Merit or Meritocracy? 60 years and counting...
Monday 9th April 2018, Newcastle University

Call for papers
The BSA Sociology of Education Study Group and the School of Politics, Geography and Sociology, Newcastle University invite proposals for papers on merit and meritocracy as part of a one-day conference to mark the 60th anniversary of the publication of Michael Young’s *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. Using Young’s classic contribution as a springboard, the conference will explore meritocracy in relation to topics including education, social class, elite groups, and social mobility; and in relation to broader ways of thinking about social change and social justice in sociology, social anthropology, social policy and social history.

Keynote speakers
Nicola Ingram (Lancaster, BSA Sociology of Education Study Group)
Jo Littler (City University)
Cris Shore (Auckland/Stockholm)
Daniel Smith (Anglia Ruskin)

The conference will examine the contemporary relevance of Young’s ideas. The welfare state he helped to design, and the education system that he speculated would promote talented, hard-working individuals into high status jobs, are much changed. Political values of collectivity and equality have given way to expectations of enterprise, self-actualisation and individualism following neoliberal discourses. Nevertheless, ideas about merit and the notion of meritocracy continue to circulate in political, media, social and academic realms, expressing social critiques and encapsulating hopes for better futures. ‘Meritocracy’ remains a powerful currency for thinking about society past, present and future.

We welcome proposals that address these questions and related topics, such as:
- Merit and meritocracy in HE and secondary education: access; widening participation; elite institutions; boundaries and opportunities; audit cultures
- Merit, neoliberal discourses, and personhood
- Qualifications and social mobility
- Gender, age, and ethnicity, in education, labour and careers
- Class boundaries, class relations and elite groups
- ‘Experts’, expert knowledge, and power
- Discursive, intellectual and political histories of ‘meritocracy’
- The future of meritocracy and the role of speculation in sociology and social science
- Public policy debates on educational opportunity
- Implications for organisational practice

The deadline for receiving abstracts of not more than 250 words is 8th December. Please email proposals to pastandfutures@newcastle.ac.uk.

There is a modest budget to support doctoral/postdoctoral speakers (to cover certain travel expenses and overnight stays). Please indicate on your proposal if you want to apply for this.

Merit or Meritocracy is organised by Geoff Payne, Anselma Gallinat, Lisa Garforth & Ruth Graham for the Imagining Pasts and Futures research cluster, Sociology, Newcastle University.