You are cordially invited to the launch of PESGB IMPACT 26

‘Powerful knowledge’, ‘cultural literacy’ and the study of literature in schools

by Robert Eaglestone

Online  Tues 15 June  17:30-19:30

17:30  Welcome from Impact Chair and PESGB Chair - Michael Hand
17:40  Presentation - Robert Eaglestone
18:10  Responses from Invited Speakers:
     - Barbara Bleiman, co-editor of emagazine
     - Dr Rachel Roberts, chair of the National Association for the Teaching of English
     - Dr Bethan Marshall, author of English Teachers: The Unofficial Guide
18:40  Robert’s Responses
18:50  Plenary discussion / Q&A
19:20  Closing Remarks

Abstract: This pamphlet tells the story of a mistake which is having a destructive impact on the teaching of English literature and the humanities more widely in this county. The mistake is a philosophical error with real-world in-the-class-room consequences. ‘Powerful knowledge’ and ‘cultural literacy’ have dominated education and education policy. Both have advantages, both have also provoked political controversy; generally, conservatives have strongly supported them while progressives attacked them. But this political aspect is not the focus of this pamphlet. Instead, there is something in both at the deepest level which means that they do not fit the study of English, and the attempts to make them fit are deforming the subject and its teaching.

- Why do ‘powerful knowledge’ and ‘cultural literacy’ not ‘fit’ the study of literature?
- What ‘in-the-class-room’ damage is this doing?
- How can we fix this?
- What does this tell us about disciplines and about education?
- How might we rebalance our national conversation about teaching?

Robert Eaglestone is Professor of Contemporary Literature and Thought at Royal Holloway, University of London. He works on contemporary literature and literary theory, contemporary philosophy and on Holocaust and Genocide studies. He is the author of seven books including Doing English (4th ed 2017) and Literature: Why it matters (2019), and co-editor of ten more, including English: Shared Futures (2018). He has advised the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority, DfE and OfQual. He is a National Teaching Fellow (2014).

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