanities, the Certificate in Public Scholarship (2010 to present) evolved out of the Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students that ran from 2003 to 2008. The institute itself emerged from local and national initiatives reassessing and reimagining the purposes and practices of doctoral education.[1] From 1998 to 2000, the University of Washington (UW) supported Re-envisioning the PhD, an interinstitutional research grant led by the dean of the UW Graduate School and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts (see University of Washington Graduate School 2011). The Re-envisioning the PhD grant focused on evaluating and redefining doctoral curricula with the goal of reducing time to degree, enhancing preparation for a variety of professional careers inside and outside the university, and increasing the

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ethnic and gender diversity of doctoral students and graduates. Based on its findings, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation mounted the Responsive PhD initiative in 2000, working with UW and other targeted universities nationally to identify, assess, and disseminate promising reform strategies. At the same time, the foundation promoted Humanities at Work, a high-profile initiative that provided predoctoral practicum grants for graduate student internships in nonacademic cultural and policy institutions, postdoctoral fellowships in the same employment sectors, and innovation awards to encourage graduate programs to diversify the professional development of their students. These initiatives were intended to address the three-way mismatch between the aspirations of graduate students, graduate curricula grounded in a disciplinary or guild apprenticeship model, and available job opportunities and career pathways for PhDs.

Proposed by a task force from the UW Division of Arts and Humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences with the intention of catalyzing structural change in doctoral education, the Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students was launched in 2003 with Woodrow Wilson seed funding. It was designed as a critical alternative to the apprenticeship model that dominates graduate training and socialization in the humanities and elsewhere across the university. For six years (the last four of which we codirected), the institute offered cross-disciplinary cohorts of doctoral students a week-long exploration of diverse cultural work and community partnerships, including site visits to local organizations engaged in arts and cultural programming; workshops with practicing faculty members, graduate students, and staff; and discussions of institutional politics with department chairs, center directors, and divisional deans. These intensive experiences refigured the purposes of doctoral education for graduate students by stressing the skills and capacities required of academic *and* nonacademic culture work, with the intent of developing project-based orientations and collaborations among the participants. Over its six years of operation, more than a hundred students from the humanities, arts, social sciences, and professional schools (education, information studies, social work, and built environment) participated as fellows of the institute. Demand for institute fellowships grew increasingly competitive, with applications outnumbering spaces available by a ratio of more than 2:1.

Institute fellows brought with them very different understandings of and investments in public scholarship. "Public humanities" represented one organizing thread interwoven with others: civic engagement, community-

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based learning, participatory action research, arts-based collaboration, cultural and social activism, and various forms of organic intellectual practice. The students shared a common dissatisfaction with department-based forms of training premised on a disciplinary apprenticeship model—the assumption that graduate students at UW aspired to academic positions at institutions like UW. They consistently told stories that drew on achievements outside of the research university (nonprofit jobs, community activism, artistic production) and life and career ambitions that lay beyond the research university (community college or liberal arts faculty positions; hybrid work across educational and cultural organizations; nonprofit, entrepreneurial, and governmental careers). They also reported that their academic and dissertation advisers in their home departments were the last people with whom they would discuss these desires for so-called alternative careers. They left the institute excited about the connections they had made: "We should have a weekly brown bag" was one recurrent suggestion on the last day. But they were quickly pulled back into the institutional orbit of their disciplines: "I would love to come to the brown bag, but it conflicts with my department's weekly colloquium." The institute succeeded in activating a critical mass of publicly engaged graduate students, but it gave them nowhere to go next. Like many externally funded programs, its intervention was too episodic to help students swim across the current of departmental imperatives.

As we began to develop the Certificate in Public Scholarship, we understood that it would need to inspire and galvanize students while also emphasizing the value of integration. It would have to ask students to think broadly across their department-based research, teaching, and engagement activities, even as they explored and developed those activities in (critical) relation to departmental frames. This curricular and pedagogical redesign responded most immediately to the needs expressed by students in their evaluations of the institute: for diverse forms of professional development, including practicum opportunities; for mentoring networks inclusive of peers, faculty members, nonacademic professionals, and community leaders; for effective means to frame the *scholarly* value of their engaged research and teaching activities for different audiences, including their home departments; and for programmatic initiatives that develop, make visible, and link all of these resources. With the help of a task force of graduate students and a cross-campus steering committee, we created a flexible, portfolio-based curriculum that begins with a gateway course (2 credits), moves through a set of electives that highlight different forms of public scholarship (5–7 credits) and

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a practicum appropriate to the fellow's intellectual and professional ambitions (3–5 credits), and concludes with a capstone portfolio course overseen by the fellow's portfolio adviser (1 credit). The certificate program launched in 2010.

Pedagogies of Public Scholarship

At the heart of the certificate curriculum lies a pedagogy focused on the development of a digital workspace that allows fellows to create academic-professional portfolios that reflect and support their ambitions inside and outside higher education. Portfolios are commonly used to demonstrate mandated skills and competencies in professional degree programs such as those in education and design or to evince teaching capacities in many humanities programs. In the certificate program, they provide fellows with the flexibility to showcase work in multiple academic and professional domains and to enable the articulation of value across them. A fellow from the English department, for instance, might discuss the significance of her dissertation on post-9/11 US racial formations in relation to artifacts produced in her campus organizing work with a women-of-color collective. A fellow from the College of Education might contextualize her academic research on educational policy through reference to materials created as part of her mentoring of young Latino/a poets. In each instance, the process of creating a portfolio denaturalizes disciplinary and professional assumptions about what types of artifacts "count" (including but not limited to scholarly articles, grants, and monographs) and which audiences those artifacts address (including but not limited to peer reviewers). It challenges fellows to think critically about disciplinary and professional measures of success as they integrate their accomplishments and abilities for diverse audiences and publics. In the certificate, the nitty-gritty of portfolio development is supported by UW Google Sites, the digital platform though which students archive their work and stage their portfolios.

The certificate's two-credit gateway course launches the process of workspace and portfolio development. In designing and teaching the course, we emphasize that fellows will create several different portfolios during their time in the program. While their form and content will be flexible, each portfolio will need to address three questions:

1. What audience or public do you want to address, engage, or call into being?
2. What claims do you want to make or stories do you want to tell?
3. How will you transform a limited set of artifacts into evidence of those claims or stories in a way that will be persuasive for that audience or public?

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As the exercise with which we began this essay indicates, the pedagogy that supports this emphasis is necessarily flexible and situational. We have learned from negative experience that attempts to define public scholarship or answer the question of why and how it matters in universal terms inevitably produce reactions focused on the question of what is included in that particular definition and what is not. While this type of claim-critiquing activity can be useful (and is highly valued in other graduate school contexts), the introductory exercise and the gateway course prioritize claim making. Our follow-up questions push fellows to put flesh on the bones of their claims, exposing motivations and commitments that too often go unspoken in graduate education. As a result, fellows begin to ground their provisional definitions of public scholarship in their existing and emerging practices. The definitions provide a starting point for the evidence-based claims the fellows will make in future portfolios.

The remainder of the gateway course foregrounds the intellectual stakes and hones the practical skills central to developing hybrid academic-professional portfolios. The initial class meeting is followed by three sessions keyed to the core elements of portfolio construction: audiences and publics, claims and stories, artifacts and evidence. Each session consists of a workshop for new fellows, followed by a public roundtable featuring faculty, graduate students, and alumni. In each case, fellows complete theoretical and contextual readings that introduce them to the questions at hand (Rosaldo 2005 on artifacts and evidence; Warner 2002 on audiences and publics; Appadurai 2004 on claims and stories), along with writings and websites related to the work of local practitioners of public scholarship. The writing that the fellows do for each session helps them construct their workspace, build a rich archive of artifacts drawn from their academic and nonacademic experiences, identify the audiences or publics they seek to engage, and develop evidence-based claims about themselves and their work as public scholars. The workshops include exercises in which fellows present their writing orally and provide one another with feedback. These pedagogical choices prioritize collaboration skills while linking pragmatic discussions of self-representation to intellectual and political concerns and both to the ethics of claim making with and about others.

The assignment sequence begins with artifacts and evidence. Fellows upload to their digital workspaces twenty to twenty-five artifacts drawn from their employment, volunteer, activist, and educational experiences. From this archive, each fellow creates an annotated bibliography of six to ten items, practicing the skill of objectifying and then transforming a limited set

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of artifacts into evidence of the claims they seek to make on and through the category of public scholarship. Subsequent assignments ask them to reflect on the audiences and publics implied by those artifacts and to pilot some evidenced-based claims or stories that respond to one of two prompts:

1. How can the scholarship you have created (and the scholarship you will undertake in the future) participate in creative and collaborative practices that benefit diverse publics and communities?
2. What should graduate education committed to promoting engaged forms of research, teaching, and service or practice look like, and what is necessary to develop, support, and institutionalize those educational practices?

Fellows craft a digital workspace and initial portfolio, confer with their advisers, and, at the end of the term, present their work to certificate fellows and prospects, advisers, faculty members, and graduate school representatives.

These concluding sessions advance both pedagogical and institutional objectives. They hone fellows' ability to think broadly about their work as they make evidence-based claims about practices of public scholarship. They also strengthen the network of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and community partners that functions over time as an informal learning community. What emerges is a collaborative, integrative approach to graduate education that encourages fellows to build from their strengths and to seek resources outside their home departments. This asset-based approach, common to community-led development practices, is particularly important in elite educational institutions like UW that recruit students because of their rich and varied professional, community, and artistic accomplishments and then tell them to suspend those activities until they have (a) finished their dissertations, (b) landed tenure-track academic jobs, (c) been promoted and tenured, or (d) been promoted again to full professor. In these types of hyperprofessionalized and microprofessionalizing environments, curricula and pedagogies that draw out students' strengths and resources are critical to bridge, in small and pragmatic ways, their academic and nonacademic accomplishments, engagements, and ambitions. They are the building blocks of a more public university.

In recent iterations of the gateway course, the results of these pedagogical and curricular innovations have been remarkable. Fellows enrolled in the course have produced some of the most interesting and textured statements about public scholarship we have seen in our decade of experience, both locally and nationally. One fellow from the College of Education traced

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his genealogy of *mestizaje* public scholarship through Chican@ activism and open university movements in the late 1960s, marshaling evidence from an archive that linked family histories in his community of origin to the academic research he is conducting on the history of Mexican labor migrations and schooling in the American Northwest. A fellow from the geography department defined public scholarship as a form of lived experience that mediates the false division of the university and the public, drawing on evidence from her everyday practices of community building, organized around food justice, and her academic research and service projects focused on mapping urban agriculture and food systems in collaboration with local farmers and nonprofits. A fellow from the English department argued for public scholarship as a form of critical practice that questions shared assumptions *and* solves problems in collaboration with others, a claim that reflects her dual commitment to educational program development in regional prisons and activist work for prison abolition. In these cases and others, the fellows' portfolios drew on artifacts that would not be visible within strictly disciplinary frames and articulated the significance of those artifacts in ways that exceed and critique narrowly professional metrics of success.

Why Crisis Talk Doesn't Help

So, does public scholarship matter for graduate education? Our experience suggests the answer is yes, but not for the usual reasons. Since at least 1990, a wide range of educational leaders and policy institutions have responded to an equally wide range of perceived educational crises: the crisis of the culture wars, the crisis of the corporatization of the university, the crisis of various job markets, and the crisis of public support for various fields or higher education in general (National Task Force on Scholarship and the Public Humanities 1990; Hall 1990; Readings 1996; Lye et al. 2011). This tendency toward discourses of crisis has been particularly widespread in the humanities, where the most severe crisis always seems to involve one thing: the academic job market. As the original job crisis of the early 1990s (the idea that there would not be enough PhDs to fill open tenure-track positions) gave way in the mid-1990s to the current job crisis (the idea that there are too many PhDs in relation to open positions) (Ehrenberg et al. 2009), university administrators and policy makers began to respond by promoting "alternative careers" for PhD students, especially those in the humanities. One salient criticism of these initiatives points to the institutional bad faith involved when administrators tout alternative careers while cutting costs and tenure-track

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faculty lines in the humanities as part of their labor management strategies (Bousquet 2008, Newfield 2008, 2010). If only there were better administration or enough tenure-track jobs, some versions of this argument imply, there would be no crisis.

The problem with this typical framing of the "crisis of the humanities" as a "crisis of the job market" is that it ignores students' motivations for entering into graduate programs in the first place. True, some students aspire from the outset to tenure-track jobs. But our experience with the institute and the certificate program indicates that many have more complex commitments and view their relation to institutions of higher education more critically. Even for students who seek academic positions, the desirability of a job often hinges on the promise of ongoing institutional transformation. A wealth of research supports this local observation, suggesting that nearly half of the students who enter humanities doctoral programs nationally leave without a PhD as a result of becoming disenchanted by the narrowness of their intellectual and social experiences, with a disproportionate number of noncompleters being women and underrepresented minorities (Lovitts 2001; Ehrenberg et al. 2009). Even students who finish complain about the lack of integrative professional experiences of collaboration, teamwork, and mentoring (Nerad et al. 2004; Aanerud et al. 2006; Ehrenberg et al. 2009). For these students, the disciplinary apprenticeship model that dominates the humanities is a dead end, regardless of whether too many or too few jobs are available in the guilds after the masters have done their work. The problem with the model is that it casually yet ruthlessly prunes any intellectual, educational, and political capacities or aspirations that do not fit the specific academic-professional trajectories normalized in graduate degree programs.

Given this set of concerns, one wonders if the real effect of two decades of crisis talk in the humanities and elsewhere across the university has been to insulate the guild apprenticeship model from critique and to block the development of cross-cutting, assets-based approaches to graduate curricula and pedagogy. Doing so marginalizes broader questions about the purposes of graduate education, about the reshaping of graduate curricula for a changing world, and about which versions of the humanities should be saved as we look toward the future. Crisis talk locates graduate students, claims made about them, and curricula designed for them at the crux of these debates. They are the (not yet) subjects of the research university and its professional guilds, which is to say that they are also (not yet) agents positioned at the point where the university's contradictory impulses toward preserva-

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tion and transformation collide. The institute and the certificate program are local strategies designed to recognize and support graduate student agency in institutional contexts that are in the process of being shaped. Of the two programs, the certificate program more effectively links the institutional to the pedagogical by engaging directly with departmental practices and norms. It hardwires the institution for long-term change. We recognize, as our initial exercise indicates, that different institutional contexts will require different circuitry. But the institute and the certificate program have convinced us that any successful program will need to learn how to draw on and draw out the diverse capacities, commitments, and aspirations of the students it recruits.

Lessons Learned

Keeping in mind our caveats about the risks associated with context-neutral and delocalized generalizations, we conclude with four recommendations drawn from our experience at UW with interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral graduate education.

1. Graduate programs focusing on public scholarship, including institutes, certificates, and master of arts and doctorates, should be shaped to their specific institutional contexts. Initiatives that do not align with the professional and institutional investments and concerns of local constituencies—faculty, students, staff, and administrators chief among them—will gain little traction or momentum. This negotiation of institutional cultures, histories, and missions will shape decisions large and small, ranging from the name of the program to the incentives provided to participate. In our local context, including *public scholarship* in our certificate program's name was a strategic decision, given UW's relatively traditional research mission and metrics of evaluation. At an institution with a strong teaching or outreach mission, or in a different interdisciplinary configuration, a similar program might include in its name, among many other options, *civic engagement*, or *community-based learning and research*, or *public humanities*.
2. Graduate curricula and pedagogy focusing on public scholarship should be assets based and resources oriented. Students are recruited and admitted to their programs with histories, networks, skills, and interests that are sources of personal, scholarly, and programmatic strength. The same is true of the recruitment and hiring of faculty and staff members. The desire to integrate these intellectual, social, and political assets and interests with the research, teaching, and service commitments of the institution can be a powerful motivator. Working in an asset-based, resource-oriented way can help to enrich, diversify, network, and shape the intellectual, professional, and institutional

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agendas of the program—and the institution as a whole. This type of approach is ethically and pedagogically consistent with a community organizing/social change perspective and upholds the value of integration in practice.

3. Graduate curricula and pedagogy focusing on public scholarship should seek to promote the agency of students to shape not only their own educational trajectories but also the institutions that educate them. Programs and curricula need to orient students toward one another as an interested collectivity working within a specific institutional context and not just as individual performers or strivers. This approach requires that students learn about the institution, not just the field, and gain the ability to balance impulses toward transactional and transformational forms of institutional engagement—negotiating claims for individualized credentializing ("I have a Certificate in Public Scholarship") versus those for collective action ("We helped to shift the research culture of UW"). Faculty and staff members can ally themselves with students as agents of institutional change by creating and publicizing spaces and venues where they can articulate and act upon their individual and shared aspirations, and organize for long-term transformation.
4. Institutional leaders interested in supporting programs, curricula, and pedagogy focused on public scholarship should think creatively about innovative and transformational forms of administration and not just the need for more money. This recommendation is not another version of "do more with less." Rather, it recognizes that add-on approaches to institutional change most often result in splitting the energies of a dedicated few who have to prove themselves in multiple arenas. One challenge of a transformational approach to initiatives like the ones we have described is to move away from additive models of growth that preserve the status quo and toward new integrations. Another is to assess, renovate, or discontinue programs that do not serve current interests. In our context, this approach led us to engage small-scale opportunities (the institute), leverage them through evaluations that demonstrated their institutional value, and pilot an integrative form of institutionalization (the certificate program) that did not force students to choose between their doctoral degree and public scholarship.

Our hope is that these lessons learned from the specific institutional context of UW will enable colleagues elsewhere to move past the discourse of crisis and the impulse simply to preserve what we have (and have long critiqued) and instead build a more public and engaged future for graduate education. Let the experiments begin.

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Notes

1. For more on the institute's history, participants, and programming, see depts .washington.edu/uwch/programs/initiatives/public-scholarship/archive/institute. For more on the graduate Certificate in Public Scholarship at the University of Washington, its curriculum, faculty, and fellows, visit depts.washington.edu/uwch /programs/curriculum/certificate-in-public-scholarship.

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