

# Open letter

Date: 22.12.2022

From: Students of the course MSV-ME302 Current Research in the Field of Ethnic Relations

To:

Dean of Social Sciences Marjaana Seppänen

Rector of Swedish School of Social Sciences Johan Bärlund

Rector of Swedish School of Social Sciences (from 1.1.2023) Tuomas Martikainen

Vice-Rector of University of Helsinki Kai Nordlund

**Subject: Decolonising the curriculum at the University of Helsinki**

Dear all,

This letter is an intervention produced by the students of the course MSV-ME302 Current Research in the Field of Ethnic Relations, taught by Dr. Faith Mkwesha. While this course was framed from the perspective of the decolonial perspectives from Global South, it has expanded our understanding of the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge production that the University of Helsinki constantly reproduces. As the goal of the University of Helsinki is to maintain its reputation as an internationally acclaimed institution, the theories and research we engage with must also reflect this international dimension. We are proposing this intervention to facilitate the decolonization of the curriculum and, thus, the implementation of pluriversal knowledges. In this open letter, we provide concrete steps for our intervention.

Why is decolonising the curriculum important to the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Swedish School of Social Sciences? Currently the University of Helsinki does not provide us with the tools to critically assess the social issues arising in the context of neo-liberal globalization. Many students are conducting research in marginalized contexts, whether it is (post)colonized, racialized, Indigenous or other marginalized people, both locally and globally. Hence, to do research on these topics in a manner that is respectful and holistic, we feel the need to immerse ourselves in critical decolonial perspectives that challenge Eurocentrism, the coloniality of knowledge, and methodological nationalism/whiteness.

Pluriverse knowledge opens up knowledge from diverse perspectives. Moreover, it avoids the risks of legitimizing the (ab)use of (post)colonized, Indigenous and other marginalized people. Thus, it stops researchers and students from creating knowledge that denies the lived experiences of marginalized peoples, while reproducing and reinforcing racial inequality.

## **What should be done**

The following actions should be implemented in the mandatory courses of both bachelor's and master's programs of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Swedish School of Social Sciences.

- As most mandatory courses lack decolonial perspectives and readings, we have composed a critical reading list ([available here](#)). This is meant to facilitate course coordinators and lecturers to bring a plurality of silenced knowledges into courses.

Incorporating these theories and knowledges throughout a course's curriculum rather than as a separate seminar, encourages students to partake in critical discussions on a variety of topics and allows for co-production of knowledge.

- All methodology courses should address the history of social scientific research and implement discussions and practices based on decolonial methods and research ethics ([see the reading list](#)).
- Decolonising the curriculum also calls for expertise in decoloniality, Global South theories and Indigenous knowledges. Therefore, we call for more diversity in recruitment of staff.

We hope this open letter facilitates taking concrete steps for decolonising the University of Helsinki.

Thank you for your time.

Signed by the Students of the course MSV-ME302 Current Research in the Field of Ethnic Relations