Tuesday 8 October
The History of Dirt in West Africa
Professor Steph Newell, Yale University and Leverhulme Visiting Professor, Newcastle University
Does dirt have a history that can be researched in understanding urban environments? Using interviews with contemporary residents of Lagos, Nigeria, as well as films, music and documents from British colonial archives, Professor Newell will analyse the causes and consequences of seeing global cities through the lenses of dirt. She will ask how certain people, places and objects came to be labelled using categories related to dirt, and the consequences of this at critical moments in the 20th Century.

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Tuesday 15 October
Black History Month Lecture
British Women in the Liberation of Frederick Douglass
Professor Leigh Fought, Le Moyne College, New York
Frederick Douglass’s slave master was demanding his return to bondage when the African-American abolitionist arrived in Newcastle in 1846. Eight months later, Douglass returned to the United States with the master paid off and arrived in Newcastle in 1846. Eight months later, Douglass returned to the United States with the master paid off and freedom. As Director, Maria is also the Accounting Officer of the Fine Art Department at Armstrong College. Maria Balshaw was appointed Director of Tate in June 2017 and has overall responsibility for Tate’s strategic direction and day-to-day operations. As Director, Maria is also the Accounting Officer appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Wednesday 23 October
Mercy and truth are met together
One of the key assertions of Christian orthodoxy is that God is merciful. And that God’s mercy is most needed when truth is revealed. Iris Murdoch, whose centenary is celebrated this year, commented in 1970 that ‘Christianity is not so much abandoned as unknown’. Lucy Winkett will argue that this is evident most acutely in the absence of mercy as a public value or societal norm.

Wednesday 6 November
Charlton Memorial Lecture
Dr Maria Balshaw, Director of Tate
This year’s Charlton Memorial Lecture marks the centenary of its establishment. The lecture was set up to commemorate William Henry Charlton, who studied in the Fine Art Department at Armstrong College. Maria Balshaw was appointed Director of Tate in June 2017 and has overall responsibility for Tate’s strategic direction and day-to-day operations. As Director, Maria is also the Accounting Officer appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Thursday 24 October
The quality of mercy is strained
Although Shakespeare’s Portia was speaking about the constraint rather than the dilution of mercy in her speech to Shylock, in her second lecture Lucy Winkett will explore what she will characterise as the mercilessness of contemporary public discourse, in contrast to the Scriptural characterisation of mercy, to be exercised with what might be called decisive patience and revolutionary forgiveness. Could the quality of mercy transform contemporary public debate? If so, how?

Tuesday 29 October
Philosophical Society Lecture
What do you see? Frames of perception, Claudia Rankine and Serena Williams
Dr Tina Chanter, Newcastle University
What do we see, hear, perceive, know? What habitual assumptions inform how we interpret the world? Dr Chanter discusses Rankine’s interrogation of racial micro-aggressions in the context of controversial public discourse in tennis matches. The talk will draw on the work of Jacques Rancière, who is interested in how politics and art can shake up what we think and what we know about the world.

Thursday 31 October
Jack Jeffery Lecture on Environment and Sustainability
Incentivising an Ethical Economics. What can we learn today from the last five centuries of our history?
Professor Simon Szreter, University of Cambridge
The lecture examines the long history of universal welfare provision in England and the UK in relation to the history of economic growth. It is argued that this provides a helpful perspective with which to formulate radical, but not unrealistic, policies to address the severe problems facing us today, which include extreme social and regional inequality, the productivity puzzle, and the need to de-carbonise the economy.

Thursday 7 November
The Crisis of the Meritocracy: how popular demand (not politicians) made Britain into a mass education society
Professor Peter Mandar, University of Cambridge
Before the Second World War, only about 20% of the population attended secondary school and only about 2% went on to higher education. Today everyone goes to secondary school - to 16 and mostly to 18 years of age - and half the population progress to higher education. How and why did this happen and with what effects?

Thursday 14 November
Can meaningful hope spring from revealing the depth of our climate failure?
Professor Kevin Anderson, University of Manchester
Peel away the layers of dangerously naive hope and unfounded optimism, and the mitigation challenge posed by the Paris Agreement now demands the rapid and profound re-shaping of contemporary society. While the models dominating the mitigation agenda employ speculative technologies, the arithmetic of emissions increasingly embeds equity at the heart of any mathematically cogent strategy. Against such a depressing backdrop, does the rapid emergence of new and vociferous constituencies and the heightened profile of climate change suggest early cracks and the prospect of new light?

Thursday 19 November
Smart Cities: fact or fiction?
Philip James, Newcastle University
Newcastle has recently been voted Smart City of the Year but what makes a city smart? How do we embrace the data revolution to make better decisions, put citizens at the heart of the process and demonstrate the value of data to ensure the economic sustainability of people and places? This lecture explores the potential of data and the challenges and risks that cities such as Newcastle face as we explore more data-centric decision-making.

Thursday 21 November
Three tales from the biomedical frontier
Winners of the Faculty of Medical Sciences’ postgraduate public speaking prize describe their quests at the cutting edge of science and how their findings may underpin the medical treatments of tomorrow.
Newcastle University welcomes you to its Autumn 2019 Insights programme. Given by public figures and eminent scholars, the lectures cover a wide range of topics, are free and open to all. All seats are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Unless otherwise stated, lectures begin at 5.30pm, last about an hour plus time for questions, and are held in the Curtis Auditorium, Herschel Building.

Audio recordings of some lectures are available on our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/events/public-lectures after the lecture has taken place. Additions or changes to the programme will also be published on our website. You can also follow us on Twitter: @insightsncl

To join our mailing list, please complete the online registration form. The information contained in this card can be provided in alternative formats on request. Please contact the Public Lectures office by telephone or email as above.

Wednesday 27 November Note: 6.00pm start
Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne Lecture Finding Ralph Tailor Professor Keith Wrightson, Yale University

This lecture is about researching and writing Ralph Tailor’s Summer, a ‘microhistory’ of Newcastle upon Tyne during the devastating plague of 1636, and of the role in that calamity of the scrivener Ralph Tailor, who did much to record it. The talk will focus on the origins of the project, its development through the exploration and analysis of the surviving records, and the problems of how best to write histories of this kind.

Thursday 28 November
Jacobson Lecture Understanding stem cells Professor Fiona Watt, King’s College London

In this lecture we will hear from internationally renowned scientist Professor Fiona Watt describe the different types of stem cells in the body and why they are important – both for normal tissue function and as a contributor to disease. Fiona Watt is Director of the Centre for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine at King’s College London, and became the Executive Chair of the Medical Research Council in 2018.

Wednesday 4 December Note: 5.30-7.00pm
Celebrating Student Research Scholarships and Expeditions 2019

Presentations by students showcasing the achievements of their diverse summer research scholarships and expeditions. These challenging projects reflect the broad range of academic interests across all three of the University’s Faculties. Accompanying posters will be on display in the Special Exhibition Space, Great North Museum, from 4.30pm.

Thursday 5 December
Is fixing infrastructure in the London global city-region undermining the rest of the UK? Professor Andy Pike, Newcastle University

Infrastructure provides services we all rely upon for our day-to-day lives. This lecture explains why the geography of infrastructure investment in the UK is spatially skewed towards its capital city-region. It reveals that infrastructure fixes for London risk undermining national rebalancing, leaving places in the rest of the UK struggling to invest for their future prosperity.

JOHN H HOLMES MEMORIAL LECTURES FOR 10- TO 14-YEAR-OLDS

The inside story of our body and mind
The 2020 Holmes Lectures will be given by researchers from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, and will take place in the Curtis Auditorium, Herschel Building.

■ Wednesday 15 January 2020, 5.00-6.00pm
Looking at the brain in pain

■ Wednesday 22 January 2020, 5.00-6.00pm
Seeing inside the body with radioactivity

To register for free places, please email the Public Lectures office public.lectures@ncl.ac.uk or telephone 0191 208 6093.

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