

EXPLORE



Season 1
2025-26 programme

Explore Season 1 Programme 2025-26

Welcome to our Season One Programme

New joiners are very welcome, so **if you would like to join Explore** please [get in touch](#) or join our [mailing list](#) to find out more. Look out for our special FREE Taster sessions on our first day of the season - all welcome! You'll find details in this programme and [online](#).

Our cover image this season is a detail of artist **Sue Brophy's** monoprint '**Which Path to Take?**' made in our Practical Art & Craft Studio sessions last season. With this title in mind, we are proud to share our Season One programme; with so many sessions and subjects to enjoy, we're here to guide you through an expanding world of ideas no matter which route you choose.



Look out for a small train logo against some titles as a number of our Culture & Society talks this season are inspired by 200 years since the birth of railway right here in the North East!

'It is not knowledge, but the act of learning, not the possession but the act of getting there, which grants the greatest enjoyment.' Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855)

Explore Season 1 Programme 2025-26

We hope to welcome lots of new members to our volunteer-run, member-led organisation as we continue to thrive after more than a decade of independent learning for the love of learning.

New joiners are very welcome and we'll be holding a special [Taster Event](#) for anyone interested in our programme, so come along and enjoy sessions alongside existing members to find out more about our organisation and how to join.

Before then we'll also be hosting our newly named Joseph Cowen Legacy Lecture (previously known as the Gordon Brown memorial Lecture in memory of our previous member of the same name) to welcome the well-known and well-loved journalist & sports reporter Jeff Brown. We'll then begin our season with talks and refreshments to welcome everyone to our first season of the year; with special thanks to Friends of Explore, our marvellous social team.

Thank you to the programming team and everyone else not listed who helped to organise the programme this Season:

Art History & Design: Helen Watson & Justin Pearce

Narratives (Literature, Cinema and Music) : Rita Prabhu

Science & Mathematics: Pamela Denham, Rita Prabhu & Karen Gammack

Culture & Society (incl. History & Archaeology): Kath Smith, Lesley Pringle & Joan Oliver

Philosophy: Trish Hutson

With direction from Anthea Lang & Malcolm Grady.

We are grateful to our hosts Brunswick Methodist Church, Hatton Gallery, Great North Museum: Hancock & Newcastle Arts Centre for our Face-to-Face lecture rooms, workshop and practical art spaces.

We are Explore! Come and join us!

Before Season One Starts...
Joseph Cowen Legacy Lecture
(Previously Gordon Brown Memorial Lecture)



Free Public Lecture

Tuesday 9th September 2025
18.00-19.00 Face to Face & Zoom

Jeff Brown
'My Sporting Life'

BOOK YOUR FREE TICKET VIA EVENTBRITE

[Face to Face Tickets Here](#) or [Zoom Tickets Here](#)

Jeff Brown is a familiar face in the North East, having been a news and sports reporter for both BBC Look North and ITV Tyne Tees for the best part of three decades. From his first, hand-written report of a table tennis tournament as a teenager, he went on to cover top-class sporting events around the globe - from Champions League football to World title fights and Test matches at Lord's - meeting many of his heroes & heroines in the process. As a playwright and podcaster his journey continues, inspired by the major players and colourful characters he has met along the way.

Come along to hear all about it!

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

Start of Season One...

EXPLORE

FREE Taster Event

Monday 6th October from **10.30am**

Enjoy talks from expert tutors, meet the organisation and find out more.

We are happy to invite all to our special Taster Event, a welcoming opportunity to try sessions alongside our friendly members at the start of our new season.

Brunswick Methodist Hall

Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7BJ

Book your FREE place online [HERE](#) via Eventbrite



Explore Season 1 Programme 2025-26

How will sessions be delivered? Members will receive additional information about accessing different sessions, but if you're unsure [get in touch](#) and we'll try to help.

Face-To-Face Check Venue

Face-to-Face Sessions - our face-to-face sessions usually take place at Brunswick Methodist Church in central Newcastle, however we do occasionally hold sessions off-site or at Newcastle Arts Centre. Most sessions do not need to be booked however we do occasionally request members to register interest in advance (for example practical art classes or walks) to manage materials or group sizes.

LIVE ZOOM SESSIONS

Live Zoom Sessions - these sessions are online sessions using Zoom to create a live classroom environment remotely with a tutor and 'audience'/members actively attending the session. This allows an immediacy of interaction akin to being in the same room (but usually with audience member microphones 'muted' during tutor presentation) Zoom details (invite links relevant codes) will be sent to members in advance of the sessions. If you need assistance setting up Zoom on your computer/tablet click [HERE](#).

BLENDED (F2F & Zoom)

Blended Sessions - where appropriate we may combine methods and stream a live Face-to-Face session via Zoom as well. This is not available for all sessions due to the nature of sessions and available resources.

We will also send any additional resources via the weekly bulletin in advance

Monday

One-Off Culture & Society Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.00



Date	Tutor	Title
06 Oct	Geoff Moore	Success Versus Excellence in an Elite Sport: The Case of the GB Rowing Team
13 Oct	Simon Buck	Legacy of Slavery in Britain
20 Oct	Brian Tanner	Portents, Miracles & Marvels: How High-Medieval Chroniclers Reported Celestial Phenomena
27 Oct	Jo Bath	Photographic Firsts and the Stories Behind Them
03 Nov	Colm O'Brien & Max Adams	Northumbria: Between the Romans and the Danes

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Philosophy Course: *13th October to 10th November*

Provocations

Tutor: Ian Ground

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



This season, we will continue with our popular “Provocations” format, exploring four or five carefully selected videos or texts that offer bold and thought-provoking perspectives on philosophical or contemporary themes. These will often touch on topics in the philosophy of the mind, our understanding of other forms of consciousness, and questions in ethics and aesthetics.

All source materials will be provided in advance, and participants are encouraged to review them before each session (typically just about an hour reading or watching an online resource).

Each session will begin with a brief introduction to the key themes by the tutor, followed by an open and lively group discussion.

As with all sessions, any details needed in advance will be sent out via the weekly bulletin.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face (except 17th Nov)**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-11.30



Date	Tutor	Title
10 Nov	Qin Cao	Curating 'The Forbidden City' Photographic Exhibition
17 Nov	Henry Martin	Vincent Van Gogh's Analogies (Zoom Only)
24 Nov	James Wright	Art, Absurdity and the Non-human
01 Dec	Michael Johnson	The Diary of W.G. Footitt
08 Dec	Jill Harrison	Siena via the Silk Road: Looking at Art & Trade

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Culture & Society Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 12.30-13.30



Date	Tutor	Title
06 Oct	Malcolm Grady	Death on the Tracks - The Fate of William Huskisson 
13 Oct	Olive Hogg	Write Your Name in Egyptian Hieroglyphs
20 Oct	Sue Ward	The Hexham Militia Riot of 1761
27 Oct	Mike Fraser	Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Irish Famine – The Victorian Cromwell?
03 Nov	Anthea Lang	Tracks above the Tyne - Newcastle-Gateshead's High Level Bridge 

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face (except 17th Nov)**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 12.00-13.00



Date	Tutor	Title
10 Nov	Qin Cao	An Astronomical Clock in the Durham Oriental Museum collection
17 Nov	Henry Martin	L.S. Lowry - A Fan's Introduction (Zoom Only)
24 Nov	Michelle Wood	Micro Geographies: The Things We Cannot See
01 Dec	Narbi Price	Going Back Brockens: Monuments & Rhetoric After the Miners' Strike
08 Dec	Jill Harrison	The Golden Age of Dutch Art: An exploration with reference to how slavery & the 'other' was depicted

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Art History Course: *6th October to 3rd November*

Art of Japan

Tutor: Peter Quinn

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face** and **live via Zoom**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



Japan has a long history of art and culture and in this series we will seek to examine the range of Japanese visual culture in relation to the shifting historical, social and economic contexts experienced by the people of the Japanese islands. (Japan is composed of 14,125 islands)

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 06 Oct | Japan for Beginners |
| 13 Oct | Floating World, Print Culture in Edo |
| 20 Oct | Meiji Transformation: Riding the Famous Hot Air Balloon |
| 27 Oct | War, Defeat and Reconstruction: Atom Boy |
| 3 Nov | Perfect Days: Contemporary Art in the Years after the Bubble economy |

**If you need any help downloading & using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

Monday

One-Off Culture & Society Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face (except 8th December*)**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00-15.30



Date	Tutor	Title
10 Nov	Mike Barke	The Development of Newcastle's West End in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries
17 Nov	Niall Hammond	The Stockton & Darlington Railway of 1825: The Railway That Got the World on Track 
24 Nov	Judith Green	The Montagu Pit Disaster
01 Dec	Ian Jackson	Defined by Stones: Connection between Northern Landscapes and Our Prehistoric Ancestors

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Art History and Culture & Society One-off: *8th December*

Fuelling the Railway Revolution

Tutor: Anne Sutherland

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.30-15.30



Anne has curated [Fuelling the Railway Revolution](#), an exhibition commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, at the Mining Art Gallery, Bishop Auckland.

The exhibition explores the vital link between coal mining and the development of railways and we welcome Anne to speak to us about the work featured and the process involved in curating the show.



**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

Monday

Culture & Society Course: *6th October to 3rd November*

After Rome

Tutor: David Burke

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 18.00 to 19.30



It's often said that Europe after the fall of Rome was a dark and dour land. The reality was far from this.

From the glory of Charlemagne to the emergence of Islam, this was a vibrant and creative period of European history. From the wandering Vandals to the stalwart Byzantines, it was in the post-Roman world that we find the roots of modern Europe. It was the era in which western Christianity almost took a different path; medieval art and culture echo through to today.

From familiar rulers such as Charlemagne and Alfred to the lesser known Brunhilda, the tragic queen of the Merovingians; Eriugena, the greatest philosopher of the era; and Theoderic, the man who tried to make Italy great again... we will explore the early medieval history of Europe after Rome.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Science Course: 7th October to 4th November

Human Britain

Tutor: Derek Teasdale

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



Humans (species of the genus Homo) have occupied Britain for at least 800,000 years.

The fragmentary evidence that we have shows their presence during warm periods and absence during the regularly occurring glacial episodes. Our species, Homo sapiens, only established a permanent presence after the end of the last ice age, around 18,000 years ago.

Join us to explore a fascinating story of evolution, extreme climate change and human cultural development.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Philosophy One-Offs: 14th & 21st October

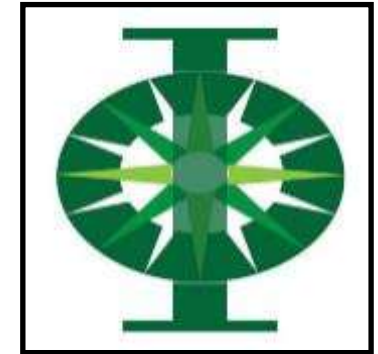
A Philosopher's Guide to ... (Mary Midgley Bequest)

Tutor: Darren Harper

Format: This session will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.00



14 Oct A Philosopher's Guide to Nature

What does it mean to live in harmony with nature; not just environmentally, but existentially? Drawing on Arne Naess's deep ecology and Soga Ryojin's insight that "we cannot rise above nature" this talk invites reflection on our place within the natural world. Through discussion and guided questions, we'll explore how shifting from a human-centered worldview to one of interconnectedness might reshape our ethical responsibilities. Is it possible to reimagine nature not as something we manage—but as something to which we belong?

21 Oct A Philosopher's Guide to Simplicity

Can a simpler life be a richer one? Drawing on Thoreau's retreat to Walden Pond and Emrys Westacott's critique of modern complexity, we'll explore the meaning and value of simplicity today. What might we gain by resisting the cultural pull toward accumulation and speed? Through reflective dialogue and guided questions, we'll examine simplicity not as denial, but as a deliberate philosophical stance. Might choosing less - intellectually, materially, emotionally - be a way of choosing more wisely?

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

This session is supported by the legacy of Mary Midgley (1919-2018)

Tuesday

Narratives Course: 4th & 11th November

***Das Rheingold* & Norse Mythology: A Thrilling Way in to Wagner's *Ring* Cycle**

Tutor: Michael Ayton

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Time: 10.30-12.30



Have you ever wanted a way in to Wagner's music dramas, but been daunted by the manifold problematics attending the man and his work? – this course is for you.

However repugnant some of his beliefs and behaviours, Richard Wagner was astonishingly creative. He built his mesmerising, ever-challenging operatic tetralogy *The Ring of the Nibelung* over many years. Before composing the music, he wrote the cycle's entire libretto himself, weaving it from the Icelandic *Eddas*, Norse saga material and the medieval German *Nibelungenlied*.

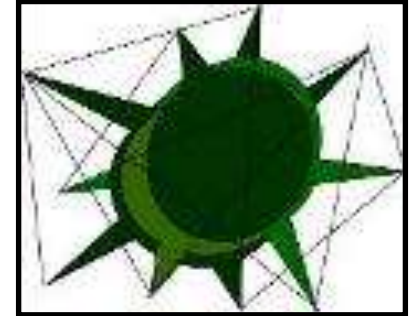
In these two sessions, we'll focus on how in *Das Rheingold* (The Rhinegold) – which he saw as a Prologue to the other three operas – he deftly adapts and amalgamates three stories from the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson (c. 1220), alongside other material ranging from *Thidreks saga* to *Puss in Boots*. In doing so, we'll also consider how this introductory opera foreshadows the sometimes 'dark' but continually fascinating philosophical themes of the cycle as a whole (a full overview will be given), as a prelude, hopefully, to further exploration ...

Come and be thrilled (and challenged)! All texts will be provided, as will some of the most awe-inspiring music ever to fill a classroom ...

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday



Science Series:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

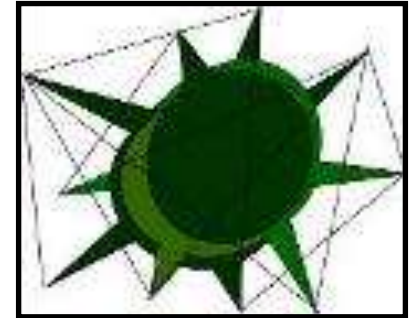
Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-11.30

Date	Tutor	Title
18 Nov	Dr Lizzie Beavis & Amy Robinson	The Importance of Patient Voice in Rare Biology
		Biology is a complex system with extensive variations. In medicine, we see this in the thousands of rare diseases across the world that are often chronic, life changing and sometimes even fatal. In this lecture, we will highlight how patient voice has been an instrumental driving force for expanding our understanding of rare biology from the perspectives of a rare disease researcher and a clinician. We will also explore how patient voice and science advocacy is conducted by following the story of patient advocates and their work within science communication, community liaison and law. In an age of growing science misinformation where the patient voice is often drowned out, we will find out how we can all help those voices be heard.
25 Nov & 02 Dec	Dr Isil Ezman	Microbial Allies: How the World's Smallest Organisms Help C21st Century Challenges
		These two talks build on Dr Ezman's talk last year, but don't worry if you missed it as these sessions work independently. First she'll recap the basics of the molecular mechanisms underpinning the innovative technologies that harness microbiology to address pressing challenges. She'll give more detail on examples such as combating climate change, reducing plastic waste & improving traditional practices like cheese and wine production. She'll incorporate the latest scientific studies, offering an engaging & detailed perspective on how microorganisms drive sustainable industrial progress.

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday



Science Series:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-11.30

Date	Tutor	Title
11 Nov	Dr Kasia Pirog	A Brief Introduction to Rare Disease & Drug Repurposing The UK defines a rare disease as one that affects fewer than 1:2,000 individuals. This may seem incredibly rare, however, there are over 6,000 individual rare diseases identified to date. In fact, 5% of world population is affected by a rare disease, and there are currently 3 million people living with a rare disease in the UK alone. A high percentage of these conditions are developmental and affect children and young adults, and many are debilitating and have severe outcomes. Due to the rarity of individual conditions it is often difficult to develop treatments. However, recent advances in disease modelling and molecular and systems biology have shown that in some cases molecular mechanisms that are involved in more common diseases (for which treatments are available) are also perturbed in rare diseases. This led to a new approach to treatment of rare conditions, through re-purposing of FDA & EMA approved drugs for a new (rare disease) purpose. In this talk Dr Pirog will discuss several rare diseases and potential drug repurposing therapies, and show examples from my own research journey in rare skeletal disease research.

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

You can also find more Science sessions on [Page 32](#) and [Page 33](#).

Tuesday

Literature Course: 25th November to 9th December

The Unique Cinema of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger

Tutor: Roger Mitchell

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.30



Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Powell and Pressburger made a series of extraordinary films that went against the prevailing tastes and attitudes of their times and now rate among the most ambitious and important works of British cinema. A unique collaboration between two visionary filmmakers, their work has been described as innovative, witty, conceptually audacious, visually flamboyant, unpredictable, perplexing, magical, poetic and passionate.

25 Nov *The Spy in Black* (1939)

This espionage film was the pair's first collaboration and, although it is a genre piece, it features many of the abiding motifs that would typify the pair's subsequent work.

02 Dec *I Know Where I'm Going!* (1945)

An unconventional romance in which the atmospheric scenery of the Western Isles is combined with elements of Scottish culture and folklore to provide the setting for a journey of self-discovery.

09 Dec *Black Narcissus* (1947)

Set in an isolated Himalayan convent, this psychological drama details the growing tensions within a small community of nuns which eventually lead to tragedy and dissolution. Described as one of the most beautiful films ever made, it was also arguably the most iconoclastic to be made in Britain at that time.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

Tutor: Peter Quinn

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face** and **live via Zoom**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 13.00-15.10



In each 'double-bill' the tutor will cover two talks within the slot and will negotiate breaktime with the group directly.

Date	Title
07 Oct	1.) Piero della Francesca (d.1492) Early Italian Renaissance artist (Blended) 2.) 10 Artworks to Debate & Discuss: Art on Walls (F2F)
14 Oct	1.) Roger van der Weyden (d.1464) Early Netherlandish altarpiece & portrait painter (Blended) 2.) 10 Artworks to Debate & Discuss: Devotional Art (F2F)
21 Oct	1.) Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) Print, paint and theory in Renaissance Nuremberg (Blended) 2.) 10 Artworks to Debate & Discuss: The Woodcut (F2F)

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

Tuesday

Face-to-Face Film Special: 28th October

Rashomon

Tutor: Peter Quinn

Format: This sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 13.00-15.30



Directed in 1950 by Akira Kurosawa (1910-1998), the film often features in 'Best Film' lists. On its release it won the Golden Lion at the 12th Venice International Film Festival, the Best Foreign Language Film at the 24th Academy Awards, and was nominated for Best Film at the 6th British Academy Film Awards.

"One of legendary director Akira Kurosawa's most acclaimed films, Rashomon features an innovative narrative structure, brilliant acting, and a thoughtful exploration of reality versus perception." Rotten Tomatoes

'Men lie because they are weak and, as the priest says, if we can't trust one another then life on earth becomes a kind of hell – another idea that recurs throughout Kurosawa's films. And yet, Rashomon ends on a note of hope: the rain cannot last forever and, through it all, Kurosawa's unique brand of humanity shines through.' Alex Barrett for BFI, Where to Begin.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

One-Off Art History Talk: *4th November*

Printmaking and Beyond: A Conversation with Kath Bell

Tutor: Kath Bell

Format: This sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 13.00-14.00



Kath Bell is a North East printmaker, fine art painter, bookbinder and technician at the Northern School of Art, whose experience working with various media and techniques is also evident in her beautiful artists books.

In this session we welcome Kath to talk about her work in an interactive session with the audience.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Literature One-Off: 18th November

Witness – An Introduction to the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova

Tutor: Tim Crocker

Venue/Format: This session will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.00-15.30



From the silver willow recollected from 'the cool nursery of the young century', 'fanning her dreams with insomnia' to the whispers among the prison lines of Leningrad under the Yezhov terror, the poetry of Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) gave unstinting witness for her people during unprecedented dislocations of war and revolution.

A pdf of the selection of poems to be read will be circulated beforehand.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Culture & Society Course: *25th November to 9th December*

Hellenistic Thought: Philosophy after Alexander the Great (Mary Midgley

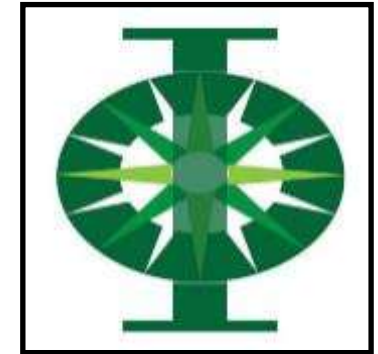
Tutor: Jordan Bayley

Bequest)

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00-15.30



This short course will explore the philosophical ideas that flourished during the Hellenistic Period (323-30BC). It will consider how approached to philosophy changed from the death of Alexander to the death of Cleopatra and fall of the last Hellenistic kingdom, focusing on the three main branches of philosophy that were prominent throughout this period.

This course will be suitable for those who are new to the subject of Latin philosophy as well as those who have some grounding in the topic. All welcome.

- 25 Nov Stoicism in a new world order
- 02 Dec Epicureanism and the search for a happier soul
- 09 Dec Cynics and Sceptics and beyond

This session is supported by the legacy of Mary Midgley (1919-2018)

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Music Course: 14th October to 18th November (**no session 21st Oct*)

We Are Family

Tutor: Mike Green

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 19.00-20.30



This season we will be exploring the instrumental “families” of the orchestra.

We will be considering the development of the instruments over the centuries, their role in the orchestra (and other ensembles) and the similarities and differences between the various members.

14 Oct	Strings
28 Oct	Brass
04 Nov	Percussion
01 Nov	Woodwind
18 Nov	Voice

There will be plenty of musical examples to guide us and no formal musical experience is needed for these sessions.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Wednesday

Law & Justice One-Off: *8th October*

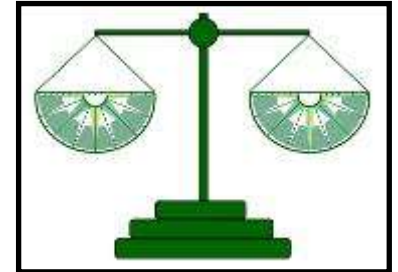
Illustrating the Sycamore Gap Trial

Tutor: Nick Lewis

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.00



The 150-year-old Sycamore Gap tree, or Robin Hood tree, next to Hadrian's Wall was chopped down by two men as a "bit of a laugh". Not surprisingly, they have since become public enemy number one.

The trial of two men was held in May this year and with cameras not allowed in court, the general public had to rely on the Court Artist's sketches to illustrate the proceedings. Illustrator Nick Lewis was the Court Artist in this instance (as reported by the [BBC](#)).

Nick will discuss the process of illustrating the trial of Andrew Graham and Adam Carruthers who were convicted of cutting down the famous Sycamore Gap Tree.

See [Page 35](#) For more Thursday sessions in this Law & Justice Series series.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Culture & Society Course: *15th October to 5th November*

A Week is a Long Time in Politics

Tutor: Malcolm Grady

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.00



'A week is a long time in politics'; this saying is usually attributed to Prime Minister Harold Wilson in the mid-1960s.

Wilson's quip, which he probably made at a lobby briefing for journalists at the time of the sterling crisis in 1964, aptly describes the current implosion in the political world.

In this interactive course we will discuss this at length.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Literature Course: 12th November to 10th December

Literary Siblings

Tutor: Clare Jackson

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30-12.00



Siblings shape the starting points of so many narratives from myth, legend and folktale to the modern day. They are bound in with the most wide-ranging and profound of themes: loyalty and betrayal, sacrifice and greed, time and loss.

In this course, we shall be discussing how a range of siblings are portrayed, whether they be idealised, sentimentalised, treated with ambivalence or as a driving force of conflict. We will be considering how authors' representation of siblings reflects the values of their times, how the gender of siblings affects their presentation, and what each writer's intention was in choosing siblings for their central characters. Why do writers return so frequently to this fundamental relationship?

- 12 Nov Charles Dickens - [*The Battle of Life*](#)
- 19 Nov Christina Rossetti - [*Goblin Market*](#)
- 26 Nov Christina Rossetti *Goblin Market* (cont'd)
- 03 Dec Colm Tóibín - *The Blackwater Lightship* (Picador paperback edition pub. 2000)
- 10 Dec Colm Tóibín - *The Blackwater Lightship* (cont'd)

*If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Wednesday

Culture & Society Course: *8th October to 5th November*

Connections

Tutor: Anthea Lang

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00-15.30

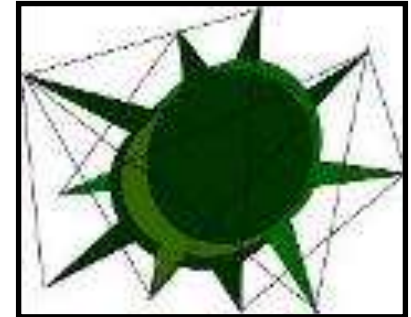


Over 5 weeks, enjoy a magical mystery local history tour discovering connections between people, places and items in the North East. Starting and ending in the Summerhill area of Newcastle this tour takes some surprising turns.

08 Oct	Summerhill to Wallington
15 Oct	Wallington to Stella Hall
22 Oct	Stella Hall to La Sagesse
29 Oct	La Sagesse to Killingworth Colliery
05 Nov	Killingworth Colliery to Summerhill

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday



Science Series: 12th November to 10th December

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

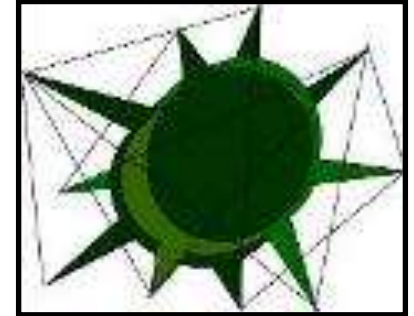
Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00-15.00 or 15.30 (See Below)

Date	Tutor	Title
12 Nov	Wallace Arthur	From Egg to Animal (14.00-15.30)
		Most animals start life as a fertilized egg. But how does such a single cell become a large, organized body consisting of millions of cells? What are the similarities and differences in the developmental process between different types of animals? Are similar mechanisms at work despite the very different animal forms involved? In this talk, we'll look at these fascinating questions.
19 Nov	Sammie Buzzard	The Polar Regions, Past and Present (14.00-15.00)
		As assistant professor & glaciologist at the Centre for Polar Observation and Modelling at Northumbria University, Sammie uses a combination of computer simulations, satellite observations and fieldwork to understand how our polar regions are changing and what that might mean for the rest of the planet. This session will explore how our understanding of the polar regions has changed over the last century, from the "heroic age" of polar exploration of Scott and Shackleton to current & future satellite missions to monitor our polar regions. She will share a variety of the current polar research taking place at the Centre and beyond, as well as explain why what happens in the poles matters for us here in the North East.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday



Science Series: 12th November to 10th December

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

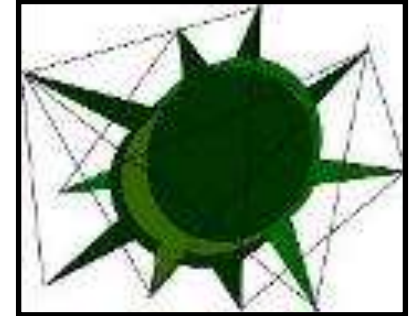
Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00-15.30

Date	Tutor	Title
26 Nov	Erin McClymont	Seabird Records of the Antarctic in the Present & During the Ice Age* Antarctic sea ice is a critical component of the climate system, affecting a range of physical & biogeochemical feedbacks, and supporting unique ecosystems. Here, we will examine the results of our investigations into a novel archive of past sea-ice environments. The reconstructions span the last 50,000 years, and details both how the sea-ice environment changed, but also the resilience of the seabird to the dramatic climate events. (*14.00-15.30)
03 Dec	Dr Sadaf Iqbal	Machine Learning and How It Shapes Our Modern Lives (14.00-15.30) Dr Iqbal studied engineering, and completed a PhD in Deep learning/ Machine learning. She currently works full time at Northumbria University as a Post Doctoral Research Assistant. She will share the many positive impacts that Science & Maths has on us, particularly Machine Learning (ML). This talk will include an introduction to ML with examples of how people are currently using it. Sadaf will outline why ML is able to do things the way it does, including its history, and its intersection with other science disciplines. Finally, the session will end with a focus on the future of ML and thereby our future.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday



Science Series: 12th November to 10th December

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00-15.00

Date	Tutor	Title
10 Dec	Karen Dobson	Wellbeing & the Environment at Scotswood Garden (14.00-15.00)
Karen Dobson, is CEO of Scotswood Garden, an environmental, community charity in the west end of Newcastle. Karen has led the charity for 13 years, having previously worked as a primary school teacher. Scotswood Garden is celebrating its 30th birthday this year. Hear about how the charity developed from an abandoned school playing field into a thriving community resource. Based in the heart of an area of high disadvantage, the Garden uses nature to improve health, confidence and skills, and enables people to forge connections. It is a community growing together.		

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

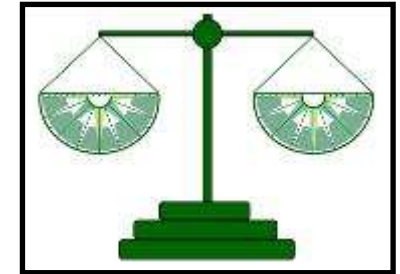
Thursday

Law & Justice Series: 16th October, 6th November, 4th & 11th December

Format: This session will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.00



Law and justice go hand in hand and are foundational concepts that exist in a civilised society. These concepts refer to the system of rules and the pursuit of fairness, respectively. Law encompasses the formal rules and regulations established by a governing body i.e. the government to maintain law and order. While Justice ensures the moral & fair application of those rules in all instances. Law & Justice applies to all aspects of our life and in this series we will get a glimpse of the system that we have in our country and its pros and cons.

16 Oct Nicola Shaw The Structure of the English and Welsh Judiciary

Nicola Shaw was called to the Bar in 1992 and has had a career in the self employed bar and is now retired from the district bench. She still practises non court dispute resolution from chambers in London and Leeds.

06 Nov Malcolm Grady To Be Or Not To Be a Magistrate... That is the Question?

People who don't know about being a magistrate think you are just sending people down. Find out more from a pro.....

See [Page 28](#) (Wednesday) and [Page 36](#) for other sessions in this series.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

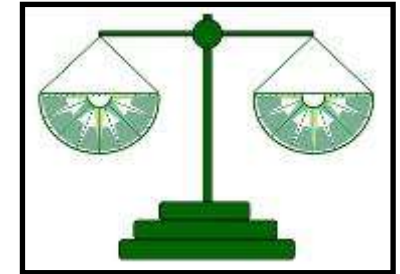
Thursday

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04 Dec Gavin Dingwall Independent Sentencing Review Part 1

The recently published Independent Sentencing Review led by David Gauke will form the basis of these two talks. In these two sessions Gavin will be, in the first instance, discussing how we got to the position where prisons are operating virtually at capacity.

11 Dec Gavin Dingwall Independent Sentencing Review Part 2

Following the first session above, this second session will consider possible ways in which the situation can be improved.

See [Page 27](#) (Wednesday) and [Page 35](#) for other sessions in this series.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Narratives and Culture & Society Series: 13th November to 27th November

The Fall of the Tsarist Empire

Tutor: David Saunders

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30-12.00



Ivan the Terrible was crowned as the first tsar of Muscovy in 1547. Muscovy proclaimed itself 'The Russian Empire' in 1721. The last tsar abdicated in March 1917. These lectures try to explain why the 370-year-old tsarist state came to an end. Although David will make clear which explanation appeals to him most, he will also encourage listeners to rank the various considerations in their own way.

- 13 Nov Politics & Ideology - After beginning by spelling out the diversity of the tsars' territories, this lecture argues that the tsars tried to bring them together by means of grandiosity, religiosity, and force. When, in the later years of their rule, their tactics gave rise to opposition, some of the country's rulers recognised the need for concessions.
- 20 Nov Economy & Society - For most of its life, the tsarist state was overwhelmingly agricultural and sociologically straitjacketed, but in the later years of the 19th Century it began experiencing industrialization and social mobility. This session focuses on the question whether, in conjunction with the oppositionist ideas which the 1st lecture brought into play, the degree of late-tsarist social change was enough to bring down the regime.
- 27 Nov Diplomacy & War - Because the tsars never stopped adding to their territory, they were in more or less constant diplomatic conflict with other countries. The wars which sometimes resulted exacerbated the strains which the Russian Empire tended to experience on account of its internal ideological controversies and nascent industrial society.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Literature Short Course: 9th to 23rd October

Three Short Stories by Henry James

Tutor: Tim Crocker

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.30-16.00



For many, Henry James (1843-1916) represents the acme of realist fiction. Known best for classic novels such as *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and *The Ambassadors* (1904), he was also a brilliant short story writer, publishing 112.

We will look at three, selected from different phases of his career to give a sense of his development as a writer:

['Four Meetings'](#) (1877)

['The Middle Years'](#) (1893)

['The Jolly Corner'](#) (1908)

Texts are available online for free on [Project Gutenberg](#) and via the links above. They can also be found in the following recommended scholarly edition on kindle and in paperback: Henry James (2001) *Selected Tales* - edited by John Lyon London: Penguin

*If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Thursday

Literature Short Course: 30th October & 6th November

Irish Short Fiction

Tutor: Claire Nally

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.30-16.00



In these two sessions, we will address Irish short fiction, and consider some of the central themes in the literature of modern Ireland, including the role of history and forgetting, ideas of community, religion and identity; comedy in Irish storytelling; the legacy of the Celtic Tiger and the economic crash; and how new media forms, such as podcasting, have influenced the Irish literary landscape.

Our texts will be as follows:

- 1.) Claire Keegan, Selection from *Walk the Blue Fields* (2007). Titles will be provided nearer the time
- 2.) Blindboy Boatclub, Selection of Short Stories – read from *The Gospel According to Blindboy* by Blindboy Boatclub or listen to his podcasts. These are very short stories.
 - a. 'Did You Read About Erskine Fogarty?'
 - b. 'I'll Give You Barcelona'
 - c. 'Topographia Hibernica'

*If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Thursday

Art Course: 30th October to 11th December

Practical Art & Craft Studio

Format: This session will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Art Room, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QB

Time: 13.30-16.00



In a change of format from our previous seasons, our new Practical Art & Craft studio sessions will now run for 7 weeks. This will allow additional tutor-led sessions to provide some coaching to those would like it, alternating with member-led sessions.

This season, the group will use the Art and Techniques of David Hockney as the inspiration for sessions before members continue develop work in their own styles.

30 Oct	Tutor-led 'Kick-off' - Discussion of theme, work & techniques
06 Nov	Member-led Session
13 Nov	Tutor Coaching Session
20 Nov	Member-led Session
27 Nov	Tutor Coaching Session
04 Dec	Member-led Session
11 Dec	Supportive Group Crit/Critique Session

*These sessions are open to any Explore member. No prior art experience is necessary.
We will happily welcome any members wanting to join us for the first time.*

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Literature Course: 13th November to 11th December

International Prize-winners

Tutor: Bronwen Calvert

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



In this course we focus on four contemporary women writers who have recently received major international awards. We will read examples of short stories, novels, and autofiction, and consider the interplay between these writers' themes and preoccupations. We'll read these works in English translations; the works are originally written in German, French, Polish, and Korean.

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| 13 Nov | Jenny Erpenbeck, 'Siberia' (2002) translated from the German by Susan Bernofsky, and extract from <i>Kairos</i> (2021) translated from the German by Michael Hofmann (pdfs provided) |
| 20 Nov | Annie Ernaux, <i>The Years</i> (2008), translated from the French by Alison L Strayer (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2018) |
| 27 Nov | Finish Ernaux; Olga Tokarczuk, <i>Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead</i> (2009), translated from the Polish by Antonia Lloyd-Jones (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2018) |
| 04 Dec | Finish Tokarczuk continued |
| 11 Dec | Han Kang, 'Fruit of my Woman' (1997), translated from the Korean by Deborah Smith (pdf provided) |

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Friday

Culture & Society Course: 10th October to 7th November

A Social History of Language Before the Norman Conquest

Tutor: Jo Bath

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



Modern English is full of loan words, but at its root is the language of the Anglo-Saxons. We'll start at the beginnings - whether that's Babel or Proto-Indo-European - then look hard at Old English, from the Lord's Prayer to the names of months, place names and some wonderful words we should bring back.

Then on to riddles, kennings and word games, before asking What did the Vikings do for us?

This course won't teach you Saxon grammar, but it will tell you how to swear in Old English, the correct name for a female werewolf, the connection between shit and science, and the importance of "Things".

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Friday

Culture & Society Course: *14th November to 12th December*

Ramsay MacDonald—Socialist, Labour Leader, Prime Minister & Pariah

Tutor: Nick Cott

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face** and **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



This series of talks will look at the life and political times of Ramsay MacDonald, a figure in political history whose reputation has been overshadowed by his controversial role in the demise of the second Labour government (1929-31) and the establishment of the multi-party National Government, dominated by Conservatives. It is also overshadowed by his role in appeasement of Germany whilst Prime Minister. We will also look more widely at his life and politics over a long period of time. MacDonald's involvement in political life spanned the period of the creation of the Labour party and its displacement of the Liberals, WW1, the General Strike and the two Labour governments of the inter-war period. There is no political history of Britain in the early 20th century without consideration of MacDonald's roles, successes and failures.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 14 Nov | MacDonald: the making of a socialist |
| 21 Nov | MacDonald and the foundation of the Labour party |
| 28 Nov | MacDonald and Labour as a party of power |
| 05 Dec | MacDonald and the Second Labour government |
| 12 Dec | MacDonald and the National Government |

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

Coffee Morning, Lunch or a Catch Up with Friends of Explore

Once we've settled into this season, we might want another get-together, perhaps a group meal or a walk, or a quiet coffee and a chat between sessions.

If you'd like to help organise a social event, or would appreciate a friendly natter over a cuppa (face to face or via Zoom) get in touch.

We'll announce more details of any social events **via the weekly bulletins** so keep an eye out for events and news from [Friends of Explore](#).

If you would like to join us or have any suggestions for a meet-up please email friendsofexplore@gmail.com



Face-To-Face
Check Venue

LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS

The End of Explore Season One

**Season Two 2025-26 will start
Monday 12th January 2026**

Did you know that we're a CHARITY?
Find out more and donate via the link below:



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