



Durham
University

Research and
Innovation Services

Inspiring the extraordinary

**Connect: a newsletter for our Members
of Parliament
3rd Edition**



At Durham University, we are justifiably proud of the strength of our Faculty of Arts and Humanities with its top 20 place in the Times Higher World University Rankings 2021. But what are the Arts and Humanities and why do they matter?

In brief, we study the languages, arts, cultures, philosophies and texts that have shaped our world, providing insights into our rapidly changing and complex environment and nurturing thoughtful, critical and engaged citizens equipped to make sense of difficult and challenging times. We provide tools for analysis, interpretation and expression, tools to discuss and compare models of human life and flourishing, tools for imagining the future. Our work is grounded in core disciplines, but we have a strong track record of interdisciplinary collaboration, generating new and important knowledge in critical areas such as health and medicine, digital and data science, environmental sustainability, and creativity, culture and heritage.

There is much about living through a global pandemic that none of us yet fully understand, but in the Arts and Humanities at Durham we are offering practical responses that help make sense of the experience. As the examples included in this newsletter show, we are listening to, amplifying and appraising the stories that are being told about lives in lockdown, helping to shape and frame memories of a defining period. We are tracking down the historical case studies that help us navigate the present situation. We are ensuring that rigorous thinking shapes and guides decision-making around responses to Covid-19. We are helping those confronted with grief and loss to find solace. We are continuing to raise the aspirations of young people whose schooling has been disrupted and are contributing to the recovery of the cultural sector, connecting County Durham to a network of prominent partners worldwide. In all of these ways, and in so many more, the Arts and Humanities matter greatly and matter now.

Professor Janet Stewart
Executive Dean for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Video: DU Faculty of Arts and Humanities Research Celebration 2021



In this issue:

- Evaluating Effectiveness: transforming the policy landscape
- Culture-led Regeneration in County Durham
- Widening Access to Classics: The 'Living Poets' Project
- Understanding death to help us face the challenges of life: The Centre for Death and Life Sciences
- New Perspectives on Hearing Voices: a clinical condition or a human experience?

Evaluating Effectiveness: transforming the policy landscape

When it comes to policy-making and implementation, the metrics and benchmarks used to evaluate success are crucial to get right and yet so often missed. How should we measure the success of new policies and legislation? Research being carried out at the Philosophy Department at the University of Durham by Professor Nancy Cartwright and her team is helping to answer this question.

Cartwright's work is helping to shift thinking and practice in how evidence is used in assessment in social life and public policy. Her work puts an emphasis on context and suggests a new way of looking at policy effectiveness that incorporates social, economic and political factors. Importantly, she believes that a local context and a user-orientated approach to policy development and implementation must be considered.

This approach is being applied by international research centres, national academies and social science and policy forums in the UK and internationally. It is having an influence on international development, medicine, education and child protection.

Cartwright has helped to devise and author strategies and guidelines used by the UK Government's former Department for International Development (DFID) and the Academy of Medical Sciences. In the UK, the Education Endowment Foundation has adopted recommendations in 'Making the Most of the Evidence in Education: A Guide for Working Out What Works...Here and Now', co-published by Cartwright.

In the North East specifically, Cartwright, along with Eileen Munro from LSE, met with child protection managers and practitioners from local authorities across the region to discuss how their work could benefit frontline decision makers.

This research is having a real impact in the way that the effectiveness of policies and strategies in public life can be measured, assessed and truly evaluated in way not previously seen. In a world driven by metrics, this can only be a positive thing for society.



Culture-led Regeneration in County Durham

County Durham's rich cultural heritage is a source of regional pride and international interest and is a key driver for tourism and the visitor economy across the region. The iconic Durham Cathedral sits at the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is emblematic of the medieval history of Durham City and the wider county. However, research by Professor Andrew Beresford and Professor Stefano Cracolici has uncovered Durham's lesser-known international heritage and helped to promote culture-led regeneration in the south-west of the County.

Professor Beresford's art-historical research uncovered both the presence and the prominence of Spanish art works in County Durham. His work provides an in-depth account of the history and significance of Durham's Spanish artworks, revealing the extent of the holdings of Spanish art in the County for the first time. His work also led to rediscovery of ten 'lost' Apostle paintings that were looted by the British Navy from Cádiz in 1702 and then brought to County Durham. They had been displayed in Durham Castle and the Dean and Chapter Library at Durham Cathedral before being removed and forgotten. Their rediscovery prompted a series of exhibitions in County Durham, that helped shape business models and inform public engagement strategies at The Bowes Museum (an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation in Barnard Castle) and The Auckland Project (a regeneration venture in Bishop Auckland).

Professor Beresford's work in partnership with The Bowes Museum helped secure investment of £135,000 for a Curator of Spanish Art to further promote collections to local communities and visitors. An additional £3.3 million was raised to help save an important painting for the nation. Working with the Auckland Project, he provided the academic case for a successful £9 million Heritage Lottery Fund bid for a new Spanish Gallery, and formed partnerships leading to a loan agreement with the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, bringing important Spanish artworks to County Durham and helping to stimulate the visitor economy.



Meanwhile, Professor Stefano Cracolici's interdisciplinary research draws on literary, art, religious, theatre, and film studies as well as early-Christian archaeology to reveal the transnational dimensions of nineteenth-century Catholic heritage, and has helped to raise awareness of its significance to faith communities, museum curators, and heritage professionals. The 'Rome in the World' project helped to identify, preserve and present global Catholic, connection communities through culture in England, Mexico, and Chile. His consultancy has driven the restoration of important heritage assets, including the development of Ushaw College in County Durham. This former Catholic seminary has been transformed into a dynamic visitor destination and growing cultural centre in the region, with a strong visitor offer sitting alongside a developing business hub for cultural and creative industries.

More broadly, the County's collections have been brought to international prominence via loans to museums abroad, and regional cultural policy is now focussing on Spanish art as a continuing path to further regeneration. Professor Beresford's work played a pivotal role in securing £600,000 of investment from Santander Group to help establish The Zurbarán Centre for Spanish and Latin American Art, an institution devoted to promoting understanding of Spanish art.

Professor Cracolici served as the Zurbarán Centre's first director from 2017 to 2020. Since its launch in 2017, the Centre has engaged in major international conferences, research projects, and exhibitions, including the first UK exhibition of the works of Jusepe de Ribera (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2018) and the exhibition *Roma en Mexico* relating to nineteenth-century Spanish, Italian and Mexican art (Museo Nacional de San Carlos in Mexico City, 2019). The Zurbarán Centre has developed collaborations with partners in the UK and abroad and launched an ambitious programme of fellowships and scholarships.

The Centre's current director is Professor Claudia Hopkins.

For further information please contact Professor Andy Beresford a.m.beresford@durham.ac.uk or Professor Stefano Cracolici stefano.cracolici@durham.ac.uk, School of Modern Languages and Cultures



Widening Access to Classics: The 'Living Poets' Project

Research from the 'Living Poets' project in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Durham University has transformed access to classical lives and letters in some of the most socially and economically marginalised areas, schools and communities in the North of England. In addition, it has helped to raise educational attainment and aspiration for young people from deprived areas across County Durham.

Rooted in research by Professor Barbara Graziosi, Dr Nora Goldschmidt, and Dr Edmund Richardson, the 'Living Poets' project explored how readers of ancient poetry have appropriated and reconfigured ancient poets' lives in light of their own lived experiences throughout history.

Researchers collaborated with local schools and theatre company Changeling Productions to develop a touring performance of the 'Spennymoor Odyssey', which retold Homer's *Odyssey*, then invited pupils to consider who the poet Homer might have been, by using both their own life-experiences, and stories taken from ancient biographical sources.

As the charity Classics For All recently noted in their Impact Report 2010-2020, there is an urgent need to champion the teaching of Classics in schools within areas which are socio-economically marginalised. Their report showed that engaging pupils with classical material can help to close the achievement gap: evidence suggests that 'the specific impacts on special educational needs pupils and in socio-economically challenging areas are particularly noteworthy'.

Classics For All recognised the potential of the Living Poets approach to close these gaps, and provided a start-up grant of £15,000 to support the next phase of the project, 'Bringing Classical Literature to Life.'

The project builds on the potential identified by the Living Poets activities, to enhance the curriculum at Key Stage 2 through Classics. It involved a significant step up in the ambition of the Living Poets project team through engaging more people with more material than before. Dr Craig Hannaway engaged KS2 classes in schools using the poetry and biographies of Homer and Ovid.



These sessions encouraged pupils to draw upon their own experiences to make the ancient world their own. Once again, the project focused on pupils in socio-economically marginalised areas in the North East of England.

The more conventionally 'challenging' the audience, the more effective the Living Poets methodology has been in building bridges between that audience and the ancient world. As one teacher put it: 'We find it particularly difficult to engage boys in literacy; however, you provided them with a brilliant role model and as a result they are hooked - we even have some of the 'hard to reach' boys saving up their pocket money and spending it on abridged versions of the Odyssey.'

On the basis of these successes, Classics for All awarded a further grant of £8,000 to support the creation of a North East Regional Classics Hub at Durham University. This Hub, co-ordinated by Dr Catherine Rozier and Ms. Justine Wolfenden, is focused on introducing new audiences to Classics, by working with teachers in schools where Classics provision has not previously been part of the curriculum.

For further information, please contact Dr Edmund Richardson on edmund.richardson@durham.ac.uk



Durham County

Council stated: *"The work of the Classics department has raised awareness within the council of how classical subjects can be used across the curriculum to support learning and teaching".*

Understanding death to help us face the challenges of life: The Centre for Death and Life Sciences

As the old proverb has it, nothing is certain in life except death. In this past year, we have witnessed death on a scale not seen before in most people's lifetimes. The pandemic has brought us face to face with mortality and raised questions around how to deal with death in a time when our life is restricted and the normal rituals and processes we use to cope with loss are limited.

Durham University's Centre for Death and Life Studies (CDALS), set within the Theology and Religion Department has, for some time, conducted interdisciplinary research into life-values and practices aligned with living and dying, including cremation as well as woodland or natural, forms of burial. It has also been involved in aspects of pet-death, including issues of veterinary training with Edinburgh University.

Over the past year, Director of the Centre, Professor Douglas Davies has been engaged in much of the public discussion around death, grief and funerals. Covid has certainly intensified many of the debates around the CDALS's research areas, and directly connects with a current research project funded by The British Cremation Society.

The research concentrates on crematorium staff, those conducting ceremonies, and some families affect by this year's severe constraints. It is hoped that by understanding the way these individuals have dealt with increased work pressures, mental health issues and general well-being in times of crisis, lessons can be learnt for the future. Another project focuses on The National Arboretum near Lichfield which embraces hundreds of memorial monuments to many different groups of people.

The Centre has been instrumental in attracting to the University both the archives of the Cremation Society of Great Britain and the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, making Durham unique in holding the largest archive of this kind, one visited by scholars from many places.



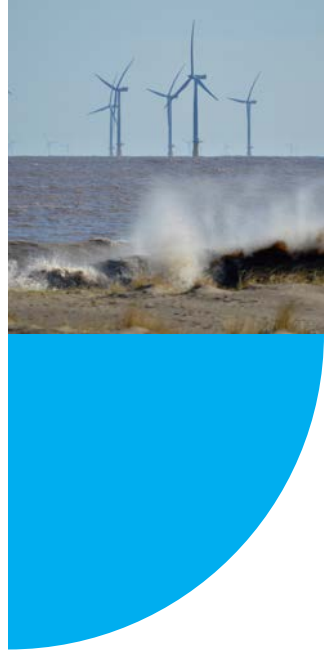
The Centre also benefits from its approach to its research, which brings together anthropologists, philosophers, theologians, social scientists and life scientists, as well as maintaining strong connections with both professional bodies and public life as a whole, ensuring that CDALS is much more than just an academic facility.

Pandemic aside, the other major global issue, the environmental crisis, is also setting the agenda for much of the work at the Centre. Increasingly, societies are concerned about the carbon footprint their death might have. One of our doctoral students is currently engaged in work on alkaline hydrolysis (often known as Resomation), a process not yet established in the UK, but is being seen as an environmentally sustainable alternative to traditional methods of cremation or burial.

Professor Davies has been privileged as an academic to work with the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and with other academic colleagues in looking at ecological and environmental issues, including some direct discussions on alternative approaches to funerals. Another doctoral student is working on the death rites of contemporary Pagans in the UK.

The past year has certainly brought death to the forefront of public thinking and allowed Centre interests an intensified expression of its pre-existing concerns. Through public interaction and engagement, research in this area can help society with its understanding of death in the challenges we face in life.

For more information, please contact Professor Douglas Davies, douglas.davies@durham.ac.uk



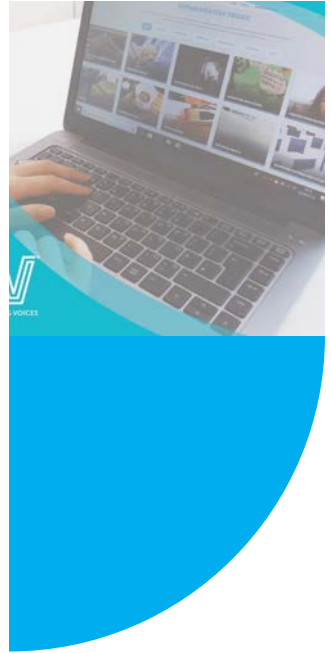
New Perspectives on Hearing Voices: a clinical condition or a human experience?

Hearing voices in the absence of any speaker has long been associated with mental illness and historically has been thought of as distressing, even dangerous. In the North East, the rate of psychotic disorders is particularly high, especially amongst young people, and hallucinations can be a significant and distressing part of those disorders. This public health challenge poses a huge burden to the NHS, as well as an increased risk of early mortality and high suicide rates amongst sufferers.

Hearing the Voice, winner of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's Medical Humanities Award for Best Research in 2020, is an interdisciplinary study of voice-hearing at Durham University. The project, which has received £4m of funding from the Wellcome Trust, brings together academics from anthropology, cognitive neuroscience, history, linguistics, literary studies, medical humanities, philosophy, psychology and theology. They work closely alongside clinicians, voice-hearers and other experts.

Literary and medical humanities researchers working on the project analysed voice-hearing in texts from the medieval to modern periods, as well as considering the experiences of contemporary writers, readers and voice-hearers. Their research challenged the traditional stigma associated with hearing voices and reframed the condition as a meaningful part of human experience.

Studying authors ranging from Virginia Woolf and Muriel Spark, through to Samuel Beckett, the researchers found a clear connection between voice-hearing, literary experimentation and other aspects of creative and 'inner' experience. These findings allowed the researchers to challenge the concept of hearing voices as only being a symptom of mental illness.



Hearing the Voice research has been central to the development of new treatments produced in collaboration with the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. Managing Unusual Sensory Experiences (MUSE) is a guided digital health intervention used by clinicians to discuss and address patients' distressing voice-hearing experiences. Two feasibility studies have shown that it improved patient outcomes, resulting in reduced distress, severity and frequency of voices, as well as improved daily functioning. Patients treated with MUSE reported a 29% reduction in voices, rating them as 21% less severe, 22% less frequent and 37% less distressing.

Supporting voice-hearers and those around them is an important element of the Hearing the Voice project. The team has worked closely with voice-hearers, their families and mental health professionals to develop Understanding Voices <https://understandingvoices.com/>, a website that signposts approaches and support available to those who hear voices, as well as offering information for family and friends.

As society becomes more accepting of, and knowledgeable about mental illness, research into hearing voices has revealed a much greater depth and connection between this clinical condition, memory, trauma and literary experimentation. Through this, better coping mechanisms can be developed to help those suffering from psychosis to understand and manage their condition more independently.

Hearing the Voice highlights a growing move to more interdisciplinary approaches to societal challenges and underlines how thinking can evolve through the cross-pollination of ideas from both scientific and humanities research.

Hearing The Voice: <https://hearingthevoice.org/about-the-project/>

Understanding Voices:
<https://understandingvoices.com/about/>

For more information about this project, please contact Dr. Angela Woods, Associate Professor of Medical Humanities, Department of English, Durham University
Email: angela.woods@durham.ac.uk

"What took me years to find, by luck and the kindness of others, is contained in this single website. It's a travel guide, opening up different pathways and ideas that can help people find solace, connection and inspiration.

Connecting with the wider survivor, family-member and mental health communities, it is an invaluable resource for voice-hearers, their loved ones and supporters across the world." -

Rachel Waddingham, a voice-hearer, psychiatric survivor, mental health trainer and Chair of the English Hearing Voices Network.



Durham
University

Research and
Innovation Services

Contact the team

Rachael Richards
Director of Public Affairs
rachael.l.richards@durham.ac.uk

Stephen Evans
Director for Policy Engagement
stephen.n.evans@durham.ac.uk

Neil Heckels
Senior Policy Engagement Manager
neil.heckels@durham.ac.uk

Durham University
Palatine Centre
Stockton Road
Durham
DL1 3LE

durham.ac.uk

Durham University and Durham University logo are registered Trade Marks of the University of Durham. Unless otherwise stated, all material in this publication is copyright of the University of Durham. The University makes every effort to ensure that the information contained here is accurate. This publication is intended as a general guide to University of Durham's facilities and form no part of any contract between you and the University. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the permission of the University. Please note that the University's website is the most up to date source of information and we strongly recommend that you always visit the website before making any commitments.

© Durham University 2021

About our policy team

Durham University's policy team is responsible for building relationships with policymakers regionally, nationally and internationally to optimise the external impact of Durham's world-leading research

Our key external relationships include politicians, government departments and agencies, non-departmental public bodies, think tanks, learned societies, NGOs and the voluntary sector – at regional, national and international level.

For more information, visit
durham.ac.uk/research.innovation/business.engagement/policyhub