



“Reimagining Educational Work for Collective Freedom: The Labor Strike as a Portal”

Project Team

This initiative is convened by Drs. [Sabina Vaught](#) and [Elon Dancy](#) (School of Education) and Dr. [Nancy Glazener](#) (Arts & Sciences) at the University of Pittsburgh and is sponsored by the [Spencer Foundation](#).

Description of Symposia and Study Group

The Seminar Symposia and Study Group “Reimagining Educational Work for Collective Freedom: The Labor Strike as a Portal” will be shaped around two liberatory praxes of several knowledge traditions: the study group and the dialectic. A study group formed of students will convene across eight months, punctuated by three public symposia that take up complex questions of labor and freedom. These interrelated projects will take shape around the question of the strike: What can it teach us about the possibilities for radical educational praxis?

In her now oft-quoted essay, Arundhati Roy called on us to understand the pandemic as “a portal, a gateway between one world and the next” and to move through it deliberately, “with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.” Just months later, not far from where she penned those very words, Indian farmers, agricultural workers, and other laborers undertook the largest labor strike known to history. The labor strike itself, as form and function, is a portal of sorts. It is the agentive assertion of moving from one set of conditions through transformation to a future imagined by workers. And it is a knowledge community, temporality, context, and set of praxes that we can learn from and that exceed the parameters of labor as we think of it. In this spirit, we will form a study group comprised of participants interested in music, aesthetics, poetics, materialisms, and more.

Although the agricultural workers’ strike was most immediately catalyzed by an agricultural law crafted to deepen global fascist, neofascist, patriarchal, and ethnonationalist alliances and devastate an already precarious agricultural workforce, it is far more than a reactionary mobilization. In this resistance we see a portal defined by what Robin D. G. Kelley calls *the work*--a life’s passion, a site of collective creativity, and an analytic that exceeds labor. In the study group and across the three symposia, we will take up the collective educational work of studying the conditions and theories of life’s work, of educating one another across imposed

social and political boundaries, and undertaking the praxis of freedom by beginning with the strike.

While the strike is specific, *the work* is a broad educational frame. Therefore, we invite theorists--scholars, organizers, activists, and others--whose dialogic engagement with each other and with the educational praxes of knowledge traditions during our three symposia will build capacity for moving through this portal.

In the study group, students will be paired with other students as dialogue partners, to undertake the rigorous dialectics of study together. In addition to participants' responsibilities to their dialogue partner, we ask that each have a local community, organization, or network with whom they can share the ideas generated in the seminar as well as a plan for doing that sharing. We do not have imagined boundaries to those local groups or sites--so, they might range from an artists' collective to an 2nd grade classroom to a community garden and so on. We are interested in bringing together a group that represents broad interests, experiences, and knowledge with shared commitments to common cause and studying together.

Schedule of Events

Seminar Study Group Meetings:

Seminar participants will commit to meeting on 8 Mondays between May and December 2022. Please be sure you can participate on all the following dates and times, via Zoom:

- May 23, 2022, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Eastern US)
- June 20, 2022, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Eastern US)
- July 25, 2022, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Eastern US)
- August 22, 2022, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Eastern US)
- September 19, 2022, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Eastern US)
- October 17, 2022, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Eastern US)
- November 14, 2022, Noon - 3 p.m. (Eastern US)
- December 12, 2022, Noon - 3 p.m. (Eastern US)

Seminar Symposia Events:

May 19-20, 2022 - Symposium #1: "The longue durée of freedom work: Bridging history and the current moment through the agricultural mass strike"

- Day One, Thursday, **May 19, 2022**
 - 2:30-4:00 p.m. Eastern US, Study group
 - 4:30-6:00 p.m. Eastern US, Keynote Dialogue: Sarah Haley & Damien Sojoyner, moderated, open to public through [registration](#).
 - 7:00 p.m. Eastern US, Study group dinner: Seminar participants with Sarah Haley, facilitated, open only to study group members
- Day Two, Friday, **May 20, 2022**
 - Noon-2:00pm Eastern US, Plenary: Keisha-Khan Perry & Ana Cristina da Silva Caminha, moderated, open to public through [registration](#).

- 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Eastern US, Study group workshop: Seminar participants convene with Keisha-Khan Perry
- 4:30-6:00 p.m. Eastern US, Plenary: Damien Sojoyner & Yusef Omowale, moderated, open to public through [registration](#).
- 6:30-7:30 p.m. Eastern US, Study group: convenes

September 22-23, 2022 - Symposium #2: “Women, gender, and labor: reframing the work and refusing femicide”

- Day One, Thursday, **September 22, 2022**
 - 4:00-6:00 p.m. Eastern US, Keynote Dialogue: Connie Wun & TBA, moderated, open to public through registration
 - 7:00 p.m. Eastern US, Dinner with Study Group: TBA
- Day Two, Friday, **September 23, 2022**
 - 2:00-4:00 p.m., Eastern US, Plenary Dialogue: TBA, moderated, open to public through registration
 - 4:30-6:00 p.m., Eastern US, Plenary Dialogue: Connie Wun & TBA, moderated, open to public through registration
 - 7:00 p.m. Eastern US, Dinner with Study Group: TBA

Late November/early December, TBD, Symposium #3