

Teaching – Research Day 2022

School of Social Sciences and Global Studies

Saturday, November 26, 2022 - 10:45 to 15:00 - Online

Morning Disciplinary Parallel Sessions

11:00 am to 11:40 am

Development Policy and Practice

Matt Staples ‘Soft power and the battle for influence in West Africa’

This talk will explore how West Africa has become the arena for competition between the China and states whose influence stems from either a colonial legacy such as France and Britain or the cold war, such as the United States. The presentation will explore the concept of ‘soft power’ and the different ways it is manifesting itself in this area and explore whether the current situation lends itself to great agency for West African states’ in defining their relationships with other states.

Geography

Dr Ruth Slatter: ‘Faith and friendship, and the geographical proximity of friendship networks’

This session will discuss research into the importance of friendships in faith spaces. In this session we will explore the relationships between space and friendships, particularly the implications of where we meet with friends, the geographical proximity of friendship networks, and the use of online spaces to develop and maintain friendships.

POLIS – Politics and International Studies

Dr Precious Chatterje-Doody and Dr Filippo Boni: ‘Russia’s invasion of Ukraine’

Two international relations experts from POLIS will present their thoughts on the war in Ukraine. Dr Chatterje-Doody works on historical memory and identity in international relations and Russia’s use of media. She will talk about the background to the conflict and Russia’s attempts at historical justifications for the invasion. Dr Boni works on China’s foreign relations and will explore China’s role in the Ukraine crisis.

Philosophy

Dr Jon Pike: ‘What does “fairness” in sport amount to?’

The International Olympic Committee, and others, say that ‘meaningful competition’ allows a situation where athletes with male advantage can compete with female athletes. Dr Pike argues that fair competition in sex categories means excluding those with male advantage from female competition. In this talk I will argue against several objections to the claim that

transwomen should be excluded from female sport. I offer this as an example of applied philosophical analysis.

Religious Studies

Dr David Robertson: 'How does the study of religion help us to understand conspiracy theories like QAnon or the antivaccine movement?'

From fears of Satanic paedophile cannibals in Washington to 5G affecting our chakras, there are plenty of examples of conspiracy theories as, in and about religion, but are there underlying structural reasons for why they are such frequent bedfellows? Dr Robertson will talk about how Religious Studies can help us understand how different ideas become popular in the marketplace of stigmatised knowledge, and how these ideas move through religious and conspiratorial spheres.

Social Policy and Criminology

Dr Matthew Cole: 'How can theoretical concepts like 'power' and 'discourse' help us research harms against nonhuman animals?'

This session focuses on how key themes and concepts in criminology, such as power, discourse, the state and resistance, can be used inform research into harms against nonhuman animals. This exciting new research direction both challenges 'conventional' criminology, but also opens up the potential for criminology to challenge 'conventional' harms against animals. The session will highlight examples of how research for nonhuman animals is embedded into our criminology modules.

Sociology

Professor Sophie Watson: 'Key ideas of Sociology in our contemporary world'

This session will introduce students to the key ideas of sociology at the current time. Explore what is meant by digital societies and social worlds. Discuss how an understanding of social theory gives new insights into understanding the society in which we live. Students will have a chance to discuss their own understanding of what a sociological imagination means and how it helps explain different contemporary social issues and questions.

Afternoon Themed Parallel Sessions

1:00 pm to 1:50 pm

Session A: Climate, Technology, Sustainability

Dr Les Levidow, *Development Policy and Practice*: 'Digital storytelling and local food-growing initiatives'

Local food-growing initiatives around the world sought to respond to the Covid-19 crisis, by building communities for better futures. Dr Levidow will talk about his recent research project, for which he established collaborations with many food-growing organisations. The

project was structured as a course in visual storytelling, using methods from Participatory Action Research (PAR), meaning that the researcher and the participants worked together to change things for the better. The project showed that digital storytelling can improve social inclusion, build community bonds, and strengthen ecological resilience.

Dr Maria Nita, *Religious Studies*: Green Christians and Muslims – what can religious communities teach us about sustainability?’

How are religious communities greening their faith traditions? How are they revising their practices and responding to the climate crisis? Dr Maria Nita will speak about her research with Green Christians and Muslims in the UK, looking at what we could learn from these religious communities about sustainability and resilience.

Session B: Health, Wellbeing, Biodiversity

Dr Cristina Santos, *Economics*: ‘Learning from cancer patients’

This session discusses how our research identified barriers and facilitators of cancer patients accessing cancer care in Tanzania and in Kenya. While often the assessment of cancer care systems pre-empt why cancer patients fail to present themselves early, and pre-empt how systems can be improved, asking patients in an open interview, about their experiences and perceptions, challenged pre-conceived ideas.

Dr Azita Chellappoo, *Philosophy*: ‘Is “obesity” a disease?’

This session will explore how the larger body size has often been perceived as a moral failing. Recently, it has been argued that ‘obesity’ is in fact a disease. Alternatively, others have argued that ‘fatness’ is best understood as a socially marginalised category. I unpack what is at stake in these debates, and how philosophy can illuminate them.

Session C: Conflict, Peace Security

Dr Ruth Slatter, *Geography*: ‘International Exhibitions as Spaces of Conflict, Peace, and Security’

During the nineteenth century a series of international exhibitions were held across the western world. Specifically focusing on London’s 1862 International Exhibition, this presentation will explore how the material things in these exhibitions were on the front line of international industrial warfare, collaboration, and defense.

Dr Dan Taylor, *POLIS – Politics and International Studies*: ‘Talking about politics when the house is on fire’

The climate crisis is here. This year the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) warned that it is having ‘widespread and pervasive’ impacts, some ‘irreversible’. From extreme weather to droughts and wildfires, and from species extinctions to collapses in farming and flooded urban areas. Up to 3.6 billion people are highly vulnerable. And it is forecast to get worse. As Greta Thunberg put it, ‘our house is on fire’. What happens next is a subject for politics and social science.

Session D: Migration, Race, Equality

Prof Gerry Mooney, *Social Policy & Criminology*: 'How do boundaries and borders shape OU lives?'

Despite repeated claims over recent decades that geography no longer matters, that 'we' can go anywhere, barriers to the movement of people are becoming more and more significant. That is barriers for certain populations. In a world where borders and boundaries are seemingly an ever-growing dimension of everyday life, this presentation explores the multiple ways boundaries shape our lives and considers why this matters.

Dr Ece Kocabicak, *Sociology*: 'Gender, class, race, and migration – themes and questions'

This talk will introduce sociological research addressing the themes of gender, class, race, and ethnicity based social inequalities as well as migration undertaken by members of the Sociology department. By focusing on a few case studies, the impact of the research conducted by sociologists in our school will also be explored.

Keynote lecture

2:00 pm to 2:45 pm

Dr Paul-François Tremlett, *Religious Studies*: 'Protest, religion and social justice – Occupy Hong Kong and beyond'

The sociology of religion is sometimes thought of as a field of academic enquiry concerned with beliefs and practices that are of declining relevance in the contemporary world. Drawing in the first instance upon research conducted in Hong Kong, I will argue to the contrary that social scientific approaches to religions provide an important lens for making sense of contemporary conjunctions of culture and politics in different parts of the world.