New Director at CCR

In March 2009 Associate Professor Brett Neilson began a one year appointment as Director of the Centre for Culture Research. He succeeded Professor David Rowe, who was at the helm of CCR from March 2006. Research.Culture thought it would be informative for David to reflect on his 1000-odd days in office, and to ask Brett about CCR’s future strategic directions.

Professor David Rowe: Remembrance of Things Past

RC: What have been the most satisfying aspects of your time as director of CCR?

David: I was tempted to quote the Glimmer Twins and say that a Research Centre Director ‘Can’t get no satisfaction’! Seriously, what I feel best about my term is that the momentum that CCR had built up under Founding Director Ien Ang was not lost, and it continued to develop as a high-performing research centre with a very human face. I have been to some well-known research centres and departments that had an atmosphere somewhere between an insurance office and a bear pit. I think that CCR has maintained its esprit de corps despite becoming quite a big and successful operation. I always felt happiest when we had a CCR Seminar in the Female Orphan School in which our members, research officers and assistants, postgrads and visitors (many of whom have been eminent researchers) have been wrestling collectively with some major issue in cultural research. I’ve felt at such times that we are at the frontiers of knowledge in our field, but we are working together on intellectual problems.

CCR achievement acknowledged in UWS Research Landscape Review

The authors of the recent UWS Research Framework Document 2009-2013 say this about the Centre for Cultural Research: ‘not only a very strongly performing centre with the largest cohort of HDR candidates in any UWS Academic Organisational Unit (AOU), but is an outstanding example of how to build actively a successful research centre over a long gestation period. This group is now ranking first in Australia among Cultural Research groups.’

Also in this issue

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and cultural conundra, rather than showing off and putting other people down, which happens fairly frequently in other competitive research environments.

Over the last three years I’ve hosted sundry visitors and made many PowerPoint presentations to visiting dignitaries on the wonders of CCR, criss-crossed the dispersed campuses of UWS, and attended meetings that made Purgatory look like a more attractive option. I’ve also been all over Sydney, sometimes having to attend the opening of the proverbial envelope. What I found continually pleasing was the way in which people would volunteer, without any prompting from me, their admiration for the work and people of CCR.

RC: Research. Culture interviewed you in April 2006 soon after you became director. You said then ‘the way [CCR has] taken “culture” very seriously as an area of research, culture in its many-faceted ways, attracts me because it gives considerable scope for the kind of research I’d like to do.’ Three years on, what would you say about this?

David: Yes, I dug out that interview, which I did when I was very new at CCR and a little disorientated! There’s a picture of me in our old demountable building, Getting on for four years later, let’s just say that there’s been no re-make of The Picture of Dorian Gray when I compare the mirror and the photographic image. I think since that time the corporate and political worlds have caught up with CCR. It’s become a standard rhetorical move to put culture to the fore whenever there is a problem. Someone is always talking about the need to ‘change the culture’ in some respect in organisations and contexts of every kind. Part of me is pleased about that, because culture has for so long been treated as secondary to the big game—what I call ‘epiphenomenal’ when speaking in my native sociologese. So, now that cultural research has had some success in getting people to take culture seriously, we have to work hard to explore its complexity, ambiguity, use and abuse. We have to understand better its relationship to power, and to prevent it being used in an anodyne way that surreptitiously disables comprehension, analysis, critique and action.

RC: During your directorship you maintained a healthy research output, no doubt at the expense of barrels of midnight oil. Are you expecting to produce even more academic writing now?

David: Cultural research abhors a vacuum, and I’ve found since I’ve stopped being Director that the midnight oil is still burning, but not for the purposes of drafting the agenda of meetings, checking minutes, and answering the avalanche of admin-related emails. There were jokes about me going into retirement, and people do say that I look much more relaxed now. That’s a bit of an illusion though—it’s just that I’m not seen so much running from meeting to meeting, and wrestling with the day-to-day ‘curve balls’ that confront any middle-senior manager.

I’m writing up my last three ARC Discovery Grants (on tabloidization, global TV sport and international cultural policies) in quite a few places, and working on the current two (on the night-time economy and online media sport), and thinking about what might transpire in the next grant round. I’m part of the Australian wing, with Professor Rod Tiffen from the University of Sydney and Associate Professor Paul Jones, University of New South Wales, of a big multi-national comparative media and political systems study based at Goldsmiths College, University of London and run by eminent researcher Professor James Curran. Then there’s the second phase of a research consultancy with the Communications Alliance on consumers’ experiences with the telecommunications industry, which I’m doing with ex-CCR Assistant Director Elaine Lally. There are lots of other activities—for example, I recently reviewed the Bachelor of Media at Southern Cross University—and I still do a fair bit of work as a media commentator.

I have been able to devote more time to higher degree research supervision, and am looking at several completions this year (including two candidates still at The University of Newcastle, my previous institutional location). I do far too much peer reviewing of journal articles, research grant applications, book proposals, draft manuscripts, and so on—but at least it keeps me up with the latest work! I’m editing a special issue of a journal and a proposed book, and sweating on acceptance of another book proposal. Worst of all, I have multiple writing commitments for projects that I accepted when the CCR Director, and which are now keeping me awake at night as the deadlines loom. So sometimes it’s my bed’s that’s burning rather than the midnight oil!

All this isn’t meant to sound like a complaint—I’m just placing on the record that since I became an ex-Director I have not suffered from Relevance Deprivation Syndrome, and seem no closer to resolving the work-life balance problem!

RC: Although of course you are not leaving CCR and will continue as a research professor, have you any last comments as director?

David: When I came here, as Ien Ang noted in her kind commentary on my tenure as Director, I was determined to play a role in cementing CCR in particular, and research centres in general, more firmly at UWS. There were occasions when I had, metaphorically, to butt heads and other body parts (although I managed to resist the temptation to emulate Zinedine Zidane in the 2006 World Cup Final!!) with UWS people at all levels in reminding them that this University has made enormous strides in research by putting its faith in research centres, and putting them at the forefront of institutional priorities. I’m increasingly confident that commitment to performance-related research centres is secure at UWS—which cannot be said with assurance of many Australian universities.

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Continuing my own research activities is another challenge that comes with the directorship. I’m a Co-Chief-Investigator on an ARC Discovery project, entitled Culture in Transition: Creative Labour and Social Mobilities in the Asian Century. This is a large project that will conduct research across China, India and Australia in the coming three years. At this stage we are planning...
renewed research activities in Shanghai for mid-2010. Also
I’m a Co-Chief-Investigator on an ARC Linkage
project about the agency of the museum sector in
climate change initiatives. In addition, I’m
working on a book manuscript with my co-author
Sandro Mezzadra of the University of Bologna,
who was a UWS Eminent Research Visitor from
2006-2008. So it’s full speed ahead with lots of
juggling between research and administration,
not to mention other aspects of my busy life.

RC: There have been several refinements
to CCR’s strategic research statements in
recent years. In your opinion, why were these
necessary?

Brett: A research centre has constantly to adapt
to changing institutional and social conditions
while maintaining firm lines of investigation that
distinguish the work it carries out. The refinement
of strategic research statements in thus a
process that I expect to continue. One reason
why this has been necessary at CCR is the rapid
growth of the Centre. With the addition of more
members, researchers and staff, there has been
a multiplication of projects. One of the fascinating
things about cultural research is the way it can
span across different aspects of contemporary
life and move with the latest issues. But there
is also a need to train this wide reach to
ensure depth and focus. This is why CCR has
outlined the introduction of a unifying research
theme—Knowledge Practices: Theory, Method,
Engagement—as well as four integrative research
themes—Intercultural Dialogue; Institutions,
Governance, Conduct; Cultural Economy and
Globalisation; and Culture, Nature, Environments.

RC: In what fields of research do you think that
CCR might increase its presence?

Brett: Research on cultural diversity, which is
to say the relation of cultures to other cultures,
has always been a prominent feature of CCR’s
profile. One of the current challenges is to
develop research that also focuses on the
relations between nature and culture. This clearly
relates to the research theme on Culture, Nature,
Environments, but it is important to remember
that this is an integrative theme that extends
across the range of CCR research. I also think
that cultural labour is an area in which CCR
is developing a profile. The two most recent
ARC Discovery awards made to CCR both
engage with this issue. The point should be
made, however, that CCR’s research presence
rises or falls across its range of interests. CCR
researchers can and should move across
different fields of inquiry. The presence of the
Centre, both academically and publicly, rests
in foregrounding this flexible interdisciplinary
approach and the ways it delivers solutions to
contemporary social problems.

RC: How do you think that CCR will be affected
by the Federal Government’s Excellence in
Research Australia (ERA) program?

Brett: In the past five years, the Australian
university sector has experienced a rapid
succession of proposed audit schemes. The
ERA has come and gone and now we have ERA.
This turnover should not be cause for cynicism.
The ERA exercise is now a reality to which CCR
will have to adapt. Having said this, I do believe
the system will evolve over the next few years.
For example, I expect that the journal rankings in
the Humanities and Creative Arts will continue to
be fine-tuned and that this will entail some shifts.
While ERA may bring good news for CCR, this
does not mean that we can be complacent about
the system and its effects. One of the things
about ERA is that it measures performance within
Field of Research (FOR) codes at the university
level and does not distinguish the performance of
particular units, such as research centres, within
a university. In terms of ERA, then, the borders
between CCR and other parts of the College of
Arts becomes murky. A positive effect of this may
be that CCR begins to play a greater role as a
‘contact zone’ that galvanises cultural research
projects across the College.

In early April 2009, the Centre for Cultural
Research shut its doors to the outside world
and held its second annual Expo Day.

Expo Day aims to bring together all members
of the CCR community—professors, research
fellows, academic members, research associates
and administrative staff—and provide an opportunity
for everyone to hear about the different research
projects and initiatives that are happening within
the Centre. In between the competing demands
of research and writing, lecturing and teaching
and multi-campus meetings, there are not many
opportunities for CCR folk to come together in an
atmosphere dedicated to intellectual exchange
and sharing. Expo Day was piloted in 2008 with
the intention of addressing this deficiency. It
offers a dedicated occasion to refresh people’s
awareness of the diversities and commonalities
in the research being conducted across CCR.
The 2008 edition was enormously popular and
a renewal in 2009 was immediately taken for
granted. CCR’s Swedish visitors from Linköping
University reportedly found Expo Day the
perfect way to end their intensive exchange.
The 2009 Expo Day included presentations
on projects still at the development stage, demonstra-
tions of particularly useful software and
digital applications, as well as discussions of
in-progress research projects, such as
Hot Science, Global Citizens: The Agency
of the museum Sector in Climate Change
Interventions, Culture in Transition: Creative
Labour and Social Mobilities in the Asian
Century and Media Strategies for Western

Sydney: A Media Survey of Contemporary
Representations of Western Sydney. Light-
hearted accents to the day included show bags,
competitions, prizes and a delicious lunch.

In prioritising the sharing of researcher interests
and passions, Expo Day contributes to a greater
sense of CCR collegiality, engagement and of
moving towards new knowledge practices.

Reena Dobson

One of the popular sessions on Expo Day

CCR Expo: A Fun Day with a Growing Profile

NEWSLETTER OF THE UWS CENTRE FOR CULTURAL RESEARCH

3
Leading Cultural Researcher to Join CCR

In October 2009 CCR’s professoriate of world-recognised scholars will be strengthened further by the arrival of Professor Tony Bennett from the Open University, United Kingdom. Professor Bennett has a long history of collaboration with CCR and UWS; his most recent visits were in March 2009 and April 2007.

Professor Bennett’s interests are in areas where the concerns of sociology, cultural studies and cultural history intersect. These include:

• the history and theory of museums, and the role played by systems of representing and remembering the past in the construction of particular ways of being and acting in time;
• the history and theory of the development of modern forms of cultural governance and their role in shaping social conduct in the context of different regimes of citizenship;
• statistical and ethnographic studies of everyday cultural practice and their relevance to the concerns of both contemporary class theory and cultural policy development;
• the development of forms of cultural analysis, drawing on the perspectives of science studies and governmental theory, that are capable of throwing new light on the relation between culture and the social;
• the relationships between social theory and cultural theory.

Clearly these interests come under the rubrics identified for the Centre’s research agenda announced in 2009; in fact Professor Bennett will be convenor of the thematic program ‘Institutions, Governance, Conduct’.

Swedish Visitors add to Autumn & Spring Academic Life

In 2008, ACSIS (The Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden), together with the Department of Cultural Studies (Tema Q) at Linköping University, and applied successfully for a STINT (Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education) Institutional Grant. The STINT grant provides annual substantive funding of 400,000 Swedish Kroner—about $64,000—for eight staff and student exchanges of four persons between Sydney and Linköping from 2008 to 2012.

The Project Culturalisation and Globalisation: Advancing Cultural Research in Sweden and Australia is exploring interfaces between CCR and ACSIS in four focal areas—cultural policy and cultural production, uses of history and museums, urban tourism, and media and popular culture. In doing so, it is intended that the two centres will develop an ongoing strong and multilevel collaboration in research and higher degree research education.

In October 2008, CCR visited ACSIS for the inaugural workshop and during March-April 2009, ACSIS reciprocated for the second in the series. CCR’s guests were Professor Erling Bjurström, Postdoctoral Fellow Anna Eklsson, and HDR candidates Per Möller and Ann Werner. Ann has been an exchange student at CCR previously and she, together with the CCR Administration team, made most of the local arrangements for the visitors.

In 2009, Professor Bennett visited ACSIS and participated in a workshop and a bus excursion to several cultural institutions located in UWS’s western Sydney heartland.

At the workshop, Anna, Ann and Per spoke about the topics of their doctoral dissertations.

Anna’s thesis was titled In place in history: studies on (Swedish) local heritage societies in the 21st century. The research analyzed the meaning of local heritage societies in the past and the present. It questioned the importance of the uses of history, place, local identity, local development and civil society. Anna was keen to accept the opportunity her visit to CCR provided her to gain new perspectives on these issues in the context of another and very different continent.

Ann’s thesis is about teenage girls ‘emotional listening, gender and sexuality’, and uses of popular music in their everyday lives in Sweden. The study is based on ethnographic fieldwork and investigates music, media, feelings and the social focusing on gendered practises.

Ann explained that the songs that the girls who have participated in her field work typically listen to are slow and sad, often of unrequited love, are performed by ‘boy bands’ whose members are in their early teens. Through their listening the girls are assisted in the acquisition of those gendered qualities such as care-giving that they are still expected to possess—despite the reforms of the feminist movement of the 1970s. She stressed
that emotions felt by her subjects while listening were very real to them and it was incorrect to trivialise them.

Per’s thesis will be a critical scrutiny of the concept of the ‘Creative City’ and the ‘Creative Economy’ as a whole. The object of study is the city of Malmö, the third biggest city in Sweden. Malmö was formerly dependent on heavy industry but now promotes itself actively as the ‘City of Tomorrow’ (a slogan used for the spectacular housing fair in 2001 that signalled a starting-point in this transition). His focus, though, is not the spectacular culture events, but rather how ‘authentic’ locally produced culture is appropriated into the brand of the ‘Creative City’.

Professor Bjurström provided an overview of his research activities of recent years, the main focus of which has been on cultural history (in particular, the history of the media), the cultural economy and ‘culturalisation’. He has been investigating if the demarcation of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture is still possible, or even relevant, given that few scholars these days would suggest that cultural ‘tastes’ can be objectively ranked. Professor Bjurström compared the current situation with what he called the ‘Great Reformation’ of Taste that occurred in the Nineteenth Century, stimulated by critics such as John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, who espoused ‘universal’ values.

CCR professors David Rowe and Ien Ang also presented. David spoke on the ‘City after Dark’ project and the post-industrial night-time economy of the Sydney CBD centred on The Rocks, Pyrmont, Circular Quay and Darling Harbour. Planners are hopeful that this part of Sydney can be reborn as a Mediterranean ‘promenading’ type city but there are many impediments for them to overcome. A nexus between the City After Dark project and Per Möller’s research was evident.

Ien described the DiverCities project as a ‘web-mediated, intercultural dialogue’. In response to fears generated by the bombing of the World Trade Building on 9 September 2001, NGOs such as UNESCO have been encouraging workers in Cultural Research to devise global collaboration spaces based on Web 2.0 technology where such dialogues can occur. The objective of these dialogues is to highlight human commonalities rather than differences.

The DiverCities project is a collaboration between CCR, the Archaeological Computing Lab of the University Of Sydney, the National University Of Singapore and the Tata Institute for Social Sciences, Mumbai, India. With the project’s Research Associate Dr Nayantara Pothen, Ien demonstrated the global digital atlas prototype, which was the main outcome of this pilot project.

The excursion organised for the ACSIS/Tema and several CCR staff and students visited the Casula Powerhouse and the Campbelltown Arts Centre, and undertook a street tour of a culturally diverse suburb, Bonnyrigg.

The ACSIS/Team Q were interested observers and participants at CCR’s 2009 Expo Day, which coincided with the fifth day of the ‘official’ exchange week.

A second team from ACSIS/Tema Q for 2009 will arrive some weeks before a workshop and other events to be held at CCR in the first week of November.
South Sea Bubbles as Islands Sink

During 2008 Dr Carol Farbotko, a Research Officer working on the CCR-based ARC research projects Reconceptualising Heritage Collections, and Global Citizenship and the Agency of the Museum Sector in Climate Change Interventions, completed her PhD candidacy.

Dr Farbotko’s research, undertaken in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania, was founded on an interest in disappearing islands. These are spaces identified by scientists as at risk from rising sea levels associated with climate change. While disappearing islands and climate refugees are signifiers that circulate with frequency in public discourse, the role that these representations play in the cultural politics of climate change had not previously been examined.

Dr Farbotko was particularly interested in how low-lying islands are being used as litmus tests for global climate change. Her dissertation offered an account of how sea-level rise debates reverberate around Western mythologies of island laboratories, burdening low-lying island sites with providing the proof of global climate change. Her PhD field work focussed on the ‘disappearing islands’ of Tuvalu (pronounced too'hvahlooh) in the central Pacific. In colonial times they were known to the West as the Ellice Islands.

‘I lived for six months on Tuvalu, observing how inhabitants construct climate change in daily life,’ Dr Farbotko explains. ‘Drawing on this ethnography, public discourse and interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, community and religious leaders and members of non-government organisations, in my thesis I described how, as Tuvalu is imagined as the “canary in the coalmine of climate change”, the space of an already marginalised population is culturally appropriated by cosmopolitans who demand, for various and at times conflicting reasons, that disappearing islands provide an answer to the question “are the seas really rising?”

‘I explored the hero/victim figure of the climate refugee and the spectacle of the disappearing islands,’ Dr Farbotko continues, ‘examining how these are linked to both cosmopolitan activism on, and voyeurism and apathy towards, sea level rise. I used Epeli Hau’ofa’s critique of the litany of smallness that dominates Western development discourse of the Pacific region to consider how Tuvalu’s islands have been constructed as spaces outside and yet constitutive of continental and mainland modernity.

According to Dr Farbotko there is an aspect of ‘moral geography’ present in the debate about rising seawaters and the broader issue of climate change. She refers to the ‘wishful sinking’ stance of high profile environmentalists such as Al Gore, which attempt to posit Tuvalu’s islands as expendable—only after they disappear will the islands convey the absolute truth of the urgency of climate change, and thus act as an impossible-to-ignore prompt for action to save the rest of the planet.

Said Dr Farbotko: ‘My conclusion was that as islands and islander bodies have become sites to concrete climate science’s statistical abstractions, they have also reinforced a neo-colonial gaze on small, low-lying islands as marginal to, closer to ‘nature’ than, and at times expendable to, capitalist modernity.’

In September 2008 Dr Farbotko gave a paper that drew on her PhD research at the CCR Lunchtime Seminar Series. In addition to the particular circumstances that apply to the low lying atolls challenged by the rising sea, she and her audience discussed the West’s fascination with isolated islands, the paradoxical constructions of them—paradises or prisons?—and the guilt associated with colonialism and the South Sea Islands dreams of artists such as Herman Melville, RM Ballantyne, RL Stevenson, Paul Gauguin, Somerset Maugham and James A Michener.

(Editor’s note: The subjects of climate change and sinking islands were central issues at the 2009 Pacific Islands Forum, which took place at Cairns, Qld, during August. In July 2009 Dr Farbotko began a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Wollongong.)
Dr Elaine Lally Departs UWS

On April 30, Dr Elaine Lally, Assistant Director at the Centre for Cultural Research, farewelled UWS. Elaine has accepted a new appointment and promotion to Associate Professor, Creative Digital Practices, within the Creative Practices group of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney. As well as making a contribution to research and research training in her new job, she will be leading the development of a new cross-faculty program in Creative Digital Studies, coordinating activity between the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Design, Architecture and the Built Environment, and the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology.

Elaine’s career has been an exemplar of what is possible for UWS general staff who have an ambition to carve out academic/research careers. She undertook a PhD candidacy while performing her full time administrative duties. UWS supports such trajectories with an enthusiasm that more traditional institutions, where the demarcation of general and academic staff is perhaps stronger, may find difficult to match.

Elaine was executive officer at the Research Centre for Intercommunal Studies from January 1997. Her progression towards her doctorate was in sync with the evolution of this research centre towards its current incarnation, the CCR, via the foundation of the Institute for Cultural Research in 2001. Supporting Foundation Professor Ien Ang, Elaine was a key driver of this process.

Elaine received her PhD qualification for the thesis The Computer at Home: Material Culture and the Relationship of Ownership in 2000. In August 2001 she became the Assistant Director of CCR. Elaine has established an enviable academic track record in a relatively short period of time. She has been very visible within the wider UWS community and has been a very active agent of UWS’s community engagement by means of her numerous partner research collaborations.

Back in 2000, soon after graduation, Elaine was featured in the Centre newsletter. She told other HDR students that, by the end of their candidacy, they would find themselves equipped with skills for unpacking and finding answers to questions much more complex than those they had originally posed.

Elaine reflects on the nine years since that interview: ‘I spent six and a half years on my candidature, and as I indicated, the learning curve was remarkable. But I have gained even more in a similar period at CCR since completion. The PhD gave me a grounding, a set of skills. Working at CCR as an academic allowed me to “take off” and put these skills into practice. The sheer diversity of the experience—being a chief investigator on ARC grants, collaborating with industry and cultural groups from Greater Western Sydney and beyond, performing contract research for peak industry bodies, supervising HDR students—has enabled this broad practice.’

In 2000 Elaine expected her future research would include a teasing out of the double articulation of information technology hardware such as the home computer as both an object in itself and as a medium of communication with the outside world. ‘Certainly this has remained a central focus of my work,’ she continues, ‘but it has dovetailed as a result of projects like the ARC Linkage The Art of Engagement, where I have seen how artists use material culture as the means of generating creative practices. I look at what they do from a research point of view. This has led me in turn to the frontier work currently taking place in the digital humanities.’

Elaine has been one of CCR’s most energetic and committed people. The CCR team wish her all the very best with the challenges and experiences of her new position.

Buddhist Studies Conference and Special Issue Journal of Religious History

In December 2007 CCR was co-host of the second annual conference of the Australasian Association of Buddhist Studies (AABS).

The AABS grew out of a CCR initiative in 2003. It aimed to provide a multidisciplinary academic forum for the study of Buddhism, one that recognized and highlighted new directions in the field, and the shift away from traditional textual analysis towards cultural, social, and historical perspectives, and the recognition of its circulation in everyday life.

The output from this conference continues to accrue. One is a special issue of the Journal of Religious History (Vol. 33, No. 2, June 2009). Associate Professor Judith Snodgrass of CCR contributed an article titled ‘Performing Buddhist Modernity: The Lumbini Festival, Tokyo 1925.’ Judith was also guest editor of the issue, which contained six other papers arising from the conference, by Drasko Mitrikeski, Douglas Otto, Lee Chilton & Peter Oldmeadow, Andrew McGaritty, Peter Gerard Friedlander and Amanda L. Capern (for full bibliographic information details visit webpage http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118510181/home)

Judith’s article looks at the 1920s Tokyo transformation of hanamatsuri (the celebration of the Buddha’s birthday) from a local observance to a mass public spectacle. The Lumbini Festival (inaugurated 1925) was a performance of Buddhist modernity orchestrated to promote links between Japan and Asia and present Japan as leader of Asia. It contributed to the formation and naturalisation of links between Japan and its Asian neighbours and the development of the Japanese Empire. The Lumbini festival naturalised Buddhist brotherhood in Tokyo; the journal Young East, by reporting it through Asia and the West, promoted ideas of their shared Buddhist heritage, and of a Buddhist basis for social reform and Asian modernity.

The editors of JRH have praised the AABS and all involved for creating the academic space to permit the production of a range of research on Buddhism. The AABS and its conferences, they have noted, have been instrumental in enabling the journal to take a wider, more global scope of religious history than hitherto.
## CCR Seminar Series

Convenor: Dr Cameron McAuliffe: Presenters from CCR unless identified otherwise

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<td>Pr Elizabeth Shove, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, UK</td>
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<td>17 Dec</td>
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<td>Dr Wayne Peake</td>
<td>Coming Back to the Field: the Retreat of Australian Horse Racing from Mainstream Culture to Sub-culture</td>
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<td>Dr Cristina Rocha</td>
<td>Healing the Land: The John of God Movement in Australia</td>
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<td>Joanna Winchester</td>
<td>A Practice in Faith: What is the Value of Community-based Arts?</td>
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Contemporary Society

On March 27, Professor Ghassan Hage, inaugural Future Generation Professor of Anthropology and Social Theory at the University of Sydney, launched James Arvanitakis’s new book, Contemporary Society: A Sociological Analysis of Everyday Life at Gleebooks Glebe. In one of his first post-CCR Directorial roles, David Rowe MC-ed the event.

James, an early career researcher and member of CCR since 2007, seems set to become a regular contributor to the large publications output that the Centre generates. For this is his second book within a year: Research.Culture noted the previous, the cultural commons of hope, in issue five. And James looks to have negotiated ‘second album’ syndrome, if the large attendance and enthusiastic reception given the book at its launch is an indication.

Published through Oxford University Press, Contemporary Society can be ordered from Gleebooks, The Connect Bookshop or Amazon.com.

‘In his latest book James Arvanitakis undertakes the task of analysing contemporary Australia. Armed with his own strange experiences from travelling around Australia and the world, and a backpack full of his unique understanding of centuries of sociological thought, James attempts to unravel our everyday experiences. Discussing everything from talking to pirates in a Sydney supermarket, hanging out in remote libraries in Colombia, to being accused of swimming like a ‘public school boy’, he attempts to understand our world when everything seems chaotic, changes rapidly and appears simultaneously disconnected and interrelated. Engaging, challenging and thought-provoking, this book is essential for anyone interested in sociology. Its application and relevance covers a range of broad concepts and themes including globalisation, technology, racism, gender, active citizenship and poverty.’ (Source of review: http://cpd.org.au/events/launch-contemporary-society-new-book-james-arvanitakis).

When asked what had motivated him to produce this new book James responded, ‘As someone who studies “culture” in contemporary society, I am often asked “why?”: Why has road rage become such an issue in today’s society? Why has there been a backlash against globalisation after all the promises that it was going to bring harmony? Why are polluting industries most often situated near vulnerable communities? ‘In this book I have tried to answer such questions within the context of our chaotic and rapidly changing world. I have tried to do this by drawing on my experiences from travelling around Australia and the world and apply my own interpretation of three centuries of sociological and cultural theory.’

Screen Media Arts Wins Awards

In August the book Screen Media Arts by CCR trio Associate Professor Hart Cohen, Dr Juan Salazar (members) and Iqbal Barkat (PhD candidate) won an Australian Educational Publishing Award. The category was ‘Tertiary (Wholly Australian) Teaching and Learning’.

Screen Media Arts is an introduction to screen media production and screen media concepts for students seeking a comprehensive but contemporary take on International and Australian film and screen media. The approach of this book is to offer both a conceptual and technical introduction to media production in which theory and practice are given equal emphasis. The book is divided into several sections with case histories and production examples drawn from the history of media—photography and photo media, cinema and video, digital media and the Internet. Significantly the book includes an embedded DVD with production exercises and demos (the DML or digital media lab) and provides the reader with links and many other resources for media production practice. The book also provides historical and conceptual contexts for selected practices and techniques and key information about the media production industries in Australia.

The judges commented that the text was ‘a contemporary analysis of the field, with a great repository of different media types to assist student learning and to expose them to the working of the media industry. The excellent “live” scenarios on the accompanying DVD integrate well with the text, and the learning experience of the students.’ (Oxford University Press)
CCR Introduces Postgraduate Study Days

The Centre for Cultural Research has recently added a new program to its events calendar. Organised as a monthly event, the CCR Postgraduate Study Days are headed by CCR HDR coordinator, Dr Megan Watkins.

CCR’s HDR candidates already have regular reading group sessions as well as informal social events which are organised by CCR’s Postgraduate Liaison Officers. There are two part-time Postgrad Liaison Officers at CCR who act as points of contact, peer support and networking for new and existing HDR candidates.

These innovative Postgraduate Study Days are aimed at providing HDR candidates with different forms of research training and guidance. Different components include:

- **A Postgraduate Workshop session, where an invited academic speaks on different facets of the HDR experience, such as, ‘writing for publication’ or ‘integrating theory’.
- **Postgraduate Stepping Stone Seminars, where HDR candidates present a 15-20 minute paper on their in-progress work as part of their preparation for a formal seminar, Confirmation of Candidature or conference. The Stepping Stone seminars thus offer a semi-formal setting in which HDR candidates can practice their presentations, and receive valuable feedback, prior to the formal event.
- **A mentoring session with a senior CCR academic. These mentoring sessions are kept small and offer students the opportunity to discuss other issues being experienced in their candidature such as ‘work/life balance’ and ‘life after the thesis’.

Where possible, the Postgraduate Study Days have been scheduled to coincide with CCR Seminars so that candidates are able to make best use of their visit to CCR, as well as making the day as informative and as stimulating as possible.

**Reena Dobson**

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Higher Degree Research Student News

**Recent graduates 2008**

| Dr Laura Calderon | April | Bridges of Love: a Healing Journey for Mexican Identities |
| Dr Selda Dagistanli | September | The role of the Courts in moral panics surrounding ‘Middle Eastern’ gang rape |
| Dr Brenda Dobia | September | Sakti Yatra: locating power, questioning desire: a women’s pilgrimage to the temple of Kamakhya |
| Dr Glenn Fuller | April | Modified-Car Culture of Western Sydney |
| Dr Ngaire McCubben | April | Living Cultural Diversity in Regional Australia: An Account of the Town of Griffith |
| Dr Jane Mills | April | Re-Imagining Hollywood |
| Dr Colin Sheringham | September | A gastronomic meditation: on McDonald’s |
| Dr Shane Smithers | April | The Evolution of Ideas and their Function: a general theory of ideology |
CCR’s neighbours no 1: 
Rosehill Racecourse

On most days the train station two stops and about a kilometre south of the UWS’s Rydalmere station is deserted. In contrast, on Saturdays men in suits, sunglasses and ‘Rat Pack’ lounge hats, fashion ‘princesses’, hen’s parties, punters, race book sellers and hot dog vendors invade. For it is the entry point to the Sydney Turf Club’s Rosehill Gardens, Sydney’s main western suburbs horse racetrack.

An invaluable green lung of 75 hectares in a mainly industrial locality, Rosehill racecourse opened in 1885, on parkland set aside from the original Elizabeth Farm grant to John Macarthur. In the 1880s it shared Sydney’s racing calendar with the Randwick (1860), Canterbury (1864) and Warwick Farm (1889) racecourses. Despite a number of other courses opening and closing since, in 2009 the four remain the venues for racing in Sydney, Rosehill a well-appointed ‘testing ground’ and was the first in Sydney to boast a railway spur line and platform, which opened in the 1890s—the same line, now extended, that carries students to UWS from Clyde station. It is the only Sydney racetrack with this facility.

Rosehill is a large, flat track of just over 2000 metres with a home straight of 410 metres. It’s largest ever attendance was the 40,000 who witnessed the much hyped clash between Sydney’s Special Girl and Melbourne colt Vain in the 1969 Golden Slipper Stakes (Vain won easily). The Golden Slipper Festival is still Rosehill’s best-attended event. However the STC’s ultimate race day for female racegoers under 30 years, ‘Girls Day Out’, which is held in mid-November, continues to gain in popularity. The ‘picnic’ meeting held at Rosehill on Melbourne Cup day is also a popular party day.

Rosehill is also an important business venue, hosting big events such as the annual Caravan, Camping, 4WD & Holiday Supershow, and The Country & Regional Living Expo in August 2009. A new Grand Pavilion that has increased enormously exhibition space opened recently at the University end of the course.

In the last quarter of 2007, Rosehill was quarantined behind a ‘Lucerne Curtain’. The disastrous outbreak of Equine Influenza that rocked the racing industry caused the Dept of Primary Industries to close the course for several months, to prevent further spread of the disease. Racing is now fully restored and the next Golden Slipper will be run on Easter Saturday 2010.
2009 Cohort

These students are undertaking the first year of their postgraduate studies at CCR in 2009.

Deborah Wall
Social Construction of a mixed race identity: Filipinos & Aboriginal Australians in Broome

Emily Burns
Women’s Perinatal experiences in the twelve tribes cult in Australia

Enda Murray
An Intercommunal Study of CCD Work Carried out in Western Sydney and East London

Jacqueline Willis
Koreanising Globalisation: History, Hybridity & Nationalism

Pariece Nelligan
Walking the Vocational Tightrope: Worker Artistry & Flexible Knowledge

Paulo Alberton
African Brazilians & African Refugees - closing the circle of Capoeira Angola in Australia

Sebastian Byrne
Lessons with Jelena: The Rise of the Female Athlete in the Male Dominated Sporting Environment

Shanna Robinson
Experimental Travel & Anti-Touristic Encounters

Sherene Idriss
The Just-In-Time Self (ARC project title)

Awards for CCR Students

CCR PhD student, Hongjin (Hilary) He was recently awarded the prestigious David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies (LEWI) Resident Graduate Scholarship, which will enable her to conduct PhD research in Hong Kong from September 2009 to January 2010. Hilary’s thesis is entitled Transformation Under ‘One Country, Two Systems’ - An Examination of Post-Handover Hong Kong Cinema (1997-2009).

Congratulations are also due to CCR Research Officer and Video Editor/Photographer, Sally Leggo, who recently graduated with a Bachelor of Communications (majoring in media production). Being in the top 2% in her class, she was also a deserving recipient of the Dean’s Medal. Congratulations are also due to Sally as the winner of the 2009 Short Cuts Film Festival.

Postgraduate Liaison Officers

For 2009 the new Postgraduate Liaison Officers are Karin Mackay and Erika Smith. They take up the good work performed by Joanna Winchester and Takeshi Harmano in 2008.