NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL DOMINATION

A masterclass with Prof Vincent Dubois

Date: Wednesday 5th April, 9.30am - 4.00pm
Venue: Clive Price Suite, University of Canberra

ABSTRACT
The hypothesis according to which we can draw a parallel between social and cultural domination has been intensely discussed during the past decades. In this presentation I will discuss the relevance of this framework when applied to “lowbrow” forms of culture. In this case, what are the social conditions for cultural domination to exert its effects?
To address this question I will reflect on the social organisation of cultural and artistic activities, of its impact on the definition of the value of cultural goods, and therefore on the conditions under which “lowbrow” culture can escape cultural domination and obtain a certain degree of symbolic autonomy.
This will be the occasion to discuss the ambiguous role of cultural policies and institutions in this process, and to address the sociological debate on the uses of the notions of worlds, fields and networks. To illustrate these theoretical debates and propositions, I will draw on empirical research conducted in France on cultural policies and amateur music.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER
Vincent Dubois, sociologist and political scientist, is Professor at the University of Strasbourg. His research fields include cultural sociology, cultural policy, poverty and welfare and more generally sociological approaches to public policy. He belongs to the SAGE research unit (Societies, Actors and Government in Europe) where he coordinates a working group on ‘Transformations in the Market for Symbolic Goods’.
Prior to this he was a fellow at the University of Strasbourg’s Institute for Advanced Study, a Florence Gould member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, USA, and a member at the Institut Universitaire de France.
He has published more than 70 papers in scientific journals and eight books, including Culture as a Vocation (Routledge 2015), The Sociology of Wind Bands: Amateur Music Between Cultural Domination and Autonomy, (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2013) and The Bureaucrat and the Poor: Encounters in French Welfare Offices (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2010).
### PROGRAM

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### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- **Peter Anderson**, PhD candidate, Swinburne
- **Wayne Appleby**, PhD candidate, UC
- **Tully Barnett**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Flinders
- **Lauren Briggs**, PhD candidate, UC
- **Simon Chambers**, PhD candidate, UWS
- **Robyn Higgins**, PhD candidate, UC
- **Paul Magee**, Associate Professor, Writing, UC
- **Ian McHugh**, PhD candidate, UC
- **Duncan McKay**, Research Officer, Edith Cowan
- **Kerrie Nelson**, MA student
- **Tayanah O’Donnell**, Research Fellow, UC
- **Sora Park**, Associate Professor, Communication and Media Studies, UC
- **Jordan Williams**, Associate Professor, Writing, UC
- **Scott Brook**, Associate Professor, Writing, UC (facilitator)
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A comprehensive suite of maps, including accessibility maps and those for bicycle shelters and taxi drop-off points, is available on the UC website at www.canberra.edu.au/maps.
PARTICIPANT RESEARCH STATEMENTS AND BIO NOTES

Duncan McKay

Situations and Realisations: Using visual artists’ CVs to map the field of cultural production in Western Australia

For part of my doctoral research, completed in 2013, I made innovative use of artists’ CVs as a readily available source of information about the field of cultural production in Western Australia. While CVs are not a complete or historically reliable source of information, they are documents that are socially instrumental. So those select activities and achievements that are included by an artist on their CV are significant because they correspond to some system of value that operates more or less objectively in the field. By collecting and analysing the information contained in the CVs of 322 artists, I had unique access to empirical means to map the field of cultural production, as it operated for visual artists in Western Australia for a period spanning nearly five decades. Through this work I was able to show that the local field was indeed like Bourdieu’s market for symbolic goods – with the “anti-economic ‘economy’ of pure art” at one pole, and the “economic’ logic of the... artistic industries” at the other. Through mapping relationships between artists and galleries, my study gave empirical weight to anecdotal accounts about how connections were established and maintained, and opportunities distributed in the field. In this short presentation, I will briefly introduce this small part of my PhD research and focus on what it revealed about the role of art schools in the Western Australian field of cultural production.

Duncan completed his PhD in 2013, with an empirical, sociological study of the working lives of professional visual artists in Western Australia. Duncan has a background and qualifications in visual art practice, and has also worked as an arts administrator for the City of Perth, in the area of public art.

Peter Anderson

Self-Organised - art & infrastructural activism: from ‘alternative spaces’ to artist-run initiatives

‘Self-Organised – art and infrastructural activism’ is an independent research, writing and curatorial project focused on artist-run practice in Australia. The first stage of the project involved archival and curatorial research focused on the artist-run spaces scene in Brisbane during the 1980s. The primary research outcome for this stage of the project was the curated exhibition ephemeral traces: Brisbane’s artist-run scene in the 1980s, University of Queensland Art Museum (April to July, 2016). This case study exhibition was focused on the scene that developed around five key artist-run spaces between 1982 and 1988 – One Flat, A Room, That Space, The Observatory and John Mills National. Subsequent research is guided by a broader investigation of ‘infrastructural activism’ within the visual arts (Smith, 2012) through an examination of key shifts in policy and practice within the Australian ‘alternative spaces’ field from the 1970s to the present. Of particular relevance to this current work is the tracing of changes within the field from a broad notion of ‘alternative spaces’ to a bifurcated field of Contemporary Art Spaces and Artist Run Initiatives, with both types of organisation now defined as elements within a broader Small To Medium (S2M) sector (Campbell, Murray, Brennan & Pettit, 2017).

References

Campbell, Murray, Brennan & Pettit (2017) S2M: The Economics of Australia’s small to medium visual arts sector Sydney: National Association for the Visual Arts

I’m employed as a Research Assistant on ‘Working the Field’, undertaking a PhD (in creative writing) at Swinburne University, as well as functioning as an independent writer, curator and researcher.
**Tully Barnett**  
**Words and numbers: A report on Laboratory Adelaide**

Laboratory Adelaide: The Value of Culture is a three-year ARC Linkage project partnering Flinders University with the State Library of South Australia, the State Theatre of South Australia and The Adelaide Festival Corporation. The idea is to seek, develop and trial ways of understanding and communicating the value of culture beyond economics. When I started working on this problem, I defined the territory as culture as in art and value as in worth, not values. But, of course, I was wrong. The slippage between the terms art and culture, between value and values is exactly the broader territory and project in which any attempt at changing the way “stakeholders” communicate the value of culture resides. We began as a mixed methodology approach, blending quantitative and qualitative methods for valuing culture, and we continue to trial willingness to pay / contingent value methodologies as one means by which cultural value can be measured. But we realised early on that the problem of communicating the value of culture has to be solved in the domain of language. Numbers, like words, are rhetorical. Because measurement exercises are dependent upon what can be readily measured, evidence of value is typically gathered from quantifiable externalities. Looking elsewhere for a clue, we argue that much of the value of culture is conferred in cultural reporting contexts – formal reporting such as through annual reports as well as informal reporting in the way that staff in arts and culture organisations talk about what it is that they do. As a result, we argue that “institutional value,” to refer to John Holden’s value triangle, needs to be unpacked in much greater detail than it so far has. And we look to alternative reporting frameworks that are arising out of sustainability and post-GFC initiatives to assist in reframing the communication of different kinds of value.

Tully Barnett is a Research Fellow in the School of Humanities and Creative Arts at Flinders University, working on the ARC Linkage project Laboratory Adelaide: The Value of Culture developing methodologies for valuing culture beyond economic data. She is Associate Director of the Australasian Consortium of Humanities Research Centres and serves on the board of the Australasian Association of Digital Humanities.

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**Simon Chambers**  
**Evaluating the unfamiliar: the construction and performance of taste in contemporary art music**

My doctoral research is broadly interested in developing our understanding of how people discover, engage with, evaluate and utilise music which is initially unfamiliar to them. The context of my research is unique in that I am supervised by and involved in the separate research cultures of both a psychology research institute with a focus on music cognition (The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development), and a research institute with broad interests in sociology and cultural studies (The Institute for Culture and Society).

Using contemporary classical music as the specific context to investigate this topic, my project firstly seeks to understand how and why people engage with and form an attachment to a genre which was previously unfamiliar to them. I then seek to explore in greater detail how people mobilise concepts of taste, of both liked and disliked music, to construct the dimensions of taste and aesthetic disposition towards a genre they have familiarised themselves with to achieve particular outcomes in particular contexts – particularly as they discover new artists and works. Finally, I will link my research to the ‘cultural omnivore’ debate in cultural sociology by examining the actual behavioural listening patterns of users of digital music services to assess predictors of different levels of listening heterogeneity and its role in facilitating engagement with unfamiliar cultural forms.

I am a PhD Student, Western Sydney University. Complimentary to my PhD studies, I am also a Partner Investigator on an ARC Linkage Grant project into music recommendation algorithms being conducted in collaboration between Western Sydney University, Waikato University, the Australian Music Centre (AMC) and the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA). My professional work is involved in developing digital user interfaces to support the discovery and exploration of music resources.
**Robyn Higgins**

My current research will make new application of the concept of Cultural Safety to the Australian arts and cultural sector. Originally a concept developed by Māori for application in the Aotearoa/New Zealander health sector this research will develop an evidence-based approach to designing training frameworks and resources for Cultural Safety as applied to the Arts. Drawing on data available through the Australia Council for the Arts, that suggest that inequity is present in the arts, the research will seek to: further understand inequity in the Australian arts and cultural sector from a First Peoples’ artist and arts worker centred perspective; identify how Cultural Safety might address inequity in the Australian arts and cultural sector from the perspective of First Peoples’ artists and arts workers; and identify and explore existing experiences of Cultural Safety in the Arts as defined by First Peoples’ artists and arts workers. This project is designed collaboratively, working with a Critical Reference Group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous arts and cultural professionals/researchers. Collaborative research practice will be achieved using a critical approach to Action Research, interrogating the process through the lenses of Tūhiwai Smith’s Decolonising Methodologies Indigenous Research Projects and Nakata’s Indigenous Standpoint Theory as a means of working within Cultural Safety as an applied to research Cultural Safety.

**Paul Magee**

I am writing a book on how lyric poets compose (Suddenness: On Rapid Knowledge) and am testing the hypothesis that there might be a relation between how a poet comes up with a given line and those times (e.g. question times during conferences) when one does not know quite what one has to say, until one has said it. The book is based on an archive of 30 interviews with Anglophone poets which I conducted over the last ten years, interviews which included questions focused on this specific issue as to where the words come from in the moment, and how they relate to speaking off the top of one’s head. So my focus is very local and in a way quite technical. On the other hand, the repetitiveness with which certain themes come into people’s ‘empirical’ reports on their own specific practice alerts me to the need for the sort of analysis that can comprehend systemic, field-based drivers that may have to do with what sort of compositional practice is valuable to be associated with, and what discredited. Positive and negative relations to the concept of romanticism seem to have some bearing in this regard. So I want to think about how positionality might effect poets’ discussions of specific compositional practice.

Paul Magee is a poet and researcher in poetics at the University of Canberra. He is author of Stone Postcard (John Leonard Press 2014), Cube Root of Book (John Leonard Press 2006) and the ethnographic monograph From Here to Tierra del Fuego (University of Illinois Press 2000). He is currently working on a fourth book, Suddenness: On Rapid Knowledge, an exploration of the relation between poetic composition and practices of extemporisation in everyday conversation. Cube Root of Book was shortlisted for the Innovation Award at the 2008 Adelaide Festival Awards for the Arts, while Stone Postcard was named in Australian Book Review as one of the books of the year for 2014.

**Ian McHugh**

**Australian fantasy fiction as a literature of unbelonging**

My project is to explore the largely vacant space for novels of the fantastic with a distinctly Australian sense of physical, historical and cultural place, and why this remains so, despite the success of Australian writers since the 1990s in creating a genre industry for Australian fantasy and, more broadly, “speculative” fiction. As Judith Wright put it, non-indigenous Australians are yet to achieve “that point of equilibrium at which we can feel that this country is truly ours by right of understanding and acceptance”. This enduring tension of possession and alienation can be found reflected in most genres of Australian literature, with the land often present as a mysterious Other, alien and alienating, variously wondrous or threatening, depending on particular genre needs. But, in fantasy fiction, Australia, as a place or sense of place, is vanishingly rare, at least at novel length and unless one widens the net
to capture works aimed at junior, rather than adult, audiences. Australian writers don’t always “write Australian”, by any means, nor are they obliged to and nor is their work lessened by a choice not to, but Australia isn’t as absent from most genres as it is from fantasy fiction. With notable exceptions in short- and junior fiction, fantasy literature hasn’t contributed substantially to discourses of decolonisation and belonging in Australian literature. This project proposes to demonstrate that fantasy fiction can contribute to those discourses, by facilitating the isolation of destabilising cultural components and providing an important safe(r) space to examine them. My topic centres on a genre of literature that, despite “highbrow” recognition of individual authors (Kazuo Ishiguro, Jose Saramago, Susanna Clarke, Lev Grossman, and so on), is widely treated as “lowbrow”. This masterclass could not be more relevant to my research or, coming at the very beginning of my project, more timely.

Kerrie Nelson
I’m a Masters by Research student in the Arts & Humanities area. My research focuses on culture shock and white privilege, which underpins a creative work - memoir with poetry - focused on a 30 year career in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. The plan is to link the research of the day to personal/professional experiences of the time and demonstrate a growing awareness of intercultural difference/similarity and improved cross-cultural competence.

Tayanah O’Donnell
Exploring the coastal lawscape: legal geographies of climate change adaptation in two New South Wales localities
Place on the Australian coast is both legally and culturally constructed. In drawing on PhD findings of fieldwork in 2012 as well as detailed legal and grey material analysis between 2012-2017, this paper explores how two coastal localities, or better said, sites, in New South Wales, Australia, are in reciprocal relationships with a myriad of ongoing coastal law reform. Key actors in these localities contribute to a material understanding of the coast as place where deep attachments to ideas of private property play a significant role in orienting climate adaptation responses. Mapping the legal geographies of the Australian coast can illustrate where and how relevant legal and cultural constructs operate and collide.

Legal geographies scholarship in itself has much to offer. The assemblages that contain (constrain?) relational and material ways of knowing coastal Australia provide much to consider when we query how these complex reciprocities contribute to a sense of place. If we accept Bruno Latour’s “flat” ontology of networks as providing a more coherent approach in concentrating any analysis of these reciprocities, questions then arise: Is law reform a process of territorialisation? And if so, how does the materiality of the coast affect or otherwise influence the enactment of territorialisation?

Tayanah O’Donnell is a Research Fellow with the University of Canberra Australia. She has recently submitted her PhD titled “Exploring the coastal lawscape: Legal geographies of coastal climate change adaptation in two New South Wales localities”, completed with the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University. Tayanah has a strong research background in climate change adaptation, environment and planning law and policy, geography, cities, and place-making. Her current research examines intersections between property, place, law and climate change. She is a lecturer in planning at UC, where she teaches in coastal management, and co-convenes “Planning for Cities and Climate Change”. She has lectured in law and the social sciences at the Australian National University and Western Sydney University, worked as a solicitor in litigation in Sydney, Australia, and spent 2009 as a researcher for a Judge in the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales.

Sora Park
Sora is Associate Professor of Communication and Senior Research Fellow at the News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. Her current research focuses on digital exclusion and the impact of technology on the distribution of opportunities in society.