

A Lockdown Curriculum for Arts and Humanities Foundation Year

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Learning in lockdown, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, refocused Arts and Humanities Foundation Year encounters with histories, theories and cultural works. This paper outlines the concept of a lockdown curriculum as a strategy for innovating curriculum design and pedagogy within an interdisciplinary foundation year. It sets out a case study of how this thematic framework was developed to facilitate the redesign of the 'Modernity and Post-Modernity' module on the Arts and Humanities Foundation Year in the Lifelong Learning Centre at an English university from 2020 onwards. It explores how new and refreshed perspectives on the past and present supported learners from widening participation backgrounds to undertake a journey through module contexts and the development of working definitions of complex cultural concepts like Modernity and Post-Modernity whilst living through lockdown. The paper reflects on how our changed lived experience reshaped encounters with cultural works as historical documents and offered new scope for supporting the development of interdisciplinary criticality at Level 0. In turn, it considers what we have learnt about our strategies to engage with real-world events in our teaching in the Arts and Humanities.

On or about March 2020, the world changed: Teaching Modernities during COVID-19

In 1924, Virginia Woolf, wrote that 'on or about December 1910 human character changed [...] all human relations have shifted' (Woolf, 1928, pp.4-5). For Woolf, 'the tools of one generation are useless to the next' (Woolf, 1928, p.17). Woolf was writing in the aftermath of the First World War, and the Spanish flu pandemic. Addressing the need to find new ways for people to express themselves in art and literature, she acknowledges the fact that, as the world had changed, our ways of discussing it and representing it also had to change.

As foundation year practitioners at the Lifelong Learning Centre at an English university as we taught through March 2020, while the world was profoundly changing, it seemed inconceivable to teach our Level 0 Modernity and Post-Modernity module as we had before. We were

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faced with the prospect of teaching a module designed for a pre-COVID-19 world, and it began to feel increasingly unfit for purpose for a world in lockdown. Our perceptions of the concept of 'modernity' were disrupted and profoundly reconfigured. We could not consider the histories contextualised by our module without recognising our changed lived experiences within a new, challenging, and unknown concept of our own modernity. We decided that the Arts and Humanities Foundation Year curriculum needed to bridge encounters between March 2020 and Woolf's modernity.

This paper explores our concept of a *lockdown curriculum* as a strategy for theorising the re-development of the foundation year module, Modernity and Post-Modernity, within an interdisciplinary context for teaching post 2020. This notion emerges out of how we utilised the necessity of lockdown learning to change what we teach at Level 0. At our university, the Arts and Humanities Foundation Year is the first year of an extended degree pathway enabling progression into the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures for learners from widening participation backgrounds. Our lockdown curriculum focused on supporting a diverse group of learners to use the study of modernity to have space to share, discuss and make sense of our world as we lived it individually and collectively. But this also enabled our students to navigate the complexity of our changed modernity through the lens of the past.

Like a lot of courses during the first lockdown, we moved fully online. At first, we delivered content as we had done before. However, as lockdowns continued through 2020, we began to realise that to teach 'Modernism' and the historical changes of the 1920s, we needed to acknowledge the profound change of the world around us. Our lockdown curriculum puts forward a focus on lived experience in dialogue with the challenging concepts of Modernity and Post-Modernity, and Modernism and Postmodernism.

We will set out how we re-structured this already interdisciplinary module through four themes brought into focus by the pandemic context: 'the City', 'the Body', 'Consumption', 'Reality/Memory'. These also work as fundamental lenses through which to study Modernity and Post-Modernity. We outline the insights we have gained from this approach and address how we have supported our learners to find new ways to inhabit interdisciplinary sites of the Arts and Humanities. Together with our students, we strived for more meaningful ways to study 'changed' and 'shifted' experiences of the world around us and human relations during the global pandemic. We will demonstrate how this was achieved by each of the four themes, detailing the importance of each focus and how this shaped student learning at Level 0.

Philip Tew and Alex Murray argue that 'one of the most significant challenges facing both students and teachers of Modernism is differentiating it from the terms of 'modern' and 'modernity' (2009, p.11). Similarly, Eleanor Heartney (2001, p.7) asserts that 'to a student of the subject, postmodernism may feel very much like Narcissus' reflection in the water, which disintegrates the moment one reaches out to grasp it.' To teach these concepts in an accessible and interdisciplinary manner at foundation year level can be a challenge. One purpose of the Foundation Year is to give students the critical tools to make sense of the world, and to express their place in it. The Modernity and Postmodernity module has a special place in this – as it is designed to get to grips with looking at how issues of globalisation, work, time, cities, travel, money, class, gender and race are explored over the course of the Twentieth century. Our interdisciplinary scheme of work introduces what David Macey has termed the 'aesthetic', 'sociological' and 'philosophical' conceptual aspects of modernity (Macey, 2001, pp.259-261). We broke down the module and its prior interdisciplinary case study mode (art, literature, design, architecture, etc.) and rebuilt it thematically. This took the form of four sections, each addressing an issue that the pandemic has particularly laid bare. These themes of the City, the Body, Consumption, and Reality/Memory allowed us to emphasise the module's interdisciplinarity and rethink how we support learners to find their own way through the complexities of the Arts and Humanities.

This is particularly valuable for foundation year study as we explore such challenging concepts with learners at the start of their undergraduate journey. The module enables literacy, understanding and application of the contested terms of Modernity and Post-Modernity which often appear across future degrees and disciplines. Our interdisciplinary approach to these theories and concepts allows our students to make connections across a range of disciplines, therefore, preparing them to work with a wider landscape of theoretical and conceptual materials than those which might be encountered from a single subject context. While we introduced new material to achieve this, one of the interesting effects was that some of the pre-existing material that was kept functioned differently by being taught in a pandemic context.

These four themes highlight the importance of designing a course that can speak to the experiences of diverse learners. Even though we were all separated online during lockdown, we could see in the module the issues and experiences that connect us all, and help foster a widening participation learning community. Mary C. Madden talks about how Modernism can do this, noting that we can ‘place the modernist preoccupation with identity and loss of agency in the context of social class’ and ‘the ongoing effects of social and economic inequality’ (2018, p.51). She picks out themes such as ‘uncertainty’, ‘fragmentation’, ‘alienation in personal relationships’, and ‘a preoccupation with the passage of time’ as topics used to investigate social issues with her students (2018, pp.62-3). In this way, our module performs what Paolo Freire highlights as the need for the replacement of ‘deposit-making’ education with ‘the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations to the world’ (2008, p.79), and specifically ‘problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world’ (2008, p.81), facilitating a dialogue for students to be ‘critical co-investigators’ (2008, p.81). To this end, non-didactic and fragmented modernist styles, while initially intimidating, offer students more freedom of analysis, and room to find their own way through the module topics, in contrast to the physical restrictions of lockdown.

In June 2020, Amol Rajan, the BBC’s Media Editor, echoing Virginia Woolf, observed that ‘and then COVID-19 happened, from now on we will divide history into before and after this pandemic’ (Rajan, 2020). For our evolving modernity, experiences such as not being able to leave the house, having to consider and plan how and what food was to be acquired, reduced mobility about the city and the country, an increased awareness of and concern about health and our bodies, and a concern about flows of information about the pandemic – what stories could be trusted, and what was real – spoke to the histories that we were teaching on the module. Similar ideas are to be found in the cultural artifacts and texts in the periods we look at: the lead up to the First World War, the inter-war period, and the shift into post-war Post-Modernity.

We will now detail each of our four themes in turn and some of the ways we have considered them through our concept of the lockdown curriculum. In this way we will demonstrate not just module design, but a way of looking at an Arts and Humanities module that acknowledges its context, even when its immediate topics are historical.

The City

The pandemic has not only changed the shape of our cities, but our places in them. This contemporary experience is modelled in Modernist works. Woolf’s imagining of the city in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) acts as the start of our module. We discuss how the novel presents the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway’s experience of the city, as she declares that ‘I love walking in London’ (Woolf, 2000, p.6). And yet, her ability to move around the city is not as easy as we might think, as she encounters echoes of the First World War and the Spanish flu – remnant traumas that still affect the population. As Elizabeth Outka has pointed out, Clarissa can be seen as a ‘pandemic survivor’, and the story operating in a pandemic context (Outka, 2019, p.105). For the study of Mod-

ernity at Level 0, an exploration of cultural vocabularies and touchstones for students to consider these restrictions and their own concerns were useful.

Mrs Dalloway, which takes place over the course of a single day, opens with the titular protagonist in the process of planning and organising a party to take place that evening, and setting out from her house to acquire flowers, rather than sending a member of her household staff. The novel's famous opening lines, announcing that 'Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself', prompt us to consider the ways in which the pandemic affects us. As the *New Yorker* noted in 2020, this novel offered new ways to describe how our movements were affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns:

In the first days of the stay-in-place orders made necessary by the coronavirus pandemic, anxious variations on one of the most famous openings in English literature began cropping up on Twitter [...] March 24th: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would scroll through pictures of flowers herself." March 31st: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would have the flowers delivered because they were [a] non-essential need, but she would make sure to tip the delivery guy at least 30% herself." April 3rd: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would order from @Instacart herself." April 5th: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would make the mask herself." (Kindley, 2020, no pagination)

Like these memes, our students used *Mrs Dalloway* to help investigate contemporary restrictions and concerns. We looked at how the city was conceptualised at the start of the Twentieth Century, and how it was seen as offering, and taking away, particular ways of moving and living, which resonated with the student experience.

So, we looked at Modernist texts which deal with cities, and the new ways in which they ask us to navigate our lives. Impressionist and Futurist works (by, for example, Gustave Caillebotte, Mary Cassatt, Giacomo Balla), the sociological writings of Georg Simmel and the figure of the flâneur highlight how the city works differently and functions differently for different people, containing both opportunities and threats.¹ In seminars, we talked about how the character of Clarissa Dalloway reveals the city to be a place of positivity as well as restrictions, and how signs of trauma after the War are evident even as people try to go about their daily business. Not everyone in *Mrs Dalloway* can move around the city in the same way, or belong equally in the same spaces and places, and our widening participation students are consistently conscious of the inequalities in Modernist texts, in the same way as they are for how the pandemic has highlighted the structural inequalities in societies. Class and gender affect the way cities work in the works that we look at.

From Woolf's exterior experiences of the city, which are noticeably different from those of men, our seminars then look at how Modernism has shaped how we inhabit the interiors of the built environment. We confront problems, restrictions and concepts associated with domesticity, home, and practicalities of space. Teaching and learning online during lockdown brought our own living spaces into a different focus, allowing us to reframe existing module content. Students consider aspects of our day to day lives alongside modernist ideals for utopian functional living and architectural designs; for example, from Le Corbusier's famous premise that 'the house is a machine for living in' (1995, p.4) to the flatpack Ikea furniture we might have in our homes. We discussed with students how domestic spaces function, while our own concepts of space, home and work were being altered by lockdown. In this way students could discuss these questions as active issues. The analysis of the ideals of modernist architecture allows students to pick apart the newfound challenges of our makeshift learning and teaching spaces, and the complex multiplicities of lockdown life.

¹ Key works are: *Paris Street, Rainy Day* (1877), and *Le Pont de l'Europe* (1876) by Gustave Caillebotte; *In the Box* (1879) and *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* (1878) by Mary Cassatt; *Abstract Speed – the Car has Passed* (1913) and *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912) by Giacomo Balla; and Georg Simmel's *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903).

The Body

The theme of body became a space to address both Modernism and our critical interrogation of it. We consider how the lived experience of modernity as the experience of modern life (Berman, 2010) historically shaped representation. Again, we discussed how Modernist practitioners sought new creative vocabularies to comment on the changing nature of modern life, and because the established ways of representing the world no longer sufficed.

With public space now requiring that we move in specific ways and spaces, and with an increased focus on the vulnerability of our health, breath and physical context, our own views of our bodies have changed. Helena Lewis-Smith and Sharon Haywood at UWE Bristol (2020) have noted higher reports of dieting and binge eating, greater challenges for those with eating disorders, and increased mental health anxieties, while newspapers have covered worsening mental health, sleep quality, and bodily pain. This is compounded by an increase in interacting through the window of the computer screen, as well as replication and viewing of self-image in virtual learning environments. This resonated with our critical discussions particularly around the question of how you represent and process such profound changes in society and our everyday lives — when studying representations of modern life in 1920, our own moment of 2020 was something students wanted to discuss and consider.

We looked at Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), which features a man who wakes up one day to find himself transformed into a beetle – he experiences a very specific kind of lockdown and self-isolation, unable to leave his house due to circumstances beyond his control, having to renegotiate his relationship with food, subjected to work pressures and cut off from family. Already a text featured on the module, it was cast in a new light by lockdown.

In March 2020, Merriam-Webster lexicographer Peter Sokolowski tweeted a list of current top 'lookups' on the online dictionary; in order these were: "pandemic, coronavirus, quarantine, corona, epidemic, draconian, lockdown, novel, martial law, xenophobia, apocalypse, self-isolation, cancel, apoplectic, presumptive, endemic, mitigate, vector, calamity, virus, pestilence, postpone, Kafkaesque" (Sokolowski, 2020). That last word is one many of our students have heard of, even if they are not totally sure of its definition. Almost a year later, in February 2021, cartoonist Tom Gauld, for the *Guardian*, imagined a Kafkaesque lockdown, in a cartoon in which a gigantic beetle sits at a table working on a laptop; the caption reads: 'Gregor Samsa awoke one morning to find himself transformed into a gigantic insect, but because of the lockdown, his life carried on pretty much unchanged' (Gauld, 2021). There is something resonant about Franz Kafka's novella in articulating the experience of COVID-19 and lockdown, and one which prompted us to use Modernism to adapt our curriculum to lockdown life.

The Metamorphosis prompts us to think about our own experiences of bodily transformations and spatial restrictions. It is a book that is particularly suited to how the last two years have seen a collective focus on our own bodies, and our changing perceptions of them. Since March 2021 we have had to think about our bodies in relation to where they are allowed to be, how close they can be to others, and to contemplate their vulnerability and fitness in the face of COVID-19. Gregor Samsa is unable to leave his house due to circumstances outside of his control, subjected to work pressures and cut off from family; he too has to get used to a new body. *The Metamorphosis* allows students to engage in a monstrous metaphor for a shared experience, and provides a platform for them to engage with issues affecting them in critical ways. Importantly, trapped in his room, the view out of Gregor's window is a hospital, placing the text in the midst of a conversation of health, and society's views of it.

Indeed, we need to recognise that, as the Office for National Statistics notes, 'many higher education students have found themselves in a unique situation, perhaps isolating in a household with others they do not know well', and that 'students were more likely [than the general public] not to have left their home or accommodation in the seven days prior to being surveyed'

(Office for National Statistics, 2020). This needs to be seen in the context that over recent years the well-being of undergraduate students has declined (noted in the Student Academic Experience Survey, 2020), with lower levels of reported well-being than the general population aged 16-24 years (Office for National Statistics, 2020). In this way, *The Metamorphosis* functions as a text which gives students licence to engage critically with ways in which historical literature can speak to contemporary concerns, and how contemporary concerns can help us articulate the themes of historical texts. Contrary to the persistent idea that online learning spaces can be mostly silent, our students engaged in dynamic seminar discussion on this topic, with frequent comments about the text's appropriateness for what we were all going through.

A consideration of the 'modern' body as a conceptual device introduces students to the new modes and forms of visual representation associated with Modernism. Developments in Modernist Art, such as representation of new subjects pertaining to modern life, abstraction and fragmentation of the body in visual representation, are tracked through examples of Modernisms, such as Impressionism, Cubism and Futurism. This initiates space to discuss works of art as cultural products and historical documents. This introduces foundation year students to the current interrogations of the canon of Modernism, critical work to examine histories of arts and culture through Modernist Studies to address concepts of gender, race and class. The emergence of Modernist Studies, critical perspectives, such as Feminism, Post-Colonialism, and Global Modernisms, also becomes a way to introduce students to the theoretical context and timeline of post-war Post-Modernity facilitating these critical standpoints. In order truly to represent a lockdown curriculum, this module illuminated our global interconnectedness. We extended the module's focus as global, rather than local, in outlook. We, and our students, recognised a need to acknowledge key social events happening alongside COVID-19, namely the Black Lives Matter movement, and increased engagement with, and investment in, our national histories (for example, the discourse around the purpose of statues, as well as the financial history of our cities).

One such example, which illuminates the module's transition from a consideration of the body in modernities to the 'post-modern' is the project of the feminist and activist artist collective Guerrilla Girls. Their diverse practice of institutional critique including artworks such as *Do Women Have to Be Naked To Get into the Met. Museum?* (1989) focuses our attention on the limited diversity of representation of 'the body' and artistic practitioners in the art world. The Guerrilla Girls' recent statement that 'you have to question what you see' (Tate, 2018) engages learners with both artistic practices and theoretical perspectives contextualised by the timeline of Post-Modernity. This becomes a device to ask key critical questions central to the Arts and Humanities and undergraduate study (Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?). For example, how are modernities represented and histories written – those of the timeline encompassed by our module and within our contemporary moment of the global pandemic. With these module discussions happening as interpretations of the pandemic, its effects, and its impact, were increasingly contested, the function of a module like this became, as we see it, vital. It allowed students to question social assumptions and investigate the constructedness of how we see society and history (for example, the perceived value of various kinds of workers during the pandemic). They were given space to navigate the world but also to practise the skills to express how they see it. Interpretation and argument, then, is key, and this bridges our module exploration of Modernity to Post-Modernity in the second half of the semester.

Consumption

In an increasingly globalised world, the lockdowns forced us to rethink what we buy, how we buy it, what we value, in terms of both materials and social roles. The availability of food, and the necessary planning in order to shop or have it delivered is an obvious example of this, with the BBC noting that

When Covid-19 first began to engulf Europe, and some rushed to the supermarkets to stockpile, others hit the keyboards. Worldwide Google searches for “food delivery” and “local food” reached all-time highs in April. In the UK, people were six times more likely to look for “veg boxes” than a year ago. The crisis made us all re-examine how we get our groceries and where they come from. (Shveda, no date)

This focus on food availability also seems to be accompanied, globally, by an increase in eating disorders; once again our relationship to commerce and our own bodies has been re-shaped by the pandemic (Hansen and Menkes, 2021; Feinmann, 2021). Indeed, it was not only food, and ‘stuff’ that we were forced to re-evaluate, but also social roles and positions. The term ‘essential workers’ to describe ‘those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery’ as defined in the government guidance of ‘essential workers prioritised from COVID-19 testing’ in February 2021, is a key example of this (UK Health Security Agency, 2021). Supermarket workers were given the same social status as healthcare professionals. As the *Guardian* noted in January of that year, ‘when the UK first went into lockdown last March, many supermarket workers said they had never felt so appreciated. Customers would thank them for their service, leave chocolates for the staff room and applaud delivery vans as if they were carrying royalty rather than groceries’ (Pidd and Wolfe-Robinson, 2021). What we consumed during the pandemic, and how we looked at it, became an increasingly political topic.

The Post-Modernity section of the module necessarily engages with the themes that relate to different kinds of ‘consumption’, and with the ways in which we instil value in products and services, and how we might question these ideas. In literature we look at the postmodern Japanese novel *Kafka on the Shore*, by Haruki Murakami (2002), that deals with ideas of capitalism and globalisation in the tale of a man trying to rescue lost cats from a spirit in the form of the Johnnie Walker whisky logo, which aims to gain power by devouring their hearts. It sparked conversations about what counts as ‘real work’ and ‘productive’ members of society, who decides this, how do we judge what has value, and to what extent brands and business affect our lives. Students dealt with the idea that we can be consumers, as well as products being consumed. Its surreal and postmodern style prompts further discussions of how we, and whether we should always, look for easy narrative answers to social problems.

Class conversation puts these ideas into practice with our learners discussing postmodern art such as Banksy’s *Napalm (Can’t Beat the Feeling)* (ca. 2004) and Jenny Holzer’s *Protect Me From What I Want* (ca. 1987), as well as various iterations of Ai Wei Wei’s vase photographs. Students engage with a seemingly definable term like ‘consumption’ and become comfortable with the implicit range of meanings contained within it (eating, purchasing, destroying, wasting, disease) and apply them to real-world concerns, such as how advertising works. From a gradual introduction of what previous discussions of Post-Modernity have defined it as, using examples as diverse as Wes Craven’s post-modern horror film *Scream* (1996) to Fredric Jameson’s ideas of Postmodernism and late capitalism, our students are soon able to engage with examples on their own terms. Similarly, the theme of consumption enables students to consider key conceptual and creative ideas associated with the post-modern, such as appropriation, parody and pastiche. The new iteration of this module gave students both a way into larger social discussions of consumption during lockdown, and new strategies to make sense of the history and theory of Postmodernism.

Reality/Memory

One of the defining images of the early months of the pandemic remains the bulk-buying and hoarding of toilet paper, a comic image that nevertheless poses important questions: what do we value, why do we value it, and what pressures could force us to reassess that? In his book, *Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World* (2020), Slavoj Žižek records something similar from Yugoslavia in the 1970s:

All of a sudden, a rumor started to circulate that not enough toilet paper was available. The authorities promptly issued assurances that there was enough toilet paper for normal consumption, and, surprisingly, this was not only true but people mostly even believed it was true. However, an average consumer reasoned in the following way: I know there is enough toilet paper and the rumor is false, but what if some people take this rumor seriously and, in a panic, start to buy excessive reserves of toilet paper, causing an actual shortage? So I better buy reserves myself. It is not even necessary to believe that some others take the rumor seriously – it is enough to presuppose that some others believe that there are people who take the rumor seriously – the effect is the same, namely the real lack of toilet paper in the stores. (Žižek, 2020, Chapter 7, para. 2)

Regardless of the situation in the UK in 2020, Žižek's historical example demonstrates how a society can generate the circulation of behaviour, which have real effects, but which are not necessarily based on reality. Our sense of reality, in such circumstance, may be a more malleable thing than we might think. And this is a topic that our students find productive for demonstrating their analytical abilities and exploring new ways of critiquing society.

Inspired by the difficulties we all had in negotiating different, and competing, interpretations, news and narratives of the pandemic, we used Postmodernism to explore ways in which stories, narratives and histories can be shaped and challenged. So, we reframed established module texts to address our new thematic concerns: the play *Endgame* (1957) by Samuel Beckett, the poetry of Edwin Morgan's poem 'Message Clear' (1967), and *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison, all texts which prompt us to think about the subjectivity and malleability of stories and memories. *Beloved*, a ghost story about racism and slavery in Nineteenth Century America, with its unreliable narrative told from different perspectives, asks us to consider who shapes our ideas of history, who interprets our stories and who gets left out by them. *Beloved's* status as a ghost story particularly is used to explore how ghosts can be used to explore who is made ghost-like in society, or marginalised. In the pandemic, which effects some people more than others, and which creates situations where it is hard to know whose version of the news, science, and reality to trust, these skills and discussions are invaluable in allowing our students not only to explore period-specific study, but to use that study to hone skills which equip students to make sense of their own lives.

The study of the theoretical ideas associated with Post-Modernity and Postmodernism means this module must support learners when they encounter complex ideas associated with notions of the 'real' and the 'unreal'. Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality (1981) is encountered by our students and the context of learning in lockdown facilitated new juxtapositions between this complex theory and our own experiences. In the sudden move to communicate online by video-conferencing platforms during the pandemic, post-modern debates, such as a loss of the real, resonated in our discussions of reality and memory. Connections were made between notions such as the rise of fake news and the internet as a 'postmodernist phenomenon' (Butler, 2002, p.117). As teaching and learning took place in virtual learning environments, module topics, for example Cyber-Culture and media which questions concepts of reality like *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and *The Truman Show*, (Weir, 1998), had an impact in class discussion reshaping our curriculum in lockdown.

Lockdown Curriculum as the ‘New Normal’

The importance of our lockdown curriculum is to establish Arts and Humanities modules as having active engagement with contextual concerns for our students, even if the topic is an historical one. The strength of the Humanities are how texts find new ways to shed light on our shared humanity. This lockdown curriculum, then, might be considered the new normal, to find the commonalities between others (now and in the past), even as we acknowledge difference as well. We have, here, shown an example of how a module might function as a response to the lives of its students. This is not a template for a module per se, but rather a template for how to think about a module.

New dialogues with subject content and new ways to discuss and think with our foundation year students was an unexpected result of the great challenges of the last few years. As learners progress through the Modernity and Post-Modernity module, they are supported to engage with the complex conceptual and theoretical ideas underpinning these areas of thought. As Heartney (2001, p.7) suggests for the student of Postmodernism, ‘with the “real” world upon which such representations once rested yanked from under us, we find ourselves tumbling down the postmodern rabbit hole.’ In order for our students not to feel like this, as they encounter new terms within their foundation year studies, we embed support for learners to develop their criticality through an approach which explores complex ideas in an accessible way. Our thematic discussions utilise interactivity and collaboration. The module is conceptualised not by teaching students what these terms mean but by working together to see if we can as a team construct working definitions that acknowledge the complexities of these concepts and currency of debates. In this way, Modernity and Post-Modernity are not monolithic labels but rather active discussions to which lifelong learners can bring their own experiences and make their own connections.

The complexities of module themes have also required us to address the integration of recent scholarship concerning where Modernist and Postmodernist studies and its terminologies go next, as well as the potential theoretical parameters of ‘Post-Postmodernism’. The complexities of the contested debates that underscore the study of Modernity and Post-Modernity interact with our module content across the timeline from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century. As we study them from 2020 onwards, and as we have introduced them to learners via our mode of the lockdown curriculum, notions of the ‘new normal’ and ‘post-2020’ connect to these complexities. In his longstanding writings on Modernity as experience, Marshall Berman posits that ‘It may turn out, then, that going back can be a way to go forward: that remembering the modernisms of the nineteenth century can give us the vision and courage to create the modernisms of the twenty-first.’ (Berman, 2010, p.36). It was from the dialogues between our present and those of the past, and our conversations as a learning community of students and staff, that we have been able to re-think how we teach and learn concepts of Modernity and Post-Modernity at Level 0.

Looking back on our experiences of reshaping the module curriculum, we have seen how our changes have fared from the journey out of online learning and teaching to transitional hybrid contexts – and the resonances we retain now we are back on campus. Learning from lockdown has enabled us to re-imagine aspects of how we engage foundation year learners with complex theories and concepts, as well as the strategies we can utilise to shape interdisciplinary Arts and Humanities study as a pathway onto a degree.

As Sherry Turkle described of her own experiences in lockdown: ‘During the year of COVID, we lived echoes of the pandemic of 1918 [...] On the Zoom screens of the pandemic, I found the exhilaration of new connections.’ (Turkle, 2021). We, like Turkle, have ‘seen the limits of lives on the screen. We had time to observe ourselves because we were as though experimental subjects.’ (Turkle, 2021). Our experience has reframed our perceptions of foundation

year curriculum design, interdisciplinary strategies for supporting learners, and pedagogic approaches for teaching in response to real world events. Not only did we decide that the topics of Modernity and Post-Modernity had to be addressed through the lens of our changed times, but that our changed times could be addressed through the lens of Modernity and Post-Modernity.

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