

STATEMENT ON DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM

Recent international, national, and local events have brought Black Lives Matter to the forefront of our thinking. We are committed to anti-racist pedagogy, challenging both students and staff to reflect on the concept of “race” and the articulations of racism in their lives, their communities and at Durham University.

We acknowledge anthropology’s roots in colonial projects and scientific racism, even as we celebrate the contributions of our discipline to anti-racism and seek to drive that agenda forward. We recognise that structural inequalities in the wider world and our own unconscious acceptance of existing power imbalances and how this influences who we listen to, whose work we read and value, and whose understandings we prioritise.

Our discipline is distinguished by critical scrutiny of our own work, and how our identities influence, and bias, our understandings. We seek to decolonise anthropology in our education and research, for example by

- critically examining the assumptions underpinning our own thinking
- reflecting on what we choose to teach and study to ensure we include a diversity of voices and perspectives
- challenging dominant norms and narratives
- exploring issues of prejudice, power and inequality
- providing different types of assessments to challenge students in multiple ways

Much of our education and research engages directly with issues of representation and inequity. For example, in medical anthropology we address the impact of structural inequalities, including racism, on health. In social anthropology, we examine issues of slavery and memorialisation, and the social construction of ethnic and racial identities. In anthropology, we consider the nature and origins of the materials we use to teach human anatomy, and the (neo)colonial context of fieldwork on primates. Moreover, we recognise the importance of engaging with scholarship from a range of contexts, including but not limited to, indigenous scholarship and that from post-colonial contexts.

While decolonisation centres on race, racism also intersects with other forms of marginalisation, including gender, class, and sexuality. Beyond what we teach and study, decolonisation involves recruiting and retaining a diverse range of students and staff and co-creating a positive environment in which everyone feels included, and able to do their best work.

We aim to equip our students with the ability to understand privilege and power relations, speak out against inequality in all its forms, and change the society for the better. We encourage students to challenge us and to hold us to account in our efforts to decolonise Anthropology.