**Faculty of Arts, Social Science and Business:**

**Sample PGR Projects**

*Guidance: The below projects, for PhD and MPhil study, exemplify our areas of research expertise at the University of Wolverhampton.*

*If you are interested in completing a research degree in the below areas, or variations of them, please copy and paste the project directly into the application.*

*We can then move your application ahead with that project, which will save you needing to devise or prepare a project yourself.*

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Art & Design

AI, Art and Authorship

Socially engaged art and modes of participatory practice

Business

Family Business Entrepreneurship

Enhancing Governance through Artificial Intelligence: Ethical, Efficient, and Effective Decision-Making

Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Development: Strategies and Applications

Contextualisation of Women entrepreneurship

Implementation of Fintech in microfinance provision to enhance women entrepreneurship

FDI and the performance of SMEs in developing countries

Role of Artificial Intelligence in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the Tourism Industry

The Impact of Influencer Marketing in the Metaverse on the Tourism Industry

Service experience in tourism, hospitality, and retail

Corporate Governance and Sustainability

Creative Industries

Local voices unheard? Language, memory, and the local archives: Discursive representation local industries as a place-bonded and gendered practice

Sustainability and the hidden costs of AI: Exploring Sustainable AI - an Arts Based Approach

Virtual Space as the new Green Space: Netnographies of (post)-pandemic green spaces

Virtual Space as the new Green Space: Place and Space in Immersive Technologies

Image Cultures

Art and Change

Ecocinema in the Anthropocene or Eco-apocalyptic cinema in the Anthropocene

Adapting human/nonhuman borders across literary and film canons

Local community responses to local community representation in television biopics

Myths of technology, myths of sustainability

New Hollywood in Perspective: Assessing a Golden Age

Alignment or Antagonism? Pop and Feminism

Nation, Identity, Representation: New Perspectives on British Cinema

History

‘Our home will be broken up’: English women, family and work, 1916-1921

Romani History

Blind Veterans as Shopkeepers in Twentieth Century Britain: A Collective Biography

Charity Shop Histories

The First 70 Years of Medical Social Work: Hospital Almoners in Britain, 1895-1964

Various aspects of the Northern Ireland conflict and conflict resolution

The Midlands Miners and the strike of 1984/5

Popular Music and Social Change in the West Midlands 1970-1990

The British coal crisis of 1992

Law

An investigation into the role and activities of the Police Offices created by the Middlesex Justices Act 1792

Offending by British Prison Officials 1853-2023: A Question of Trust and Legitimacy

The UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross Border Insolvency – Divergence or Convergence amongst the adopting nations?

Discipline: Art & Design

Title / area of PhD research: AI, Art and Authorship

Supervisors / contacts: Prof John Roberts, Dr. Fran Pheasant-Kelly

The critique of authorship has been central to modern practice in the twentieth century, principally through the artist self-identifying as a technician as opposed to that of a sovereign creator. Yet, if the artist has critiqued the myth of expressive sovereignty, he or she, nevertheless retained his rights as an autonomous and creative producer. Does AI finally destroy both expressive sovereignty and the residual notion of the artist as creative technician altogether? Does AI remove all vestiges of authorship? The research will look at the challenges AI brings to artists’ creative use of technology, at the same questioning the inevitability of AI’s ‘replacement’ theory of human subjectivity and reasoning.

Discipline: Art & Design

Title / area of PhD research: Socially engaged art and modes of participatory practice

Supervisors / contacts: Prof John Roberts, Dr. Alexei Penzin

Socially engaged art in its extended participatory forms is over thirty years old. How has the institutional and extra-institutional support for this activity changed during this period? How has the drop in public funding and the adoption of modes of audience participation by major museums, shifted the terms of engagement by socially engaged artists/groups? The research will address these issues on a global basis.

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Family Business Entrepreneurship

Supervisors / contacts: Prof Yong Wang

Family businesses are reckoned as one of the engines of the post-industrial growth process since they are credited for a sense of loyalty to business success, long-term strategic commitment, and corporate independence. Evidence from the literature shows family businesses as a group outperform non-family businesses. One of the contributing factors is related to the socio-emotional wealth within family businesses, which is built upon blood relationship, intensive interactions, shared values and common understanding of the family. As such, family businesses often enjoy sustainable commitment, low transaction cost, and unrivalled employee loyalty. However, in contrast to this advantageous stance, the economy of the sector is characterised by alarmingly deteriorating survival rates. Researchers confirm that only about a third of family businesses survive the transition from the founders to the second generation. Of those who do that, only about one third are able to survive to the third generation. Professor Wang is interested in exploring strategies, processes, and resources that can contribute to the continuity of family businesses and their entrepreneurial venturing. Projects along the following directions, but not limited to, are welcomed:

Digitalisation and entrepreneurial venturing in family businesses

Socio-emotional wealth and family business leadership

Lean innovation and antecedents in family businesses

Family business internationalisation

Resilience of family businesses in times of crisis

Women involvement in family businesses

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Enhancing Governance through Artificial Intelligence: Ethical, Efficient, and Effective Decision-Making

Supervisors / contacts: Prof. Sibel Yamak

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in governance to enhance decision-making processes, improve public service delivery, and ensure ethical oversight is becoming increasingly important. Proposals are invited to analyse current AI applications in public administration, identifying best practices and potential risks associated with AI-driven governance. A multidisciplinary approach, combining management, political science, ethics, and computer science insights to actively develop frameworks that ensure transparency, accountability, and inclusivity is needed. The expected outcome is a set of guidelines and policy recommendations that governments can actively adopt to harness the power of AI while safeguarding democratic principles and human rights.

Method: Interdisciplinary, mixed method

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Development: Strategies and Applications

Supervisors / contacts: Prof. Sibel Yamak

There is a need to investigate the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to drive sustainable management in companies across various sectors. Proposals focusing on AI applications in environmental sustainability, such as energy/waste management or social sustainability in terms of addressing equality, are sought. They need to aim to identify innovative solutions that contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, they will assess the ethical and social implications of deploying AI in sustainability initiatives. The anticipated outcomes include a set of AI-based tools and policy recommendations designed to support sustainable practices and promote ecological resilience.

Method: Interdisciplinary, mixed method

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Contextualisation of Women entrepreneurship

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Samia Mahmood

Previous literature shows that numerous factors, including women's families, domestic choices, and the larger institutional and physical setting, influence and shape women's entrepreneurship. Gender roles and expectations are shaped by deeply rooted cultural and societal conventions, which may be beneficial or detrimental to female entrepreneurs. However, current literature shows some evidence that women entrepreneurs are freed from an oppressive system by questioning the current quo and removing the barriers preventing them from pursuing their entrepreneurial goals. This PhD proposal focuses on the unexplored context and experiences of women entrepreneurs and their journey to empowerment and emancipation in an under-researched and challenging context.

Methodology: Mixed Methods approach

References

Althalathini, D. and Tlaiss, H.A. (2023), “Of resistance to patriarchy and occupation through a virtual bazaar: an institutional theory critique of the emancipatory potential of Palestinian women’s digital entrepreneurship”, Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Vol. 35 No. 9–10, doi: 10.1080/08985626.2023.2241412.

Alshareef, S. (2022), “Does location matter? Unpacking the dynamic relationship between the spatial context and embeddedness in women’s entrepreneurship”, Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Vol. 34 No. 3–4, doi: 10.1080/08985626.2022.2047798

Welter, F. (2020), “Contexts and gender – looking back and thinking forward”, International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, Vol. 12 No. 1, doi: 10.1108/IJGE-04-2019- 0082.

Tlaiss, H.A. (2019), “Contextualizing the career success of Arab women entrepreneurs”, Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Routledge, Vol. 31 No. 3–4, pp. 226–241, doi: 10.1080/08985626.2018.1551790.

Welter, F., Baker, T. and Wirsching, K. (2019), “Three waves and counting: the rising tide of contextualization in entrepreneurship research”, Small Business Economics, Vol. 52 No. 2, doi: 10.1007/s11187-018-0094-5.

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Implementation of Fintech in microfinance provision to enhance women entrepreneurship

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Samia Mahmood

Automation and technical solutions could help microfinance not only increase the client base but also outreach to underprivileged clients such as women. Technical options include big data, artificial intelligence, branchless mobile banking, or FinTech apps that can be tailored for microlending. The rise of female borrowers for microfinance (80% in 2018) over male clients has been linked to various factors, including women's empowerment through entrepreneurship their contribution to household and children's education expenses and broader impacts like fighting gender inequity. Some studies have negated the claims that women are not the true beneficiaries of the loans and support women entrepreneurship development. One of the areas of concern for microfinance to reach underprivileged clients is costs such as transaction costs, and provisions for delinquent loans in which technology/FinTech can be useful in improving sustainability and outreach. This PhD proposal focuses on how the adoption of FinTech in microfinance could enhance female outreach and enterprise development in developing and emerging economies.

Methodology: Mixed Methods approach

References

Ashta A, Herrmann H. Artificial intelligence and fintech: An overview of opportunities and risks for banking, investments, and microfinance. Strategic Change. 2021; 30: 211–222. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jsc.2404>

Dorfleitner, G., Forcella, D. and Nguyen, Q.A. (2022), "The digital transformation of microfinance institutions: an empirical analysis", Journal of Applied Accounting Research, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 454-479. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAAR-02-2021-0041>

Moro Visconti, Roberto, Microfintech: Outreaching Financial Inclusion with Cost-Cutting Innovation (May 26, 2019). Available at SSRN: [https://ssrn.com/abstract=3533873](https://ssrn.com/abstract%3D3533873)or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3533873>

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: FDI and the performance of SMEs in developing countries

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Mohammad Mahdi

Foreign direct investment (FDI) into developing countries has made significant impact on their economies and particularly the development of their manufacturing sectors since the starting of the economic liberalisation of developing countries some four decades ago. However, while large businesses and corporations have benefited from such inflow and outflow of investment small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on the other hand, seem to experience little or no benefit from the spillovers of FDI. Research conducted in different developing countries has suggested several reasons for not taking advantage of inward and outward FDI. This PhD proposal focuses on the missing opportunities by SMEs in developing countries from foreign investment and the benefits linkages with large international companies and the required policies to strengthen the standing of SMEs.

References:

Pasali, Selsah and Chaudhary, Arslan, 2020, “Assessing the Impact of Foreign Ownership on Firm Performance by Size: Evidence from Firms in Developed and Developing Countries”, Transnational Corporations Journal, Vol. 27, No. 2

Bilgin, [Mehmet Huseyin,](https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/epdf/10.1142/S0217590812500208) Lau, Che Keung and Demir, Ender (2012) “Technology Transfer, Finance Channels and SME Performance: New Evidence from Developing Countries”, [The Singapore Economic Review](https://www.worldscientific.com/worldscinet/ser)[Vol. 57, No. 3](https://www.worldscientific.com/toc/ser/57/03)

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Role of Artificial Intelligence in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the Tourism Industry

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Roya Rahimi

  Introduction: The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the tourism industry presents a promising avenue for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations has identified specific targets within these goals that relate to sustainable economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusiveness, all of which are relevant to the tourism sector. This research seeks to explore how AI can be utilized to optimize these aspects, transforming tourism into a tool for sustainable development.

Research Gap: Despite growing interest in sustainable tourism and AI, there is a notable gap in systematic studies that combine these areas to address specific SDGs. Research has predominantly focused on either AI in broader industrial applications or sustainable practices in tourism without integrating AI technologies. There lacks a comprehensive analysis on how AI can specifically support the tourism industry in achieving the SDGs, particularly in areas such as reducing environmental impacts, promoting sustainable local economies, and enhancing visitor experiences in a sustainable manner.

Aims and Objectives:

To identify and analyse how AI technologies are currently being used in the tourism industry and their potential expansion to further support SDGs.

To evaluate the effectiveness of AI-driven solutions in sustainable tourism practices, focusing on economic, environmental, and social outcomes.

To develop a set of best practices for implementing AI in the tourism sector to maximize contributions to the SDGs.

The purpose of this research is to bridge the gap between AI technology and sustainable tourism to develop actionable strategies that contribute significantly to the SDGs. By doing so, the study aims to provide a framework that can guide policymakers, industry stakeholders, and communities in harnessing AI for sustainable development.

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: The Impact of Influencer Marketing in the Metaverse on the Tourism Industry

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Roya Rahimi

Introduction: The rapid evolution of digital environments, especially the metaverse, presents new frontiers for marketing and consumer engagement. As a virtual space where users can interact with a computer-generated environment and other users, the metaverse offers unique opportunities for influencer marketing within the tourism industry. This research aims to explore how influencers in the metaverse can affect tourist behaviours, preferences, and perceptions, potentially reshaping tourism marketing strategies.

Research Gap: While influencer marketing is well-studied in traditional and social media platforms, its application within the metaverse—particularly in relation to the tourism industry—remains underexplored. There is a significant gap in understanding how virtual interactions with influencers in the metaverse can influence real-world tourism decisions and experiences. Additionally, the effectiveness of these marketing strategies in such immersive digital environments has yet to be quantified.

Aims and Objectives:

To analyse the role of influencers within the metaverse and their potential impact on the tourism industry.

To identify factors that influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the metaverse, focusing on tourist engagement and decision-making.

To develop guidelines for tourism marketers on leveraging influencer partnerships in the metaverse to enhance destination attractiveness and visitor experiences.

The purpose of this research is to provide a deep understanding of how influencer marketing in the metaverse can be strategically used to benefit the tourism industry. This study aims to identify best practices and potential pitfalls, offering insights for marketers looking to tap into this new virtual environment.

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Service experience in tourism, hospitality, and retail

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Ade Oriade

Project: Consumer behaviours include decision making and successive evaluations, which, consequently, include experience quality, subjective attitude, perceived value, and satisfaction (Chen & Tsai, 2007). There has been some recognition that tourists/visitors/buyers/customers simplify decision making by breaking down the process into manageable steps (Nicholau & Mas, 2008). However, the general models of tourist/visitor/buyer’s decision making, and subsequently experience do not often acknowledge all relevant stages and/or recognise the social context (Decrop & Kozak, 2009), the impulsive nature of some decisions or their complexity (Decrop, 2014). Rationality continues to be either assumed or implied, which negates the role of emotion (Correia, Kozak & Tao, 2014). A partial exploration of constructs in relation to decision making or experience possibly offers inconclusive and partial representation of the relationships that exist in service experience (Oriade & Schofield, 2019). The gap in knowledge about the mental processing, the interrelationship between psychological factors, and contexts of decision making and service experience need further exploration.

Applicable theories: Dual system theory, the hierarchy-of-effects model, and the cognitive-affective-conative framework

Methodology: The primary research will require both qualitative and quantitative elements, including structural equation modelling of the relationship between exogenous, endogenous and mediating variables. The findings will advance theory and practice in this hitherto neglected area of hospitality service failure and recovery research.

References

Chen, C. F., & Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioural intentions? *Tourism management*, 28(4), 1115-1122.

Correia, A., Kozak, M., & Tao, M. (2014). Dynamics of tourists' decision-making: From theory to practice. In The Routledge handbook of tourism marketing (pp. 299-312). Routledge.

Decrop, A. (2014). Theorizing tourist behaviour. In The Routledge handbook of tourism marketing (pp. 251-267). Routledge.

Decrop, A., & Kozak, M. (2009). 7 Tourist Decision Strategies. Marketing innovations for sustainable destinations, 80.

Nicolau, J. L., & Más, F. J. (2008). Sequential choice behaviour: Going on vacation and type of destination. *Tourism management*, 29(5), 1023-1034.

Oriade, A., & Schofield, P. (2019). An examination of the role of service quality and perceived value in visitor attraction experience. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 11, 1–9.

Discipline: Business

Title / area of PhD research: Corporate Governance and Sustainability

Supervisors / contacts: Prof. Sibel Yamak

Global challenges we are facing across the planet make sustainability an important topic to address environmental, social and governance problems. Colleagues in Corporate Governance and Sustainability Research Cluster in Management Research Centre are conducting research on sustainability with a special focus on governance. Among them Prof Yamak is interested in welcoming applications in relation to the following themes:

Sustainability

Sustainability with a focus on environment and social issues such as gender equality

The nature of the collaboration and the exchange of knowledge on sustainability between SMEs and MNEs

Genealogy of corporate social responsibility

Corporate governance

Corporate governance with a focus on macro influences on governance practices

Corporate governance in extreme institutional environments

The relationship between the board of directors and sustainability performance of the enterprises

Contextual antecedents of top management teams and their impact on firm performance

Business elites

Business elites networks

Their relationship with the state

Their impact on society and democracy

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Local voices unheard? Language, memory, and the local archives: Discursive representation local industries as a place-bonded and gendered practice

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Esther Asprey, Prof. Aleksandra Galasinska

A cooperation between University of Wolverhampton and The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust to explore recorded narratives of local miners from Ironbridge demonstrated that there is an unexplored potential to use such rich and already existing data. Proposals are invited to explore this possibility with a particular focus on topography, place names, and well as local landmarks as featured in the interviews at hand. On the other hand, a gendered aspect of stories of and about women, who were either working in mines, or were involved in the mining industry in different roles is also invited.

Methodology: Linguistics; Dialectology; Discourse Analysis

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Sustainability and the hidden costs of AI: Exploring Sustainable AI - an Arts Based Approach

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Denise Doyle

Topic: The hidden impacts of AI on planetary resources is currently under scrutiny (Crawford & Joler 2019) yet our desire for an increasingly digital world continues at a relentless pace. Proposals are invited to respond to this theme through arts based and/or interdisciplinary methodologies, and to interrogate the implications of a future world increasingly controlled by AI and its applications.

Methodology: Art and Design Practice; Interdisciplinary

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Virtual Space as the new Green Space: Netnographies of (post)-pandemic green spaces

Supervisors / contacts: Prof. Aleksandra Galasinska

Following recovery from the C-19 pandemic some virtual practices of how green spaces were accessed, visited, and imagined are still in place. Proposals are invited to respond to this theme through online ethnography of local parks, recreational grounds, nature reserves, and allotments investigating how online tools, skills, as well as linguistic and visual practices were deployed for virtual recreation and use of green spaces.

Methodology: Online ethnography; Discourse analysis; Visual analysis; Interdisciplinary

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Virtual Space as the new Green Space: Place and Space in Immersive Technologies

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Denise Doyle

Following developments in the second wave of VR immersive spaces are becoming more complex, through mixed reality, and at the same time more accessible as real alternative spaces for the experience of both place and space. Proposals are invited to respond to this theme through arts and/or design-based methodologies, exploring the potential of how to create both space and place as an alternative to, and augmentation of, the physical world.

Methodology: Art and Design Practice; Interdisciplinary

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Art and Change

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Euripides Altintzoglou

Change is a constant force that shapes and reshapes the world around us. Contemporary art practices bring visibility to manifestations of political discourse but also to the subtle, often overlooked instances of resistance and resilience. In a world marked by division and discord, socially engaged art practice emerges as a means for bridging divides. Proposal are invited to explore practical and/or theoretical approaches that adapt to historical, social, and cultural conditions in order to sustain the transformational role of art to act as a catalysts for change.

Methodology: Fine Art, Philosophy, Critical Theory

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Image Cultures

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Euripides Altintzoglou

Images are inseparable from life, as they have come to define cultural trends, raise political awareness, and inform ethical responsibility. Contemporary image-making is dynamic practice as images develop into modes of communication that inter-operate in variable contexts. Proposal are invited to explore the role of image-based creative agency in relation to a set of synergies between image production and dissemination, critical analysis and communication strategies, advanced technological awareness of conceptual diversification.

Methodology: Photography, Fine Art, Philosophy, Critical Theory

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Ecocinema in the Anthropocene or Eco-apocalyptic cinema in the Anthropocene

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Robert Geal; Dr Fran-Pheasant-Kelly

Ecological issues are an emerging area of interest in film studies. The proposed research will consider one of two main topics in the field – how ecocinema functions as an attempt to represent ‘nature’ as a meaningful alternative to film’s more customary anthropocentrism; or how eco-apocalyptic and eco-dystopian cinema relates to cultural anxieties about climate change and other forms of ecological degradation.

Methodology: Textual analysis; Ecocriticism

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Adapting human/nonhuman borders across literary and film canons

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Robert Geal; Dr Fran-Pheasant-Kelly

Adaptation scholars have only recently addressed ecological issues in a systematic manner. This opens up the possibility for research in a number of areas relating to adaptation, including analyses of the changing representations of humans and nonhumans in texts which are adapted through time, across cultures, and between media, along the lines of Robert Geal’s (2022) discussion of the intertextual journey from ‘Pygmalion’ to *Frankenstein* to the *Terminator* and *Toy Story* franchises.

Methodology: Textual analysis; Ecocriticism; Adaptation studies

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Local community responses to local community representation in television biopics

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Robert Geal; Dr Fran-Pheasant-Kelly

Topic: There is an absence of sustained analysis of communities which are not regularly represented in film and television culture, and of how those communities respond to those representations. This absence is particularly regrettable because such communities play an important role in various political events. Recent biopics about celebrities from Wolverhampton (*The Boy with the Topknot*;*Raised by Wolves*; *Toast*), for example, depict the city as a ‘left behind’ community from which the protagonists escape. How do local audiences react to this characterisation of the city?

Methodology: Reception studies; audience analysis; textual analysis

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Myths of technology, myths of sustainability

Supervisors / contacts: Dr. William Pawlett, Prof. Meena Dhanda

There is growing awareness that Capitalism is reaching absolute environmental limits to its expansion, however the myth that technology can deliver 'sustainable solutions' is enshrined in corporate, political and popular discourse. Proposals are invited which explore the myths of technology and sustainability from the perspective of critical theory. Proposals examining the ethics of anti-consumerism, and of indigenous movements against extractivism are also welcome.

Methodology: interdisciplinary mixed methods; critical, narratological and interpretative analysis, participatory action research

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: New Hollywood in Perspective: Assessing a Golden Age

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Benjamin Halligan

New Hollywood is typically hailed as the last “Golden Age” of Hollywood film-making, but its influence continues to be felt as these once marginal examples of “small” film-making gained canonical status. The projected study will look to reassess New Hollywood from a number of possible perspectives: aesthetic innovations; the influence of European New Waves; the politics of New Hollywood in respect to the pre-Reagan era, and the ending of that era; the reinvention of Hollywood after New Hollywood via the blockbuster; auteur-based studies for any figures associated with New Hollywood; New Hollywood’s star system; method acting in New Hollywood.

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Alignment or Antagonism? Pop and Feminism

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Benjamin Halligan

Drawing on work in my co-edited collections *The Arena Concert* and *Diva*, this projected area of study will look to pop (historical or contemporary) in terms of the contested, or boosted, relationship with feminisms. Subjects can include, but are not limited to: performance and empowerment; punk and pop; fashion and photography in relation to pop; image-creation, post-Warhol; stardom; uses of social media by and for fan bases; liveness and world touring; liveness and intimacy; the comeback and media criticism; popular musicology.

Discipline: Creative Industries

Title / area of PhD research: Nation, Identity, Representation: New Perspectives on British Cinema

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Benjamin Halligan

Drawing on my monographs and edited collections in relation to British cinema (*Michael Reeves, Adult Themes, Hotbeds of Licentiousness, Desires for Reality*), this proposed research will look to elements of British cinema (historic or contemporary) that have remained underexplored or marginalised. Topics may include, but are not limited to: trans cultures and characters; shifts in the portrayals of homosexuality cultures and characters; imagining the nation state, particularly during the time of war; British cinema and Thatcherism; the British star system; performing class; projecting Britishness on the international screen; evolution of the period drama; British cinema; auteur perspectives from non-British film-makers; adaptations; auteur-based studies.

Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: ‘Our home will be broken up’: English women, family and work, 1916-1921

Supervisors / contacts: Prof Laura Ugolini, Prof George Gosling

The public perception of the impact of the First World War on British women is dominated by the notion that the war helped to emancipate them and brought them new opportunities, allowing them to enter previously male-dominated arenas, most notably as munitions workers. Different perspectives on women’s wartime lives generally receive scant attention, either in public discourse or in historical scholarship. Making use of two important National Archives collections (the MH47, ‘Central Military Service Tribunal and Middlesex Appeal Tribunal: Minutes and Papers’ and the 1921 Census), the aim of the proposed PhD is to turn the spotlight on the experiences of women who did *not* enthusiastically embrace new wartime roles and identities. It will focus on the experiences of women who sought to maintain pre-war patterns of employment and family responsibilities on the English home front and did *not* join uniformed services or enter masculine workplaces and other domains.

Its aim is to explore voices and experiences that have hitherto received surprisingly little attention, despite the rich variety of existing research into the First World War. This project will thus take the PhD student beyond one-sided narratives of either female emancipation and change or continuity and conservatism, encouraging reflection and dialogue about the diversity of female experiences at this key historical moment.

Paying due attention to differences in experiences and conceptions of femininity linked not only to class and economic background, but also locality, age, marital status, family circumstances and health, the PhD will thus consider the understandings of femininity and feminine capabilities and skills that were adopted and endorsed by these women. How significant were well-established feminine ideals that stressed domestic, maternal and family responsibilities? Were these ideals modified in the course – or because – of the war? Were they challenged by patriotic appeals that emphasised the importance of women’s contribution to the war effort, or by the increasingly dominant rhetoric of equality of sacrifice?

The PhD will question the extent to which such women were successful in maintaining the status quo: did they develop new practices and strategies to cope with wartime economic and consumer pressures, as well as challenges that might include the loss (temporary or permanent) of a male breadwinner or other family members? Did these women’s economic and family roles change, and were any such changes rolled back after the war? Were experiences influenced by factors such as class, health, marital status, or family circumstances and if so, how? The PhD will consider the impact of policy initiatives, the ongoing vicissitudes of war and, indeed, male decision-making on women’s wartime lives, but will pay especial attention to evidence of women’s agency and autonomy, both during and in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, as they coped with the effects of war.

Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: Romani History

Supervisors / contacts: Simon Constantine

I’m happy to supervise doctoral research on any aspect of the history of the Romani in late modern Europe (1789-present).

I would be keen to support projects on state persecution, including those which focus on the development of government policies towards Romani and other traveling groups, or (more specifically) on policing, the role of the courts and the institutionalization of Romani minorities. Further, fruitful areas of enquiry might include the economic and social relationship between Romani traders and craftsmen and non-Romani / majority communities or the media representation of ‘Gypsies’ in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: Blind Veterans as Shopkeepers in Twentieth Century Britain: A Collective Biography

Supervisors / contacts: Dr George Gosling, Prof Laura Ugolini

The sheer numbers of wounded men returning from the First World War posed a major societal challenge for all combatant nations. In Britain, the task of rehabilitation and restoration for wounded veterans fell largely to charities (Cohen 2001). One of the leading charities in this field was *St Dunstan’s Hostel for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors*, established in London in 1915 by the now-blind founding editor of the *Daily Express* and President of the RNIB and soon known simply as *St Dunstan’s*. Still operating today as Blind Veterans UK, they quickly became well known for the rehabilitation and industrial retraining provided in their homes, along with life-long after care and the development of pioneering assistive technologies, aimed at making the *St Dunstaners* independent men (Castleton 2013, Anderson 2013, Rubery 2015).

Handicraft training in the home’s workshops was a core element of the residential programme, as with many disability charities of the day (Borsay 2005). This led many *St Dunstaners* to make a living selling the craft items they had made. However, an aspect of this long forgotten until recently was the extent to which they not only sold their craft items through the charity and its prestigious Regent Street shop, but in their own shops around the country. Long-term after care supported basket-makers and cobblers to diversify, picture framers to sell art supplies, but also the establishment of newsagent’s, confectioner’s and tobacconist’s shops. Their numbers grew until the charity was supporting over 100 blind shopkeepers after the Second World War, before a rapid decline in their number (Gosling, Green & Millar 2024).

This project will examine the pre-war and wartime social, economic and medical backgrounds of these men, their continued relationship with the charity, and the variety and trajectories of their professional lives in retail. A collective biography of these blind shopkeepers will be compiled, using a mixed methods prosopography drawing upon three different source types: First, the administrative records and case files of the charity itself, which often maintained monthly visits throughout the lives of the men. Second, a range of local and retail history sources, including trade directories, local press and in rare cases business records. Third, oral history interviews with surviving relatives (usually grandchildren) of the men might be possible. Key information gathered from these sources will allow for a synthesis of overarching trends in relation to the professional lives of this distinct group of blind ex-servicemen in the decades following the First World War.

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Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: Charity Shop Histories

Supervisors / contacts: Dr George Gosling, Prof Laura Ugolini

Today’s charity shops sit within long and multifaceted histories, but ones that are only now beginning to be seriously researched.

Around 25 years ago there was a boom in contemporary research into charity shops by sociologists, geographers, and marketing researchers (Parsons 2002; Horne & Madrell 2002; Gregson & Crewe 2003). They mapped out the patterns of charity shop retailing and consumption, volunteering and professionalisation, and investigated the subversive potential of the charity shop as a site of counter-cultural alternative economies. This research generally treated the increase in the number of charity shops in the 1980s as the starting point for considering them a noteworthy retailing phenomenon.

Until recently, historians had only challenged this idea by emphasising the longer retailing history of Oxfam (Black 1992). Their flagship store, opened in 1947 and is still trading on Broad Street in Oxford today, and the relationship between their shops and the origins of the modern fair trade movement have been revealing subjects for historical study (Field 2016; Anderson 2015). However, this focus also reinforced the myth that Oxfam invented the modern charity shop and that the pre-1980s story is one concerned primarily with international development charities. On both counts, this overlooks the importance of the British Red Cross, the Salvation Army and local charities across the country, not least disability charities.

New research, just beginning to be published, has used the archives of numerous charities and historic collections of local newspapers to elaborate and extend the history of charity retail (Gosling, Green & Millar 2024). This new research relocates the pre-1980s charity shop in its local setting, driven by the associational cultures of local communities rather than the increasingly business-like fundraising operations of national charities. It shows there was a place for professional and paid work, and male shop workers, but that women had always predominately staffed the sale of donated second-hand goods. Above all, it reveals that charities often ran shops as sites of social projects above and beyond their value as fundraising initiatives.

It is the intention that this archival research should form the basis for further studies that explored different aspects of the longer history. Three possible approaches would be an oral history, a case study, or an international comparative study.

An oral history might focus on the history of charity shops from the boom of the late 1960s, exploring how memories of charity shop buying, selling and donating feature in participants’ life stories. The charity shop history of childhood in particular is yet to be written. A PhD project might ask: to what extent are the findings of contemporary researchers universal to longer history of charity retail or specific to their current incarnation? How has changing consumer culture been experienced by charity shoppers over recent generations? How did the charity shop serve as a site of generational and gendered social change over this period? How do memories of charity shops influence our views of charity shops today?

A case study approach would allow for an in-depth analysis of one charity or a small number of charities, connected by locality to field of charitable work, exploring the place of retailing in their history. Local charities, such as Beacon (previously the Wolverhampton Church of England Society for the Blind), are amongst many that have longer histories than could be accessed through oral histories today. This approach would be especially useful for considering the use of shops by charities for different purposes, raising funds but also using the shops as part of job creation schemes for the unemployed and the disabled.

An international study might compare and explore connections between the British charity shop tradition and those of other parts of the world. This might be the North American *thrift store*, the *op shops* (short for *opportunity shops*) of Australia and New Zealand, or the *world shops* (previously *third world shops*) of Western Europe, found most commonly today in Germany. Given the cost of international travel, primarily remote supervision might be provided for a research student already based in that part of the world. An international comparative study would suit exploration of issues around the balance of business and philanthropy, consumerism and second-hand cultures, fundraising and fair trade.

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Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: The First 70 Years of Medical Social Work: Hospital Almoners in Britain, 1895-1964

Supervisors / contacts: Dr George Gosling, Prof Laura Ugolini

In the two decades running up to the First World War, a new professional figure appeared in London’s major charity hospitals. These ‘Lady Almoners’ quickly became commonplace in voluntary hospitals across the Britain in the 1920s, before entering the municipal public hospital in the 1930s. By the time these hospitals were nationalised as part of the newly established National Health Service in 1948, they were an established feature of the modern hospital (Gosling 2018).

These were the early generations of British hospital social workers, who were key figures in the evolving welfare services of the hospital as it underwent a change from being an institution focused on serving the poor to the sick of all classes. This emergent field of social work, with links to organisations such as the Charity Organisation Society and the early social science departments of British universities, was at the core of this new female profession. Initially appointed to assess whether and at what level a patient might be able to financially contribute to the hospital, the so-called Lady Almoner began to utilise her wider knowledge of local charity and welfare to complement the medical services of the hospital in ways that would become the beginnings of both hospital social work and occupational therapy (Doyle 2014; Gosling 2017). Despite being such a key figure in the social history of medicine in modern Britain, the focus on the people who made up this new profession has been largely limited to very early pioneers based at London hospitals (Willmott 1985; Waddington 1998; Simmons 2005; Cullen 2013).

This project will employ a mixed methods prosopography to develop a series of collective biographies for the members of this new profession over its first 70 years. It will do so primarily using three sets of historical sources: First, the records held at the University of Warwick’s Modern Records Centre for the precursors of BASW (the British Association for Social Workers), which included the Institute of Almoners and Hospital Almoners Association, which were later merged and later still renamed in1964 to reflect the shift away from a focus on payment to medical social work. Second, the records of the small number of British universities which provided the two-year course necessary to qualify as an almoner from very early in the history of the profession. Third, hospital records from local archives around the country, as part of which almoner department records rarely survive, but appointments to and the work of which is often traceable from other administrative records and reports.

Key information gathered from these sources will allow for a synthesis of overarching trends in relation to the social backgrounds and professional lives of over 1,000 women (and 1 man) who worked in the field of British hospital social work as the new profession adapted to major changes including the rise of mass hospital treatment and the inception of the National Health Service.

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Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: Various aspects of the Northern Ireland conflict and conflict resolution

Supervisors / contacts: Dr Eamonn O'Kane

I am available to supervise students on topics related to the events during, and resolution of, the Northern Ireland conflict (“the Troubles”). Areas examining the role of the British and Irish governments during the conflict and reasons for the emergence and success of the peace process are particularly welcome. I am also willing to supervise topics related to the “outworkings” of the peace process such as projects examining the challenges that Northern Ireland still faces; how to deal with the legacy of the conflict; the impact of international actors on Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland’s impact on other conflicts.

More widely, I am happy to consider supervision of PhDs related to conflict resolution theory and practice.

Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: The Midlands Miners and the strike of 1984/5

Supervisors / contacts: Professor Keith Gildart

In recent years the miners’ strike of 1984/5 has attracted the attention of historians, sociologists and political scientists. There have been major studies of specific coalfields such as Scotland, Durham, and South Wales. This project will explore the strike through the experiences of mining communities in the Midlands. The specific focus will be on trade union culture and politics in Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Warwickshire. Methodologically, the research will develop an oral history project involving former miners and their families and the recently catalogued records of the National Union of Mineworkers (Derbyshire/Warwickshire) held in Matlock Record Office.

Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: Popular Music and Social Change in the West Midlands 1970-1990

Supervisors / contacts: Professor Keith Gildart

Histories of popular music in twentieth century Britain have largely focussed on the cities of London, Liverpool and Manchester. Yet the West Midlands (particularly the cities of Birmingham and Wolverhampton) have been central in contributing to the development of youth subcultures and music scenes. In particular, both cities have been spaces where race, class and deindustrialisation have formed the backdrop to the music of important groups of musicians in the 1970s and 1980s including Slade, UB40, and Dexys Midnight Runners. This project will use oral history and archival research to trace the cultural responses to the decline of the steel, coal, and car industries in the West Midlands and the contribution of popular music in opposing the politics of Thatcherism.

Discipline: History

Title / area of PhD research: The British coal crisis of 1992

Supervisors / contacts: Professor Keith Gildart

Outline:

The British coal crisis of 1992 led to the closure of a number of British collieries and contributed to the growing unpopularity of John Major’s Conservative Government. In contrast to the 1984-85 miners’ strike the event has largely been ignored by historians. The records of the National Union of Mineworkers are currently being preserved by the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick which will shed new light on the politics of the 1992 coal closure programme and the political responses. The University of Wolverhampton has a collection of oral history interviews with former miners and their families which provide a crucial resource for examining the impact of colliery closures on villages and towns in England, Scotland, and Wales.

Discipline: Law

Title / area of PhD research: An investigation into the role and activities of the Police Offices created by the Middlesex Justices Act 1792

Supervisors / contacts: Dr David J. Cox, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society

The creation of the Bow Street Police Office in 1749 as the first professional police force in the UK has recently been ably documented by historical criminologists, along with its role and activities. However, the same cannot be said for the seven Police Offices created by the Government following the passing of the Middlesex Justices Act 1792. These offices were formed along the same lines as Bow Street Police Office in order to replicate the perceived success of Bow Street, but virtually no academic research has ever been carried out into their role and activities from 1792 to the date of their abolition in 1839, when they were replaced by the newly created Metropolitan Police.

This project would rectify this lacuna, with detailed investigation into the various ways in which these seven Police Offices operated both as separate entities and as part of a co-ordinated and increasingly professionalised police force for the whole of the metropolis of London and beyond. It has always been assumed that Bow Street Police Office (whose senior officers operated both throughout Britain and on the European continent) played the role of *primus inter pares* (first among equals) as it was formed half a century before the other seven offices, but was that in fact always the case? Did the other Police Offices specialise or differ in their approach to preventing and detecting crime, and to what extent did they influence the formation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829? This research would provide answers to this and other important questions to the development of professional policing in the early nineteenth century before the creation of the Metropolitan Police.

Discipline: Law

Title / area of PhD research: Offending by British Prison Officials 1853-2023: A Question of Trust and Legitimacy

Supervisors / contacts: Dr David J. Cox, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society

Outline:

With such a large prison estate, it is perhaps not too surprising that the British media occasionally report the odd case of corrupt behaviour by prison staff. The most high-profile and recent of this concerned an inappropriate relationship between a female prison officer and a male inmate of HMP Berwyn, one of Britain’s largest and newest prisons. The accused pleaded guilty to a charge of misconduct in public office and was herself jailed for 8 months.

However, such bad behaviour by those trusted by the public to maintain the safety of the British penal system and its inmates is nothing new; it has been present since the very start of the modern British prison system in the mid-1850s.

This PhD research project would therefore investigate what happened when prison officials in the British prison system themselves fell foul of the criminal law. Using a selection of case studies and a wide range of historical sources, it would investigate some of the numerous cases of criminal activity reported in the provincial and metropolitan newspapers from 1853 until the present day. Prison officials were and are obviously meant to be above reproach, but this project would provide a machine-readable dataset of all known examples of criminal behaviour by prison staff between 1853 and 2023 (from prison guards to prison governors) ranging from petty offences of fraud through serious sexual assault up to charges of both manslaughter and murder. The project would investigate how the offences first came to light, how the suspects were dealt with by the courts and what happened to them post-trial The research would shine a light into a somewhat dark and previously under-researched corner of the British penal system.

Discipline: Law

Title / area of PhD research: The UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross Border Insolvency – Divergence or Convergence amongst the adopting nations?

Supervisors / contacts: Various

The Model on Cross Border Insolvency has been lauded as a significant step forward in creating a version of modified universalism in cases of insolvent debtors where their assets and liabilities are subject to different legal jurisdictions. There are a number of issues which arise from countries adopting the Model Law. In recent years with more countries adopting the Model Law it is becoming apparent that as well as convergence in general approaches to cross border issues, there have been a number of matters upon which the varying ways in which the Model Law has been adopted has led to divergence. Some of these divergences may seem relatively minor, eg whether a provision is contrary to public policy or manifestly contrary to public policy, or are more significant eg, whether the effect of the Model Law is merely procedural or substantive.

Many books and articles have been written on the Model Law and a number of online UN resources are available including a digest of case law, a legislative guide, a practice guide, judicial perspective as well as reports from various colloquia. The way in which the Model Law has been adopted has not been consistent (as is the case for example under the EU Regulation on Insolvency Proceedings). There is no single appeal court to opine on the interpretation of the Model Law. Divergences suggest a lack of uniformity and inconsistency.

The purpose of the project will be to isolate different provisions of the Model Law where i) there has been convergence, where case law will be considered to see if there is in fact divergence in interpretation; and ii) where the provisions have not been adopted in terms identical to the Model Law and again the interpretation of such provisions will be considered to assess the level of divergence. Ultimately, it is hoped that the analysis of the Model Law adoptions and case law will lead to a clear understanding of the problems of any divergence (if any) and will result in clear recommendations which may lead, for example, to potential updates to the Model Law or the introduction of an international court to deal solely with issues of interpretation