

Faculty Research Communication - May 2021

Organized by the HSS Faculty Research Committee

04th May 2021 - 10.a.m via zoom



Abstract: English Departments in Sri Lanka seem to be widely acknowledged for their high standards of education, excellence of students and the rigor of curricula. However, there is an emergent discourse among alumni and faculty that English studies is in crisis today because standards have to be lowered, changed or broadened to accommodate a “radically different” kind of student. Whereas earlier students were from a middle or upper middle class, anglicized, urban, professional milieu, the prospective students are much more diverse, and many are even first-generation undergraduates. How, then, can these newer categories of students be accommodated without doing violence to established norms seems to be a serious concern. While this anxiety dominates the staff and prominent alumni, less attention is paid to the students who, in many cases, have to reinvent themselves to fit into the norms set by English Departments. This study attempts to trace the “evolution” (or transformation) of the English Department students as they try with varying degrees of success and varying social and psychological costs to negotiate a more or less “non-conventional” socio-cultural background and ‘value system’ that is ‘compulsory’ for acceptance.

Bio: Thilini Prasadika is a first-generation graduate of English at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Her BA thesis titled "Fixity and Change: Class and Culture in the Department of English, University of Peradeniya" was an inquiry into the ways in which non-traditional English students navigate the rigorous standards, elite epistemologies and class apartheid in an exclusive academic department. She hosts a weekly podcast titled "[Who is Afraid of the Humanities?](#)" which critically engages with the crisis/crises in the Humanities in different parts of the world. A central focus of her research is studying the crossings of Sri Lankan history, social class, the queer analytic, and the Sinhala-Buddhist problematic. Currently, she is a Masters student in Social and Political Thought (Online Stream) at the Global Center for Advanced Studied, Dublin, Ireland. Thilini is currently a

Temporary Lecturer at the Department of Language Studies.

Zoom Link:

<https://learn.zoom.us/j/68388661254?pwd=dHI3RHlkMFpub1VVeGg4Vlo2aUIBZz09>

Meeting ID: 683 8866 1254

Passcode: t?QeDiC0