

Interdisciplinary Studies Today: Featuring the work of Prof. Nevena Stojanovic

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Feature Article: Dr. Nevena Stojanovic

Since we are at the threshold of a new calendar year, it is time to reflect on unique and major contributions to the field of interdisciplinary studies in 2017. To that end, we are talking to Dr. Nevena Stojanovic, Lecturer at West Virginia University, who in Fall 2017 had the honor to serve as the Keynote Speaker and an Honorary Guest Speaker at two international interdisciplinary conferences, organized by Advena World and held in the Washington, DC, metro area, USA. On October 27, Stojanovic delivered the keynote address at the 2017 Global Conference on Humanities, Literature, Cultures, and Arts, presenting her work on interdisciplinary pedagogical methods. On December 1, she was an Honorary Guest Speaker at the 2017 Global Conference on Research, Education, and Policy, where she presented her work on digital humanities and radical performance art.

The methods that she recommends for teaching cultural texts of the past optimize students' understanding and effective analysis of old writing styles across the disciplines. Similarly, her study of the interplay of digital humanities and radical performance art delineates the path of the integration of performance art into college education and of leading the students towards civic engagement.

HZ: Your work on teaching old cultural texts was noticed by Advena World, and they invited you to be the Keynote Speaker at their international interdisciplinary conference. In the humanities, we are often faced with students' resistance towards the writing styles of the past, so what are your recommendations for the instructors who teach older texts?

NS: One of the methods that I recommend in my article on teaching nineteenth-century literature is transmediation. It raised approval from my colleagues at the interdisciplinary symposium. This method allows students to imagine a nineteenth-century novel, short story, play, poem, or any other literary text, in a different genre, and rewrite it or resketch it in that new genre. For instance, some of my students resketched a humorous nineteenth-century novel as a comic strip, which enabled them to analyze the ideological coding embedded in the novel. They were able to see why the author portrayed his characters in a humorous way and how the cultural context in

which the novel was published shaped the author's message. This method can be used in classes on history, philosophy, sociology, etc. Students could rewrite an old historical document or an old philosophical text in a new genre, which would help them decipher the reasons behind the author's aesthetic choices or selection of historical data.

HZ: The topic of your honorary guest address was how radical performance art and digital humanities could work together towards the optimization of the results of our teaching and our students' learning in the humanities. Since the online medium of teaching and learning is one of our primary assets in higher education of the twenty-first century, how could we incorporate performance art, this quite often underrepresented artistic area, in our digital learning environments in order to enhance the outcomes of our students' humanistic education?

NS: In my study, I contend that Guillermo Gómez-Peña's website *La Pocha Nostra* has helped this performance artist reshape the existent artistic cyberspace through the inclusion of marginalized voices via the Internet. Gómez-Peña's performance art group called La Pocha Nostra has been staging live radical performances in different locations in the United States and beyond its borders, motivating audiences to eradicate ethnic stereotyping. The group's website, also named *La Pocha Nostra*, plays an important role in making these performances accessible to cyber-migrants from all over the world. I argue that La Pocha Nostra's performance venues and website could be used to inspire and enable their visitors to eradicate mechanisms of stereotyping in everyday life through the interactions with the staged stereotypical specimens of different ethnic groups and through the temple of confessions on the *La Pocha Nostra* website. In my honorary guest lecture, I demonstrated how the activities that I had designed and tested could be used in classes on literature, sociology, history, communications, philosophy, etc.

Based on the interest raised by her interdisciplinary scholarly work, Stojanovic was invited to serve as the Keynote Speaker at the April 2018 Global Conference on Education, Humanities, and Society Development in Washington, DC. Her presentation will deal with her recent findings on the effective pedagogical methods for helping students build top-quality research projects across the disciplines. All these events highlight the importance of interdisciplinary research in contemporary academia.