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## Decolonising English Literary Studies: Theory and Practice in Higher Education

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the current state of play in the recent and ever-evolving field of decolonising the curriculum, as it is generally termed in Anglophone contexts. Focusing on the teaching of undergraduate English Literature but with relevance for secondary school teaching too, I will critique the focus on curriculum design to propose that the selection and presentation of texts is only a small part of the decolonisation project. I argue that it is equally essential for teachers to develop an ongoing dialogue of co-creation with students, getting to know aspects of the educational and demographic background of students in order to develop an organic, dynamic teaching model that engages directly with the students who are actually in the classroom, rather than focusing on the development of teaching materials for an abstract, imagined student. This paper will employ theories of co-creation (Cook-Sather, Matthews and Bell 2019) and self-determination (Deci and Ryan 2008) to develop a more student-centred, dynamic approach to decolonisation. I will present examples from my own teaching practice and qualitative data gathered from international students to test an initial application of my proposed approach. My findings indicate positive student and teacher response to this more holistic and individualised approach to decolonising the curriculum.

**Keywords:** decolonisation; co-creation; English literature; international students; self-determination theory