



Dr Riadh Ghemmour
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
(University of London)

UoE Creativity and Emergent Educational Futures
Network Seminar:
**There is no 'safe space' – a critical insight to frame
conversations around social justice education**

Thursday 1 December 2022, 12-1.15pm

RSVP: email k.a.chappell@exeter.ac.uk to receive the Zoom link.

Since the rise of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, many UK universities have started to unpack curriculum development, classroom praxis and the nature of institutional paradigms from decolonial and antiracist lenses. To achieve such aims, there have been multiple initiatives which have explored race and racism, colonisation and coloniality, and intersectionality through centring lived experiences. Usually, facilitators and participants come together in a space where such controversial topics are discussed openly and respectfully. These discursive spaces are referred to as 'safe space'.

'Safe space' is a terminology which is often used in social justice education. The aim of such space is to provide safety and comfort for those who may feel upset, frustrated and uncomfortable sharing or hearing accounts regarding racism, oppression and otherness. But what does safety mean in a social justice context? What does it look like? And how can we critically and reflexively cultivate a nuanced understanding and praxis of the so-called 'safe space' to avoid reinscribing harm and violence in the space?

In this interactive session, Riadh will draw on his lived experience as an educator to critically unpack taken-for-granted assumptions constructed around the concept of safe space. In addition, he will draw on his latest article to present a dialogic framework – which is a work in progress- to recognise, manage and work around the fact that difficult spaces cannot be risk-free and safe.

Biography

Dr Riadh Ghemmour is an early career researcher holding a PhD in education from the University of Exeter. He is currently the learning skills coordinator who provides learning development for students at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London). Riadh is also a diversity consultant working for MA Education (Ltd) which offers trainings and coaching sessions around racial literacy, antiracism and decolonial practices. He has worked with a number of universities including Exeter, Edinburgh, Brunel, Lancaster or Wellcome Sanger Institute. He is also the co-founder of Decolonial Dialogues shared space. Riadh is passionate about social justice, activism, social awareness. Outside his academic work, Riadh enjoys cooking, long walks, poetry, coffee shops, and working out.