

# **Discourse, Subjectivity and Practices of Looking in Higher Education**

**Alejandro Santaflorentina**  
Erasmus Mundus Masters  
Crossways in Cultural Narratives

How do we socially negotiate what is seen or not seen in an institution? This dissertation posits the idea that educational institutions reproduce social exclusions and inequalities both through verbal exchanges and through practices of looking; it aims to apply some theoretical frameworks from the field of visual studies to the study of discourse and subjectivity in the context of higher education. The first part of this dissertation summarizes some of the general currents within the field of sociology of education on the study of the “hidden curriculum,” and, drawing on Foucault’s understanding of disciplinary power, proposes a theoretical approach based in three axes of analysis – i.e., the technical capacities, the systems of communication, and the relationships of power. Following this approach, the second part of this dissertation presents a case study at the University of Guelph. Autoethnographic methods, visual methodologies and qualitative interviews are combined to collect data that are examined according to the defined axes of analysis. Different pedagogical approaches that draw from art education and critical theory are offered to address the non-verbal processes identified within each axis of analysis: “invisible pedagogies” deal with the discursive aspects of the pedagogical settings; “pedagogies of touch” address the role of affect and the body in the reproduction of discourse; and “performative pedagogies” are used to address power relations and to allow for multiple subject-positions in the student-teacher relationship. All of these approaches draw on concepts currently being used in curriculum studies, the aim of this dissertation being to contribute to the development of critical perspectives in relation to the role of the visual in educational research.