

## “Anti-classroom Classroom”

The theme for the class exhibition of the Public History Seminar, AY 2024-2025, is “Anti-classroom Classroom”. Through several exhibits displayed at multiple sites throughout the NLSIU campus the students along with the instructor explore how we can break down and rethink the classroom as a space and an idea. Our point of divergence is the traditional classroom where the instructor and the institution are merged as sites of authority. “Anti-classroom Classroom” is not necessarily a critique of the traditional classroom but an effort to imagine and practice alternative forms of pedagogy that are in alignment with community-based learning and making and knowing as co-constitutive practices. The alternative imagination allows us to push boundaries of knowledge making in the classroom as we rethink what we do and where we do. This is an endeavour in reassembling and reordering learning through practice-based reflection on the work that takes place in a Public History classroom. As an area of inquiry, Public History makes us think of the classroom beyond university spaces, to include spaces of public interaction like streets, neighbourhoods, monuments, museums, and much more. One iteration of public history is to imagine the possibilities of history communication outside the traditional lecture and seminar based classrooms of universities. In doing so, the effort is also to focus on forms of knowledge making that exist in collective thinking, sharing of ideas, and making together as a community. This knowledge, as we acknowledge, is embedded in a space of public interaction and continuous interpretation. We expect that the audience will interact with our exhibits in ways that will expand our ideas of shared learning.

Some of the questions we ask through this exhibition include, Can the public history ~~classroom~~ be a space of learning through community building? Can the public history ~~classroom~~ be a site of decentralized power? Can it be mobile, shifting, perhaps anywhere we want it to be? What happens when the traditional classroom is imagined as an anti-classroom? In what ways do institutions, bureaucracies, and protocols negotiate in the space of the public history ~~classroom~~? What are the ethics on which an idea of the “anti-classroom classroom” rest? And, how can we do this in practice and not just in theory.

### Exhibit 1.

“Public History Classroom”, OAB 105 (Tuesday, 28 May, 5-6 PM)

“Public History Classroom” is the flagship exhibit of the show. It reimagines the traditional classroom as a space of learning where the instructor is the embodiment of institutional power and the curriculum is the site of it. Public History methods, however, challenge this understanding through the practice of collective learning and building community in the classroom. This exhibit highlights a decentralized pedagogical approach, both the film (exhibit A) and the syllabus for “History, in the Present” (exhibit B) are representative of this. The syllabus has been co-authored by the instructor and the students towards the middle of the trimester when the students were equipped with the tools and methods of doing Public History. The focus is on building an inclusive learning environment through seminar discussions, roundtable conversations, history lab exercises, and field visits. This exhibit asks us to imagine where we can begin if we were to take the various components of a classroom and put a radical spin on it! We ask the audience to experience the space while watching the film and reading the syllabus. Take your time, slow down, and think as you inhabit our anti-classroom classroom space.

### Exhibit 2.

“Rainbow Circle”,  
OAB Quad (Tuesday, 28 May)  
Library Lawns (Wednesday through Thursday, 29-30 May).

The Rainbow Circle is a space of solidarity. It is a circle of love and sharing. Of caring and belonging. Of longing and remembering. As you enter the circle, remember that each flag is an artefact of memory dedicated to queer persons from various parts of India who have lived the trials and travails of loving in a society where queer love is made difficult. You are welcome to sit inside the circle with yourself, with your friends, your chosen family and anyone you want to share the space with. You are welcome to use to the circle as a space of gathering, sharing, and making memories. Take pictures or just sit and unwind!

The exhibit is a material interpretation of an appendix from Ruth Vanita's pathbreaking study of queer marriage titled *Love's Rites*. The appendix lists queer couples who were forced towards death by society and its institutions, from Kerala to Assam and almost all places in between. Our effort is to write these individuals back into history and this exhibit therefore asks you to think about these individuals as actors and agents in the history of queer becoming and belonging in India.

#### Exhibit 3.

"Heritage NLSIU", Below Library Ramp (Tuesday through Thursday 28-30 May)

"Heritage NLSIU" is a campus tour map. Use it to know your campus. Use it to show your campus. There are places on the map that were and there are places that still are. The map doesn't exist just in the present but layers it with the past and a projected future. As you watch the screen remember that it is a fun object. An object that helps you belong to the campus in ways that you might not have thought about. An object that takes you a little closer to yourself as you find yourself in the winding pathways of the Nagarbhavi campus of NLSIU.

#### Exhibit 4.

"Postcard Uru", NAB Newspaper Stand (Tuesday through Thursday, 28-30 May)

Postcard Uru is an archive of the city in words and images. What is Bengaluru to you? How do you know it? How have you known it over the years? And, how would you like to know? Do you find any resonances with the postcards? If so, then write one to someone who is, or was, or will be. And, leave it here for the world to read!

#### Exhibit 5.

"Telling the I: Autobiography/History", OAB 105 (Thursday, 30 May, 2:30-4:40 PM)

Come join us for a riveting session of telling histories through the lens of the individual. As you sit with us and listen to the stories think if you can relate and how would you tell your story embedded in histories of race, caste, gender, state, nation, colonialism, and much more. The tellings will be followed by an open house where you are welcome to share your stories with us.