PhD Research seminars (Social Sciences)

2013-2014

Semester A, Wednesdays
Room: BS.3.14, 11-1 pm

Seminar co-ordinator: Maria Tamboukou

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Induction session (the craft of PhD)</th>
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Wednesday 25 September, 2013

The PhD Induction day is designed to help all new research students settle into life here at UEL. The programme covers many different aspects of life as a research student and there will be plenty of opportunity for questions you may have about your research, your PhD, and about life at UEL.

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<th>11-11.15</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maria Tamboukou</td>
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<td>(LSS Research Degrees Leader)</td>
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<td>(Phil Rees) Research Administrator for Social Sciences</td>
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11.15 – 11.45
Expectations of doing a PhD
students’ and supervisors’ perspectives
Group work and discussion

11.45 – 12.00
Life Stories of the PhD
Existing PhD students discussing their experiences,

12.00-12.30
Research administration
things to do and dates to remember

12.30-1.00
Research Support / teaching during your research/research centres, seminars and activities
Week 2
Library workshop
October 2nd
Presenter: Robin Sinson
A workshop with the UEL Social Sciences librarian

Week 3
Thinking, Doing
October 9th
A round table discussion around the importance of theory in research
Discussants: Maria Tamboukou, Erika Cudworth

Suggested reading:


Weeks 4, 5
Thinking with the situationists: Lefebvre and de Certeau
October 16th, 23rd.
Presenter: Myrto Tsilimpoundi

The Situationists, central to the Paris uprising in May 1968, continue to inspire theorists, artists and activists around the world. One theme central to their work was *rethinking the city*: from a site of routine consumption and work to a utopia that breaks down barriers between function and play.

The first seminar focuses on the work of Lefebvre and de Certeau, offering a reading of cities as living organisms and multi-layered terrains for sociological investigation. We are going to unpack the tensions between the hegemonic, official cityscapes and the numerous hidden urban terrains: between real and imagined places in which material networks parallel the maps of hopes and attitudes.

The second seminar offers some methodological compasses in order to explore cities as dynamic environments in which space and people
mutually create one another. In accordance with the Situationists, this seminar is a manifesto for interdisciplinary methods.

**Suggested Readings:**
McKenzie, W. (2011) *The Beach Beneath the*

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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Reading Week</th>
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<th>Weeks 7-8</th>
<th>Thinking with Bauman in Liquid Modernity</th>
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<td>November 6th, 13th</td>
<td>Presenter: Giorgia Dona</td>
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Bauman uses the metaphor of ‘solid’ and ‘liquid’ modernity to examine the ways in which the world has changed, and to identify the challenges and ambiguities that these transformations entail. His work has covered a broad range of topics ranging from violence to consumerism and from broad social issues like globalization to more intimate emotions like love and fear.

The first seminar is dedicated to the analysis of Bauman’s solid and liquid modernity, and their distinctive features and ambiguities. In the second seminar we will explore how Bauman’s thought can influence our research. I will give examples of how Bauman’s analysis of modernity and the Holocaust has influenced my work on violence and genocide; his use of the figure of ‘stranger’ is applicable to my research on forced migrants and asylum seekers; and his analysis of social networks and consumerism is informing my new research area on young diasporic communities and virtual realities.
References:

http://neilsquire.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/35116162/Bauman-Liquid%EE%80%80Modernity%EE%80%81.pdf


http://www.faculty.umb.edu/lawrence_blum/courses/290h_09/readings/bauman_intro.pdf


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**Weeks 9-10**

Thinking with Bourdieu: thinking about the ‘theory effect’

November 20th, 27th

Presenter: Derek Robbins

Rather seeking to damn Bourdieu with faint praise, Richard Jenkins wrote in 1992 that Bourdieu ‘is ... enormously good to think with’ (Jenkins, R., 1992, *Pierre Bourdieu*, London, Routledge, p 11.) We shall look at who Bourdieu thought with and the consequences of this for how we think with him. We shall also consider the implications of what Bourdieu called the ‘theory effect’.

Suggested reading:

Weeks 11, 12
Thinking with Popper and misunderstanding positivism

December 4th, 11th
Presenter: Jon Griffith

Suggested readings

Relevant sections (and other related material) available at (or via):
http://www.autodidactproject.org/other/positivismusstreit/contents.html
In his seminal work *Of Grammatology* (1967) Jacques Derrida problematizes, among other things, the notion of origin, proposing a deconstructive approach to Rousseau's texts that postulated and corroborated this notion's importance. Decades later, in his *Technics and Time* (1994), Bernard Stiegler revisits 'origin' in his discussion of the notion of the human, man's relation to nature and technics, the philosophical relationship between subjects and objects and the practical difficulties of living in an ever-changing technological world.

In this seminar we will focus on Stiegler's main arguments on origin and man's relation to technics as expressed in the first volume of *Technics and Time*. We will also explore the affinities of Stiegler's approach and method to Derrida's thought. We will also draw on Stiegler's discussion of 'Prometheus' as a myth of origin and consider the importance and function of (myths of) origin in contemporary philosophy and culture.

Proposed Readings:
Weeks, 3, 4
Thinking with Jeffrey Alexander and the Social Construction of Suffering

February 19th, 26th
Presenter: Eric Woods

Why do some traumatic events take on great significance, whereas others are ignored? In this seminar, we will consider Jeffrey Alexander's claim that suffering must go through a symbolic process before it is recognized as such.

Suggested Readings:


Week, 5, 6
Thinking with Marx

March 5th, 12th
Presenter: Bob Cannon

During my youth I would have called myself a Marxist and in my dotage I remain close to and appreciative of Marx’s critical writings. They not only inspired me towards a greater understanding of economic mechanisms and their theorization but also Marx’s philosophical debt to Hegel. Only for me to discover that you could not understand Hegel without an understanding of Kant and you couldn’t understand Kant without an understanding of Hume, Leibniz and Descartes all the way back to Aristotle and Plato.

Today I remain engaged with Marx’s writings – but I am critical of his scientific critique of capitalism. The recent economic crisis, which brought the near meltdown of the financial sector, has seen a resurgence of interest in
Marx’s writings. But this has only made me more aware of their deficiencies. Above all, I question Marx’s reliance on a labour theory of value to render capitalism unjust – especially as Marx treats labour as a mere facet of self-valorizing value (capital). This has got me thinking about the way in which (a) social movements (such as the labour movement) render capitalism unjust (in the absence of a labour theory of value), and (b) money performs normative tasks in a reified guise.

There is much talk today about the immorality of capitalism. Pope Francis recently condemned capitalism for putting money before humanity. But there is insufficient understanding of the way money performs normative tasks, such as the allocation of social value (conferring a worth of billions on a few and little or none on billions). Few question the ethics of allowing an impersonal economic system to decide our social worth (or worthlessness). Were it not for the state intervening to curb the callous excesses of capitalism, the system would collapse under the weight of its own inhumanity. We still need a radical critique of capitalism as pioneered by Marx, but this critique needs to be rethought along ethical lines.

**Suggested Readings:**


**Weeks 7, 8**  
**Thinking with Stuart Hall**

March 19th, 26th  
Presenter: Gargi Bhattacharyya

Stuart Hall, with others, established a rich tradition of thinking and work that brought together attention to the detail of popular cultures and practices with an examination of larger historical shifts. His work encourages us to think reflexively about our own moment and our own formation, in order to consider the meanings of everyday life and the important question of ‘what is to be done?’

We will discuss the implications of Hall’s work for an understanding of our own time of crises.

Reading  
*Stuart Hall, Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (Routledge, 1996)  
*The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Stuart Hall (Verso, 1988)  
*Policing the Crisis, mugging, the state and law and order*, Hall et al (Macmillan, 1978)

**Weeks 9, 10**  
**Easter Vacation**

**Weeks 11, 12**  
**Thinking with Haraway**

April 23rd, 30th  
Presenter: Erika Cudworth

Donna Haraway is an influential thinker in twenty-first century feminist theory and her work has informed debates on the nature of feminist knowledge (and epistemology more widely), the conceptualising of agency and the mutual constitution of forms of social exclusion. You do not have to agree with Haraway or to like her writing to see that her work pushes us to think differently and unsettles many of our assumptions. For example, Haraway’s conception of “situated knowledges” encourages a shift from humancentrism and Eurocentrism, amongst other exclusive frames. Haraway’s concepts of "naturecultures", "cyborgs", and "companion species" have also been important in debates about the problems of humanist thought and the development of ‘new materialism’.
Reading:


