



[Dr Craig Hammond](#) is an Associate Professor in Pedagogies and Critical Theory at Liverpool John Moores University and a National Teaching Fellow (2022). His work focuses on creativity, alternative and critical pedagogies, and innovative approaches to higher education, including autoethnography and heutagogy. Craig serves as Deputy Director of the [Liverpool Institute for Research in Education](#) (LIFE) and leads the (Post)qualitative Research in Education group.

He has an extensive background in teaching and research, beginning his career in further education before moving into higher education, and completed a PhD in Sociology at Lancaster University. Craig is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and an active contributor to national and international education-focused networks, including the [Association for Research in Post-compulsory Education](#) (ARPCE).

An accomplished scholar, he has published widely on critical theory, pedagogy, and higher education, his most recent book is *Music, Hope and Transformation through Higher Education*. He is also Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal [PRISM](#) and plays a significant role in mentoring researchers.

## **Talk title**

‘Beyond Oedipus and the Academic Sphinx: An Expedition towards Concrete Hope’

## **Abstract**

What happens to hope in contemporary higher education, and how might we reclaim it?

In this presentation, Dr Craig Hammond will draw on personal narrative, critical theory, and cultural experience to explore the tensions between control and possibility within the university. Tracing a journey from a working-class background to

academia, the talk foregrounds music as a powerful, lived source of hope and transformation, offering an affective and experiential lens through which to reimagine educational pathways.

Using the metaphors of *Oedipus* and the *Academic Sphinx*, the presentation critiques dominant structures within higher education that bind learners through disciplinary norms, assessment regimes, and institutional hierarchies. These powerful influences, it will be argued, often constrain autonomy, silence individuality, and reproduce limiting forms of knowledge and authority. Against this backdrop, delegates will be invited to consider how higher education might move beyond constraint toward transformative, democratic practices that value creativity, agency, and personal meaning-making.

The presentation concludes by proposing a series of experimental “expeditions” for teaching, learning, and research, approaches that metaphorically “unbind the ankles” of learners. These include autoethnography, psychogeography, and heutagogy; each offering ways to challenge academic orthodoxy and cultivate more hopeful, exploratory educational futures.