



Undergraduate Scholars Research Project Outlines 2021/22

This year we have 5 research projects that students can sign up to. This document provides abstracts for each of the projects. You will need to specify which project you are applying to on your application form.

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Key Dates:

- **Monday 22nd November: Deadline for Applications**
- **Friday 17th December: Students informed of success**
- **Semester 2: Week 1, Wednesday 9th Feb, 2-5pm, first UG Scholars session (after this most UG Scholars sessions will take place on Wednesday afternoons)**

Re-making the Performance Repertoire: Equality and Diversity in the Drama Classroom

Project Lead: Dr Kate Dorney

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In the 21st century UK teachers of theatre and performance at all levels have increasingly used recorded performances of work with their students to investigate performance practice and history. Many rely on the small number of platforms that feature high quality video recordings of contemporary performance (notably Digital Theatre Plus, Drama Online and National Theatre Live). These platforms tend to feature large scale, large budget productions of mainstream script-based work to maximise revenue streams across the education sector and this is encouraging a fixed repertoire of works studied and reperformed. As part of our ongoing work to decolonise the curriculum in Drama at UOM staff and students have been discussing how and what we teach. Students of African, East Asian, South Asian, Arab and Black heritage have told us they feel inadequately represented in the work we ask them to encounter and their experience is echoed by artists and scholars we have encountered in other decolonising and anti-racist working groups and fora. There is clearly a gap in the preservation of small scale work by artists of Black, African, East Asian and South Asian and Arab heritage and this affects the efforts of teachers, students and practitioners to experience, research and be inspired by this work. The aim of this project is to explore existing initiatives to diversify the performance repertoire (e.g Black Theatre Live and Eclipse Theatre, the National Theatre's Black Plays Archive) and to consider how these might be integrated into teaching, learning and research and what other resources/initiatives might support diversifying the performance repertoire.

Indicative list of tasks

As part of this project the team will undertake a number of tasks including:

1. Compiling a list of all projects and initiatives running or that have been running in the UK since 2000 and summarising their aims, key personnel, sources of funding and mode of work.
2. Evaluating the usefulness of these resources/initiatives for their own study and practice at UG level
3. Compiling an overview of UK UG Drama curricula at select universities
4. Compiling an overview of GCSE, A' Level and BTEC Drama and English Literature set texts/practitioners

This work will then inform the primary aim and output for the project team, which is to identify gaps in provision and make recommendations for how these projects could be integrated/better integrated into existing curricula.

This work will contribute to an ongoing project run by Kate Dorney and Simon Parry, funded by the Creative Manchester Social Responsibility Fund. More information here: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/salc-making-a-difference/2021/06/18/manchester-performance-archive-towards-an-equitable-practice-of-archiving-and-accessing-performance/>

The Hulme Hippodrome and Working Class Entertainment in Hulme, Manchester

Project Lead: Dr Victoria Lowe

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The Hulme Hippodrome is a 120 year old Grade 2 listed Edwardian theatre in Hulme, currently on the Theatre's Trust, Theatres at Risk Register. In its time, it has been known as the Grand Junction Theatre and the Floral Hall. The Hippodrome was initially built alongside the Hulme Playhouse (1902) and they were both designed by the same architect, Joseph John Alley. In February 2021 a campaign called Save Hulme Hippodrome was created by a local group to bring the building back into community use and save it from demolition. This project seeks to look at the history of the building as a local performance venue, how it developed initially as part of the Broadhead circuit of Variety Theatres, through to its use as a BBC Television studio for live broadcasts in the 1960s. Students will investigate various archives to trace this history in detail, including the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Centre and the Manchester Local Image Collection. I am particularly interested in the project team investigating how the building has engaged with local, multi-racial and working class audiences.

Reproducibility in studying speech dynamics

Project Leads: Dr Patrycja Strycharczuk

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Speech is a very complex system that involves continuous physical body movement as well as abstract discrete units that carry a specific meaning. There must be a systematic mapping between the two that allows humans to communicate, but the nature of that mapping is not yet well understood. Part of the issue is that studying vocal tract movements requires careful instrumental experimentation, and the resulting data require careful reduction to allow us insights into the systematic events in speech.

In this project, students will have an opportunity to observe and analyse articulatory data, a visual representation of articulator movement during speech. As a team, we will try to identify systematic properties of vowel sounds using specific measurements. The focus of the project will be to establish how we can make such observations reliable and reproducible. Training will be given on using tools for parsing articulatory gestures, and the task of the students will be to investigate whether different analysts can obtain the same results, and to develop a protocol for achieving consistency.

“Not wealthy but life”: the Cultural Value in the Socio-Economic Development

Project Lead: Dr Leandro Valiati

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How do we count the value of culture? Poets and philosophers can tell us in words, but are there other ways to measure the value of the arts? What happens if we try to express that value as a measurement of social/individual economic progress beyond the traditional quantitative approach made by economists (impact on GDP, employment, e.g.)? Are there different measures we can use to express the value of the arts for the society and Economy?

In this project, students are invited to reflect on innovative ways to identify and describe the multidimensional contribution of arts and cultural practices for economic development. In this sense, it will be assumed that the Economy is a social science and should focus on elements such as gender, race and social backgrounds equality, distribution, and pro-society policies for improving life quality. So, Development means a sustainable individual and social wellbeing improvement, which is intensively provided by arts and cultural practices and their values.

From a practical perspective, this research will comprehend:

- a) A focused non-exhaustive literature review on the theoretical core on Multidimensional Human and Economic Development, Wellbeing, Substantive Value for Economics, Political Economy of Culture and Social Progress.
- b) Inspired by the toolkit of multidimensional indicators produced by Dr Leandro Valiati in partnership with 30 Arts Organisations in Brazil and the UK (www.culturalvalue.org), we will create a small set of indicators aiming to express some dimensions found in a) as examples of the impact of the arts and culture in the socio-economic Development in a multidimensional perspective.
- c) These indicators will be tested having as a case study one chosen cultural activity performed by one of the Arts Spaces of UoM during the second semester.

Formative aims:

- i. Basic notions on heterodox economic development and wellbeing theory.
- ii. Training in research instruments and their applications.
- iii. Development of basic data-analysis

Notes:

a) The indicators produced can be either fed by secondary data, structured interviews, or surveys (depending on the health measures and viability).

b) *Only very elementary math knowledge will be required for this project.*

How to conduct corpus-based research on spoken language

Project lead: Dr Richard Zimmerman

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Studying the language of written texts is relatively straight-forward: Collect lots of texts, look for the linguistic expressions you are interested in, and investigate your results. The study of spoken language, however, is a whole different animal. First, speech does not come in objective categories, but must be transcribed. This is not a trivial task but requires some theory and great effort. Secondly, there are many aspects of language that are exclusive to the spoken mode, such as errors or fillers (think of all the uhms and you knows). Such difficulties must be treated carefully within an explicit framework. Thirdly, the processes in uttering spoken words are multi-faceted and complex, involving factors such as attention to speech (you speak differently when you read or talk to others), speech participants, dialect, and much more. In this Undergraduate Scholars Research Programme, students learn how to deal with all of these difficulties and how to analyse spoken language professionally and competently.

Specifically, students will become familiar with ...

- (1) ... the relevance of theoretical transcription guidelines, involving issues such as time stamps, tokenization, disfluencies and spelling conventions,
- (2) ... the state-of-the-art “tier transcription system”, with different levels for speakers, extra-linguistic noises, comments, etc., associated software, as well as text and audio formats,
- (3) ... ways to find speech samples from public sources,
- (4) ... the importance of proper documentation of a speaker, including dialect, age, social, individual and situational variables,
- (5) ... basic analysis techniques in the study of linguistic features that are predominantly found in speech (e.g., quotative *be like*, *I was like*, “*Yeah, definitely.*”, the *is is* construction, *But the reality is is nobody knows the answer, or the use of emphatic literally, I literally couldn't open my mouth.*).

Each student will contribute two transcriptions of 5 minutes and 25 minutes of speech, resulting in the main outcome of this project – a professional, publicly accessible corpus of high-quality transcripts. In addition, students will then use the corpus to analyse one feature of spoken language of their choosing.