

## Studying with the Social Science Centre: curriculum workshop

June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012 – Croft Street Community Centre

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the SSC curriculum working group met to discuss how to develop the SSC curriculum and organise the specific educational activities (courses, etc.) that are scheduled to begin in October 2012. We have designed a workshop that we hope will help us to organise this process during the meeting on Saturday, June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### Things to think about before we meet

There are a few questions we'd like everyone to think about before the meeting. It may help to look at the schematic of the (working) 'curriculum framework' below for a sense of the different areas of work.

- Are you interested in being actively involved in designing, teaching/facilitating, and/or studying with the SSC at this time? To what extent? Are there other aspects of SSC activity that you'd rather be involved in?
- How (practically) would you like to be involved in the design of curriculum and/or courses at this time? Which parts of this do you hope to be working on? How much time do you think you can and want to commit to this project in the coming months?
- How can the SSC support you to participate and contribute to curriculum development in the ways you would like? How might you be able to support the work of others?<sup>1</sup>

### Where we are at the moment...

We start from the framework that we've been developing for a number of months (see below).

At present, the curriculum framework is organised around four components: (1) a creative project, (2) a 'core' course in social scientific approaches to and perspectives on knowing the world, (3) study in 'scholarly literacies' and (4) exploration of more specialised themes or topics (perhaps through diverse kinds of courses, activities and etc.).

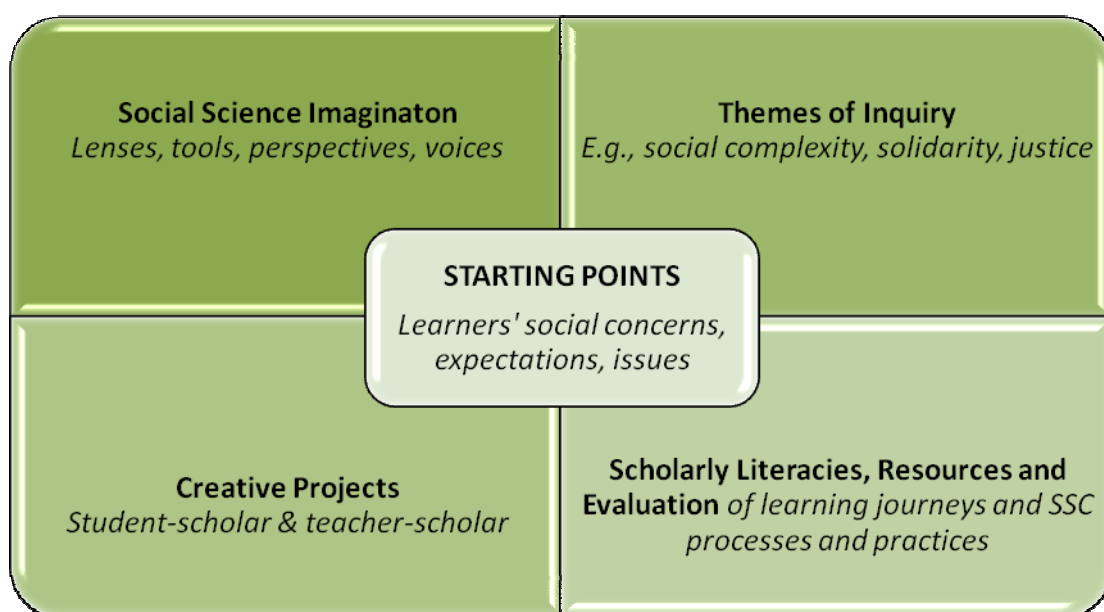
We suggest that these could be connected through:

- the identification of a number of key questions or themes which could be explored by all scholars, from diverse perspectives and stages of learning, for blocks of time (for example, a month) in each of the four areas of work – in this way, the SSC is conceived as a community or communities of scholars engaged in the exploration of key questions, problems and/or themes of social research, in relation to personal interest/need and local environment
- periodic whole-group gatherings to (a) share and discuss work in progress on the above, (b) reflect on the process, relationships and organisation of the project as a whole, and (c) create spaces and time for such collaborative reflection, critique, celebration and revision as a regular feature of the democratic and cooperative learning experiment

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<sup>1</sup> This is broadly conceived to include, for example, assistance with physical access and mobility; childcare; financial resources; transportation, materials, help to work with learning difficulties; intellectual or emotional care or support; guarantee of safe spaces; intellectual expansion; professional learning; skills training, etc.

## The SSC curriculum framework (a work in progress)



### ...and what we hope to accomplish

By the end of the meeting, we hope to have agreed on a general curriculum framework and organise dedicated working groups (for different courses or elements) that have clear plans about preparing for the autumn. We suggest the following questions to get this going:

- What are we teaching, and why? What will be the substance of:
  - the 'core' course on social scientific approaches and perspectives?
  - work on 'scholarly literacies', and our processes of evaluation and creation of resources?
  - the organisation of 'creative projects'?
  - focused themes of inquiry and topical courses?
- For whichever course/component of the curriculum you are working on, consider its:
  - desirability (why teach it, why teach it in the SSC)
  - viability (how it is likely to work in practice)
  - achievability (what practical steps, work, resources are needed to make it work)<sup>2</sup>
  - evaluation and reflection (how you might imagine evaluating the process and work)
- Should we identify a number of guiding questions/themes of inquiry...
  - to frame the curriculum?
  - initially, to frame the curriculum, with a view to renegotiating when possible?
  - gradually, by identifying questions and themes together with student-scholars?

<sup>2</sup> These criteria are adapted from Erik Olin Wright's recommendations for working towards the realisation of 'real utopias', as outlined in Michael Fielding and Peter Moss's *Radical Education and the Common School: A Democratic Alternative* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 140–141.