Seminar schedule academic year 2013/14

The Department convene an annual series of seminars involving a 40 minute presentation followed by discussion with a range of internal and external speakers. All members of staff and PG students from the department attend and guests are welcome.

The seminars are held on Wednesdays, from 1.30 pm.

30 October 2013

Speaker: Ms Rose Holyoak (Leicester Sociology)

“When You Find Your Own Femininity, Declare It For Yourself, It’s Super Lush”: Young Women Negotiating Femininity in Social Movement Activism

Abstract: Young women have been identified as ideal subjects of neoliberalism and have been heralded signifiers of the future. The ideological dominance of neoliberalism, the global economic crisis and government attacks on the welfare state have coincided with pornification, celebrity culture and the revival of traditional domestic femininity to make young women’s production of flexible biographies and identities more challenging. The very same young women have been at the heart of academic concerns about political apathy and alienation; post-feminism positions young women as socially powerful but apolitical, rejecting the spectre of the hairy-legged feminist in favour of the individualist entrepreneurialism of reality TV celebrities. However, such theories fail to address young women’s increasing participation in activist politics since the new millennium. From Occupy and the Arab Spring to newly reinvigorated feminist and anti-fascist movements, young women are at the heart of radical political organising. Theoretical links between femininity and political participation have been considered previously, not least by feminists of the second wave. This paper considers the contemporary ideals of young femininity in the context of hypersexualisation, shifting gender roles and motherhood. Using qualitative data it explores how young women in contemporary UK anarchist and environmental movements engage with notions of femininity in formulating and performing activist identities. It examines cases in which performances of specific femininities are utilised as protest tactics; explores the opportunities that counterhegemonic cultures of social movements provide for interrogating and reformulating performances of femininity; and considers what we can learn about agency and politics from these young women’s experiences.

6 November 2013

Speaker: Dr David Bartram (Leicester Sociology)

Happiness Among North-to-south Migrants in Europe

Abstract: A core finding of research in happiness studies - which concludes that achieving an increase in one's income does not generally bring greater happiness - suggests that economic migration (motivated by hopes of an increased income) would not bring greater happiness. Income
affects happiness mainly via the way it signals status, and many immigrants in wealthier countries have a lower status in the destination society than in their origin society. This paper considers that scenario "in reverse": people who move from wealthier countries to poorer ones might attain a higher status position in the destination, relative to the status they enjoyed in their country of origin - and, if so, then perhaps they would experience an increase in happiness. The paper assesses that proposition via analysis of European Social Survey data on people moving from wealthier countries in northern Europe to Mediterranean destinations such as Spain, Portugal and Greece.

20 November 2013

Speaker: Professor Carlo Ruzza (Leicester Sociology/University of Trento)

Civil Society Actors and EU Fundamental Rights Policy: Opportunities and Challenges

Abstract: This presentation examines how civil society actors in the EU utilise the political and legal opportunities provided by the EU Fundamental Rights policy to mobilize against discrimination, and notably racism and xenophobia. It emphasises the multiple enabling roles that this policy provides to civil society associations engaged in judicial activism, political advocacy, and service delivery both at EU level and in Member States, and assesses their effectiveness. It describes several factors that hinder the implementation of EU fundamental rights policy and reviews the strategies of civil society to overcome them. It highlights the reluctance of parts of public opinion to combat ethnic prejudice; considers reactions against what at a time of crisis is perceived as a costly project of social regulation; and examines civil society responses. The data sources consist of interviews with bureaucratic and civil society actors at EU level.

27 November 2013

Speaker: Professor Nick Crossley (Sociology/Mitchell Centre for Social Network Analysis, Manchester)


Abstract: In this paper I discuss both the role of social networks in the generation of the first wave of punk in London between 1975-1976 and the utility of social network analysis, as a method, for exploring patterns of connection and their effects. The presentation will not presuppose prior familiarity with network analysis and some time will be spent, at the start, briefly explaining what it is.

4 December 2013

Speaker: Professor John Thompson (Cambridge)

Merchants of Culture: On the Logic of the Publishing Field

Abstract: The world of Anglo-American trade publishing in the early 21st Century looks very different from the world that existed in the 1960s and before. A set of profound structural changes – economic, social and technological – has transformed the industry and given rise to new organizations and actors whose interrelations now define the practices of the trade. In this talk I will analyse the key changes that have brought about this transformation and assess some of its
consequences. By reconstructing what I call 'the logic of the field' of trade publishing, I can shed fresh light on why some books become bestsellers while many thousands of others find themselves marooned in an industry increasingly focused on short-term growth and profitability. I also show how the industry is being disrupted by a technological revolution that is forcing every player in the field to reconsider its position in the new value chains that are emerging around ebooks. Based on five years of research and more than 280 interviews with publishers, agents, booksellers, authors and others in London and New York, I provide an in-depth account of how the world of trade publishing really works and the key challenges it faces today.

11 December 2013

Speaker: Dr Richard Courtney (Centre for Labour Market Studies, Leicester)

Dirty People and Effluence Economies: Identity and Resentment in the 'Old' Working Class

Abstract: This paper will draw upon data collected between 2004 and 2006 in Thurrock, Essex. It represents a strand of enquiry from my PhD that failed to make it into the 'final cut'. The data relates to the ways in which an identity was fostered in many local instances that illustrated an ambivalence to the concept of 'dirt'; it was at once viewed as positive, whilst also being used to mark out 'others'. 'Dirt' is conventionally viewed as a symbolic threat to one's own purity and largely manifests in social discourse as negative stereotypes and boundary maintenance. However, this paper will re-conceptualise 'dirt', by highlighting the difference between dirt as uncleanness and dirt as effluence. The latter concept of effluence will be used as way to avoid the 'medical materialism' usually conjured by anthropologists when attempting to identify non-cultural pre-cursors of discourses on dirt. The paper will argue that, in the context of 'old' working class community, concepts of dirt and effluence tell us much more about subjective understandings of the economy than they do about medical and clinical knowledge on dirt. The importance of this observation will be signalled through the wider political ramifications of identifying with and in reference to dirt; upon which conclusions will be drawn about the role of qualitative research and the development of sociological theory.

12 February 2014

Speaker: Professor Rachel Thomson (Sussex)

Objects, Affects and the Research Process: Conversations with Grandmothers

Abstract: In this paper I reflect on what happened when grandmothers were invited to select two objects for discussion at interviews: one representing their past and one their present and future. These interviews took place as part of a longitudinal qualitative study of family dynamics arising from the arrival of a new generation, and constituted the women’s second encounter with the researcher over a four-year period. The resulting interviews were highly charged with emotion, facilitating a different quality of communication than had taken place previously. The materiality of the object appeared to facilitate the communication of affect, in such as way that the interaction between the researcher and the researched became the site of a heightened and creative potential for the generation of insight. In this paper I describe the method and the way that different participants responded to the initial invitation, before focusing in detail on one object and the interaction that arose from it. The example explores the ways in which objects can exceed
conventional approaches to narration, capturing something of the paradoxical character of experience, communicating more than would be possible in words. The discussion is located within current interest in material culture, temporal processes and psychosocial methods.

19 March 2014

**Speaker:** Edmund Chattoe-Brown (Leicester Sociology)

**Time To Move On? Understanding Migration Using Agent-Based Modelling**