

PhD Studentship in the area of Cultural and Media Studies

Closing date: Sunday 7th May 2017

Interview date: May 2017 (date TBC)

The Project

The University of Worcester is seeking to expand its research strength in Media and Cultural Studies. In the government's last Research Excellence Framework (REF2014), *Research Fortnight* identified Worcester as the most improved university in the UK. Researchers in our Media and Culture course team contributed to that success and continue to produce publications of regional, national, and international significance. We are now seeking aspiring researchers who will benefit from that environment and who could, at the same time, consolidate and re-shape our existing research specialisms. As a postgraduate researcher you could also help enhance our University-wide focus on producing distinctive research in Arts, Culture and Heritage.

To this end, the University of Worcester is offering a full time, fully funded PhD studentship to address, broadly, one of the following three areas: social media; eco-media; media, culture and sport. These studentships offer an exciting opportunity to help expand media and cultural studies in new discrete areas of study which are beginning to receive critical attention. It is, therefore, an important element of these studentships that the direction of the project should primarily be determined by the skills, knowledge and interests of the applicant. Seeking applications that address the broad headings below, we also welcome enquiries from anyone thinking creatively and uniquely around the areas specified or who might wish to propose an alternative angle.

For general enquiries about the studentship, please contact Dr John Parham (j.parham@worc.ac.uk). For enquiries around specific topics contact the researcher identified below.

Topics

Beauty and Fitness vloggers: body image, self-esteem, mental health (Dr Barbara Mitra b.mitra@worc.ac.uk and Dr John Parham j.parham@worc.ac.uk)

This topic is designed to explore the relationship between vloggers and representations of the body and/or perceptions of health and well-being. Proposals are invited that might focus primarily on issues such as beauty, food, diet, fitness, or mental health with regards to perceptions of self. Applications exploring notions of self-esteem, shame, dieting, and implications for body image are especially encouraged. We would also consider proposals looking at other forms of new/social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram).

Social Media, Environmental Activism, Green Lifestyle (Dr John Parham j.parham@worc.ac.uk and Dr Barbara Mitra b.mitra@worc.ac.uk)

Researchers in the burgeoning area of green media and cultural studies have argued that online media has potentially re-energised an environmental activism invariably shut out from mainstream media discourse. Evidenced by the ubiquity of social media in environmental activism, and the emergence of high profile websites (from Ecorazzi to 350.org), internet and social media has also become a valuable resource in promoting/educating about green lifestyle and in facilitating an environmentalist public sphere. At the same time, critics question the effectiveness of social media given, for example, 'content flood', the potentially superficial nature of online activism (so-called 'clicktivism'), and the continued influence of mainstream media. Proposals are invited that address any dimension of this emergent and urgent topic.

Sport, Culture, and Ecological Sustainability (Dr John Parham j.parham@worc.ac.uk and Dr Geoffery Z. Kohe g.kohe@worc.ac.uk)

This topic will examine the role of sport in promoting sustainability and/or green lifestyles and will be supervised by researchers across the University's Institutes of Humanities and Sport and Exercise. We invite proposals around: sustainability or sustainable legacies in sports-based corporate policy, community engagement, urban sports initiatives, etc; sport, leisure and green lifestyle (e.g. walking, running, cycling); sustainability, social activism, or social justice in sport and leisure space. We welcome (without limiting this to) proposals that examine the role played by social media in promoting those activities.

Sport, Social Media, Cross-Cultural Identity (Dr John Parham j.parham@worc.ac.uk and Dr Geoffery Z. Kohe g.kohe@worc.ac.uk)

The proposed project will examine the role of social media, internet or free media in supporting and promoting initiatives whereby sport, leisure, and/or physical activities are assuming a role in the (re)construction of the identities and experiences of migrant and/or transnationally displaced communities. We also welcome proposals that address social media, sport/leisure, and the cross-cultural identities, communities and experiences of local populations.

Supervisors

Dr Barbara Mitra. Dr Mitra's research focuses on gender, ranging from the influences of advertising to virtual worlds. She recently published (co-edited with Rachel E Johnson) *Gender Construction in Kay's Catalogues: 1920 to the New Millennium* (Cambridge Academic Ltd, 2015) whilst a recent journal article focuses on the gender of avatars ('Exploring Intrinsic Gender Identity Using Second Life', *Journal for Virtual Worlds Research* (2016)).

Dr John Parham. As well as teaching Media and Culture at Worcester, Dr Parham is Associate Head for Postgraduate Programmes and Research in the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts. He is author of *Green Media and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and co-edits the Routledge journal *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*. He has recently published articles on green documentary and popular music.

Dr Geoffery Z. Kohe. Dr Kohe's research is in the areas of sport organisational politics, young people's experiences of Physical Education and the Olympic movement, and the History of Sport and physical cultures. He has recently published work examining issues around Olympic legacies, sport and physical education/physical activity policy, sport stakeholder relationships with the central government, and the experiences of professional sports workers. He is co-editor (with Prof. Derek Peters) of *High Performance Disability Sport Coaching* (2016, Routledge).

We now invite applicants to submit a research proposal in one of these areas [details of the proposal structure are on the application form].

Shortlisted applicants invited for interview will be asked to give a 10 minute presentation based on the structure of their project proposal.

The University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. This growth is most clearly shown in the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure, reflecting a more than four-fold increase in the number of staff submitted compared to RAE 2008 and a commensurate increase in the quality of the research. As a consequence of its REF 2014 submission, Worcester's QR income for 2015-16 is up by 341% from 2014-15.

The University is committed to further developing its research profile in the coming period, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. As part of this investment it is funding a number of full-time PhD studentships in its areas of particular research strength.

The Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts

The Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts is home to 2,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers, and academic staff. The Institute is a vibrant community, which makes a distinctive contribution to local public life and to international knowledge through our academic activities. The institute's broad discipline base gives students the opportunity to develop their creativity and learn the transferable skills necessary to adapt in the post-university job market.

Research School

The Research School is a focal point for all our research students. It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

Details of the studentship

During the period of your studentship you will receive the following:

- a tax free bursary of £13,863 for a period of 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years
- a laptop
- use of the Research Student Study Space in Research School
- access to the Research Student Support Scheme to cover costs and expenses related to your research

You will be expected to play an active role in the life of both the Research School and of the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts. You will be given opportunities to gain experience in learning and teaching within the Institute under the guidance of your Director of Studies

Qualifications needed

Essential:

Applicants should have or be able to evidence:

- A First or Upper Second (2.1) Honours Degree, or expect to receive one by October 2017;
- A sound understanding of, and interest in one of the areas of Media and Cultural Studies outlined above;
- Computer literacy;
- Ability to organise and meet deadlines;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work independently and contribute to a team;
- Commitment and an enthusiastic approach to completing a higher research degree.

Desirable:

- Education to Masters Degree level in a relevant area;
- Experience of appropriate research methods and skills;
- Ability to contribute to research study design;
- Means of travelling independently to archives etc.

The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held in May 2017. All successful applicants will be interviewed. You will be asked to make a short presentation on a topic related to the study. You will also be asked to provide an example of your written work (e.g. a dissertation) ahead of the interview.

Widening Participation:

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

For further information or an informal discussion on the areas of interest outlined above, please contact the named Director of Study via telephone on +44 (0)1905 855500, or by email at the addresses given above.

Application forms are available at:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships>

Completed application forms should be sent by email to: research@worc.ac.uk or sent via post to: Research School, Jenny Lind Building, Henwick Grove, St Johns, Worcester, WR2 6AJ