Lisa M. Rabin
"Teaching Research Approaches in Cultural Studies"

In her book *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford*, a case study of Stanford in the mid-20th century rise of the US research university, Rebecca Lowen reveals a startling conjuncture. As faculty and administrators began to focus less on teaching and more on gaining industry and government patronage in the 1950s and 1960s, and discouraged open campus debate on these arrangements, universities tackled the resulting "disaffection and alienation" among undergraduates not as the students' *intellectual* disconnection with their campuses, but as a *psychological* problem -- and turned to new models of student services like counseling (and grade inflation) to improve student satisfaction. As Lowen points out, and now especially as we face mounting mental health issues among young adults in the US, of course psychological services are a crucial part of our work as a university. But it is significant that at this conjuncture, the boundaries between undergraduate students and the mission of the research university as a US social institution became sharply delineated.[i][1]

This year, I have celebrated 31 years of teaching at George Mason University, a period in which we have attained R1 status, my own research commitments have increased and student services beyond psychological ones on campus (and at universities across the country) have exponentially expanded. It is also a time in which I have learned much from my students, most of whom are first-generation, migrants or children of migrants and full-time workers, about the impact of high tuition and competing responsibilities on what they can justify studying at George Mason -- and how attached they are to the campus. In this atmosphere, I have become devoted to a critical pedagogy that guides students towards seeing their intellectual work as primary, not secondary to their campus experience; and as work that stakes their claim to the identity and mission of the research university where they live or spend much of their time.[ii]

My tack at bringing students into the university's research mission is not simply to make my research part of the syllabus. Combining higher education learning studies on higher knowledge organization as one of the most important strategies for university learners[iii] with the aim of interrogating knowledge organization in my field of cultural studies, I make my research *approaches* explicit in my classroom. In all my courses, from basic level Spanish to Latin American Mass Media to Globalization and Culture, I introduce students to cultural studies formations, rooting them in social and cultural turns at the university over the past twenty years and describing how they differ from dominant approaches to culture they may have encountered in other courses. I share with them my own research in historicizing disciplinary formations of US Area Studies and Spanish language education in mid-twentieth century processes of the Cold War security state, and the significance of this research for interrogating taken for granted assumptions at what constitutes a "global education" in our own times. And I invite students to use cultural studies as a critical lens on the connections between knowledge organization, power and resistance at the university and in society – and as a conduit to their intellectual journeys as citizens of the research university. Importantly, I emphasize for students that our classroom is a safe space in which they can "try on" these approaches without a fundamental risk to their sense of self or belief systems.[iv]

One of the most validating moments of my career came just this fall in my CULT 320 class, where students of Computer Science and Instructional Technology have joined us to fulfill their Core in Global Understanding. These STEM students regularly express their enthusiasm for the course framing in critical political economy and focus on technology and inequalities -- which

they are seeing as useful expansions on their major course of study and in their conception of themselves as future professionals in the world of Big Tech. When STEM students feel safe at "trying on" a critical lens on technology and society, it is possible to see a big return on framing students' learning as citizenship at our research university.

[i] Lowen, R. S. (1997). *Creating the cold war university: The Transformation of Stanford.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

[ii] Escobar, M., Fernandez, A. L, Fuevara-Niebla, G., & Freire, P. (1994). *Paulo Freire on higher education: A Dialogue at the National University of Mexico.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

[iii] Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

[iv] Wool, G. (1989). "Relational Aspects of Learning: The Learning Alliance." In K. Field, B. J. Cohler and G. Wool (Eds). *Learning and Education: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. Madison, CT: International Universities Press. 747–770.