



Culture and communication

Culture and communication are multi-faceted terms that are central to the ways in which we make sense of the world. At the University of York, researchers explore every kind of cultural activity, product and practice from poetry to pollution; they investigate every aspect of communications from syntax to cyberspace. This work addresses all periods from prehistory to the present and places across the globe.

This research theme encompasses the Arts and Humanities, a research specialism which interprets and evaluates the products of human cultural endeavour. Much of this work revolves around the Humanities Research Centre and period-defined Centres: the Centre for Medieval Studies; the Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies; the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies; the Centre for Modern Studies.

It also characterises much of York's social scientific research such as that carried out at the Science and Technology Studies Unit and the European Centre for Cultural Exploration, not to mention the University's cutting-edge work in communications technologies.

These projects and inquiries are advancing and challenging how we understand the world. They are developing new intellectual tools to make sense of human thought, human behaviour and our relation to the natural world, emphasising how far the environment is the product of cultural perception and human behaviour.

Our research excellence

- York's four largest Humanities departments – Archaeology, English and Related Literature, History, and History of Art – were all ranked in the top four in the UK Research Excellence Framework (2014).
- The York Arts and Humanities faculty was ranked 31st in the 2017 Times Higher Education World University listing.
- Between 2010 and 2016, the research income of Arts and Humanities at UK Russell Group Universities increased on average by 25 per cent. In this period York's Arts and Humanities research income increased by 83 per cent.



Case study

Rethinking civil society

Contemporary social commentators and policy advocates regularly talk of civil society. Rarely do they reflect upon the changing history of this term, or think about the ways this history affects the actions and assumptions of people. Supported by the Leverhulme Trust, a team of four PhD students and four Early Career Fellows based at York, led by Professor Tim Stanton, Department of Politics, joined by three Senior Research Fellows based at the Lichtenberg Kolleg, University of Göttingen, are researching the history of civil society from the 16th century to the present day. This project draws on scholars in York's Centres for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies and for Eighteenth Century Studies. It combines the history of political thought and political theory with intellectual, cultural, diplomatic, and art history, literature and political philology, and digital humanities. Excavating its history will allow us to understand civil society anew.

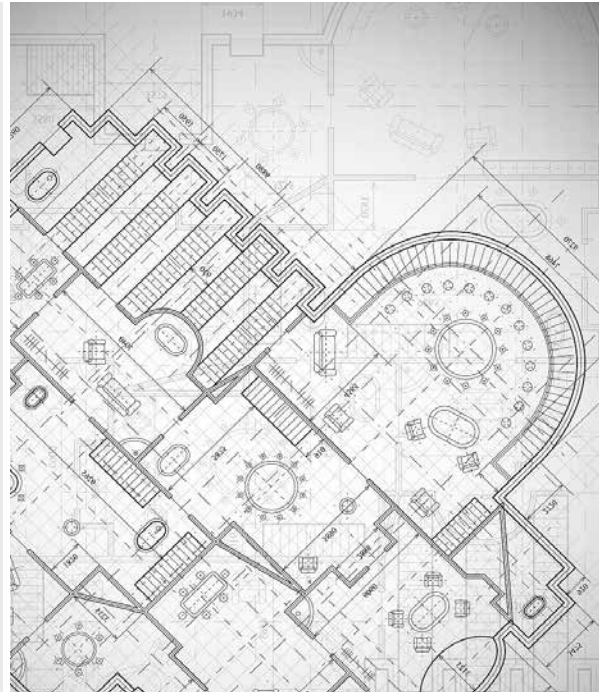
Stanton, T. Rethinking civil society: history, theory, critique. Leverhulme Research Leadership Award project ref: RL-2016-044

Case study

Planning for health in later life

As life expectancy increases, more people in the UK will spend time in care homes or in supported housing. We therefore need to understand more about how these facilities contribute to the atmospherics of care and the feel of ageing. Architects, rather than health and social care professionals, are responsible for much of this built environment, but we know very little about their work. Researchers from York's Department of Sociology are using cultural analysis and ethnographic methods to cast light on the ways in which ideas about personal care are engineered into social care settings. Led by Professor Sarah Nettleton, the research explores how architects imagine and anticipate the embodied and other needs of people in later life, and how they seek to balance these needs with other financial, technical, material and regulatory considerations inherent to architectural work.

Buse, C., et al. (2016). Imagined bodies: architects and their constructions of later life. *Ageing & Society*, 1-23



Partnerships and impact

York's Department of Language and Linguistic Science is home to one of the world's largest research groups in the growing field of forensic speech science, a form of analysis now routinely undertaken for legal teams in UK and international courts.

As well as identifying accents and speech characteristics, the Department has developed important new insights into how speech is affected by cultural and emotional factors and by the technologies we use to communicate. The University's experts are consequently in demand in courtrooms and speech laboratories from Europe to New Zealand.

The Department works closely with the UK's leading laboratory for forensic speech and audio analysis, JP French Associates (JPFA).

Professor Peter French from JPFA said: "Our relationship with the University of York has enabled the firm to be at the forefront of research in modelling individual speaker characteristics. This has provided us with a better understanding of the strengths and limitations of the various approaches to forensic speaker comparison and assisted with our development of new practical phonetic and acoustic measures used in casework."

In 2016, academics from the University's Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture helped to create digital reconstructions depicting how the Anglo-Saxon church on the site of Glastonbury Abbey looked in the eighth century.



The reconstructions really bring the Abbey's past to life for visitors at the touch of a button. They are able to see how it is today compared to how it was; an incredible amount of work and research has gone into developing these images."

Janet Bell, Director, Glastonbury Abbey, Somerset, UK.



For more information on the University of York's interdisciplinary research themes see www.york.ac.uk/research

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