



Evaluating the decolonisation of the Humanities curriculum at the University of Cape Town: Khanyisa Courses as a case study

by

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I therefore dedicate this project to my late father, Gabedi Phetso Isaac Phetlhu and great-grandfather, KZ Phetlhu who continue to be my guiding angels. To my dearest mother, Mabel Kerileng Phetlhu who recently turned 60years – this is my ode to you, mom.

PULA.

Abstract

This study sought to bring the conversation around the decolonisation of the curriculum to the fore by evaluating the decolonial work that the Humanities Faculty at the University of Cape Town has attempted to do with regard to the undergraduate degree programme through the introduction of a new suite of course, called the Khanyisa Courses. As such, this study establishes the various ways in which the Humanities faculty through the Khanyisa Courses (specifically the course called: Literature: How and why? – ELL1013F) has attempted to decolonise the curriculum in terms of the way the course is structured, the way it is taught and the way the course is assessed. The aim is to establish whether the course fulfils the decolonial project by means of disrupting and challenging the Eurocentric traditions of teaching and assessing the course. The thesis argues that the ELL1013F course does decolonial work in that it adopts a paradigm shift away from Eurocentric traditions within the discipline of literary studies. The course does this decolonial work by means of adopting epistemic disobedience as one of the approaches in how the course is structured and how the content is taught and assessed – with the idea of the students’ positionality being at the centre of the learning process thereby disrupting existing hierarchies of knowledge. Furthermore, the thesis argues that the various modules also adopt different approaches in terms of Jansen’s (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation and this varied from the different lecturers that taught the modules of the ELL1013F course. Lastly, this thesis shows how the course did not managed to fully decolonise the curriculum, at the level of assessment as it did not overtly disrupt hierarchies of western knowledge in any significant way.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

“The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious, one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” – James Baldwin, 1963.

In the wake of the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall protests, universities across South Africa have begun to examine their institutional practices, including their curricula. Much of the current literature and research done around the decolonisation of the curriculum is often written at a theoretical level and not necessarily at a practical, classroom-based level (Morreira et al, 2020). However, there seems to be emerging research, written particularly in the South African context given that various scholars are interested in assessing how the decolonisation of the curriculum looks in their respective South African universities (see Le Grange, et al, 2020; Mheta, Lungu & Govender, 2018; Morreira et al, 2020). This research study is similarly situated in the research gap on what decoloniality¹ can possibly look like in practice, in that it is interested in evaluating a deliberate attempt at the decolonisation of the curriculum that has been done in the Humanities Faculty at the University of Cape Town through the establishment of the Khanyisa Courses.

It is therefore important to provide some contextual information on how the Khanyisa Courses were conceptualised by the Humanities (HUM) Education Development Unit (HUM EDU) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). In responding to calls from students to “decolonise the curricula”, the HUM EDU (Faculty Board Minutes, 2018, p.1) proposed a Suite of Introductory Courses to the HUM Faculty Board which were intended to restructure the undergraduate degree structure. As such, the proposal that was made aimed “to offer one concrete, practical means of responding to this call at the level of the Humanities undergraduate degree structure” (Faculty Board Minutes, 2018, p. 1) by means of creating curriculum space for pedagogic innovation through implementing a new suite of required first year level courses that aimed to decolonise the curriculum both at level of the

¹ By decoloniality one refers to what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, p. 13) refers to as the school of thought that seeks disentangle the “epistemological issues, politics of knowledge production and questions of who produces which knowledge and for what purposes”.

structure of the course(s) (and in turn the undergraduate degree structure) and at pedagogical level.

The guidelines for these Introductory Courses included:

- a) Locating the majors / disciplines in a Southern context and historicising their development;
- b) Affirming the linguistic and cultural capital that diverse students bring to the classroom;
- c) Providing pedagogic enrichment so that students are ready to meet the academic demands of their chosen majors;
- d) And introducing delivery and assessment methods that encourage active, critical and multi-modal learning.

(HUM Faculty Board Minutes, 2018, p. 1)

The above-mentioned guidelines indicate the deliberate pedagogical shift that the Humanities Faculty intended to take as a way of responding to the calls by the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements to decolonise the curriculum. In what follows, I argue that these guidelines are epistemically disruptive and disobedient in nature and are indicative of the decolonial turn that the university was prepared to take. I use the term epistemically disruptive and disobedient deliberately here to indicate how the university is shifting away from Eurocentric ways of knowing and teaching – a mandate that the fallist movement (both Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall)² called for during the 2015/16 period. In fact, as an operational definition of the Mignolo's (2009) concept of epistemic disobedience, one wants borrow the definition of this concept from the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA, 2023, no page number available) who define it as a decolonial approach that is “reflected on as a refusal to engage conventional systems, epistemologies and practices of being”. In other words, it is a decolonial approach that deliberately refuses to privilege dominant ways of

² The term Fallist movement in this case is used to refer to both the Rhodes Must Fall and the Fees Must Fall movement. There are several books that speak about how these formations came to be, how they operated and what their respective objectives were including Rhodes Must Fall (2018) and Nyamnjoh (2016) respectively. So, in this study, the idea of decolonising the curriculum is what is foregrounded as it was a demand put forward by both students and staff members who were involved in those protests as they demanded the need to decolonize the university, including the curriculum among other things.

knowing, but rather privileges the previously neglected and dejected ways of knowing that would never be deemed as legitimate knowledge in the first instance.

The proposal was approved by the Faculty in 2018, meaning that the university officially recognised the introduction and implementation of the Suite of Introductory Course offered by various departments with the Humanities Faculty, which became known as Khanyisa Courses. In isiXhosa, the name Khanyisa basically means ‘to bring about light’, so metaphorically speaking, this suite of introductory courses is aimed at bring about light in the university at large by creating a learning and teaching environment that recognises various ways of knowing and producing knowledge. The Khanyisa courses are also in line with wider university documents that guide curriculum change, such as: The UCT Curriculum Change Framework (Curriculum Change Working Group, 2018) and Senate Teaching and Learning Committee’s *Taking Curriculum Change Forward* (2019).

This research paper takes as a case study one course offered within the suite, namely ELL1013F, a course in the Department of Languages and Literatures in English which is open to all first-year students, as a way to assess whether or not decolonial work can be seen to be occurring, and to focus on the implications this has in relation to the faculty’s intentions of decolonising the curriculum. In other words, this research study aimed to establish whether the way the ELL1013F course is taught and assessed incites the decolonisation of the curriculum and epistemic disobedience³ or not. This was done by evaluating all seven modules of the ELL1013F course, namely:

- Module 1 – *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019)
- Module 2 – Poetry: Black South African Women’s poetry
- Module 3 – *On Beauty* (Smith, 2005)
- Module 4 – *So Long A Letter* (Miriam Bâ, 1979)

³ In this instance, epistemic disobedience as espoused by Mignolo (2011, p. 22): “calls into question the basis of and the control of Eurocentric systems of thought and because it is crucial to fostering an emphasis on the knower (enunciation) rather than the known (enunciated) based on lived experience and in connection to others and their context” (as cited in Miles, 2019, p. 2). I expand on this in the literature review below.

- Module 5 – *The Tempest* (Shakespeare, 1623)⁴
- Module 6 – Scenes of Subjection
- Module X – Literature: How and why

I focus on both what was taught – content, in terms of what is taught and how the course is organised - and how students were assessed in the course. In doing so, I draw on Jansen’s (2017) conceptions of decolonisation, as discussed below, to analyse each of these modules, and see how each approach plays itself out in the learning process across all seven modules. It must be however emphasised that my intention is not in any way to suggest that UCT is a decolonised institution, or that the Department of English Literary Studies is, but to argue that my research simply focuses on the said course and the concepts explored in the literature review and theoretical framework as a way to evaluate the decolonial work (if any) done in the ELL1013F course.

Even within the ELL1003 course, the focus is to evaluate the prescribed readings (learning material – content covered in the course) and the assessment thereof, and that my argument simply signifies the minor component(s) of that which needs to be decolonised, or is decolonised or ought to be decolonised. Lastly, the explored objects of decolonisation (i.e. content and assessments) should be taken to be decolonised in the context of how they are now. In other words, this is to say over time, the course and the lecturers may or may not regress – this is an issue that should be taken to consideration in the future.

1.1 Research Problem

As mentioned previously, much of the literature and research around the question of the decolonisation of the curriculum tends to be at the theoretical and philosophical level (see Mignolo, 2009, Mignolo 2011, Gordon, 2011, Grosfoguel, 2007 and Jansen, 2017), and as such this research project aims to study the decolonisation of the curriculum at a much more practical level – how it looks in the classroom context. This is not to suggest that one conducted classroom or online lectures observations but rather to study the decolonial work as envisaged by HUM EDU at a practical level in terms of what the Khanyisa guidelines delineate as key

⁴ However, for this module, the lecturer used this version of the book: Mowat, B.A. & Werstine, P. (Eds). (2015) *The Tempest by William Shakespeare (updated version)*. New York, USA: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

criteria in how the content should be packaged and delivered in the classroom, thus at a practical level.

This will be done by means of making use of a concrete case study to evaluate the decolonial work that the Humanities Faculty at the UCT (particularly the HUM EDU through the Khanyisa Courses that are offered to all students in the general Humanities, i.e. both those doing Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Social Science including those that are on the extended programme and those that are not) to find out the various ways in which the faculty has attempted to decolonise the curriculum in as far the content offered and assessing the course(s). In other words, unlike the works of the mentioned decolonial scholars who theorise the tenets of decoloniality, the decolonial turn and the decolonisation of the curriculum, this research seeks to evaluate the various ways in which the course ELL1013F (Literature: How and Why?) attempts to decolonise the curriculum in terms of the structure of its content, the pedagogies employed to teach the course, and the way the course is assessed.

1.2 Research Aims

This research aims to establish the ways in which the University of Cape Town (UCT), particularly the Humanities Education Development Unit (HUM EDU) has attempted to decolonise the curriculum through the Khanyisa Course undergraduate curriculum change project – specifically seen in the case study of the Department of Literary Studies in English. The research also aims to establish the limitations and successes of the various methods of teaching and assessment of the course in question (Literature: How and Why? – ELL1013F) and the guidelines of the entire Khanyisa Courses in terms of them being in line with the decolonial project.

1.3 Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the main question: whether the work done by the Humanities Faculty (at UCT) through the Khanyisa courses amounts to the decolonisation of the curriculum? Further, in what ways does it do that or not? In other words, the research delineates in what ways the work on curriculum change through an example of a Khanyisa course can be seen as decolonial or not. In answering these main questions, I have also asked to what extent and in what ways does the ELL1013F (Literature: How and Why?) course deliberately attempt

to utilise decoloniality as a theoretical lens for the way the course is structured, the content presented and the way the course is assessed.

1.4 Rationale of the study

As argued by Mignolo (2018, p. 108) “the usage of the decolonisation (and its verb, to decolonise) have been growing exponentially over the past five years”. The idea of decolonising the curriculum in South African universities was one of the pressing matters that students from the fallist movement (both the Rhodes and Fees Must Fall movements) had prioritised. Members of the fallist movement critiqued South African universities for their Eurocentric nature both in terms of the education they offer to their students and the institutional cultures of the South African universities (particularly the historically white universities – in this case UCT).

As such, this research project aims to evaluate the work done by the HUM EDU at UCT by evaluating one of the courses they offer to the first years, as a way to assess the amount of decolonial work that the faculty is already doing and look at the impact it has on the students.

1.5 Scope of the research

The research focuses specifically on the decolonisation of the curriculum not because it is fashionable to do so, or because it is a topical subject to discuss, but because it is a very necessary topic to disentangle, particularly as far as it relates to what decolonisation looks like at a practical level (in the classroom level) and how it manifests itself at the selected university, a former white liberal university. Moreover, the intention is to interrogate the decolonisation of the curriculum within the Humanities faculty because that is the faculty that houses my research field that I am particularly interested in, the English Department.

I have chosen to evaluate Literary Studies precisely because it is my academic background, as far as my qualifications are concerned – i.e. having trained as an English teacher during my undergraduate studies and having completed my BEd Honours degree with a particular focus on literature. It therefore made sense for me to look at the subject of decolonisation of the curriculum within the literary discipline as it happens to be a discipline that I am trained in and

one that I am extremely passionate about. One is of the view that it would be quite unimaginative to have a world where universities are advocating for the decolonisation of the curriculum, and yet a canonical discipline like Literary Studies in English are not keen in taking up a decolonial intervention given the English language's legacy in the history of settler colonialism not only as a language or lingua franca, but also as an academic discipline.

With that in mind, the scope of the research is to focus on one Literary Studies in English department within the Humanities faculty, with a keen interest on the Khanyisa course (Literature: How and Why – ELL1013F) since it is an attempt at decolonising literary studies here at UCT. The main focus of this research is to evaluate the structure of the course (the curriculum – i.e. course outline and prescribed readings) as well the assessments as stated previously. The question of pedagogy – the transfer of the course content – is beyond the scope of this dissertation, due to not only space constraints but also due to the fact that at the time of my research it was taught under emergency remote teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such pedagogy was temporary and unlike the content and assessment – pedagogy of this course in my view do not necessarily reflect the intended aims of the course in the longer term.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is to contribute to filling the existing gap within the scholarly works that focus on the decolonisation of the curriculum, as it was mentioned previously that much of the literature focuses on the decolonisation of the curriculum more on the meta-theoretical level. This is because this study will be supported by empirical evidence that will indicate whether the various modules within the ELL1013F – Literature: How and Why course have decolonised the curriculum, and in what ways.

Secondly, the significance of this study will not necessarily prescribe how the decolonisation of the curriculum should look like but rather observe what has been done at the Humanities Faculty, UCT. This might not necessarily be applicable in or to other institutions, but it can provide insight(s) on the different ways that lecturers can possibly consider when they intending or attempting to decolonise the curriculum in their respective intuitions of higher learning.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This research study is structured in the following manner: in Chapter One, I have focused on outlining the orientation of the study, including what its aims are and which questions it seeks to answer. The first chapter has provided contextualisation of the whole concept behind Khanyisa courses at the University of Cape Town and begun to explain the reason why the ELL1013F course is the focus of my research.

In what follows, Chapter two provides a literature review wherein I expansively tackle other research work that has been done in relation to the decolonisation of the curriculum. In this particular section I delineate what other authors have articulated around the decolonisation of the curriculum, with the one of the main arguments being much of the research that has been done on this topic has mainly meta-theoretical whilst my own research deliberately ‘shifts the geography of reason’ (Gordon, 2011), if you will, by looking at the decolonisation of the curriculum at the practical level – in how it is taught in the classroom, but with much focus on the curriculum and the assessment.

In Chapter Three, I explain the theoretical framework that I used in evaluating the Humanities curriculum: namely, Jansen’s six conceptions of decolonisation of the curriculum (2017); and Mignolo’s concept of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011). The idea here is that I am interested in assessing how these theoretical lenses provide a means of analysing the seven modules that are offered in the ELL1013F course, to look at the similarities and differences on those manifestations in the attempts in decolonising the literary studies, both at the level of the curriculum (in how the course is structured – at the level of the course outline and at the level of the course readings prescribed in each module) as well as at the level of the assessment (based on the assignments that the students were given as part of their normative and summative assessment).

Thereafter, Chapter Four focuses on the research methodology that was employed in evaluating the ELL1013F course (including all seven modules that I have already mentioned previously). In the main, the method that I use to collect and analyse data is through content analysis as espoused by Krippendorff (2019) and the aim here is to elicit qualitative findings through the use of thematic analysis, in the form of two ways: first being direct content analysis and conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this section, I specifically outline

how direct and conventional content analysis will be applied in evaluating all the modules within the ELL1013F course in relation to who the decolonisation of the curriculum plays itself out – in how it is taught and assessed. Not only that, in this section, I also comment on the research design, sampling, the process of collecting data and provide a synopsis of the methodological tools that are used to analyse the data as well as the ethical considerations that needed to be taken into account in ensuring that the research is ethically sound as far as the ethical clearance is concerned.

In Chapter Five, I focus on the research findings that I have gathered from analysing the interviews, the course outline, content of the course – both the reading material prescribed in each module as well as the manner in which that material is organised and structured. Lastly, I focus on the assessment tasks that were given to the students – in how students are evaluated for marks, whether or not their assessments are in line with the theoretical tenets of decoloniality, epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) and the six conceptions of decolonisation as espoused by Jansen (2017). In Chapter Six, I focus on the research analysis wherein I pay careful attention by analysing the implementation of the Khanyisa course guidelines, the various modules of the ELL1013F course – at the level of both the structure of the modules and the assessments thereof. An overarching argument is therefore made out from comprehensively looking at the data that was gathered as a way to respond to the research questions and aims that my research study aimed to respond to. Hopefully, the salient points made in this section (and possibly on the other sections as well) are able to contribute to filling the scholarly gap that exists in relation to this subject matter around the decolonisation of the curriculum, not only at a philosophical level but more so, at the pragmatic level – at the level of the classroom.

The final chapter focuses on pulling the ideas together in the form of a resounding conclusion in order to comment on how the research was able to arrive at the main argument that is made throughout this research study. A reference list, and an addendum is provided to make readers familiar with the sources and additional resource materials that were used within the analysis for this research study.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

Often the concept of decolonisation is understood from a political economy perspective simply because of where it emerged from. For instance, in Fanon's (1967b) work, the theory of decolonisation emerged at a time where many African states had gained their independence away from the colonial masters – decolonisation in this instance was all about recreate a new society where the removal of the colonial administrators was necessary. Similarly, Jansen (2017) argued that the concept of decolonisation emerged during the “period preceding the collapse of colonial rule in Africa and elsewhere”. Hence, Fanon's (1967b) conception of decolonisation is largely understood from a political economy perspective however, what becomes interesting of Fanon's conception of decolonisation is the manner in which he articulated how decolonisation, as a violent process, can be used as a way to disrupt and deconstruct the world as we know it, to a point where we can reconfigure the world into a new world order with a “new language and new humanity” as Fanon (1967b, p. 28) correctly puts it. What this means is that we can also adopt a similar approach to the decolonisation of the curriculum, particularly in terms of influencing the reconfiguration of the world order that we find ourselves in.

Additionally, the Latin-American decolonial scholars such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Walter D. Mignolo and Ramon Grosfoguel are concerned with the “colonial power matrix”, a concept which is argued to show ways in which modernity “continues to structure the world system” (Hoadley & Galant, 2019, p. 100). However, these scholars are said to “often cast arguments in broad socio-political terms... rather than in relation to questions about particular knowledge forms or disciplines and their organisation in the curriculum” (Hoadley & Galant, 2019, p. 101). Despite this critique, their work remains useful in terms of sparking the debate around the decolonisation of the curriculum.

Ngugi (1989) on the other hand, adopted a similar understanding of decolonisation to that of Fanon however he located it in relation to the question of language, and therefore to the idea of knowledge, particularly the curriculum of English literature. By doing so, Ngugi (1989) was shifting from the conception of decolonisation along the political economy perspective and centred it on the issue of language and by extension to that of knowledge. Ngugi (1989)

problematised the idea of centering Eurocentric ways of knowing that are entrenched in European languages (i.e. English, Portuguese, German and French) in the academy (Ngugi, 1989). The view that Ngugi's conception of decolonisation was more focused on the curriculum is also supported by Mbembe (2015, p. 16) as he points out that:

Ngugi is, more than Fanon, directly interested in questions of writing and teaching – writing oneself, teaching oneself” and that for Ngugi, decolonisation is “a struggle over what is to be taught; it is about the terms under which we should be teaching what – not to some generic figure of the student, but to the African “child”, a figure that is very much central to his politics and his creative work (Mbembe, 2015, p. 16).

Similarly, Jansen (2017) argues that Ngugi (1989) is among the leading scholars on the issue of decolonisation, particularly in relation to the curriculum. Jansen (2017, p. 158) further argues that Ngugi “...advocates for the decentring European curriculum in his general argument but emphasises African languages in English as a commitment to Africanisation”. In other words, Ngugi advocates for the decentralisation of European knowledge and curriculum, assuming that the shift towards focusing on African languages and literature rather than English literature should be done as an effort towards Africanisation (Jansen, 2017). However, it must be stressed that Ngugi's conception of Africanisation differs from Fanon's conception of Africanisation as shown in Mbembe (2015). This is because as Mbembe (2015) argues, for Ngugi (1989, p. 87), Africanisation was part of the politics of language and part of a greater search for an emancipating perspective which may enable us “to see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe”. Whereas Fanon understood Africanisation as a political phenomenon, one which he critiqued fiercely in his third chapter of *The wretched of the earth* wherein he likened it to racketeering and retrogression as pointed by Mbembe (2015).

With that said, in foregrounding the conversation of decolonisation in relation to the curriculum, Jansen (2017) provides a “typology of six conceptions of decolonisation in relation to knowledge in university curriculum” as pointed by Hoadley and Galant (2019, p. 101). These include the following: decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge, decolonisation as the Africanisation of knowledge, decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge, decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge, decolonisation as encounters

with entangled knowledges and decolonisation as the repatriation of occupied knowledge (society) (Jansen, 2019). These different conceptions will be explained further in the theoretical framework chapter later.

Hoadley and Galant (2019) argue that Jansen and the Latin-American decolonial scholars do not necessarily speak about the decolonisation of curriculum in great detail. According to Hoadley and Galant (2019), the Latin-American decolonial scholars “often cast arguments in broad socio-political terms (‘geo-politics and ‘body-politics’) rather than in relation to questions about particular knowledge forms or disciplines and their organisation in curriculum” (Hoadley & Galant, 2019, p. 101). Whilst their critique for Jansen’s conception of decolonisation is that:

[w]hile the descriptive account of the possible permutations of curriculum and pedagogy is interesting, the distinctions don’t get to the actual entailments, and don’t touch on *what will count in the end* – from what knowledge field will the rules for evaluation be derived? (Hoadley & Galant, 2019, p. 102)

In other words, as much as the different conceptions of decolonisation of the curriculum are described, none of them mentions how each form will be assessed in the classroom. This seems to be what is missing in much of the research around this subject matter.

It is for this reason that my research study attempts to move away from only focusing on the topic of decolonisation of the curriculum at the level of philosophising and theorising about it but to extend the discussion to look at how decolonisation of the curriculum plays itself out in the lecture room in as far as the way the course is designed, assessing what is taught and how it is assessed.

With that said, there are a couple studies that have been conducted with a similar focus of providing examples of what decolonisation of the curriculum could look like in various institutions of higher learning. In the first study, Morreira (2017, p. 287) “examines humanities courses that include content that deliberately aims to interrupt the existing knowledge hierarchies, through a qualitative analysis of spaces where African knowledge is

foregrounded”. In this study, Morreira (2017, p. 288) provides “preliminary findings from a multidisciplinary research project” that she and her other colleagues did “based on three universities namely: UCT, Rhodes University, and University of Fort Hare” by “examining humanities courses that include content and methods in their pedagogy and curriculum that deliberately aim to interrupt the usual hierarchy of knowledge”. As such, this study explored “two in-depth case studies of undergraduate humanities courses at the UCT to evaluate the successes and limitations of attempts to transform the curriculum within a historically white university” (Morreira, 2017. p. 288).

The first case study was based on analysing a third year Social Anthropology course which “interrogates the ways which ethnography represents persons, and requires students to engage in a project of representation of their own”, while the second case study was based in evaluating an Education Development course – “a course that was developed for first-year students and aims to provide a broad introduction to key concepts in the social sciences” (Morreira, 2017, p. 293).

In the first case study, Morreira (2017) found that although “the course aims do not highlight Africa or theorise about Africa at all, the content taught serves to critique ethnographic production about Africa” and examine the ways in which contemporary African and Euro-American theorists are doing so today”. Furthermore, Morreira (2017) argues that the course material given to students in this course also disrupts existing hierarchies of knowledge by exposing students to material that are both within the standard canon of the discipline of social anthropology together with other texts that are not necessarily mainstream but “more relevant to the localities inhabited by the students themselves” (Morreira, 2017, p. 295).

Concerning assessment of the course, Morreira (2017, 295) is of the view that one of the assignments required from the students provides “a good example of the ways in which the usual hierarchies of knowledge have the potential to be interrupted by both the content and the pedagogy employed by the course convener”. “This assignment requires students to review an ethnographic work in terms of the politics of representation” and considering the kinds of “evidence it provides for the claims it makes” wherein “the forms of representation are not limited to traditional anthropological texts” but “includes novels such as *Things fall apart* by Chinua Achebe and P’Bitek’s (1989) *Song of Lawino*” (Morreira, 2017, p. 295). The inclusion

of these two novels is said to “provide much depth of representation as much as so-called scientific accounts” (Morreira, 2017, p. 295).

Thus, the interesting finding about this case study is that the deliberate choices made by the course convenor in terms of how the course is structured, taught, and assessed can be characterised as epistemic disobedience (as espoused by Mignolo, 2011) as the course “upends the power relations of who may speak with authority about African culture” (Morreira, 2017, p. 295). According to Morreira (2017) the course therefore intentionally disrupts Eurocentric ways of thinking (which are often monocentric in nature) and aims to propagate other ways of being in the world, particularly at the level of content and theory. Whilst at the level of assessment which is traditional in a sense (as it requires students to write a book review in the standard required in the university), the assessment nonetheless “requires the students to think outside of the dominant categories” (Morreira, 2017, p. 295).

The second case study is also an example of epistemic obedience, but the difference is that because the course is within education development, the way it is structured and taught is aimed making overt “some of the implicit rules of the social science disciplines” and Morreira (2017, p. 297) argues that the course is taught in such a way that “rather than implicitly cultivating gazes, it seeks to make the ways in which those gazes are constructed explicit to those students who are most disadvantaged by the hidden curriculum”. Furthermore, Morreira (2017, p. 297) states that “this is done through an explicit unpacking of the assumptions about what constitutes valid knowledge that are carried by various disciplines within the social sciences”. Even at the level content and pedagogy, “the course further disrupts the usual hierarchies of knowledge in terms of the content through which it seeks to achieve the above aims” (Morreira, 2017, p. 297), and this done by introducing students Steve Biko’s (1978) *I write what I like* instead of exposing them to Euro-American scholars (Morreira, 2017). Students have also responded with good feedback in terms of how they felt about this course.

A different study presents multiple case studies where different universities have been evaluated in how they have responded to the calls of decolonising the university curriculum, particularly following the Rhodes and Fees Must Fall movements (Le Grange, du Preez, Ramrathan & Blignaut, 2020). In this study, Le Grange, de Preez, Ramrathan and Blignaut (2020) are interested in how the selected South African universities have responded to the call

to decolonise their curricula post the 2015 and 2016 student protests and how their response may be interpreted.

The selected universities include four South African universities namely: Stellenbosch University, North West University, the Nelson Mandela University and University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. These scholars' concern is that even though they agree the call to decolonise the university curriculum is imperative, their contention is that the struggles to decolonise the curriculum "might become exercise of "decolonial-washing" (Le Grange, du Preez, Ramrathan & Blignaut, 2020, p. 26). This concept of decolonial-washing is "borrowed from the word 'greenwashing' that is used in environmental and sustainability studies to denote processes whereby a company provides a false impression... about the environmental soundness of its products", but in this instance, "decolonial-washing relates to a university giving the impression that its curricula are decolonised although this might not be the case" (Le Grange, du Preez, Ramrathan & Blignaut, 2020, p. 26). In this study, it was found that the understanding of decolonising the curriculum differed across the four institutions and the "process and trajectories that each [university] will eventually take will be uneven and dependent on context, institutional will and the lasting effects of each one's particular history" (Le Grange, du Preez, Ramrathan & Blignaut, 2020, p. 25).

It will thus be interesting for this study to establish whether the way the ELL1013F course is taught, structured, and assessed could be or not, an example of "decolonial-washing" without necessarily rigorously disrupting the Eurocentric traditions of understanding literature.

It can thus be seen that while most literature on decoloniality is focused on the theoretical level, some few studies, which I have addressed in detail here, have begun to fill this gap by focusing on what the decolonisation of the curriculum looks like within the university space, at more practical level – in the classroom setting as I have attempted to do so here as well. Not only that, in my thesis I have also focused specifically on assessment which in my view has not been explored enough, as such the attempt is to fill in the research gap by exploring what the decolonisation of the curriculum would mean in terms of its implications and applications to the question of assessment. I now turn to the theoretical framework I will be using to analyse the content and assessment mechanisms of the course.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Theoretical Framework

This study works with three key understandings of decoloniality, namely the concepts of coloniality of knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013), and epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011); and Jansen's (2017) six-part conceptualisation of decolonisation of the curriculum. While coloniality of knowledge and epistemic disobedience provide an overarching theoretical framing to the work, Jansen's (2017) work on curriculum is most useful as it provides a framework for analysing particularly the pedagogy and structure of the course and I will explain it in detail in the methods section as to how I have applied it when I was analysing the gathered data.

According to Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243 as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 13) decoloniality refers to a school of thought that:

is distinguished from an imperial version of history through its push for shifting of geography reason from the West as the epistemic locale from which the 'world is described, conceptualised and ranked' to the ex-colonised epistemic sites as legitimate points of departure in describing the construction for the modern world.

In other words, decoloniality is premised on the idea of coloniality of knowledge which seeks to disentangle the "epistemological issues, politics of knowledge production and questions of who produces which knowledge and for what purpose" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 11). This concept of coloniality of knowledge emphasises epistemology, and pedagogy that is informed by the epistemic decolonial turn regarding the knowledge production and the positions occupied by those who produce certain kinds of knowledge(s). As such, this conceptual framework is used in the study to interrogate and evaluate the kinds of knowledges that students are exposed to in the ELL1013F course. My approach is to evaluate how this course organises content, to question where the knowledge was produced and for what purpose and on whose behalf the content is speaking for. In other words, decoloniality is the theory that I am pulling out a particular theoretical lens from, particularly epistemic disobedience and the geography of reason as a way to interrogate if some of the modules of the ELL1013F course do shift the geography of reason (see Gordon, 2011).

This deliberate and intentional shifting of geography of reason forms part of the decoloniality as a school of thought. As such Gordon (2011) argues that the need to shift the geography of reason is premised on the need to do away with or shift away from the monolithic and Eurocentric ways of knowing which, from inception of the academy, were established from as a deliberate epistemological tool that was used to silence, neglect and reject other ways of knowing as part of the political conquest we have witness in the global world order (be it in the form of slavery and colonialism or genocide and racism etc). Therefore, the idea of shifting the geography of reason is one that aims to problematise the Eurocentricity of Western knowledge by disentangling its problematics that it suffers from and be able to give the voiceless (whose ways of knowing were and continue to be silenced) the right to express themselves, an act that Gordon (2011) deems as a form of defiance, the need to reclaim the dignity and freedom of the voiceless. In the same light, this study is interested in finding out if such possibilities are made available for students to problematise Eurocentric ways of knowing within the Literary Studies in English academic discipline.

The idea of epistemic disobedience as developed by Mignolo (2009 p. 160) is the second theoretical concept that I use in framing my analysis of the ELL1013F course. This idea refers to the process of delinking from the “illusion of the zero point epistemology” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160). What is meant by this idea of the “illusion of the zero point epistemology” is the very premise of Western knowledge system that assumes the totality of knowing the known, in other words it speaks to the enunciation of the enunciated is universal, monolithic and uniform. However, the idea of epistemic disobedience is intended to disrupt and rupture such a formation(s), and actually question the geopolitics and the body politic of the knowledge produced and the producers of that knowledge. Put differently, Mignolo (2009, p. 160) argues that the geo-politics of knowledge are interconnected with the geo-politics of the knowing – meaning it matters to understand the questions: “who and when, why and when is knowledge generated (rather than produced)” and based on that for Mignolo asking these questions “means to shift the attention from the enunciated to the enunciation” (p. 160). In other words, this paradigm shift is premised on a very deliberate shift away from clichéd notions that all knowledge is situated and constructed to asking critical questions “[w]hy did Eurocentric epistemology conceal its own geo-historical and bio-graphical locations and succeed in creating the idea of universal knowledge as if the knowing subjects are universal” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 160).

Thus, for this study, this conceptual framework is very useful in as far as evaluating whether the ELL1013F course is taught in ways that are meant to disrupt existing knowledge hierarchies or to maintain them, specifically concerning the literary canon that is selected as part of the content of the course.

With that said, in foregrounding the conversation of decolonisation in relation to the curriculum, Jansen (2017) provides a “typology of six conceptions of decolonisation in relation to knowledge in university curriculum” as pointed by Hoadley and Galant (2019, p. 101). The table below outlines the six conceptions of decolonisation:

CONCEPTION OF DECOLONISATION	DESCRIPTION
Decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge	Supports the requirement for Africa to supplant Europe and be situated at the focal point of the educational program without invalidating Western ideas, yet repositioning it from the centre and exposing its misrepresentation of universal truth corresponding to its perusing and investigation of the world (Jansen, 2017).
Decolonisation as the Africanisation of knowledge	Refers to a replacement approach with the Africanisation of the curriculum where students are “reading books by African authors, learning about artworks by African artists, rediscovering the greatness of Africa through scientific achievements of Africans... and so forth” (Jansen, 2017, p. 159).
Decolonisation as additive-inclusive knowledge	Is considered as the ‘soft version’ of decolonisation as it “recognises the value of existing canons of knowledge but asks for recognition of new knowledge and its addition to established curriculum” (Garuba, 2015, as cited in Jansen, 2017, p.158).
Decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge	Jansen (2017) argues that this conception of decolonisation is premised on the notion of

	viewing the same problems differently by using new theories and methodologies. As such, students are encouraged to engage the curriculum by asking critical questions like “where does this knowledge come from?” and “in whose interests does this knowledge persist?” as suggested by Jansen (2017, p. 159).
Decolonisation as encounters with entangled knowledge	Is premised on the idea that knowledge is interwoven within the dichotomy of the coloniser and the colonised – an interaction that advises the course regarding our daily living. In this case, Jansen (2017) declares that we can't get away from the way that our lives are snared here and there or the other, and by suggesting that this is reflected in what we know and how we know it.
Decolonisation as the repatriation of occupied knowledge	It is premised on the notion of allocating the curriculum the “power to disturb not only settled knowledge but also settler society” (Jansen, 2017, p. 161). It is also said that its aim is to cultivate consciousness in terms of the need to focus on the injustices of the colonial past such as the need to end any forms of oppression and inequalities and the need to give back stolen land (Jansen, 2017).

However, it must be emphasised that in as much as this typology is very useful in describing how decolonisation of the curriculum can potentially come in different shapes as per the descriptions above, the critique to Jansen’s (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation does not help in as far as showing us, in practical terms, how they are applicable in the classroom, and how the decolonisation of curriculum in each approach employed looks like. This research project I show these various conceptions of decolonisation of the curriculum are employed in the ELL1013F course as it will be seen in the following chapters.

Needless to say, in the following chapter, I outline the research methodology that I employed to conduct this study in terms of both the data collection process and how the chosen theoretical framework has informed the data collection and the data analysis. In addition, it is in the following section where I will break it down on how I am going to use Jansen's typology of his conceptions of decolonisation when analysing and evaluating the ELL1013F course.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Research Methodology

This research study made use of qualitative research methods to gather and analyse both textual data on course origins and design, and interview data from staff teaching on the course. Textual data included the Khanyisa documents: the initial Proposal for a Suite of Introductory courses that was taken to the Humanities Faculty board in 2018, and the Guidelines for the implementation of the Khanyisa Courses which were later developed during the rollout of courses. Other documents collected and analysed included the ELL1013F course outline; the prescribed texts and recommended readings for each module; and assessment tasks for each module which included both the tutorials and the assignments (i.e. blog posts and essays). Interviews were conducted with one lecturer (out of the eight that taught the course) who also happened to be one of the course convenors of this course and a teaching assistant (TA), which aimed to elicit data about not only their involvement in designing the ELL1013F Literature: How and Why course, but also their thought processes and intentions in designing the course, as a way to evaluate the pedagogical implications that they had to consider in their approach of designing and teaching a literature course like ELL1013F.

Data was gathered from the Guidelines for the implementation of the Khanyisa Course in order to gain insight into how the wider Khanyisa project intended to decolonise the curriculum, at a conceptual level. This could then be compared to the course outline and other course materials to gauge what those intentions looked like once implemented in a course – pedagogically, through the framing of the lecture series, in how students were assessed and to interrogate the vantage point from which knowledge was presented and formulated. Data gathered from the course outline also helps us to understand what the structuring of the course does and whether there was any form of epistemic disobedience that was employed in terms of the way the course is structured and organised, and in the tasks and topics set. Data from the interviews with the lecturer and TA help us to make sense of the lecturers' intentions in designing the course, as well as their perceptions on students' experiences of the course.

The methods employed for data analysis were informed by content analyses as espoused by Krippendorff (2019) and aimed at eliciting qualitative findings through the use of thematic analysis. Content analysis entails creating inferences from texts to their contexts of their use

by “using analytical constructs derived from theories or research, researchers adapt content analysis to their research questions and develop a range of techniques and approaches for analysing text” (Krippendorff, 2003 as cited in Beach et al, 2009, p. 129).

Beach et al. (2009) defines content analysis as a conceptual approach used to understand what the text(s) are about, an approach that considers the content from a particular theoretical perspective. In this instance, the theoretical perspective used was that of decoloniality, particularly Mignolo’s (2011) notion of epistemic disobedience as discussed earlier. This is to say that the data that was gathered was analysed by reading the core Khanyisa documents critically, and then formulating a theme around each category of the criteria in how it was decolonial in nature or not.

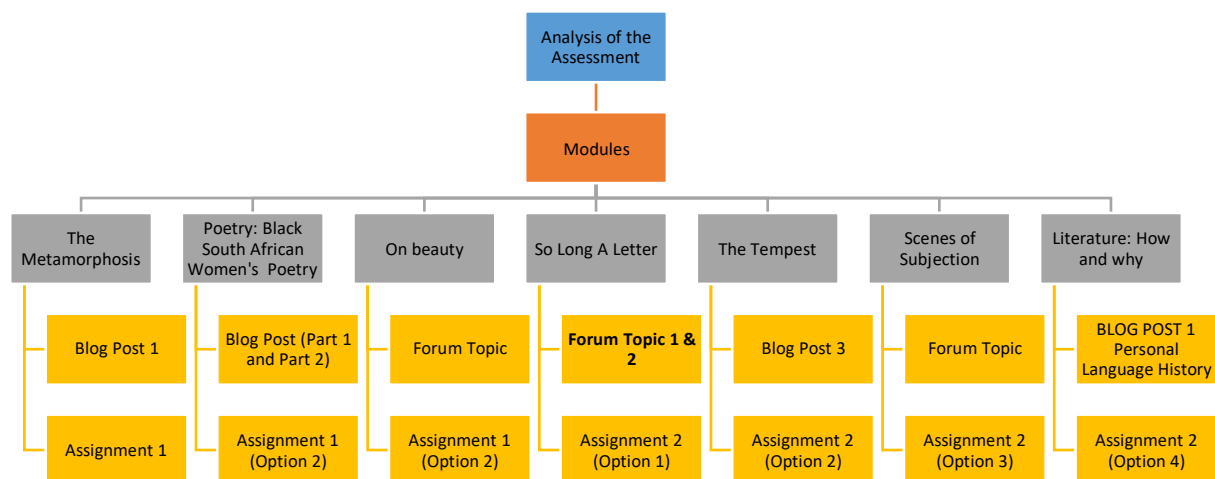


Figure 2 - Outline of the analysed Assessment Task

Data regarding the structure and organisation of the curriculum of the EL1013F course was analysed in relation to the prescribed texts and how/whether the knowledge presented in those texts aligned with epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009). I also used Jansen's (2019) six conceptions of decolonisation to unpack each module offered in the entire course, and to explore the assessment tasks. The diagram above gives a breakdown of the course, showing the assessments analysed for each module.

Information gathered from the interviews was used to augment the textual analysis. What follows is a breakdown of the research design of this research study, the sampling and data collection techniques that were employed as well as the description of the methodological tools that were used to analyse the data, and last but not least explain the ethical considerations that had to be considered for this research to be ethically plausible.

4.1 Research Design

The research method used a mixed approach in that some data was analysed using conventional and directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Reason being as explained by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) conventional content analysis is used as a research design with the intention to describe a phenomenon whose existing literature is limited. In this case, the existing literature on the decolonisation of the curriculum is limited in terms of what it looks like in a classroom setting, and that is why it is important in analysing the interviews that I conducted with the lecturer and teaching assistant in terms of their intentions in decolonising the modules they taught. This approach enabled me to immerse myself into the data and allow the data to elicit new insights that emerge from the data itself rather than prescribing certain categories that the data fell under. Therefore, the conventional content analysis enabled me to allow the categories to flow from the data itself as argued by Hsieh and Shannon (2005).

On the other hand, the use of directed content analysis was more useful in analysing the data from the official university particularly the proposal for Introductory Khanyisa courses, Implementing Guidelines for Khanyisa Courses, Course outline and assessments as well reading material prescribed in the course. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) states that the objective of directed content analysis is to either validate or expand conceptually a particular theoretical

framework. In this instance, the reason for the use of directed content analysis is to expand the idea of decolonisation of the curriculum, not from a philosophical level there is a lot of research that deals with that, but to expand it at a practical level by means of evaluating the decolonisation of the curriculum in how it looks like in practical terms.

Approaches Data Collection	Used for	Rationale
<i>1. Conventional Content Analysis</i>	Analysing interviews with my research participants (i.e. lecturers and TAs)	To allow the categories or codes to emerge from the data itself rather than from the theory of decolonisation of the curriculum (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).
<i>2. Directed Content Analysis</i>	Analysing the official documents from the university (Course outline, Proposal for Introductory Khanyisa courses, Implementing Guidelines for Khanyisa Courses and assessments as well reading material prescribed in the course including the instructions provided in the assessment task of this course - blog posts, forums and the main assignments)	To allow the theory and existing research literature to inform the coding of the data sources from the data set (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

4.2 Sampling

This study evaluates the Literature: How and why? (ELL1013F) modules by focusing on the official documents that form part and parcel of the dataset for this research project. These documents include: (1) the course outline, (2) Guidelines for the implementation of the Khanyisa Courses and the (4) Proposal for a Suite of Introductory courses– which students had to attend online due to COVID-19 hard lockdown. Furthermore, the course materials (prescribed reading and additional reading), assessments, tasks and tutorials of this course were evaluated as well.

Lastly, two interviews that were conducted among the course convenor, teaching assistant and lecturer in order to assess their intentions in designing the course in the way that it was designed

and the structure of the lectures across the various modules will be evaluated in as far as assessing how the course attempted to decolonise the curriculum.

4.3 Data Collection

Here, I explain the various tools and techniques I used to collect the data that were at my disposal during the data collection process of doing the research work. Below is the framework that focused on various aspects of the course from a decolonial perspective (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) which varied from the content, skills development (the skills that the students gained from engaging the various modules of the ELL1013F course), delivery of the course (in other words the pedagogy employed), pedagogical support, multilingualism and assessment. This particular framework was first and foremost adapted from one designed by the Unsettling Paradigm research project team (of which I was a member), which wider project was aimed at evaluating all the Khanyisa Courses. The table which can be found in Appendix X indicates how I used this framework to analyse ELL1013F in terms of its structure and organisation. It is important to note that the categories of interests within this framework are particularly Content, Pedagogic Support and Assessment, because they are more useful in answering my research question. However, the other categories, which include delivery, skills development and multilingualism, are also important in providing additional findings which will be useful particularly in relation to further debates that need to be had around the question of decolonisation of the curriculum in higher education (see Figure 1 in the Addendum section).

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was granted under the Unsettling Paradigms project of which I was a member of, as well as by the School of Education upon presentation of my proposal. Permission to name the course was given by the course conveners and teaching staff, though the staff interviewed remain anonymous. Student responses to the course via course evaluations were excluded from the analysis due to the limited nature of a Masters minor thesis, which meant that the project focused on design, content and assessment and that students' responses and their submissions under assessment would be a very interesting area of focus for further research to be conducted in the near future . As such, the bulk of data collected for the research focuses on the prescribed texts (i.e. content material, course outline and required assessments

done – with the latter the focus is only directed to the way the assessments are framed more than it is about the students’ responses).

Having said that, in this research study had to consider the following ethical issues: maintaining and adhering to the principle of confidentiality of the persons that were interviewed, gaining the permission from the Faculty and the Department were subject in this research (i.e. the Humanities Faculty and the Department of Languages and Literatures in English) and the course convenors that teach the seven modules of the ELL1003F Khanyisa Course. This was to ensure that one did not misrepresent the information that one discovered in the findings, and that the participants were aware of the purpose of this research study as well sharing the results the participants (upon request) so that they could possibly benefit from the research work as suggested by various scholars and research sources (see APA, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln, 2009; Mertens and Ginsberg, 2009 as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Moreover, one had to consider these ethical issues at various stages of conducting the research. For example, during the data collection stage, one had to ensure not to deceive the participants or rather attempting to sway or even prompt their responses when I interviewed them. This is to say, I made sure that I avoided asking leading questions but rather used follow-up questions to gain further clarity from the participants that were interviewed (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). I also avoided collecting harmful data to the participants (in this case the university in question and the course convenors teaching the course), instead I made sure I asked the interview questions that I had intended to ask from my interviewees (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Research Findings and Analysis

Overview

In this chapter, I present my findings and analysis. I begin with a discussion of the proposal for Khanyisa courses (HUM EDU, 2018), as a means of exploring how the university has attempted to decolonise the curriculum within the Humanities Faculty at UCT. I argue that the criteria that is provided within the proposal makes it possible for ELL1013F, as one of the courses within the suite, to incite epistemic disobedience. I move from there to the Guidelines document (HUMEDU, 2018b) in order to show the ways in which they enable teaching staff to find more deliberate ways to decolonise the curriculum. I argue that a strength is that they are suggestive rather than prescriptive, which opens multiple pathways for conveners and lecturers to challenge the hierarchy of Western knowledge within the academy. The hierarchisation of particular kinds of knowledge over others was a key critique raised by the Fallist movement; as such opening spaces for hierarchies of knowledge to be challenged can be considered an appropriate response to students' calls to decolonise the curriculum. In the chapter, I also draw on Jansen's (2017) conceptions of decolonisation, particularly those of decolonisation as the Africanisation of knowledge; and decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge⁵, to unpack the Khanyisa criteria.

In analysing the course structure, content and assessment, I argue that some modules are much more radical, if you will, in the way they go about inciting and utilising epistemic disobedience, and that across the various modules, we can observe different approaches that have been adopted in an attempt to decolonise the curriculum. Here, Jansen's (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation become very useful in analysing the differing ways in which decolonisation of

⁵ In as much as there are many scholars that problematise and question the homogeneity of European knowledge particular that of the colonial expansion and the maintenance of colonial knowledge as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) points when he speaks about the coloniality of knowledge). One is however aware that over the years following an extensive critique of this dominant knowledge structure of European knowledge including the critique from the Latin-American scholars that I have referred to in the earlier sections, European knowledge has now taken a different decolonial turn as espoused by Suárez-Krabbe (2014) whose work advocates for the pluperasation of European knowledge as far as facilitating an understanding of European that is not monolithic as the hegemonic colonial nature of European knowledge has done in the past, but to think of the possibilities of opening up new ways of understanding the coexistence of diverse alternatives as far as ways of knowing are concerning (Suárez-Krabbe, 2014).

the curriculum occurs or was interpreted by lecturers across the ELL1013F seven modules from the course. I thus compare and contrast what I observed from one module with others, as a way of showing where epistemic disobedience occurs. I argue that at the level of assessment, for most of the modules the idea of decolonisation of the curriculum in how the content taught is assessed is not elaborative, and perhaps this is where the scholarly gap when it comes to this topic of the decolonisation of the curriculum can be broadened. As Jansen's (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation do not necessarily in clear terms provide the pedagogical implications of each approach in the classroom, it would be recommendable for further studies to consider expanding on Jansen's (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation in terms of their pedagogical implications more practically not just at the level of epistemology and content. But more so at the level of delivery and, importantly, at the level of assessment. I thus use the findings from assessment in this course to begin to deliberate on how assessment could look through the intervention of a decolonial framework, specifically the idea of coloniality of knowledge by questioning the ways what is ought to be known is assessed.

5.1 Research Analysis

5.1.1 Analysis of the Proposal for the Pedagogically enriched Introductory courses

The proposal for the pedagogically enriched Introductory Khanyisa courses was first and foremost a response to the calls of decolonisation of the curriculum as per the demands of the Rhodes and Fees Must Fall movements as mentioned previously. The faculty then took it upon itself through a rigorous process – which involved various stakeholders (including staff and students) – to curate a series of introductory courses that could possibly work towards reconfiguring the humanities degree structure, but using the first-year cohort as the starting point. We can thus analyse the proposal and accompanying documents to see the ways in which decoloniality was framed in the documents, and to discuss whether or not such a framing is likely to lead to decolonial outcomes.

In this section therefore, I analyse why this proposal for the pedagogically enriched introductory courses is a stepping stone towards the decolonisation of the curriculum by providing reasons based on what the proposal entails as part of its guidelines.

We can begin by exploring in turn the criteria that each had to meet in order for it to be recognised as a Khanyisa course, as quoted from the HUM EDU proposal that was approved by Faculty Board:

1. “Critical content that engages students’ lifeworlds, introduces them to the discipline in ways that are cognizant of our African location, the historical development of the discipline and self-reflexive about the privileging of canonical texts and hegemonic perspectives.”

(HUM EDU, 2018a, p. 1)

Concerning this criterion, one can argue that it focuses on the idea of positionality – a concept that is at the epicentre of decoloniality and epistemic disobedience, as the foundational theoretical orientations that inform the decolonisation of the curriculum. This is the case at least from the perspective of the Latin-American decolonial scholars, in that it is centred around the question of the locality in terms of where knowledge is produced, and by extension by whom and for what purpose? (see: see Mignolo, 2009, Mignolo 2011, Gordon, 2011 and Grosfoguel, 2007). I argue that this criterion is in line with the idea of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) because it allows course convenors and lecturers to present content knowledge that problematises Eurocentrism, by means of decentring Western Knowledge.

This is also in line in how decoloniality problematizes the coloniality of knowledge, because the intention of this criterion is to delink from Western knowledge, and rather foreground other ways of knowing, but in this instance with the emphasis being put on the African continent. It is also in keeping with three tenets of the six conceptions of decolonisation of the curriculum as espoused by Jansen (2018), namely the idea of Africanisation; decentring of European knowledge; and decolonisation as encounters with entangled and/or established knowledge.

As will be explored in my analysis of ELL1013F, we will also see that this translates into practice where some of the modules within the ELL103F courses are premised in this kind of framework and with such a trajectory, wherein western knowledge is questioned, or better yet where Western knowledge is backgrounded as opposed to being foregrounded

as seen in many conventional English literature classrooms – whereby the discipline is taught universally from the point of its inception with European knowledge makers (in this case canonical literary works written by European men) in mind, thereby discarding other knowledges – in the main other canonical literary works that are not necessarily written by Europeans, for Europeans about Europe or any other part of the globe for that matter.

The second and third criteria from the proposal are as follows:

2. “Enriched pedagogy that focuses on the development of critical Humanities skills, digital literacy, on-line research skills; close reading skills; writing skills; etc. which will impact on teaching and assessment methods”.

(HUM EDU, 2018a, p. 2)

3. “Innovative teaching and delivery methods that may cut down on lecture periods, allowing more time for active engagement and skills development, as well as the option of allowing for multilingualism and translanguaging in the classroom. Assessment methods that are aligned with such a reflexive pedagogical approach, with a higher weighting on coursework - project work, tests, debates, essays, etc. and a lower weighting on formal exams”.

(HUM EDU, 2018a, p. 2)

These criteria highlight the need for a paradigm shift in terms of delivery and assessment of content knowledge, and by extension of shifting from the traditional way of teaching content. This is done so that various ways of knowing can be afforded for the students to bring forth in the classroom and to allow cross pollination of ideas, if you will, among the students who come from different family backgrounds. Again, we will see this in practice below where I analyse the formative assessment practices used in ELL1013F.

This is to say that the proposal for the Khanyisa courses was conceptually formulated with the intentions of inciting a shift in the geography of reason (Gordon, 2007) and epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) precisely because as it is stated in the proposal students are introduced to their respective discipline in ways that paid particular attention to our African location and the historical development of the discipline whilst ensuring that the content enabled students to be “self-reflexive about the privileging of canonical

texts and hegemonic perspectives”. (HUM EDU, 2018a, p. 1). With that in mind, I argue that the proposal conceptually enabled the content, and by extension the students, to not only challenge and problematise but deconstruct the universality of Western knowledge system as espoused by Mignolo (2011) by means of bringing their own lived experience into the learning process, and theorise the content knowledge from vantage point of their own positionality. This was precisely enabled by the assessment task of the different modules as these tasks made it possible for students to take the roles of being knowledge producers.

Needless to say, given that in the year 2021 – which is my focus – all modules were taught online, and that came with its implications of digital innovation which I think all lecturers did impressive work in as far as disseminating the content was concerned. It was the university’s decision to consider physical distance learning, or what Czerniewicz terms as ‘remote learning’ and it is stated that the university moved to remote just after the President of the Republic announced hard lockdown restrictions in March 2020 (Davids, 2020). As such, online learning became a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and having to save the academic year of 2020-21 (Davids, 2020).

Perhaps the downfall of the said online learning might have been a situation wherein it only benefitted a certain group of students over the others, and this is evident in what a few scholars have argued elsewhere. For example, Sayed and de Kock (2021) have commented on how the material inequalities that exist in the country continue to impact on students’ epistemic access within institutions of higher learning. Fouche and Andrews (2022) on the other hand, have commented have highlighted how the use of technology during the Covid-19 pandemic has widened the gap between students from various geographic and socio-economic backgrounds as a result of physically distanced online learning. I suppose this is what further studies could explore in terms of interrogating decolonial work that was being or should be done over online teaching and learning during a period of a pandemic like COVID-19 as it happened in the year 2020-2021 particularly how that period has impacted on the process of decolonising the curriculum.

5.1.2 Analysis of document entitled ‘the Implementation of the Guidelines in Designing Khanyisa Courses’:

The Hum EDU developed a series of guidelines for academics to use when designing and implementing the Khanyisa courses. They are largely informed by the main tenets outlined in the proposal (see *Figure 3* in the addendum). However, the guidelines shown in *Figure 4* (see the addendum) further expand on the criteria that was provided in the proposal compiled by HUM EDU (2018b), and this expansion in definite terms defines clearly the requirements that need to be met, but in a form of questions that can help lecturers in designing Khanyisa course. See below:

“Content:

- Does the course include prescribed texts that foreground African location / experience / texts that challenge the privileging of canonical texts and perspectives in the discipline?
- Does the course offer students opportunities for critically engaging with their own lived experiences?”

(HUM EDU, 2018b, p.1).

This criterion speaks to the idea of foregrounding other ways of knowing rather than centring the monolithic Eurocentric epistemology and by so doing, the idea for prescribed texts to centre the African location and experience is very crucial in the attempt to decolonise the curriculum. With that in mind, just be merely prescribing a book or text(s), article or any publication that foregrounds an African location or that of the global south does not automatically make such a text a deliberate pedagogical choice one that is decolonial in nature because as the follow-up in as far as epistemic disobedience (Mignolo (2009) is concerned, one must answer the question on whose vantage point is that content knowledge from prescribed text is from and for what purpose. Meaning, it is not enough to only have a course or module that prescribes primary texts that foreground the African experience and location, in as far as focusing on the African locality, and yet be steeped with very problematic notions of stereotype, perceptions and understandings about Africa or her people, this would be seen in a book like Joseph Conrad’s (1999) *Heart of Darkness*, considering how such a book has many problematic views about Africa and her people. This is to say, the Khanyisa courses through the ELL1013F enable students to focus on prescribed texts that pay close attention to the African experience, and not only that, it also allows them to engage with the work as knowledge producers; and therefore, allowed the

students to infuse that with their own lived experiences – thereby participating in the module both as knowledge consumers and producers.

The criterion below does not necessarily have any obligation on the decolonial project in any way, except to work towards debunking the notion that to decolonise the curriculum somehow lowers the standard of learning, or put differently debunking the idea that a decolonised curriculum has to be framed weakly as a way to diminish the quality of education offered. Instead, this criterion does the opposite: it strengthens and insists on a rigorous scholarship that is applied at this level, despite the modules being offered to first-year students. Elsewhere the fallist movement was applauded for insisting on bring about high levels intellectual rigour in its call for the decolonisation of the curriculum given that the movement “...issued a searing challenge to academics to seriously reflect on what we teach and its relevance to our specific location and social context” (Modiri, 2016). Modiri (2016) goes on to assert that “the call for epistemological and pedagogical decolonisation of universities is a call for thinking and rethinking and for contesting hegemonic knowledges” and by so doing, the student movement has potential to “cultivate a truly rigorous and lively academic space and open up a much wider intellectual archive”(Modiri, 2016). It is therefore my view that as an attempt to decolonise the curriculum, this criterion that seeks to centre the African location and contest the hierarchy of knowledge (for example the content of canonical texts) is one that advocates for intellectual rigour. As such, to some degree at the level of intent, the ELL1013F course promotes intellectual rigour by precisely meeting this criteria – even though this varies across the different encompassed in the ELL1013F course.

Moreover, this criterion gives students some form of agency within the classroom by providing them with the opportunity to potentially assume the position of being knowledge producers. The learning process in this case is very much robust and intellectually appetising.

“Skills development:

- Does the course develop critical Humanities skills, through both lectures and tutorials?
- Does the course offer a research-based exercise that positions students as potential knowledge producers?”

(HUM EDU, 2018b, p.1).

Interestingly enough, although for my research I do not focus expansively on pedagogy and the delivery of lessons of the ELL1013F course, this criterion deliberately functions for the purposes of collapsing traditional ways of teaching English literature (or rather in this case English Literary Studies as argued by the course convenor of ELL1013F⁶), by means of introducing more innovative pedagogical interventions where lecturers and students play an equal role in the learning process as opposed to the traditional top-down approach. In such an approach, the lecturer is the all-knowing individual, and the students are blank slates that need to be “enlightened”. Hence, this deliberate intent to offer students opportunities for active learning process wherein they can contribute to one another’s learning experience(s) and to be knowledge producers is indicative of the epistemic disobedience that the course follows as a way to move away from traditional ways of delivering knowledge.

“Delivery:

- Does the course offer fewer lectures and more opportunities for active learning such as tutorial/ workshop/computer lab sessions?”

(HUM EDU, 2018b, p.1).

Similarly, to the previous criterion, the purpose for pedagogical support within the Khanyisa Courses as whole, including ELL1013F, is to deliberate move towards the possibility of offering students the necessary support that they need as a way to redress structural inequalities among the them as far as their home backgrounds and schooling experiences are concerned. This is particularly noted in how for instance, in the ELL1013F course, across all modules, not much prescriptive approach is applied in assessing the students when it comes to diction, grammar and language usage instead much emphasis is put on the students’ understanding of the assessed concepts as well as their interpretation(s) thereof. Thus, the course follows the descriptive approach instead of a prescriptive approach of language teaching. This is a shift from the traditional ways of teaching that tended to be more prescriptive in nature concerning the students’ linguistic performance

⁶ We will see in the analysis of the interviews that were conducted for this research project

in English literature – without necessarily considering for example whether English as a language is student’s native language, or not. Such factors are now considered with much caution and from that, the provided guidelines in offering pedagogical support are provided for students to cope with the course as a whole.

“Pedagogic Support:

- Does the course encourage active learning via peer-learning in small groups?
- Does the course provide ample opportunities for students to receive individual feedback on submitted assessment tasks?
- Is provision made to identify and offer support to struggling students?”

(HUM EDU, 2018b, p.1).

Both criteria on delivery and pedagogical support as shown above can be argued to be in line with the decolonial agenda, more so in ways that are deliberate in terms of moving away from traditional ways of teaching where for example the idea of cultural capital would often be ignored, or language proficiency (in this instance English being the student’s native language, or not) are factors that are considered by the course convenors and the lecturers of this course. And as a way to accommodate those who might not necessarily be English native speakers, certain concessions are made available for these students so that they may not be assessed unfairly or run the risk of them feeling isolated.

“Multilingualism:

- Does the pedagogy used in the course recognize and build on students’ multilingual resources?”

(HUM EDU, 2018b, p.1).

The above criteria enabled the course to deliberately make available opportunities for students to bring about their native linguistic resources into the classroom (even if that language may not be English per se) and these become very resourceful in helping students to grasp the concepts that they are taught in respective modules within the ELL1013F course. This guideline towards multilingualism resonates with a study that was conducted by Hurst, Madiba and Morreira (2017) at the University of Cape Town in courses which

encouraged multilingualism in teaching and learning. In this study it was found that “...multilingual students are able to draw more complex range of linguistic / conceptual resources in an ongoing process of inter and intrapersonal meaning making [interactions] in a learning space” (Garcia and Li, 2014 as cited in Hurst, Madiba and Morreira, 2017, p. 3). Similarly in this course, multilingual students in some of the assessments offered in certain modules were given opportunities for them to impart ways of knowing from their native languages by using them as linguistic resources as way to engage the foundational concepts that they are were introduced to as a way to embed the students within the discipline of the course, in this case English literary studies (this will become much clearer in the next chapter).

This is to say, the way the multilingualism criteria was employed operated in ways that indeed incited epistemic disobedience through actively encouraging the inclusion of other South African languages (other than English – given that the course is primarily taught, learnt and assessed in English in an English-medium institution like UCT). African languages are not relegated to the margins but rather they are included as ways to debunk the “monolingual orientation” (of English in this case) as way to overturn the logic of coloniality of knowledge that is often witness in literary studies from a Eurocentric perspective. This is an example of border thinking. (Mignolo, 2005; 2010 as cited in Hurst, Madiba and Morreira, 2017, p. 2).

Assessment:

- Does the course offer an assessment exercise early in March, as part of the Faculty-wide Early Assessment Report?
- Does the course offer a variety of smaller scaffolded assessment tasks that gradually build student’s comprehension, critical reading and writing competence up to the required level of essay-writing skills? (i.e. a series of smaller tasks rather than just a single/a few high stakes assessments late in the course?)

(HUM EDU, 2018b, p. 2).

Unfortunately, in my view the assessment category unlike the rest did not really incite epistemic disobedience as far as the way the content was assessed. This is to say, this category only attempted to incite a soft version of decolonisation by not necessarily

considering issues of positionality – of what it is that needs to be known and assessed, and from whose vantage the known ought to be from and in what ways those ways of knowing can be problematised. Instead, this category only focused on the structure of the assessment, hence the first statement, to question if the course does offer an early assessment task in March, but that does not say much about the way the course or module seeks to decolonise the curriculum. All this category does is to ensure that the level of assessment implemented in the Khanyisa Courses are on par with other courses within the Humanities and as result, one can argue that what this category favourably does is to help avoid the debate that decolonisation of the curriculum impacts the quality of the content taught, but more so the quality of the assessment that is does within the ELL1013F course among the other Khanyisa courses.

The notion around smaller scaffolded assessments tasks also does not incite any form of epistemic disobedience because in my view, whether such tasks exist or not, that does not necessarily say anything about the coloniality of knowledge except to create much more accommodative learning environment by means of making sure that students from disadvantages (ideally so) are provided with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the content by means of assessing their knowledge through these scaffolded assessment tasks. That is why for Hurst, Madiba and Morreira (2017) it becomes very important to consider the need for university education to factor issues of multilingualism both in the learning of the content but more importantly in assessing that content. In the same way, this criterion functions with the intension to level the playing field, if you will, among the students undertaking Khanyisa courses, including ELL1013F.

The two documents analysed so far give a sense of the wider framing of the curriculum change project. I now turn to the course itself to analyse how this framing was implemented in practice.

5.1.3 Analysis of the various modules for ELL1013F course:

Data in this section is drawn from the ELL1013F Vula site, and includes the course outlines and prescribed texts.

On the ELL1013F Vula Site (this is the learning management system used at the university), we can see that not only is the course Literature: How and Why and others, premised on familiarising first year students with literary studies as a discipline, by teaching them about what literary studies is all about, it is also premised on exposing the students to the ways literature functions in society. This is to say, the course aims to teach students what role literature plays in society and how literature functions in society. In my view the former is done implicitly, whilst the latter is explicit within the ELL1003. We see this in the course outline on the Vula Site⁷:

What is 'literature' and how does it work? How and why can we read and think critically? What does close attention to plays, novels and poems tell us as we grapple with the meanings of being human within a 21st century world? How can we trace the shift from 'English literature' to 'literature in English', from our specific and simultaneously myriad locations?

(ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021)

The above is a deliberately unconventional approach towards literary studies, as the course focuses on the shift from English literature to literature in English. This shift indicates the intended epistemic disobedience that the course employs by means of shifting the geography of reason – shifting from the conventional approach of teaching literature (or English literature if you will) from a canonical perspective, an understanding that literature as a discipline originally emanates from the Western world and later spread across the world through modernity. Instead, what the course does is to foreground other ways of knowing and locating them at the epicentre of what literature is and what it looks like, and then follows a trajectory where the English canon is contested. From Jansen's (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation, the idea to "trace the shift from 'English literature' to 'literature in English', from our specific and simultaneously myriad locations?" (as stated in the ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021) aligns with the notion of decolonisation as the decentring European knowledge (Jansen, 2017, p. 158) and decolonisation as

⁷ This is the overview of the course which is however labelled as the course outline on the ELL1013F Vula Site, and not necessarily the Course Outline – which is the official document that outlines what the course entails what is taught, when and how as well as how it is assessed. In this case, the course outline for the purposes of this research is referenced as ELL1013F Course Outline (2021).

Africanisation as well as decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge (Jansen, 2017, p. 161). Moreover, the ELL1013F course overview goes further to describe how it intends to familiarise the students into the literary studies (as a discipline) by stating that:

This introduction to literary studies offers a range of critical tools and methods for reading and writing about texts in the most interesting and thought-provoking ways possible. The course also introduces students to literary and rhetorical terms, and to basic issues in literary studies.

(ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021)

This idea is indicative of the way that the ELL1013F course is committed to ensuring that students become deeply immersed in Literary Studies as a discipline, and that they become familiar with basic fundamental principles of literary concepts at an early stage of their academic careers. Thus, the intention to introduce first year learners to the basic principles and fundamentals of English literary studies is emphasised in this course because it is understood that the students will in the near future potentially be able to apply rigor and critical thought in relation to their academic inquiry in the respective disciplines that they will venture into in the future.

However, it must be stressed that all the ELL1013F modules employed the stated innovation pedagogic methods, particularly in relation to the tutorials, blog posts, forums and assignments. This was done through requiring students to actively engage on carefully scaffolded tutorials in the form of forum engagements as well as blog posts (which are part of the formative and summative assessments respectively). This is proved by the course outline which specifies that the student's "...participation in discussion forums will go towards [their] participation grade" and "must participate in 75% of forums (roughly 8 out of the 11 forums set over the course of the semester) to get full credit for participation" (ELL1013F Course Outline, 2021, p. 3). This shows that students' engagements through forums were highly measured as part of the assignment, meaning that the pedagogic shift from traditional teaching methods was evident through this intervention. Secondly, some of the assessments required students to use multilingualism in particular and coursework was weighed mostly on final essays rather than in the tests. Interestingly as well, there

were no tests that were written in the course as stated in the course outline (ELL1013F Course Outline, 2021).

- **Structure of the modules:**

In analysing the structure of the various modules, I describe what each module focuses on and how each module goes about to disseminate the necessary literary skills and concepts that the students are expected to grasp.

Module 1 - *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019)

This module focuses on the close reading of Franz Kafka's seminal work, *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019). Through this module, particularly the first lesson, students get exposed to foundational literary concepts that are at play within the primary text, but importantly, students are taken through the process of unpacking the following questions by the lecturer: What is (this thing called) 'literature'? ...and why does it matter? What does literature 'do'? What is the difference between 'English literature' and 'literature in English'? What is living language (and what is dead language)? Where do you start with a poem/story/novel/play...? (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 1). This is particularly done through the first lesson on Word-work (see (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 1, Lecture 1) wherein students are taught on what literature entails and why, how language (be it literal or figurative language) is used in literary studies – thus exposing students to key concepts such as interpretation, text, literal and figurative language among other key concepts relevant in this short story, and in literary studies in general.

Interestingly though, because the lecturer infuses secondary texts⁸ that are important for this particular lesson, and are varied as far as the genre in this Word-work lesson, the lecture takes place in quite an epistemically disobedient fashion as the lesson is not premised on the idea of teaching English from a Eurocentric lens. Thus, from the onset,

⁸Namely: Raine (1979), *A Martian sends a postcard at home*; Cole (2013), *in a place of thought*, George Orwell's (1946), and Toni Morrison's (1993) *Toni Morrison Nobel lecture* just to name a few.

the way this module is organised can be said to be structured in a way that destabilises the Eurocentric monolithic perspective which seeks to canonise Literature as if it was only produced in England by European men.

Hence, using Jansen's (2017) conception of decolonisation, this particular module can be said to embrace decolonisation as encounters with entangled knowledge simply because in this particular module, there is deliberate usage by the lecturer of multiple texts from various genres (i.e. poetry, to literary essays, to Nobel speech and a book chapter), are used to contest entangled knowledge to reveal how these various text help us to understand the way literature looks and how it functions across different formats for different purposes such as challenging the status quo. This can be as seen through Orwell's (1946) essay in terms of looking at the contradictions between language and politics and the commonalities thereof as an example. For example, in the lecture, the lecturer explores the idea that of distinguishing the difference between unjustifiable assumptions (which are often used as part of propaganda in politics) and subjective opinions, hence, "in my opinion..." becomes important in such cases (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 1, Lecture 1).

Thereafter, the lesson shifts into a close reading of *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019) as a short novel, by paying detailed attention to the unfolding story in the novella. However, this is done in interesting ways: firstly, despite the text being a European text (given the positionality of its author and where the unfolding story is set), the text is nonetheless taught in such a way that seeks to debunk the idea of English literature as it is understood and appreciated within traditional Western canon, and shift towards looking at the way the texts contests ideas such as representation, power, and the status quo. This is done through the use of the complimentary texts used to contextualise Kafka's work.

In other words, the second, third and fourth lesson of this module move towards contextualising Kafka as the author, his own historical background and the times during which he wrote his work(s) including this short story, *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019) and later focus on the writing of the short story – how the story is written (by focusing on the following questions: "How is the story narrated? What is the narrative

perspective and tone? What changes in ‘The Metamorphosis’ and why? What does this tell us about how narrative works?”) (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 1).

In essence, throughout the module, the main focuses on the idea to explore how a short piece of writing like *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019) compels so much attention, and how the texts has been interpreted over the years and just like any other literary text, the module focuses on what the unfolding story within the primary text is all about. This is a fundamental aspect in literature no matter whose vantage point is considered when reading, rereading and/ or interpreting the said text.

In other words, this is the case because the way the module is structured, it does not foreground and solemnly analyse the text from a traditional canonical lens (by looking at the background of the author, the context during which the text was written, the setting within the unfolding story and so on) with the intention to point the Eurocentric nature of the book as this is often done when teaching seminal works by European white men by a white lecturer (as it is the case with this module). Instead, what is that this module is structured in such a way that it deliberately interrupts the authority both of author and lecturer through the deliberate use of multiple voices (different texts from different genres as explained earlier) in explaining the concept of what is literature and what it ought to look like. In the latter, the use of multiple genres becomes pivotal. Therefore, in this instance, we note the shift in the geography of reason within this module looking at the difference between English literature and literature in English. (This particular point is even more prominent in Module X (Literature: How and why?), which I discuss later).

This shift in the geography of reason is particularly echoed by one of the lecturers that was interviewed when she stated: the ELL1013F course is in line with the action of decolonising the curriculum because:

“...[when] compared to other departments in the country, the course is not structured around England as a centre at all. It has been thoroughly revised and I think what is important is that England is not centred, but we have texts in translation.”

The teaching assistant that I interviewed on the other hand, when commenting about Module 1, argued that while *The Metamorphosis* did not

“speak directly to the life worlds and lived experiences of South African students and in a direct sense, right? But I think the figurative way in which you could enter into the text is to think about questions of gender, labour, capitalism, and all of these things.”

On this front, it is understood that chosen text might not have been situated in a localised context that students relate to, but the themes that explored in the texts focus on contemporary issues that students relate to – in one way or the other. This is because in our country, issues of gender and inequality (economic disparities between the haves vs the have nots) among many others other things are issues we are encountered with as a nation, on daily basis which is what can be argued to be helpful in allowing the students to relate to themes explored in the short story.

Module 2 – Poetry: Black South African Women’s poetry

This particular module foregrounds women’s literary works, specifically poetry and the lecturer was deliberate in selecting Black South African women’s poetry. The lecturer’s positionality as a woman (herself) is not something to be overlooked. In the first part of this module, we are introduced to the topic of "Oral literature", with emphasis on praise poetry, and the lessons go on to analyse one praise poem by the poet Nontsizi Mqgqwetho, translated from IsiXhosa into English. Mqgqwetho published her work during the 1920s in a newspaper called *Umteteli wa Bantu*, leaving us with a substantial, rich archive of poetry. Through this intervention, this module adopts decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge (Jansen, 2017) because students are taken through a more Afrocentric literary lens of teaching poetry by means of exposing them to a historical trajectory of writing poetry through prose poems, hence the selection of Nontsizi Mqgqwetho’s work (Mqgqwetho, 2007).

The lecture later covers the contested category of "protest poetry", which emerged in the 1950s-1980s during the apartheid regime. The final two lectures consider

respectively the poetry of the transition (roughly 1990s – early 2000s) and end with a reading of poetry of the post-transitional period. As such, the historical timeline of Black South African women’s poetry is read with the intention to decentre European knowledge given that in canonical English literature, poetry is often taught through the works and lens of the so-called “fathers of poetry” (i.e. old European men such William Shakespeare, TS. Elliot and WB. Yeats etc). Even in this instance, epistemically, the module debunks the idea of English literature as we know it, because this module is decentred from European writers, and the poetry is contemporary including poems such as: *Fall Tomorrow* by Gladys Thomas (1972 as cited in Matthews & Thomas, 1972), *For a Black Woman* by Fatima Noke (1976 as cited in Lecture 2: Protest Poetry, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021) and *Cape Spring Afternoon* by Mavis Smallberg (1986) to mention a few.

As a case in point, in Lecture 2 of this module, the lecturer introduces the contested idea of “protest theory”, and students are taught of the different perspectives of various literary scholars whose views about protest poetry differs in remarkable ways. For example, the lecturer introduces her students to Peter Horn’s paper (1993 as cited in Lecture 2: Protest Poetry, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021) wherein he argues that the poetry of the 1960s was different compared to that of the 1970s – given that the protest poetry of the 60s was specifically written to appeal to the white liberal audience, for them to use their political power to bring about political change in the country. A different take is mentioned through Michael Chapman’s (2007 as Lecture 2: Protest Poetry, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021) whose perspective brings a different dynamic into the discourse of South African protest poetry by using the term “Soweto poetry / post Sharpeville poetry” and explains it as a genre of poetry whose tone and voice was militant in style and messaging. In the lecture, it is argued that this strand of poetry emerged specific from 1976 onwards and was significantly influenced by the political ideology of the Black Consciousness and the Black Consciousness Movement (Lecture 2: Protest Poetry, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021).

With this said, Thomas’ poem *Fall Tomorrow* (1972 as cited in Matthews & Thomas, 1972) and Noke’s (1976 as cited in Lecture 2: Protest Poetry, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021) *For a Black Woman are* introduced within this orientation of problematising the idea of protest poetry in order to make it clear to students the manner in which these

two poems functioned to make the plight of women known but at the same time preserving speaking against the racist apartheid regime. It is for this reason that I maintain the view that this module was taught through a very intentional feminist outlook. At this juncture, the lecturer adopted decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge approach (Jansen, 2017) precisely because the lecturer viewed the problem of “protest poetry” in different ways but using distinctive perspectives that deal with the same problem (or concept – that of protest poetry) whom delineate this concept differently “by using new theories and methodologies” (Jansen, 2017, p.159) as I have shown above, with Chapman (2007 as Lecture 2: Protest Poetry, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021) introducing a new viewpoint when looking at the poetry of the 1970s versus the poetry of the early 1960s.

Additionally, this module managed to provide students to be exposed into an African language (that some were learning for the first time and some not) to formulate their thoughts in IsiXhosa, in this particular case because the students were learning about Nontsizi Mqgqwetho’s poetry, and in the process students were enabled with the opportunity to bring forth in the learning environment using multilingual resource(s) that they could build-up upon. This was evident in this module considering that the IsiXhosa language was the African language that was foregrounded given that one of the texts that was engaged on focused on Nontsizi Mqgqwetho who largely wrote in deep rural IsiXhosa (this is to say in Standard IsiXhosa). Thus, students got exposed to also note how poetry functions in an African language like isiXhosa, although the poem was translated into English, but in my view I think that the exposure to how poems are structured in IsiXhosa became implicit. In other words, that was not a deliberate learning outcome.

Module 3 – *On Beauty* (Smith, 2005)

While module 3, like module 1, also adopts the decolonisation as encounters with entangled knowledge approach (Jansen, 2017), it does this through a comparing-contrasting approach in as far as bringing in different perspectives into the discussion about the novel *On beauty* (Smith, 2005) as a postcolonial text. This is evident in the outline of this module on the Vula site wherein the lecture states: "We'll do so by looking at some of the conventions and theories of the 'realist novel' “...consider how

On Beauty engages with, adapts and re-works, other novels and art forms (painting, poetry, music and more), and in so doing encourages us to think about the relationship of art to life” (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 3). Furthermore, certain aspects of intertextuality and its implications on the way we think of originality and authorship are explored in the module (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 3).

This shows how the module deliberately grapple with entangled knowledge by means of interrogating the way the novel is in conversation with other forms of art, with the topic of beauty itself and how that gets communicated or translated in different mediums as a way to “think about how *On Beauty* engages with the ‘canon’ of Western literature and with hip hop and black working-class culture, and relate this to the very differing ideas Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps have on art.” (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 3).

Module 4 – *So Long A Letter* (Miriam Bâ, 1979)

However, Module 4 takes a different approach altogether as it centralises the concept of language given that the novel is a novel of translation. As such, the approach affirms Jansen's (2017) conception of decolonisation as Africanisation as it also focuses on the knowledge being centred on "Africa, not about Africa in relation to Europe and the distant West" Jansen's (2017, p. 159). Thus, the notion of translation becomes central in this module by dealing with the idea "that writing travels or circulates in translated form: that it is through translated texts that English-speakers access narratives cultures other than their own and that the translator's choices may ‘fix’ meaning in a manner that differs from the original version" (ELL1013F Vula Site, 2021, Module 4). Meaning, students have to grapple with these contrasted ideas in dealing with this text as a postcolonial text, this kind of work is absolutely disruptive as it shifts the geography of reason.

I make this argument because students also have to consider their own positionality when dealing with the text provided that the novel is set in a different African country many of them are not from and possibly have never visited, but have to find ways that the unfolding story in the novel relations with their own lives that they live in the country.

Module 5 – *The Tempest* (Shakespeare, 1623)

The Tempest, as the prescribed primary text for this module, does not necessarily belong to the decolonial literary canon, instead the text can be regarded as an English traditional or canonical text. However, when considering the way the text is taught (in terms of what the students are expected to know about it), the text is taught in such a way to challenge the Eurocentric ways of reading it. Furthermore, the text is taught in such a way that students get to use the play as a way that allows the texts to speak against the structure of imperialism, colonial power and therefore shifts away from the traditional Eurocentric conventions that tend to be monolithic in terms of how they speak of or for the subaltern – describing them as savages and barbaric etc. This is particularly the case in Lecture 1 in this module whereby the students are introduced to a critical secondary reading (Nixon, 1987) that views *The Tempest* as a critique to colonialism, in the lecture, the lecturer argues that it is almost impossible to read a play like *The Tempest* without necessarily viewing it as a critique to imperialism and colonialism, or at the very least read it as a text that acknowledges the occurrence of racial colonialism across the Empire (Lecture 1: *The Tempest*, ELL1013F lecture notes, 2021),

Importantly, in his paper Nixon (1987) problematised and complicated the different ways the play *The Tempest* has been interpreted over the years both in the Caribbean and elsewhere with two dominant schools of thought emerging, the one embracing the culture of the “traditionally possessed of discrimination” and those traditionally discriminated against” (Nixon, 1987, p. 577). Interestingly then, students were exposed to these varied readings of the play as far as the political context of the play is concerned, particularly in how the reading of the play evolved post the political revolutions and movements as argued in Lecture 1: *The Tempest*, ELL1013F lecture notes (2021).

Furthermore, students through this module were equipped with literary tools and devices for them to find the various ways in which the play can be read outside of the traditional Eurocentric conventions of English literature as a discipline. This is also evident in the secondary readings that are prescribed within this module including

Young (2021) which seeks to answer the question: *How Have Post-Colonial Approaches Enriched Shakespeare's Works?* as per the title of the paper.

Using Jansen's (2017) conceptions of decolonisation, this module can therefore be argued to adopt the approach of decolonisation as critical engagement with settled knowledge . The content of the module acknowledges the colonial and imperial tenets of the text, but the module seeks to ask different questions about the text and view it from a different lens altogether. In other words, the module allows opportunity for students to question "the underlying assumptions and silences that govern such knowledge" as argued by Jansen (2017, p. 161) about the play (*The Tempest* in this case). This is to say from this approach of decolonisation of the curriculum approaches the same set of problems but from a different outlook using new ways of seeing and methodologies to engage those problems as charged by Jansen (2017), and so in relation to the way this module is taught, the play is arguably turned upside down, as it was now read from the vantage point of those who oppose the status quo of the Empire, the subaltern as evidenced in the secondary readings of the play (see: Young, 2021 and Nixon, 1987).

Module 6 – Scenes of Subjection

By means of foregrounding the slave narratives, this module decentres Eurocentric perspectives of storytelling, particularly around slave-trade narratives, in that the prescribed text is told and taught particularly from the vantage point of the slaves themselves, in this case Frederick Douglass. Thus, the module deliberately introduces a complex genre that shifts away from the traditional Eurocentric and monolithic way of reading slave-trade literary texts. As such, the book by Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) becomes a significant source for the lecturer to demonstrate to students of how the book is introduced to students as a "foundational genre in literary and cultural history", particularly to that of American society, at least in this case.

Another way that this module shifts the geography of reason is in the way that the prescribed texts both the (*Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* and the

introduction from *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (1997) by Saidiya Hartman) are read in a various ways wherein "The narrative will be viewed through various lenses -- as literature, as political discourse, as biography, and ultimately as a window through which we may view the conditions of slavery" (ELL1013F, 2021, Module 6).

This is to say, from the Jansen's (2017) conceptions of decolonisation of the curriculum, this module on this front adopted decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge because the module deliberate disempowers the empire from speaking on behalf of the subaltern (in this instance on behalf of the said slave, Frederick Douglass) rather than viewing the subject matter from the vantage point of the voyager who is often perceived with a saviour complex as that would be the case in a canonical text like *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (1999)⁹ in the case of the character of Charlie Marlow.

Moreover, this is also evidenced in the way the lecturer considered "the slave narrative as a basis for thinking about broader questions related to spectatorship, voyeurism, witnessing, and the centrality of slavery and its "afterlives" to the present" (ELL1013F, Module 6).

The module also adopts this approach in decolonising the curriculum in that the students' positionality is emphasised even though the prescribed texts are not set in the African content, or the Global South for that matter, but speaks of the diaspora, as a result relating the story of Frederick Douglass to the current affairs that students chose to refer to. Thus, the students' lived experiences and their positionality is foregrounded in this process, therefore enabling their voices to be juxtaposed with the grand narrative that arises from engaging with the course content, but also with the two prescribed texts. With that said, the module challenged the students to think critically of the various ways that history is encountered both from the vantage point of those who have been oppressed (in this case through the slave trade) but by those who read and have written about it.

⁹ Conrad, J. (1999). *Heart of Darkness*. New York: Penguin. This is a novel that explores the tyranny of Western settler colonialism whereby this idea is depicted in the way it negatively affects who exploited the natives and their land and also those from the West who advanced the idea of settler colonialism.

Module X – Literature: How and why

This module was not centred on any specific texts or textual themes, but rather on how knowledge is made and valued in the discipline. In grappling with the distinction between "English literature" and "literature ", the module adopts this approach to decolonising the curriculum by means of decentring the Eurocentric in understanding and knowing what literature is about and should be about, thus from Jansen's typology of decolonisation, this module can be said to exhibit decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge (Jansen, 2017) because of the mentioned reason. In my view, this approach helps in dealing with current debates within the discipline of literary studies that are held globally about the need to shift away from the Eurocentric ways of teaching English literature in that this module shifts away from teaching canonical English literary texts. Instead the module foregrounds the teaching of foundational skills that help students to immerse themselves within and into the discipline.

At the same time, the module also adopts an approach whereby students are offered "a range of critical tools and methods for reading and writing about texts in the most interesting and thought-provoking ways possible" (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module X, 2021), not necessarily as a way to inculcate traditional principles of learning English literary studies from a Eurocentric perspective, but rather as a way to equip students with the necessary tools that will help them in immersing themselves in academic discourse, not only for this course or module, but rather for their entire university academic life. The latter is particularly done by means of introducing "students to literary and rhetorical terms, and to basic issues in literary studies" (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module X, 2021), which are deeply embedded in other disciplines as well.

The evidence provided in this section regarding the way content is organised points to the fact that the course is decolonial even though the adopted approaches differ for the reasons mentioned above, but with the notion of shifting the geography of reasoning being at the forefront particularly for a module like Module X as discussed above.

5.1.4 Analysis of the assessment of the various modules for ELL1013F course

- **Assessment**

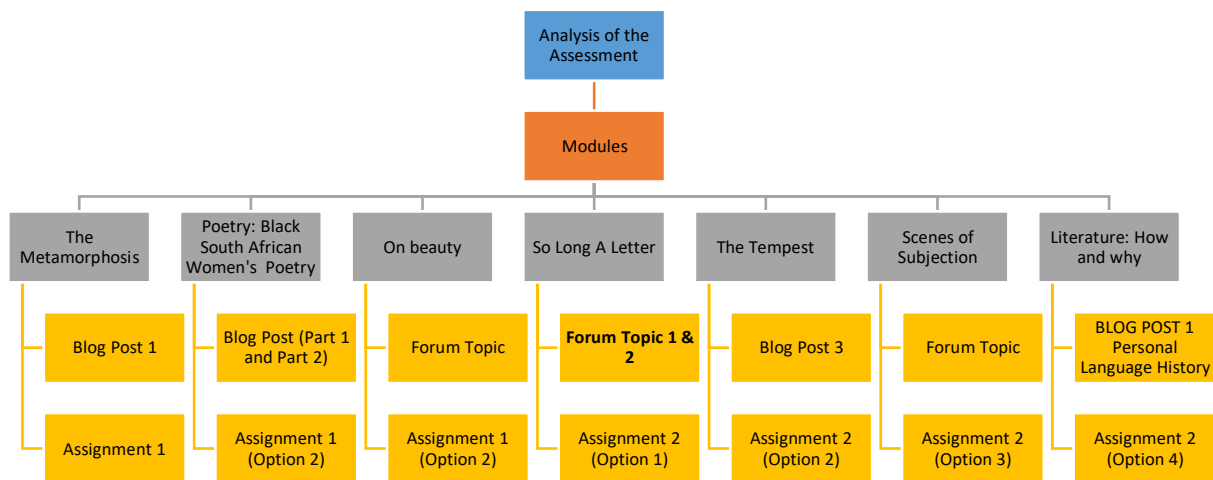
The diagram below provides a an outline on how the assignments were as part of the assessment within this course, and the information provided below outlines the weighing of these assignments. Moreover, it must be stressed that in analysing these assignments, Jansen's six conceptions of decolonisation were also applied as the tool of analysis in order to explain in the various ways the course (Jansen, 2017).

Assignments and weighing:

- Essay One: Short Fiction/ *Metamorphosis* (due 16 April) 1200 words (30%)
- Essay Two: Poetry / *On Beauty* (due 21 May) 1200 words (30%)
- Essay Three: *So Long a Letter* / *The Tempest* / Scenes of Subjection (due 18 June) 1200 words (30%)
- Participation: Completion of 4 blogs / short tasks (2 per term) and 75% forum discussions (10%)

Notably, students had to choose between Poetry and *On Beauty* (for essay 2) whereas for essay 3, students had to choose one essay between the three options as pointed above. This is important to point out because in my view the idea of allowing students to choose which module that they wanted to be assessed on speaks to the idea of giving students choice and therefore enabling their sense of agency regarding the module they preferred to be assessed on.

The diagram below provides a mind map on the various assessments takes that students were required to do for each module, and these will be analysed on using Jansen's (2017) topology of decolonisation as shown in the diagram.



Before I go onto analyse the assessment aspect of the ELL1013F course, it is important for me to explain and differentiate the various forms of the assessment tasks that the students were required to do as part of the assessment of this course as outlined in the ELL1013F Course Outline (2021). According to the ELL1013F Course Outline (2021) Forums are interactive spaces that are designed similar to those of a tutorial, and these are designed for students to engage the content from their prescribed readings and lecture materials. However, for the ELL300F course, the forum takes where the tutor prompts the students with live questions (the interaction happens in real time that is but online – as the course was offered through online learning) and students have to respond to these prompted questions and their participation does not need to be entirely formal – and students are expected to “to respond to a minimum of 75% of all [their] weekly forums. In other words, Forums as an assessment task forms part of the students’ summative assessment. In this process, students learn from one another through engaging each other’s responses and those of their tutors and or teaching assistant.

Blog posts on the other hand are short assignments that in the format of essays (limited to around 200-300words) as prescribed in the ELL1013F Course Outline (2021). These

are marked by the tutors and they are intended to prepare the students to their main assignments – with the main assignments being part of the students’ formative assessment. In other words, blog posts help students to solidify their ways of thinking about the content material so that by the time they receive the main essays, they know what is expected of them in terms of what is required of them when critically engaging the content for the purposes of their assessment. Without saying much further about the difference between these two formats, more information is provided in the ELL1013F Course Outline (2021) about the guidelines that students to abide to in terms what is expected when participating with these two assignments.

Epistemic Disobedience in Assessment Practice

‘Soft decolonisation’

The two modules that exhibited what one could call the soft decolonisation as espoused by Jansen (2017) include Module 2 – Poetry: Black South African Women’s poetry and Module 3 – *On Beauty* (Smith, 2005). This is the case because in my view, the first part of Blog Post 2 (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 2, 2021) adopted what would be described as "the soft version of decolonisation" (Jansen, 2017, p. 160) as it "recognises the value of existing canons of knowledge but asks for recognition of new knowledge and its addition to [the] established curricula" (Garuba, 2015 as cited in Jansen, 2017, p. 160), in that the assignment required students to show how they understood the use of the poetic devices that were used in the selected poem. That aspect of the assignment did not necessarily challenge the students to disrupt the dominant hierarchies of knowledge as a far poetry was concerned because it only required the students to analyse the poem using the normative lens of poetry analysis that would ordinarily be applied when analysing any other poetic piece – canonical or not. Instead, the task helped students to familiarise themselves with the basic literary tools of analysis (skills and concepts) that are standard across all readings of poetry – whether radical or liberal, critical or normative. As a result, this approach of poetry analysis did not necessarily incite epistemic disobedience nor inform the shift in the geography of reason more than it ensured that students grasped the basic necessary skills needed in understanding any reading of poetry, in general.

Similarly, Module 3 – *On Beauty* (Smith, 2005) also incited a form of ‘soft decolonisation’ and it did in this way: its Forum task retained the Eurocentric traditional way(s) of reading texts by looking at the ordinary literary devices, but I suppose the aim here was to expose students to the foundational skills need for literary analysis and scholarship, hence they are introduced to the concept of intertextuality among other key literary concepts and theories. This does not mean that intertextuality in its very nature is Eurocentric in its orientation, instead the Eurocentrism referred to here has to do with the gaze with which the students are intended to respond to Rembrandt’s painting, *Seated Nude*. Conversely though, the task required students to be rigorous in their responses because they needed to be able to point the intertextuality of the novel itself and the painting – this is to say the task required students to apply their minds critically.

Needless to say, the new ways of interpreting this text were explored through the use of a different approach of decolonisation of the curriculum. It happened in this way: the task that students were asked to complete for the Forum assignment was one that adopted the decolonisation as encounters with entangled knowledge (Jansen, 2017). This was because students were assessed on this novel whose author, Zadie Smith did not necessarily confine her novel’s structure, content, style and form to one particular style of writing (informed by a monolithic literary perspective – which tends to be what traditional canonical texts suffer from). Instead, the text was multi-layered with varied ways of knowing being at play. In other words, the book dealt with the Eurocentric concepts of beauty, aesthetics just as it did in challenging the notions of racism, sexism and history but from various vantage points, from a position of those of the working class, middle class – i.e. between the haves and have nots.

Thus, the novel managed to expose student in these varied perspectives concerning notions of beauty. This was evident in the assignment option 2 (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 3, 2021) which asked students to: "write an essay that explores how Smith’s novel represents the value of an education in the arts and humanities". In the response, students were instructed that they could possibly consider the following: "consider to include (in) the different positions on the value of such an education held by Howard Belsey and Monty Kipps, as well as the novel’s various ironies (including in the scene cited in the assignment), its representation of Wellington College, and its position ‘on

beauty' more generally"? (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 3, 2021). Students had to encounter entangled ways of knowing, and possibly relate it to their own lived realities.

Shifting the geography of reason

Unlike, modules 2 and 3, modules 1, *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019) incited epistemic disobedience particularly through the means of shifting the geography of reason based on the choice of the text, in and of itself is evidence precisely because Kafka disrupts the traditional English literary altogether just by his choice of structuring his novels, short stories and other works of prose including *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019) given that his work does not follow the conventions of traditional English literature. For instance, Kafka in the short story turns upside down the Eurocentric conventions of literary as he does not locate the unfolding story to heroism instead he writes with conviction about a story of despair to certain extent. The novelty, if you will, of this short story rests in the way the author writes about travesty of things he could have chosen to write about, but I digress.

With this in mind, the module adopted the approach of decentring the European monolithic approaches to literature (Jansen, 2017). Secondly, the question that students were asked to respond to in the Essay Assignment 1 (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 1, 2021), required them to "Place [the chosen scene] in the context of the story, then use the ideas here to construct a critical response to Kafka's story which considers its portrayal of work, money and 'business' functioned as a way to shift away from the grand narrative in terms of critically analysing texts from the vantage point of the dominant figures in the story – the so-called "hero", but rather focuses on those on the margins, the downtrodden that is. This was indicative of the shift of the geography of reasons (as espoused by Gordon, 2011) when it came to the power relations that were explored within *The Metamorphosis* (Kafka, 2019).

However, in as much as the task that students were required to complete for the Forum Task (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 1, 2021) for this module specifically, can be said to be framed within the English traditional ways of text analysis, by virtue of the text being antithetical to the traditional English canonical works, that task allowed students

to analyse the text in ways that disrupted the traditional literary analysis. In the process inciting the possibility of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) through this deliberate idea of allowing students to read the text in disruptive ways. That is another example that showed that the assignments for this module had adopted this approach in decolonising the curriculum, but at the level of assessment, both at the level of summative and formative assessments.

On the other hand, Blog Post 2 (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module2, 2021), focused on the traditional Eurocentric conventions of poetry as it stressed on students' understanding of the form, style and function(s) of poetry. From that front, the assignment appears not to necessarily shifting the geography of reason, but it does at the level of representation. The selected poems are written about women for women, but not confined to women only. Nevertheless, where the epistemic disobedience was at play is in relation to the choice of text, a poem titled: *an unforgiving poem* by Roshila Nair (1999 cited in Barry, 2001), a black woman. I argue that was the case because such a poem would not necessarily be chosen within the traditional canonical literary works therefore by selecting it, the lecturer deliberately challenged the existing dominant hierarchies of knowledge, thereby critically engaging with settled knowledge systems (Jansen, 2017).

Secondly, epistemic disobedience was also at play with the subject-matter of the poem – the poem explores the contention between loss through death and the idea of reconciliation – that of a mother whose son has been murdered having to forgive the perpetrators of that murder. The subject matter was telling of the transitional period that South Africa was going through at the time. This was the theme that was explored in this module, particularly when looking at South African Women poetry in what the lecturer described as the transitional period because it marked the period when South Africa was in its period of political transition whereby the aftermath of the TRC haunts the nation in that very period. The poem therefore requires a radical reading of that particular period, hence I argue that it incites epistemic disobedience in that it did not entail a situation of praising the democratic dispensation.

Thirdly, part two of this assignment required students to apply critical thinking in terms of their interpretation of the poem by asking them to think critically "about what [they] think the poem is doing. Show us how the poem works, how it achieves its effects, how

it uses poetic devices (diction, rhythm, tone, metaphor, verse, line, syntax, punctuation, stanza structure, etc) to produce these effects". The same applied in relation to the main assignment (Assignment 2, Option 1) (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 2, 2021), wherein students were asked to critically analyse the poem by Koleka Putuma titled: *Water* (2016), students were asked, in a way, to critically engage with settled knowledge systems by having to analyse a contemporary poem that fitted within the 'post-transitional poetry' as far as the South African poetry trajectory is concerned.

Module 4 – *So Long A Letter* (Miriam Bâ, 1979) on the other hand, also exhibited epistemic disobedience but through a feminist perspective. I say this because as part of option 1 in the second assignment (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 4, 2021), the assignment for this module was framed in such a way that students were expected to showcase their understanding of the novel by means of exploring "how Ramatoulaye's account of polygamy and single motherhood, written during and after her mirasse (40-day mourning period)" (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 4, 2021), but only from a feminist perspective.

This was particularly the case since what assignment required students to comment on how "Ramatoulaye's account of polygamy and single motherhood, written during and after her mirasse (40-day mourning period), "translates" a culturally specific feminism for a global audience" (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 4, 2021). Using this approach, students were invited to comment on the various interpretations of these themes within the novel but from a feminist lens, thereby requiring them to encounter entangled interpretations of these conceptions across various cultures and spaces. Thus, from Jansen's conceptions of decolonisation (2017), this module's assessment as discussed above was framed using decolonisation as encounters with entangled knowledge because of the content of the chosen text dealt with entangled knowledge, but in the assessment task, students were required to read the novel from a particular lens – from a feminist orientation, and that in my view was the way this module incited epistemic disobedience. In other words the disruption is reflected by the refusal to conform to Western knowledge's conventions hence the focus on choosing a book that completely displaces the centering of the English language, thus translation becomes the vehicle to get the intended point across.

Module 5 – *The Tempest* (Shakespeare, 1623) on the other hand required students to critically think about the extract from the ending of *The Tempest* (Mowat and Werstine, 2015) wherein Prospero gives an epilogue, students are asked to think about "How could this epilogue be interpreted to reflect different perspectives on colonial relations of power?" (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 5, 2021), such a question allowed students to challenge the Eurocentric ways of reading the play by requiring them to observe how the text could be read in alternative ways including from the perspective of the subaltern. In doing so, the assignment allowed students to challenge a Shakespearean text through a more radical and decolonial stance rather than asking the normative questions of the structure of the text, the form, style, diction and setting etc - the kind of normative literary devices that are often used to analyse an English canonical text like a Shakespearean play such as *The Tempest* (Mowat and Werstine, 2015).

Moreover, students were instructed to "[b]e careful to develop your argument by paying close attention to the passage itself, instead of just discussing colonialism in general terms" (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 5, 2021), this forced them to focus on the text itself rather than speaking about colonialism in general terms. Therefore, they were introduced to a particular approach of close reading that became a very necessary tool within the decolonial approach of reading a text such as *The Tempest* (Mowat and Werstine, 2015).

Interestingly, according to the teaching assistant that was interviewed, a text like *The Tempest*, more especially considering the way it was taught and assessed in the course, was "interesting", particularly when considering the idea of the positionality of the students in relation to the ways with which they read William Shakespeare. The TA argued that "students were also given opportunities in that text to reflect on their positionality when they read that text", meaning that they had to read this text with their own understanding of what the text embodied as opposed to being indoctrinated about Shakespeare's place in the global literary scene versus what his text symbolised at the time of its emergence and publication. The TA elaborated that "...what [the students] had to think about is their relationship to Shakespeare and to think about their relationship to English literature. Thus, to think about our relationship to Shakespeare is also to think about our relationship to English literature". This then became indicative

of the ways in which the course through this module was able to decolonise and disrupt certain ways of thinking about and reading Shakespeare as we have seen above.

Then, when looking at the assessment for Module 6 – Scenes of Subjection, the assignment, Essay 2 (Option 3) (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 6, 2021), decentres European knowledge by means of prescribing a text to the student that does not necessarily belong in the category of Western literary work, but rather to what I would describe as the 'African black American slave trade narrative' canon. Essentially, students were exposed to texts whose situated knowledges were located within the black Americas, the diaspora. I make the argument that the framing of Essay 2 (Option 3) (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 6, 2021), adopted the approach of decolonisation as the decentring of European knowledge as espoused by Jansen (2017) because it foregrounded the narrative of a slave as a way of engaging a period of history (i.e. Atlantic slave trade) through the vantage point of a victim rather than from than the perspective of the slave master (unlike most traditional canonical texts about the slave trade often do) thereby in the process managing to not to invalidating Western ways of writing about this history but rather repositioning it from the centre by centring the story of Fredrick Douglass at the centre.

Secondly, students were required to critically discuss "the ways we are called upon to participate in this scene of “spectacular violence” (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 6, 2021) by drawing from the works of Hartman (1997) and other scholars (which were also provided as secondary sources within the course module). This meant that students, had to think critically about an experience that was outside of their own (at least at the primary level - they have never lived as slaves), but rather to locate themselves within the narrative written from Fredrick Douglass as he recounted the "‘terrible spectacle’ of Aunt Hester’s beating" in his book, and relate it to a matter of current affairs that resonates with "spectacular violence (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 6, 2021). The George Floyd matter being a classical example that they were promoted to use in one of the tutorials.

Last but not least, concerning the assessment within Module X – Literature: How and why, the first Blog Post task for this module (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module X, 2021), as the first assignment for the entire ELL1013F course, was framed in such a way that

the students' positionality in relation to their relationship with English (as a language) vs. their own mother-tongue language(s), and was used to decentre from Eurocentric conventions of English literature. This was done by means of allowing students to comment on their language histories in any language of their choice (an example of multilingualism) but with the fusion of English language. And by doing so, students were given room to explore their language histories outside of the confines of English in and of itself. Interestingly, students were scaffolded in how they could approach this assignment by providing them with guiding principles in terms of approaching the assignment – i.e. they were given possible talking points they would be interested in exploring. This probably was more resourceful for students whose mother-tongue language was not necessarily English, thus such guidance helped them not to be left behind. This is the case because it enabled students to bring their native languages into the classroom, thereby debunking the traditional ways that the English language is often valued more than other languages, particularly African languages in this instance as highlighted in the work of Hurst, Madiba and Morreira (2017). This is the case because students were given opportunities for choice and these are not restricted, precisely because the intention is to make sure all students have equal opportunity to engagement with the content both at the level of the learning process as well at the level of assignment)

Finally, as the last option, this was quite a challenging assignment wherein students were expected to apply their minds quite imaginatively and creatively by expecting students to comment on how the following texts: *So Long a Letter* (Miriam Bâ, 1979), *The Tempest* (Mowat and Werstine, 2015) and the texts from the Scenes of Subjection module, were in conversation with one another in terms of "exploring how they work to address us" (as potential readers). Such question therefore required students to think critically on how the two chosen texts (of their choice from the three) managed to address their readers in terms of what was said, how it was said, for what purpose and how it could be read in various ways. In other words, students had to consider the various workings of interpretation(s) that were at play given the positionality occupied by either the writers who are addressing the readers vs. the characters within the texts (of their choice) in how they are perceived by the readers, and then, think about the bigger question as to what such a reading(s) could tell us about the ways these texts function by means of comparing and contrasting them.

The lecturer argued that the intention of this assessment task was to ensure that students are enabled to “think about the kind of responsibility of what is being asked of us as a reader and reflect on our practices in relation to what is expected from us as writers and readers”. Essentially, this meant that students were questioned to interrogate their positionality in as far as the various ways they engaged with the works but at the same time utilise their agency in challenging the grand narratives presented by the three texts that were juxtaposed in the assignment option 4 that they had an opportunity to respond to if they choose to.

With that said, in my view this particular assignment did not in any way utilise in any of Jansen’s (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation, all it did was to just require students to apply their minds in terms of revealing their intellectual rigor and critical thought when responding to the assignment. Even in this instance this course can be viewed as a prove of the way the course as a whole demystified the idea that any decolonial work potential involves any form(s) of lowering academic standards. This particular issue remains important because often those who are against the calls for decolonisation of the curriculum often than not tend to raise the myth standards being lowered because of the call to decolonising the curriculum, and this particular assignment discussed here shows how that is not the case at all. This can then be used as an example how the decolonisation of the curriculum, even at the level of assessment does not necessarily mean that standards have to be lowered when assessing students.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In this chapter I draw together the threads of the analysis thus far, with a particular interest in unpacking the ways this course and its different modules incited decolonisation of the curriculum. My argument rests on the fact that the modules applied different approaches to decolonise the ELL1013F curriculum, and to various degrees –because the Khanyisa course guidelines were open and not prescriptive, in terms of how academics could decolonise the respective modules, that also directly impacted on the kind of flexibility and agility that was afforded to the lecturers in designing the course content for their respective modules. I see this as a strength that enabled multiple perspectives in the curriculum, allowing lecturers to disrupt hierarchies of knowledge in their respective modules, either shifting of geography of reason as espoused by Gordon (2011) or inciting epistemic disobedience as espoused by Mignolo (2009). An analysis of the various modules using Jansen’s (2017) topology of approaches to decolonisation of the curriculum has also given insight into the many ways in which decolonial work can unfold.

Tying the Threads

It is worth mentioning that the idea of decolonising the curriculum can potentially be misleading and misguided if it is not guided by theoretically sound concepts such as epistemic disobedience, or shifting the geography of reason. Thus, there is always the potential for what some scholars regard as “decolonial-washing” (see: Le Grange, du Preez, Ramrathan & Blignaut, 2020, p. 26), whereby the idea of decolonising the curriculum, and by extension the university itself, is only done for the sake of the university being perceived to be “decolonised” even though that may only be done at a very superficial level (i.e. renaming of buildings or the reconfiguration of symbolic signs within the university). Not to say the renaming of buildings and the reconfiguration of symbolic signs within the university is not important, but rather my view is that if our institutions of higher education are serious about decolonising then they ought to think deeply about the need to and implement the decolonisation of the curriculum, in more meaningful ways epistemologically, pedagogically and otherwise.

In this research report, I presented the way that the Humanities faculty at the University of Cape Town has managed in its attempt to decolonise one element of the undergraduate

curriculum through its development of the Khanyisa Courses, ELL1013F being one of them. My view is that this course has at least managed to successfully decolonise the curriculum in the way it has – through various approaches to decolonisation which I have analysed using Jansen’s (2017) six conception of decolonisation. This is also the case precisely because from the onset the agenda of this course was to shift the needle in terms of removing English literature from the centre as the epitome of literature. Instead, the Department of Literary Studies adopted a model where literature is recognised in a broader sense; outside of the confines of the traditional English canon – the course certainly does not preserve the conventions of traditional English literature just as it challenges the hierarchies of knowledge. One particular aspect with which this course manages to do this is through the assessment assigned to students as some of these assessment tasks permitted students to use their voice as knowledge producers by means of enabling them to use their lived experience as a reference among other things.

Through this course, it became very clear that the episteme and discipline of English literature is disrupted by bringing into the classroom voices of people whose work(s) would not ordinarily be considered canonical hence the inclusion of the Putumas of this world, Fatima Nokes and others (ELL1013F Vula Site, Module 2, 2021), this is particularly in relation to the South African women protest poetry module.

I have also shown that the course managed to expose its students to the discipline itself without necessarily compromising the level of intellectual rigour and standard, and by so doing, the course managed to debunk the notions that the process of decolonising the curriculum potentially lowers the academic standard of most courses – English literature in this case being the case in point. Through the various decolonial interventions that were adopted by the lecturers of this course, the course was able to employ rigour that students were expected to grapple with – a point to which student would benefit from as they continue in their studies within the Humanities. A limitation was of course the fact that the ELL1013F course was taught online due to the circumstances of the global pandemic. That alone came with its own challenges, challenges which one could not comment further on given the scope of this research and that because of online learning, the idea of evaluating the pedagogical manifestation of the decolonisation of the curriculum through this course could not be looked into for this research project. Perhaps, it would be necessary to research more about the pedagogic interventions that were employed in this course, across different modules but for a different research project(s)

in the near future. As a result, it is my view that further research, now that universities are back to in-person learning, needs to explore particularly what decolonisation of the curriculum looks like pedagogically in terms of the ways in which content is delivered to students and how students engage with the content during such a process.

The thesis also engaged with the way decolonisation of the curriculum was approached at the level of assessment. Here, again, we saw multiple approaches in the way assessment tasks were designed by different lecturers. I have shown that some fit into the category of “soft decolonisation” (Jansen, 2017), in that the assignments did not overtly disrupt knowledge hierarchies in glaring ways; while others adopted more radical ways of disrupting hierarchies of knowledge. In this paper, I have shown the way that the ELL1013F course was slightly successful in decolonising the curriculum more terms of content and delivery as compared to assessment considering that in relation to the latter, the course adopted less definitive means to decolonise the way the course was evaluated and marked (assessed).

Lastly, this contrast speaks to the main argument that I want to emphasis as one of the key findings in this project is that for ELL1013F what became apparent to me, at least, is that approaches to decolonising the curriculum through this course were not prescriptive and that gave room for lecturers to be flexible enough to curate content that allowed them to challenge the dominant hierarchies of knowledge in the way(s) they deemed fit. Even though that was the case, it was clear that all modules were able to meet the criteria of the implementing guidelines of Khanyisa courses as per the guidelines provided in the official document of the university, the *Implementation of the Guidelines in Designing Khanyisa Courses* (HUM EDU (2018b)).

6.2 Recommendations

Considering what we have seen through a decolonial intervention such as this, an introduction of compulsory Suite of Introductory Courses for first year humanities students at one of the former white universities in South Africa, one is of the view that the Khanyisa course as a case study is a great example on how other universities can go about thinking and exploring ways with which to decolonise the curriculum in their respective institutions.

Secondly, my recommendation would be for academics to pay peculiar attention on their intentions that they would adopt when attempting to design courses and course material that sought to decolonise the curriculum – so that they can potentially avoid a situation where they would be suspected of decolonial washing. Last but not least, I would like to categorically emphasis the point that this research project does not in any way intend to prescribe what decolonisation of the curriculum should look like, but rather to make others aware of the ways in which decolonial interventions can be considered by following the Khanyisa Course model as an example despite it having its own limitation which I have already commented on.

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Addendum

CONTENT	YES/NO	EVIDENCE FROM THE SYLLABUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Does the course include prescribed texts that foreground African location/experience?				
Does the course include prescribed texts that challenge the privileging of canonical texts and perspectives in the discipline?				
Does the course offer students opportunities for critically engaging with their own lived experiences?				
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	YES/NO	EVIDENCE FROM THE SYLLABUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Does the course develop critical Humanities skills, through both lectures and tutorials?				
Does the course offer a research-based exercise that positions students as potential knowledge producers?				
DELIVERY	YES/NO	EVIDENCE FROM THE SYLLABUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Does the course offer fewer lectures and more opportunities for active learning such as tutorial/workshop/computer lab sessions?				
PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT	YES/NO	EVIDENCE FROM THE SYLLABUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Does the course encourage active learning via peer-learning in small groups?				
Does the course provide ample opportunities for students to receive individual feedback on				

submitted assessment tasks?				
Is provision made to identify and offer support to struggling students?				
MULTILINGUALISM	YES/NO	EVIDENCE FROM THE SYLLABUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Does the pedagogy used in the course recognize and build on students' multilingual resources?				
ASSESSMENT	YES/NO	EVIDENCE FROM THE SYLLABUS	RECOMMENDATIONS	OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES
Does the course offer an assessment exercise early in March, as part of the Faculty-wide Early Assessment Report?				
Does the course offer a variety of smaller scaffolded assessment tasks that gradually build student's comprehension, critical reading and writing competence up to the required level of essay-writing skills? (I.e. A series of smaller tasks rather than just a single/a few high stakes assessments late in the course?)				
Notes & Reflections				

Figure 1 - Framework adapted from the Unsettling paradigms research project (but was organised to suit my research project)

Proposal for developing a suite of Pedagogically Enriched Introductory Courses in the Faculty of Humanities

Rationale

The 2015-2017 student protests tabled a call to 'decolonize curricula' on South African campuses. South African students have expressed frustration with the 'Eurocentricism' of curriculum content and with forms of pedagogic interaction which they claim lead to a sense of alienation that undermines their potential. Whether we agree with these claims or not, it is important that the Faculty of Humanities responds to this call – and several departments have already done so by re-thinking and revising the content of the curricula they offer, as shown in the submissions made by departments to Faculty. While calls to 'decolonize pedagogy' could remain at abstracted or rhetorical levels, this proposal intends to offer one concrete, practical means of responding to this call at the level of the Humanities undergraduate degree structure. It aims to create curriculum space in some first year courses¹ for pedagogic innovation that could include: locating the majors / disciplines in a Southern context and historicising their development; affirming the linguistic and cultural capital that diverse students bring to the classroom; providing pedagogic enrichment so that students are ready to meet the academic demands of their chosen majors; and introducing delivery and assessment methods that encourage active, critical and multi-modal learning.

In August 2016 an external inter-Faculty panel recommended that the work of the Humanities Education Development Unit (HUM EDU) be integrated into the Faculty and that the HUMEDU focus on promoting academic excellence and high quality enriched pedagogy across the Faculty as a whole – i.e. that the work of the EDU expand beyond pedagogic interventions in the 4 year program to provide pedagogic support across the wider Faculty. To this end the Director of the HUM EDU has conducted discussions with some HODs and course convenors around curriculum renewal and the incorporation of reflexive pedagogies in undergraduate teaching². This proposal is the culmination of these discussions and is also part of a broader impetus to strengthen teaching, such that both teaching excellence and research excellence underpin our work in the Humanities.

Proposal for Curriculum Renewal & Pedagogical Enrichment

The proposal is simple – that the Faculty offer a suite of introductory courses³ from which all incoming BA/BSocSc students on the 3 year degree program must take two, on the assumption that all students arrive at university in need of challenging content and enriched pedagogy that sets them up for study in the critical Humanities in the majors of their choice.⁴

Criteria for an Introductory Course

All departments are encouraged to offer one Introductory course that meets the following suggested criteria:

1. Critical content that engages students' lifeworlds, introduces them to the discipline in ways that are cognizant of our African location, the historical development of the discipline and self-reflexive about the privileging of canonical texts and hegemonic perspectives.

¹ Whilst issues of decolonising pedagogy are of course imperative at every stage of the curriculum, given resource limitations we have focused here on the first year as a starting point.

² At present two such introductory courses are being developed as pilots in the FAM and HST departments, drawing on the experience of the TAs who have developed materials for Plus Tutorials currently run in those departments.

³ Holding name for now – some students have suggested naming these 'Umlilo' courses.

⁴ While this proposal focuses on incorporating Introductory courses into the 3 year degree program, (as discussions regarding revised criteria for the DHET Foundation Grant are still underway, thus preventing final decisions being made about the 4 year degree program at this stage), it is worth noting that should the Faculty accept this proposal, it will lay the foundation for enabling the 'unbundling' of the 4 year degree programme such that more flexible pathways are open to these students.

2. Enriched pedagogy that focuses on the development of critical Humanities skills, digital literacy, on-line research skills; close reading skills; writing skills; etc. which will impact on teaching and assessment methods.
3. Innovative teaching and delivery methods that may cut down on lecture periods, allowing more time for active engagement and skills development, as well as the option of allowing for multilingualism and translanguaging in the classroom. Assessment methods that are aligned with such a reflexive pedagogical approach, with a higher weighting on coursework - project work, tests, debates, essays, etc. and a lower weighting on formal exams.
4. Introductory courses are owned and run by departments, carrying the course code of the department that offers them. The more Introductory courses on offer the smaller and more manageable the class sizes will be. The HUMEDU can offer pedagogic expertise and some resources for developing these courses.

Paths to offering a suite of Introductory Courses

Based on discussions with HODs, there are three possible routes through which a department might develop an Introductory course to be approved in 2019 and offered in 2020:

1. Modify an existing 1000-level elective course
2. Modify an existing 1000-level course required for the major
3. Develop a new 1000-level elective as an Introductory course.

Routes 1 & 2 would require UEC approval via ACA35 forms and Route 3 would require UEC approval via ACA34 forms. The curriculum design and materials development for Introductory courses could be undertaken by course teams led by course conveners and could include ED Teaching Assistants and in some cases HUM EDU staff. Donor funding for TAs and ED Tutors to carry additional teaching/ tutoring loads would be available as is currently the case⁷.

Implications of the Proposal

Structure of the Degree

The structure of the 3 year BA/BSocSc Degree programme would remain the same as it is at present, with one important caveat: that at least two courses must be Introductory, pedagogically enriched courses - i.e. to graduate, students are required to pass 20 courses of which at least 2 must be Introductory, 10 senior and 12 Humanities, plus meeting requirements for 2 majors.

In addition, any BA/BSocSc student (regardless of degree programme) who enters the Faculty with English and Maths scores below the faculty minimum⁸ could be advised that their Introductory courses should include (Language in the Humanities and/or Numbers in the Humanities, the latter only for those taking quantitative majors). These students may end up taking 3 Introductory courses, but would still graduate with 20 courses in all.

- Only in exceptional cases will the development of a completely new Introductory course be encouraged.

Pre-requisites

In order to encourage maximum flexibility and improve throughput rates, departments are encouraged to review and soften their pre-requisites for entry into 1000-level S courses and into 2000-level courses.

We believe that Faculty adoption of this proposal will not only begin to address the decolonizing call, but offer a better platform from which to launch first-year students into successful completion of their majors.

Figure 3 - HUM EDU (2018a)'s Proposal for a Suite of Introductory Khanyisa Courses

Guidelines for Designing Khanyisa Courses

Original Criteria for Introductory Courses as approved by Faculty Board include:

1. Critical content that engages students' lifeworlds, introduces them to the discipline in ways that are cognizant of our African location, the historical development of the discipline and self-reflexive about the privileging of canonical texts and hegemonic perspectives.
2. Enriched pedagogy that focuses on the development of critical Humanities skills, digital literacy, on-line research skills; close reading skills; writing skills; etc. which will impact on teaching and assessment methods.
3. Innovative teaching and delivery methods that may cut down on lecture periods, allowing more time for active engagement and skills development, as well as the option of allowing for multilingualism and translanguaging in the classroom. Assessment methods that are aligned with such a reflexive pedagogical approach, with a higher weighting on coursework - project work, tests, debates, essays, etc. and a lower weighting on formal exams.

Here are some more detailed questions to assist with the design and implementation of these courses. Obviously, no course is expected to meet all of the criteria suggested below:

Content:

- Does the course include prescribed texts that foreground African location/experience /texts that challenge the privileging of canonical texts and perspectives in the discipline?
- Does the course offer students opportunities for critically engaging with their own lived experiences?

Skills development:

- Does the course develop critical Humanities skills, through both lectures and tutorials?
- Does the course offer a research-based exercise that positions students as potential knowledge producers?

Delivery:

- Does the course offer fewer lectures and more opportunities for active learning such as tutorial/ workshop/computer lab sessions?

Pedagogic Support:

- Does the course encourage active learning via peer-learning in small groups?
- Does the course provide ample opportunities for students to receive individual feedback on submitted assessment tasks?
- Is provision made to identify and offer support to struggling students?

Multilingualism:

- Does the pedagogy used in the course recognize and build on students' multilingual resources?

Structure of the Majors

The majority of departments require 5 or 6 courses for their majors.

- Departments offering 5-course majors are encouraged to modify an existing 1000-level course or develop a new 1000-level course as an Introductory course with **elective** status.
- Departments offering 6-course majors are encouraged to modify an existing 1000-level course into an Introductory course – which could either become an elective or continue to be **required for the major**.

⁵ Note Introductory courses would not need to carry Plus Tuts for Extended Degree students, the resources currently used for these could be diverted.

⁶ This needs to be specified upfront in offer letters to prospective students e.g. NSC EngFAL, NSCEngHL <5, NBT AL < Proficient will be required to take Language in the Humanities; while those taking a BSocSc with a quantitative major with NBT QL < Upper Intermediate will be required to take Numbers in the Humanities.

Assessment:

- Does the course offer an assessment exercise early in March, as part of the Faculty-wide Early Assessment Report?
- Does the course offer a variety of smaller scaffolded assessment tasks that gradually build student's comprehension, critical reading and writing competence up to the required level of essay-writing skills? (ie. A series of smaller tasks rather than just a single/a few high stakes assessments late in the course?)

Figure 4 - HUM EDU (2018b)'s Proposal for a Suite of Introductory Khanyisa Courses