

Let's Talk About [X]

Day One: Wednesday 10 Feb
Gregory Building 109

1: Jamie Gallagher

Public engagement & public speaking Keynote presentation

Jamie is the University of Glasgow's Public Engagement Officer. He spoke to our attendees about the beauty and the skill of speaking to non-specialist audience. Jamie's role at the University is to support and facilitate staff and research students participating in public engagement, helping them to make an impact with their work beyond academia.

2: John Lindberg

Nuclear power securitisation

Mention the word nuclear and most people will automatically associate it with images of a mushroom cloud and death. This narrative of fear surrounds nuclear weapons since the day they were unleashed over Hiroshima. In the 1960s the narrative was transferred from nuclear weapons to also include nuclear power. But how, and why, were these vastly different technologies, that have similar names, joined up in fear? My research has looked at nuclear power through the lens of securitisation theory, a theory that looks at how issues are framed in the public debate as existential threats. The talk will focus on the role of fear, images and security in politics, and how this is used to create a narrative of fear and distrust surrounding nuclear power. Why is this important? Nuclear power is the best way to effectively combat climate change and fear-fuelled myths should not prevent us from saving our planet.

3: Christina Tsirigoti

Multiple sclerosis: HIV drug treatment

BBC News posted a case of a patient with Multiple Sclerosis who was claimed to have been treated during a 28-day-medication of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) anti-retrovirals; Multiple Sclerosis symptoms reoccurred after the end of the treatment. It is unknown what causes Multiple Sclerosis, but theories include virus infection linked to Human Endogenous Retroviruses (HERVs). Only a few case reports include AIDS patients with Multiple Sclerosis at the same time. A theory suggests that since Multiple Sclerosis is linked to HERVs and most probably to HIV, then HIV antiretroviral therapies could coincidentally ameliorate Multiple Sclerosis. The most common HIV combination treatment that patients are given for HIV infection is called Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy (HAART). There has been a design of a clinical trial with anti-retrovirals in order to treat Multiple Sclerosis patients who are not infected with HIV named INSPIRE, which is studying the drug Raltegravir. Results from clinical studies based on the efficacy of drugs like Raltegravir in combination with improved future diagnosis by Polymerase Chain reaction (PCR) in biopsy proven brain demyelinating lesions and correct CD4 profile characterizations, will assist in finding the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis.

4: Maria Constantinidou

Religiosity in history

Many consider history to be only about dates, wars, and kings. However, history is far more than that: it is about identifying any change or continuity from the past through using primary sources. In my research, I have used oral history interviews I conducted during the summer, to show the complicated relationship between the Greek-Cypriot society with the Orthodox religion and Church. With 92% of the population claiming to believe in God, modern Cyprus is believed to be one of the most religious countries in Europe and appears to be immune to the process of secularisation. However, it has broken from the past in that people do not adhere to religion as they used to.

5: William Hooker

Satellites and space-faring

My work focused on the stabilisation of small satellites in low Earth orbit using, you would not believe, aerodynamic surfaces! A lot of people are interested in space, especially with Tim Peake's recent stationing on the ISS and exciting missions planned for future space travel, so I believe that people would find it fascinating to see what's going on "beneath the hood" of most spacecraft! My talk will look at some of the mechanisms used to control, power, and stabilise spacecraft, and take a look at what the future holds for mankind's travel into the outer reaches of our solar system. The aim of my talk is to show people that space is not only accessible to aeronautical engineers and astronauts, but that everyone can get involved in this great venture to space and beyond!

6: Emily Jamieson

Genetics in Drug Discovery

The development of new drugs is a lengthy and expensive process, with almost 90% of drugs entering phase 1 clinical trials failing on the path to approval as medicines (Hay et al., 2014). Using genetic analysis to inform the discovery process can greatly increase the chance of a drug progressing through each phase of clinical trials. Looking at which genetic variants occur more often in people with a particular disease can (a) present novel drug targets for investigation; and (b) allow failing drugs to be targeted towards specific sub-populations of patients who are most likely to respond. In a novel analysis of a genome-wide association study I have uncovered three plausibly causal variants at a known schizophrenia risk locus. This could point towards the mechanism of action at the locus, which may in turn suggest a new approach to treating the condition. This methodology has the potential to enhance future drug discovery efforts.

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7: Walther Glodstaf

Forming non-gendered sentences

With issues surrounding gender being explicitly addressed in various election debates and campaigns around the world such as the parliamentary and presidential election in Canada, the US, Sweden and, it is safe to say that our stance on the topic of gender equality has been changing. With the fairly recent push in Sweden for academics and public service servants to use gender neutral language, I set out and explain how one can form gender-neutral sentences in English and Spanish (two languages that place varying importance on gender in their grammar) to deliver a methodology for constructing gender-neutral sentences within the confines of the existing grammar.

The presentation will go through two attempts on achieving this that stem from government policies as well as fictional works such as 'Left Hand of Darkness' by Ursula K. Le Guin and 'Woman on the Edge of Time, He, She and It' by Marge Piercy, and evaluate each method's strengths and weaknesses, as well as why each method failed to gain significant traction and use in language. Based on that evaluation, a third method will be proposed that aims to work within the confines of grammar without compromising on the goal of achieving truly gender-neutral sentences.

8: Aron Kecskes

Mediterranean history

Despite huge efforts by medievalists, the Middle Ages continues to be perceived an immensely fragmented age. Mediterranean history as a field challenges this assumption by examining the vast inter-connected geographic, social and political unit that was the Mediterranean and its surroundings in the Medieval period. From antiquity to the Atlantic shift of the late 15th - early 16th century, the Mediterranean acted as the primary area of cultural, political and economic interaction between territories in Europe, Africa and Asia. By examining specific interactions and the unit as a whole we gain valuable insight on many levels that allows, for example, the analysis of isolated political actions as parts of a Mediterranean trend. It also allows to explain cultural or economic shifts in a wider context. Thus, Mediterranean history undertakes a specific case study of a socio-economic unit, which can be of immense value in both history and the social sciences.

9: Pamela Atanasova

Trichotillomania

Trichotillomania, or hair-pulling disorder, is a condition that affects up to 4% of the population. People who have it often suffer in silence and do their best to conceal their condition. This paper explores if people with trichotillomania who are "out" would demonstrate positive self-evaluations and lower self-stigma compared to those "in the closet".

What results showed was that those trichsters who have disclosed their condition to someone display lower scores on stereotype endorsement, alienation, and social withdrawal, compared to those who have decided to hide their trichotillomania. They also scored higher on measures of hope, willingness to ask for help, goal and success orientation. Fear of negative evaluation scores did not differ, but pulling-related discomfort was significantly lower in the "out" group.

"Coming out proud" is advantageous for reducing maladaptive thought processes in trichotillomania. As the condition is unpredictable and difficult to treat these results can inform both treatment providers and self-reported trichsters about the benefits of disclosure for living with trichotillomania.

10: Ronja Soerensen

Bicycling: inclusion and equity

While cycling is increasingly promoted as a healthy, sustainable, and affordable mode of transportation, little attention is given to who bikes, for what reasons people cycle and where bicycle infrastructures are implemented. My research uses Canada's largest city, Toronto, as case study example to examine the extent to which cycle organisations address issues of gender, class and race in their advocacy work.

Disclosing some of the complex and uneven geographies of urban cycling and bike infrastructure, my research shows that closer attention is needed to issues of equity, inclusiveness and identity if wishing to create a bicycle community which does not only include the "downtown white, middle-class, male cyclists". My aim is to convey my findings through this talk such that a broader audience is aware of equity and inclusion issues around active modes of transportation.

11: Lea Balint

Sociology of the comedy of Louis C.K.

This project is a cultural analysis. I analyse a show by a stand-up comedian Louis C. K. and drawing on the works of anthropologists, philosophers and social theorists I try to find an answer to the question of why we (the audience) find something comic. I explain laughter to be something social, and what we find funny as something socially constructed which must therefore reveal something about Western society. Louis C. K.'s show is funny because it brings to the surface taken-for-granted social norms, something similar to what sociologists do. I try to explain his jokes about his body, his marriage and family, and the social patterns they express and mock. All in all, sociology's role is to "de-familiarize the familiar", as Bauman writes, which means to question and explore the evident and the taken-for-granted around us, and this is what I will try to do.

12: Holly Waller

Solar eruptions: the effects on us

Do you enjoy using the internet, electricity and transport that does not, for example, fall out of the sky? If so then this talk is of vital importance to you and everyone you know.

Coronal mass ejections are immense "explosions" occurring on the Sun. They send vast quantities of high energy particles and electromagnetic radiation hurtling out into space. When these particles hit the Earth, they can cause electronic systems to fail in a phenomena known as a single event effect, or even cause wide spread damage to the national grid. The Carrington event in 1859 was a large solar storm which caused fires in telephone wires and aurora as far south as Cuba. If an event of this magnitude hit the Earth today, the resulting disruption would be disastrous.

There are a few events associated with CMEs, two of these being large flares and prominence eruptions. These events are often highly interlinked. As we currently do not understand how prominences evolve, prediction of CMEs associated with erupting prominences is limited to waiting for one to happen and calculating how long until the energetic particles reach the Earth. Current research is working hard to model events such as magnetic reconnection – a possible cause of erupting prominences – and compare the results with observations in an effort to increase our prediction time from a few hours to days.