



## **SPRING BROWN BAG SEMINARS 2010**

**13:15-14:15 W/222**

**(9 February Seminar - CHANGE OF TIME AND ROOM -  
Catherine Montgomery 12:15 – 13:15 G/045A Seminar  
Room)**

**26 January – Roger Burrows**

***Digitalisation, Visualisation and the 'Descriptive Turn'  
in Contemporary Sociology***

This paper offers an engagement with some of the recent work of Mike Savage. He argues that in order to circumnavigate modes of sociological discourse with an unproductive fetish for epochalism we need to reinvigorate our engagement with new and innovative forms of methodology better able to capture the complex patterns of continuity and change that characterise societies. He argues that this will best be done by encouraging a nascent 'descriptive turn' in the discipline in response to the onslaught of ubiquitous digitalisation processes. He goes further by arguing that this reorientation will likely involve a revitalization of visualisation methods, moving them from the periphery of the discipline toward a position more centre-stage. This paper reviews what these new visualisation methods might look like.

**2 February 2010 – Professor Andrew Webster**

**The Impact of Impact - A Cautionary Note**

This Brown Bag is less a formal academic presentation but more the opportunity to discuss the current 'impact' discourse underlying, most notably, the REF and the UK Research Councils. I will give some background on the emergence of impact, the problems in defining its meaning, give an illustrative 'impact story' and draw some conclusions about how we might manage the impact of impact here.

**9 February – Catherine Montgomery**

***STS Meets Public Health: The Co-production of Gender and Technology in HIV Prevention Research***

Vaginal microbicides are pharmaceutical products in development that are designed to reduce the sexual transmission of HIV in women. They are commonly known as a 'woman-controlled technology' and tool for women's empowerment, and form part of a burgeoning field of clinical research into new biotechnologies for HIV prevention. Little work has critically examined how such research and new technologies are produced, how they travel between 'North' and 'South', and how they contribute to the construction, maintenance or deconstruction of gender relations. In this paper I will explore the co-production of gender and technology in HIV prevention research in Zambia and the UK. Starting with some empirical observations, I'd then like to raise for discussion the more theoretical question of whether and how STS sensibilities might intersect with public health research into new technologies in developing countries.

**23 February – Andrew Balmer, Nottingham University**

***The Brain Cannot Lie: Developing fMRI Imaging for use in Deception Detection***

This seminar will outline some of my research into the development and discourse surrounding fMRI lie detection. I will describe how fMRI constructs the object 'lie' and how this fits a longer history of defining deceit. I will demonstrate how the scientific discourse highlights particular aspects of this inscription device as subjective and others as objective. I will then use some of the legal data I have collected to reflect on the question posed by almost every paper interested in neurolaw: will fMRI lie detection be used in court?

**2 March – Siân Benyon-Jones (SATSU)**

***Timing is everything: An analysis of Scottish health professionals' attempts to demarcate 'later' abortion as a problematic work practice***

Current UK law assumes that there is a point in gestational time (24 weeks) at which abortion becomes a particularly problematic act, and that medical professionals possess a privileged understanding of the significance of this point in time. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with Scottish health professionals who are involved in abortion provision this paper illustrates that the demarcation of particular thresholds at which abortion is 'late', and thus problematic, is also an important feature of contemporary clinical practice. It explores the realities that are co-produced through this process of temporal demarcation, and considers their implications for women with unwanted pregnancies. In doing so it draws attention to an important difference between health professionals' accounts of 'abortion time limits' and the way in which this topic has become framed in legal/public discourse in the UK. While the latter simply depicts the meaning of gestational time as an object of medical knowledge, health professionals' accounts reveal the work practices which are involved in the construction of this object. In other words, although health professionals may perpetuate aspects of legal discourse, their accounts also provide an opportunity to destabilise it because they reintroduce notions of human agency/responsibility to the question of gestational time limits on abortion.