

The Voice of Humanities Conference 2011 - Report

The Voice of Humanities Conference was organised by a committee made up of students from WELSH, EUROS, MUSIC, SHARE and ENCAP. The event attracted 23 delegates from various Schools at Cardiff University and included 11 papers. Dr Helen Nicholson from the School of History, Archaeology and Religion gave a keynote address entitled 'Treading on Sensitive Toes: Communicating the History of the Knights Templar and Crusades outside the University Environment'.

The event provided an ideal opportunity for postgraduates to practice presenting their research to people outside their own specialist field, and to establish links and encounter a broad range of humanities research. At the end of the conference, delegates were asked to vote for the 'best talk' - £100 was awarded to Silvia Grassi from Cardiff School of European Studies, Congratulations!

Panel 1, Chair: Lucy Morrow (WELSH)

The first panel consisted of presentations by Elise Rietveld (EUROS), Silvia Grassi (JOMEC), and James Wakefield (EUROS).

Rietveld's research, Re-constructing Multiculturalism, focuses on the relationship between public policy and political theory. In addition to describing her own work, her talk provided clear and concise definitions of the various political theories that focus on promoting cultural equality and co-operation among different groups – especially ethnic groups.

The second presenter, Grassi, gave an engaging lecture on soap operas in Catalonia. Game Over: How to Deal with the End of the Soap was an interdisciplinary presentation that described how gender, regional identity, and the media are all interrelated.

Wakefield ended Panel 1 with an insightful analysis of the relationship between Gentile's political philosophy and liberalism. Giovanni Gentile and the State of Contemporary Liberalism was a thought-provoking presentation that provided a fascinating overview of two apparently contradictory political theories.

Panel 2, Chair: Philip Handyside (SHARE)

The second panel also had three papers. The first, by Thomas George (first year PhD in SHARE) was entitled Munionettes and the Canaries – Munitions Factories in Wales During the First World War. Tom's paper explored the role that women who were called upon to work in the munitions factories during the First World War played in society. He explained that these were mainly working class women who embraced working life and found that their opportunities were increased. However, following the war they were left to return to their homes.

The second paper was by Adam Anders (SHARE). Adam is currently writing up his PhD research at Cardiff University. In his paper entitled Evidence for Roman combat Techniques, he explored the various combat techniques that may have been employed by the Roman

army. Using evidence from both archaeological and literary sources he explained the different stances and weapons used by a Roman legionary.

In Paper 3, Patrick Fitzgerald (first year PhD in JOMECE) spoke on Legitimising Dissent: News Media Coverage of the 2009 Post-Presidential Election Protests in Iran. The paper considered how media coverage of a political protest can give legitimacy to the movement. Patrick looked in particular at media coverage in the UK and the US of the 2009 protests in Iran. He argued that this coverage fed the movement and he explored the relationship between the state and the media regarding political protest.

Panel 3, Chair: James Wakefield (EUROS)

This panel consisted of two presentations: “Musical Territoriality: Flamenco and Andalusian Regional Identity,” by second-year PhD student Matt Machin (MUSIC); and “Remembering Diversity: Newspaper and First-Person Accounts of Cardiff Docklands,” by first-year PhD student Mari Lowe (ENCAP).

The first of these discussed the contested ownership of one of Spain’s (or, arguably, Andalusia’s) most recognisable cultural exports. Matt, an ethnomusicologist, explained some of the wider political manifestations of this debate alongside a selection of his initial findings gleaned from discussions with people in the region. He also indicated some of the research methods to be employed in the project’s developing stages. This presentation served as both an interesting overview of Matt’s research and an introduction to the role and significance of ethnomusicology within the humanities.

Mari Lowe’s presentation also concerned regional identity of a kind; but in this case, that of 'Tiger Bay'/Butetown in Cardiff’s docklands. Mari presented the area as a case study in British social history, charting some key moments in its representation as culturally and ethnically diverse district, maligned and alienated 'no-go' zone, to its redevelopment as the affluent and fashionable Cardiff Bay. She emphasised the importance of interpretative perspective in such case studies, drawing on photographs, newspaper reports and personal accounts of life in a transformative period of Cardiff’s recent past.

Panel 4, Chair: Matthew Machin (MUSIC)

The last panel of the conference consisted of three diverse presentations. First, was James Peake’s (PhD student in Archaeology) paper entitled ‘The Origins of Glass in Early Anglo-Saxon England: Production and Trade’. Although some of James’s research is more science-based, his presentation demonstrated how scientific methodologies such as chemical analysis can reveal interesting and relevant historical information. He explored the origins and distribution of glass beads which he argued will lead to a greater understanding of the contacts between Anglo-Saxons and other countries, as well as their level of technological advancement.

The second paper was presented by James Boyd (PhD student in SHARE) which was entitled ‘Who Do You Think They Are? The Great German Migrations and the Making of the American People’. Here, James explored some of the key elements of his research regarding

German-American ancestry. He outlined some of the main reasons for the mass-migration of Germans to America and, following the Second World War, the suppression of German-American ancestry in European and American popular history.

The last paper of the panel was presented by Bo Delp (a third year PhD student in JOMEC) and was entitled 'Building the Big Tent: The Production and Reception of the 2008 Campaign Rhetoric of Barack Obama'. In his presentation, Bo outlined his research methodologies and the 'two-pronged argument' that permeates his thesis. First, he is attempting to understand how election campaigns (through campaign speeches) are produced. Second, he demonstrated how speeches are received by British audiences by using focus groups and electronic audience response technology.