

ArtsMethods Funding Report: Manchester Postcolonial Studies Group

This document provides a report on the activities of the Manchester Postcolonial Studies Group in the academic year 2016-2017, as funded by the ArtsMethods researcher-led funding initiative.

Based at the University of Manchester, the Postcolonial Studies Group is a postgraduate-led initiative with main activities revolving around monthly reading group meetings to discuss key texts in postcolonial theory, culture, and literature. The sessions are themed per semester, but selected readings are varied and range across the disciplines to engage with postgraduate researchers from across the Faculty of Humanities. No prior knowledge is assumed and readings are briefly introduced at the start of each session. The group additionally runs a Postcolonial Atelier series, designed to fit around reading group themes. Atelier series events are structured as friendly, roundtable discussions of work-in-progress by established academics within and beyond the University of Manchester.

Funding was sought for both the Reading Group (2016-17) and the Atelier 2017 Series. Both initiatives enjoyed high attendance rates, supported by the funding and resources provided by ArtsMethods. The Reading Group average attendance more than doubled from the attendance rates in 2015-16; which can be attributed to a wider advertisement of the Group to PGT students, more engagement on social media through the Twitter account (@mcrpoco), and distributing information posters across the Graduate School and Faculty buildings and to relevant course convenors. The friendly atmosphere afforded by having light refreshments thanks to ArtsMethods support made the Group particularly welcoming to newcomers.

The continued funding support of the Atelier Series allowed the Group to invite more speakers and events, which has continued to receive a good attendance rate. The Atelier in 2016-17 has hosted a number of academics from within the university and successfully invited leading postcolonial scholars from across the UK. The Atelier activities will have enhanced the professional development of participants as career researchers through a focus on new postcolonial theory and methodologies. The Atelier has covered a diverse range of topics (including gender and sexuality, modernism, African dictatorship, Arab writing, Israel/Palestine, and the future of postcolonial studies) and this demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the Group and why it has appealed to researchers across the Faculty and we have had attendees join us from across Manchester (postgraduates from Manchester Metropolitan University and Salford University).

Manchester Postcolonial Studies Group: Postcolonial Reading Group (2016-17)

Overview of recent Reading Group themes:

2015-16 Semester I: Gender

2015-16 Semester II: Childhood

2016-17 Semester I: Postcolonial 'Canon'

2016-17 Semester II: Postcolonial 'Canon'

The Reading Group theme allows the organisers to focus readings on a particular issue each semester to centre and build up knowledge and discussion on a particular focus. In 2016-17, we decided to return the Group to a core theme addressing key and foundation interventions in postcolonial studies, i.e., the Postcolonial 'Canon', to reinvigorate the Group's appeal and attendance. This approach was successful, as our four reading group sessions in Semester I had were attended by 16, 12, 10, and 7 people, respectively. These numbers picked up again in Semester II, as the four reading group sessions were attended by 6, 10, 9, and 5, respectively. These numbers were a great improvement on the 4-5 average attendance for reading group meetings in 2015-16.

2016-17 Semester I reading group meetings:

Tuesday October 4th: Edward Said (introduced by David Firth)
Tuesday November 1st: Homi Bhabha (introduced by David Firth)
Tuesday November 29th: Chandra Mohanty (introduced by Sarah Newport)
Tuesday December 12th: Benita Parry (introduced by David Firth)

2016-17 Semester II reading group meetings:

Tuesday February 7th: Benita Parry (introduced by David Firth)
Tuesday March 7th: Frantz Fanon (introduced by Sarah Newport)
Tuesday March 28th: Judith Butler & Frantz Fanon second reading (introduced by David Firth)
Tuesday April 25th: Graham Huggan (introduced by David Firth)

Manchester Postcolonial Studies Group: Postcolonial Atelier 2017 Series

Funding for the annual Atelier Series has crossed over academic years, with the Postcolonial Atelier 2016 and 2017 Series following the highly successful launch of the Postcolonial Atelier in 2014. Full details can be found on our website.

Atelier Series 2016 information:

Atelier 1, April 21st: Erica Burman (chaired by Edmund Chapman)
Atelier 2, May 19th: Humaira Saeed and Veronica Barnsley (chaired by Anastasia Valassopolous)
Atelier 3, June 23rd: Charlotta Salmi (chaired by David Firth)
Atelier 4, November 16th: Howard Booth (chaired by David Firth)
Atelier 5, December 7th: Alberto Fernandez Carbajal (chaired by David Firth)

Atelier Series 2017 information:

Atelier 1, March 23rd: Robert Spencer (chaired by Sarah Newport)
Atelier 2, April 27th: Matthew Whittle (chaired by David Firth)
Atelier 3, May 2nd: Graham Huggan (chaired by David Firth)
Atelier 4: June 8th: Lindsey Moore and Anastasia Valassopoulos (chaired by David Firth)

Additional Atelier events planned for:

Atelier 5: October (date tbc)
Atelier 6: November (date tbc)
Atelier 7: December (date tbc)

Potential speakers who have shown an interest in participating include: Dr Claire Chambers (York); Dr Jenni Ramone (Nottingham Trent); Dr Letizia Alternò (Keele); Dr Nicola Abram (Reading); Prof John MacLeod (Leeds); Dr Sarah Lawson Welsh (York St John); Prof Edward Simpson (SOAS); and Dr Gemma Sou (Manchester). These speakers will hopefully be accommodated either through remaining sessions in 2017 or in subsequent Atelier series.

David Firth and Sarah Newport (Steering Committee)

Manchester Postcolonial Studies Group

Wordpress: <https://manchesterpostcolonialstudiesgroup.wordpress.com>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/McrPoco> @McrPoco