

What is Medicine? Seminars 2006-2007

Ger – ontology: From Vitalism to Mimesis

Tuesday 6 February
5.00 - 6.30pm | Room 1204 | Warmington Tower

With Brett Neilson | Cultural and Social Analysis, UWS

Brett Neilson (AUS/IT) is Associate Professor of Cultural and Social Analysis at the University of Western Sydney, where he is also Postgraduate Coordinator at the Centre for Cultural Research. He is interested primarily in the intersections of cultural criticism and political practice. He has published articles in venues such as *Vacarme*, *DeriveApprodi* and *Variant*, as well as in a range of academic journals, including *Traces*, *Contretemps*, *Studi culturali*, *borderlands*, *Culture Machine*, *fibreculture journal*, *Conflitti globali* and *Space and Culture*. He holds a doctorate from Yale University and is a regular contributor to the Italian newspaper *Il Manifesto*. He is the author of *Free Trade in the Bermuda Triangle ... and Other Tales of Counter globalization* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

ABSTRACT:

In what sense does a life unfold? In the wake of Foucault, the debate on biopolitics has focused on the tensions of community and immunity, *bíos* and *zoé*, generation and thanatopolitics. What remains obscure in these accounts, whether they privilege the moment of birth or death, is the temporal-experiential aspect of life – its unfolding or what might be called, in another register, the ageing process. While sociology attempts to reduce this unfolding to the generalised construct of the life course, vitalist philosophy renders it essentially ineffable. In the contemporary capitalist formation, however, life's unfolding is increasingly caught up in global flows of information, finance, and labour. The organization of the elementary human faculties, the general preconditions for knowledge and communication, becomes central to value creation. And the human body, like fixed capital for Marx, becomes a cost to be amortized as quickly as possible. Investigating these processes and the ways in which they give new importance to practices of imitation across a number of human endeavours – from stock market speculation to copyright, genetic manipulation and cloning – provides a means for reassessing the disciplinary technologies of gerontology and geriatric medicine in the era of global control.

Health under Siege in Palestine

Thursday 15 March
5.00 - 7.00pm | Room 137a, Richard Hoggart Building

Co-sponsored with Xenos

Dr Allam Jarrar | Medical Relief Committee, Ramallah, Palestine
Darrin Waller | Director, Medical Aid for Palestinians, London

Darrin Waller, 'The Right to Health - The Protection of Palestinian Civilians'

Darrin Waller is the Chief Executive at Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). He took over the leading role at MAP after spending 18 months working in Gaza as the Director of External Relations for a human rights organisation. Darrin has ten years' experience with 'rights based' NGOs in the UK, West Bank and Gaza. This includes organisational assessment, monitoring and evaluation of Palestinian NGOs funded by Christian Aid, Dan Church Aid and Education Aid International. He has served as a consultant for psychosocial support projects for the Early Childhood Centre in Jerusalem, vocational training projects for the East Jerusalem UMCA and campaigning and advocacy projects for PCHR.

ABSTRACT:

Human Rights relating to health are set out in basic human rights treaties and include:

- The human right to equal access to adequate health care and health-related services, regardless of sex, race, or other status.
- The human right to equitable distribution of food.
- The human right to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- The human right to a safe and healthy environment.
- The human right of the child to an environment appropriate for physical and mental development.

Israel's "disengagement" from the Gaza strip in September 2005 was not the end of occupation merely a redeployment of Israeli forces. Effective control on the life of protected Palestinian civilians was maintained by controlling Gaza's land borders, air space, sea space, tax revenues and population registry. In addition Israel's policy of extra judicial executions, abductions and military offensives continued.

The wanton destruction of Gaza's civilian infrastructure since the 25th June 2006 has been unprecedented; hundreds of homes have been destroyed or partially destroyed resulting in the displacement of over 5,800 civilians; electricity and water networks, bridges, arterial roads, schools, universities, government buildings, factories and Gaza's only electricity power station have been destroyed; hundreds of dunum's of agricultural land has been razed.

Food, fuel and medical supplies have been reduced to a trickle as Israel maintains control over Gaza's only commercial border crossing; chronic malnutrition and dietary-related diseases are increasing at alarming rates. Per capita income in Gaza is now less than Afghanistan and only slightly higher than Sierra Leone.

The international community has turned a blind eye to the grave breaches of international humanitarian law and human rights law perpetrated by Israel in Gaza. In addition to this, the donor community's de facto sanctions regime has resulted in acute poverty.

The "raison d'être" of the Fourth Geneva Convention is the protection of civilians and their property during conflict and occupation and the High Contracting Parties hold the legal obligation to "respect and ensure respect" (article 1 IVGC) for the Convention.

MAP is adamant that for grave breaches of international law - including the denial of the right to health - to cease in the occupied Palestinian territory oPt, an international protection force (within the 4th June 1967 boundaries) is needed in the oPt now.

Dr Allam Jarrar, 'Health Under Siege in Palestine'

Dr Allam Jarrar is a member of the executive committee of the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committee, Vice President of the Palestinian Council for Peace and Justice, and has worked for UNRWA (the UN organization for Palestinian refugees). He has participated in training and evaluation activities in the fields of primary health and community based rehabilitation programs across the Middle East. He is a member of the steering committee of the Palestinian Non Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) and author of articles on civil society in Palestine, including an article on the Palestinian NGO Sector: Development Perspectives (2005). Currently Dr. Allam is member of the board of directors of the Union of Palestinian Medical relief committees directing its rehabilitation program in the WB and Gaza. He was a candidate in the last Palestinian elections, on the list headed by Dr. Mustafa Barghouti.

ABSTRACT:

Health under siege: Palestine case

The presentation concentrates on health situation in Palestine in the context of political instability, military occupation and violence. Since June war of 1967 the Israeli Army has been occupying the WB including Jerusalem and Gaza strip in addition to the Golan Heights of Syria. Health situation was directly linked to the overall political and social context from one hand health indicators were in constant deterioration because of poverty and the inadequate resources invested into the health sector, while on the other hand it created an opportunity for grass roots civil society movement to build the infrastructure of resistance against Israeli military occupation through developing wide net of social and medical services for the Palestinian people.

Oslo accords represented as a major change into the overall political realities on the ground and at the time of its signing created a false hope that the long lasting conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis is on its way to be resolved.

At the same time the establishment of the Palestinian national authority has created new political reality where as NGOs and civil society organizations have had to deal with it especially by concluding on the legal and development frame that should regulate the relationship between NGOs and the government.

The eruption of the second Intifada was an evidence of the shortcoming of the Oslo political frame that could not conclude on the final settlement on major issues (Jerusalem, settlements, Water, borders and refugees) between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

It has been 7 years since the second intifada started around 4500 Palestinians were killed and 45000 were injured and 5000 people were left with permanent disabilities. The Israeli army has introduced a severe regime of closure and siege depriving Palestinian civilians from free movement and prohibiting and obstructing free movement and goods within the Palestinian territories the result of which an apartheid-like system has been created on the ground during those years.

Adding to that Israel has started to build a separation wall inside the Palestinian areas putting more than half a million population out side their own agriculture areas and disintegrating them from their larger society. Despite the ICJ ruling that demanded the dismantlement of the already built parts of the wall and compensate Palestinians on the damages inflicted upon them by the Israeli authorities Israel is continuing of building the wall and annexing more Palestinian lands in this process.

Realities on the ground are getting so complicated as the cohesion of the Palestinian society has been greatly damaged and the socio economic conditions have been deteriorating constantly leaving two third of the population living under poverty line and unemployment rate more than 40%.

In such complicated situation health organizations are operating and trying to cope and to mobilize resources to meet rising demand for emergency primary and secondary health care.

The latest development after the Palestinian elections and the winning of Hamas in those elections have had a great impact on health situation as the Quartet has imposed a comprehensive siege on the government depriving Palestinians from the financial support that used to come from international donors for the government, the fact that deepened the socioeconomic crises in the country.

The position of civil society in Palestine as regard to the results of the elections that it should be respected as it represents the will of the people that have explicitly shown through a democratic and fair election regardless of our opinion concerning who ever the party has won.

Civil society in Palestine strongly believes that the major challenge confronting the Palestinian people in the mean time is how to preserve the democratic experience and continue to develop democratic culture and values in Palestine. Not less important is the need for Palestinians to find ways to manage their differences in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Eventually durable and lasting peace in the region could not be achieved unless a fair and just solution is found to the Israeli Palestinian conflict that is based on international legitimacy which is stipulated in the SC and GA UN resolutions.

Heliosis: Sunshine, Hygiene and Medicine

Thursday 26 April
4.30-6.30pm | Room 1204, Warmington Tower
With Simon Carter | Open University

Simon Carter's research is in Science and Technology Studies, especially as applied to issues of health and medicine. He recently completed a historical study examining the cultural turn towards the sun and sunlight in early twentieth century Europe, providing an analysis of the roles that sunlight played in the mediation of notions of health, pleasure, the body, gender and class. He has also conducted research into critical approaches to the public understanding of science as applied to health issues.

ABSTRACT:

From the beginning of the twentieth century a variety of medical forces changed the relationship between human bodies and sunlight, as a giver of health, into the fabric of social environments. For example, both the People's League and the New Health Society played a part in public health campaigns around the benefits of sunlight. However, these campaigns framed sunlight exposure in order to stabilise a specific social figuration as part of a broader social hygiene movement. Yet, by the early 1920s, a variety of organisations and movements appeared that sought to materially 'domesticate' the sun's rays as a great health benefit in its own right. In this paper I will examine the promotion of sunlight in this period in order to chart the emergence of a nexus made up of bodies, sunlight and social environments. I have termed this assemblage a heliosis - to capture the idea of an interactive stabilisation between the various knotted couplings of the human body in the sunlit environment.

What is Medicine?

Clinical Capital: Neo-Liberalism and the Will to Experiment (China and the US)

Thursday 3 May
4.30-6.30pm | Room 1204, Warmington Tower
With Melinda Cooper | Institute of Health, UEA

Melinda Cooper graduated from the University of Paris VIII in 2001. She has published widely in journals such as *Theory, Culture and Society*, *Angelaki*, *Configurations*, *Contretemps*, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, *Postmodern Culture* and *Distinktion: Journal of Scandinavian Social Theory*. Her book *Surplus Life: Biotechnology in the Neo-Liberal Era* is forthcoming from Washington University Press in 2007. She is currently post-doctoral research fellow in the Institute of Health at the University of East Anglia, where she is part of the Global Biopolitics Research Group.

ABSTRACT:

This paper considers the relocation of clinical trials to China as a key site for examining the evolving fortunes of Chinese and North American neo-liberalism. Beginning with the premise that neo-liberalism as a mode of capitalism oscillates between the imperatives of cultural experiment and incarceration, it considers the history of prison-based drug trials in the US as the necessary context for understanding the recent rush to off-shoring. What can we deduce about the current biopolitical transformation of China, where a strikingly state-planned, indeed eugenic, approach to public health, is coupled with a dramatic restructuring of the health system, every bit as radical as that pursued by Reagan and his successors in the United States? Focusing on the ambivalent role played by the floating populations in post-reform China, I will be interested in some of the tensions that are arising around the politics of infectious disease, sex and drug use.