

4 - The (Im)Possibility of Safe(r) Spaces: Discomfort and Queer Failures in Learning Environments

Format:

1. Panel, in which 'best practices' of safe(r) spaces in feminist learning and teaching spaces are exchanged and discussed, as well as the (im)possibility of safe(r) spaces, speakers selected from submitted proposals
2. Workshop, tutorial and/or artistic piece, selected from submitted proposals. Such a contribution could be, but is not restricted to, a practical implementation of 'safe(r) spaces' in feminist learning and teaching environments, an artistic piece along the lines of 'discomfort' and '(queer) failures', etc.

Content: Since the early days of the women's liberation movement, much attention has been given to the spaces of feminist learning and teaching. Particularly the concept of 'safe(r) spaces' has been widely discussed in academic and activist circles, as spaces, where marginalized groups are supposed to be free of oppression and/or stereotypes. Given the diversity of oppressions and peoples' different needs in learning and teaching spaces, the question remains, for whom certain spaces become safe(r) and for whom not, rendering visible the difficulty that comes with implementing safe(r) spaces. Not least in the course of 'the affective turn' in the humanities and social sciences, research and artistic practices increasingly have focused on the role of emotions/affects in and for spaces of feminist learning and teaching, raising the question what kind of emotions become acceptable in the context of safe(r) spaces and for whom? As such, Megan Boler and Michalinos Zembylas acknowledged the presence of 'discomfort' in learning and teaching environments and explored its transformative potential for the latter. Similarly, (queer) failures increasingly have been given attention in the work of queer theorists, exploring the role of the latter in and for spaces of feminist learning and teaching.

This workshop/panel would like to foster an exchange of 'best practices' in creating safe(r) spaces in feminist learning and teaching spaces in and beyond Europe, as well as to invite a discussion about the (im)possibility of the latter. To this end, this workshop/panel would like to explore how safe(r) spaces could be implemented in educational settings, particularly focusing on the role of (negative) emotions, such as discomfort and anger, and (queer) failures and their role in and for these spaces. We particularly welcome contributions concerning questions such as, but not restricted to:

- How can we create safe(r) spaces in feminist learning and teaching environments? For whom do these spaces become safe(r) and for whom not? How do safe(r) spaces become (im)possible in feminist educational settings?
- What are the experiences of students and educators, as well as artists and activists, with implementing safe(r) spaces in feminist learning and teaching environments in and beyond Europe?
- What is the role of (negative) emotions, such as (dis)comfort and anger, in and for feminist learning and teaching spaces? What is the role of (queer) failures in and for these spaces? How can we resolve the perceived tension between safe(r) spaces and discomfort and/or (queer) failures in spaces of feminist learning and teaching?

Invited contributions:

This panel/workshop invites contributions and/or interventions of students, educators, activists and artists.

1. Panel: Please provide us with a personal CV (max. 2 pages) and a short abstract (length: approx. 500 words), in which you describe your personal experience, research and/or (activist) practice of safe(r) spaces and/or discomfort and (queer) failures in feminist learning and teaching spaces.

2. Workshop, tutorial and/or artistic piece: Please provide us with a personal CV (max. 2 pages) and a short abstract, tutorial or online audio/visual (length: approx. 500 words or 5 minutes), in which you describe your idea for the workshop, tutorial or artistic piece.

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