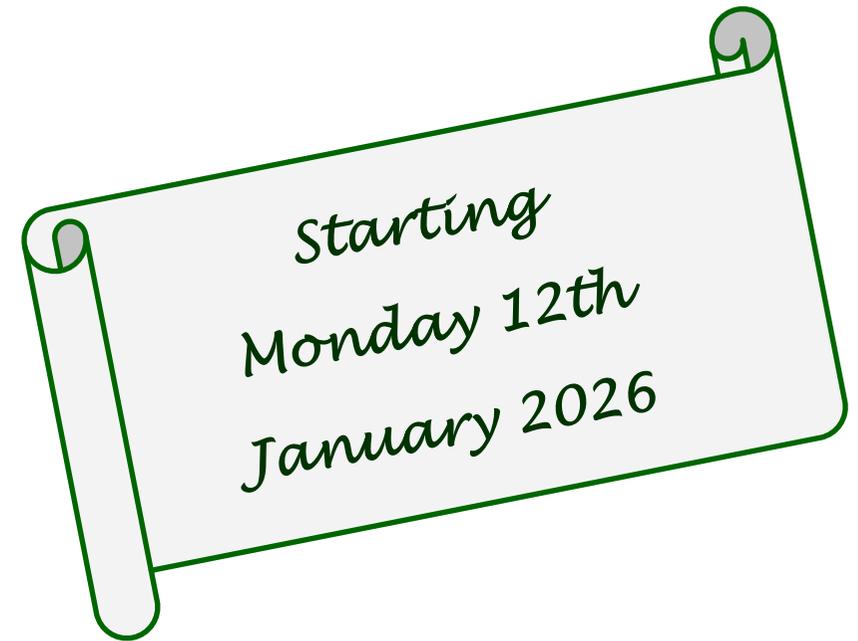


EXPLORE



Season 2 2025-26 programme

Explore Season 2 Programme 2025-26

Welcome to our Season Two 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 reflects this season's Culture & Society theme of 'Boundaries & Frontiers'; of identifying, understanding & facing them, of crossing, bridging & pushing them. In an ever changing world of conflict, climate change and shifting geo-political concerns, many of our C&S talks will consider different historical and contemporary boundaries and frontiers to help us consider where various lines are, were, or might be drawn.

Look out for our small '**Boundaries & Frontiers**' logo to identify those sessions.



'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 2 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.

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

Art History & Design: Helen Watson

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!

Start of Season Two...

EXPLORE

FREE Taster Event

Monday 12th January 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 2 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 with 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 Art History and Culture & Society Sessions: 12th January

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

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



Time	Tutor	Title
10.30-11.30	Malcolm Grady	<p>Framing the Railways</p> <p>This talk examines how artists from the mid 19th century until the present century, have portrayed aspects of the development of the railways from the construction of engines to the evolution of the railway landscape, the experience of travel and the role of railway stations.</p>
12.00-13.00	Jo Westgate	<p>Art and Inspiration</p> <p>Jo is an Artist Printmaker living in Stagshaw, north of Corbridge near Hadrian's Wall. She works from her studio where she makes pictures using an 1836 Albion press and a 1960 Littlejohn etching press. In her talk she will show examples of her work and explain the techniques of woodcut and drypoint. She will describe the inspiration she finds in the northern landscape, its history and ecology.</p>
14.00-15.30	Peter Stone	<p>Protecting Cultural Heritage in Conflict: An Impossible Dream? </p> <p>The importance of protecting heritage in conflict has been discussed for at least 2500 years and remains a critical discussion & operational necessity. Heritage can be used as a force for good, for community cohesion, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. It can also be used as a reason for conflict, and a weapon & target in conflict. This talk will discuss the work of the international NGO The Blue Shield as it strives to protect heritage as a vehicle that shows as humans we have so much more in common than what divides us.</p>

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

These sessions are part of our free [Taster Event](#)

Monday

Philosophy Course: *12th January to 9th February*

Provocations

Tutor: Ian Ground

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

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



In this discussion-based series, we will take 4 “provocations” over 5 sessions from a variety of sources with topics designed to provoke thought and discussion about central themes in philosophy.

A list of sources will be circulated before the course starts. Participants do need to view the relevant source before the session. It might take an hour or two, and it would be a good idea to jot down a note or two for questions and discussion in the session. One spare session gives us some space to extend the discussion as needed.

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 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
19 Jan	Malcolm Grady	Arbeia: The Final Roman Frontier 
26 Jan	Francesca Gillis	Surprises from the Soil: Excavation and Scientific Updates from the Magna Project's Midway Point 
02 Feb	Colm O'Brien	Deira: Kingdom, People, Territory 
09 Feb	Brian Tanner	Gerald of Wales (1146-1223): Raconteur of Natural History, Natural Marvels & Far-fetched Stories
16 Feb	Jeremy Paterson	Mussolini's Dream of Rome: The importance of Rome's past to the dictator and how it led to his transformation of the city of Rome

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions: 23rd February

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



Time	Tutor	Title
10.30-11.30	David Flitcroft	<p>'Art from the bike shed, inspiration is just a bike ride away'.</p> <p>David Flitcroft retired as a policeman and moved to France and became a full-time artist (his studio is also his bike 'shed') Zoom in to find out about David's work from across the Channel.</p>
12.00-13.00	Theo Albano	<p>Joan Eardley and her Circle in Catterline, An Artist's Colony</p> <p>In this session we welcome back the Director of The Fleming Collection to talk about Eardley and her time in Catterline, a small fishing village in the North East of Scotland where she worked and made her home.</p>

*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**

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

Time: 10.30-11.30



Date	Tutor	Title
02 Mar	Andrew Heard	The Architecture of Ushaw: Past, Present and Future
09 Mar	Teresa Barnard	International Women's Day - See Page 15
16 Mar	Nick Lewis	AI and Design The talk will examine the increasing role of AI in the design process. It shows how AI is increasingly used in the design process and how this might impact future jobs, consumers and how we perceive the creative process.

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	
19 Jan	Malcolm Grady	Sailing to Philadelphia: The Mason-Dixon Line	
26 Jan	John Verney	The Hurdy Gurdy: Rags, Religion & Revolution	
02 Feb	Alastair Bonnett	The World's Most Exciting Maps	
09 Feb	John North	The Rise and Fall (and Rise Again) of Richard Grainger	
16 Feb	Anthea Lang	A Question of Identity: Berwick upon Tweed & the Debatable Lands	

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

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

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

Time: 12.00-13.00



Date	Tutor	Title
02 Mar	Anthea Laing	A Passion for Colour - The Story of Tiffany Glass
09 Mar	Teresa Barnard	International Women's Day - See Page 15
16 Mar	Nick Lewis	"AI and Design" Continued (See Page 10)

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Art History Course: 19th January to 16th February

The Art of Southern & Northern Europe During the Renaissance

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



Join us for a five week course focussing on the art of southern and northern Europe during the 15th and 16th Centuries.

- 19 Jan Art of the Renaissance 1 - Altarpieces, story-telling and art
- 26 Jan Art of the Renaissance 2 - Lives of the Artists
- 02 Feb Art of the Renaissance 3 - The City State, Perspective and Place
- 09 Feb Art of the Renaissance 4 - Domestic and Secular Art
- 16 Feb Art of the Renaissance 5 - The Beautiful and the Ugly

**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**

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

Time: 14.00-15.30



Date	Tutor	Title
23 Feb	Mike Barke	From Berlin to Alnwick: Professor M.R.G Conzen's Lasting Legacy
02 Mar	Philip Steinberg	Global Frontiers and Global Commons: Power, Politics & Potential in Outer Space, the Ocean and the Polar Regions 
09 Mar	Sally Waite	International Women's Day - See Page 15
16 Mar	Duncan Wright	Bosham and Beyond: Lordly Power Centres in the Early Medieval English Landscape

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Art History and Culture & Society Sessions: *9th March*

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

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

These sessions are part of our 2026 International Women's Day event and we proudly welcome two excellent female speakers to share their expertise with us.



- | | | |
|-------------|----------------|--|
| 10.30-11.30 | Teresa Barnard | <p>Representations of Womanhood in 18th Century Art</p> <p>Our first talk welcomes writer & editor Teresa Barnard to talk about how women & womanhood was represented during the Eighteenth Century.</p> |
| 12.00-13.00 | Teresa Barnard | <p>Asserting their Rights: How the 'Qualities of Womanhood' Helped Structure Culture and Society. Our second talk from Teresa draws on portraiture and will allow time for extra discussion.</p> |
| 14.00-15.30 | Sally Waite | <p>Women in Ancient Greece</p> <p>Our third talk welcomes Dr Sally Waite from Newcastle University & GNM: Hancock, to talk about what archaeology can teach us about women in Ancient Greece.</p> |

Non-members are warmly encouraged to attend and can [book via Eventbrite](#)

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Culture & Society Course: *12th January to 9th February*

At the Edge of the World - The Early History of Ireland

Tutor: David Burke

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

Time: 18.00 to 19.30



In this series, we will explore aspects of the archaeology, mythology, and history of early Ireland.

From its mysterious Bronze Age monument builders to the misunderstood Celts, from Christian saints and their cats to diligent lawyers and their bees, the history of ancient Ireland is often surprising, sometimes amusing, and always interesting.

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

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Science Course: *13th January to 10th February*

Gold, Diamonds and Other Treasure

Tutor: Derek Teasdale

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

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



'There's gold in them thar hills' and 'diamonds are forever', but do you know why?

This short course will explore the origins, recovery and uses of a selection of precious things.

It's a fascinating story, but we can't guarantee to make you rich!

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

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

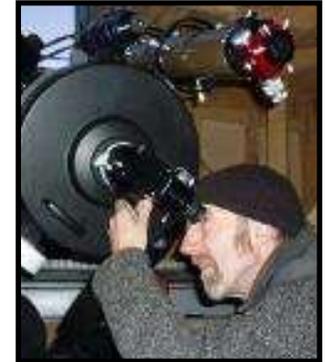
Science Course: *17th February, 3rd and 10th March (No session 24th Feb)*

Recent Developments in Astronomy & Cosmology

Tutor: Fred Stevenson

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

Time: 10.30 to 11.30



Fred's back this season with a fascinating series of three talks exploring the wonders and workings of the universe.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 17 Feb | Recent Explorations of the Solar System - Sun, Moon and Planets |
| 24 Feb | No Session |
| 03 Mar | The James Webb Space Telescope - Recent developments in exoplanet, star formation and nearby galaxy research |
| 10 Mar | JWST Recent observations of the distant universe and their impact on cosmology, including new results from large ground-based telescopes |

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

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

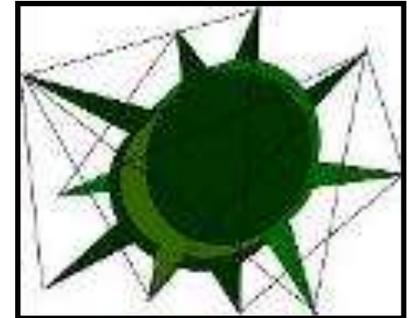
Science One-off: 17th March

Space Medicine

Tutor: Kirsty Lindsay

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

Time: 10.30-11.30



Head... shoulders... knees...toes... every part of the human body is affected by spaceflight.

Space exploration captures our imagination, but the human body faces remarkable challenges when venturing beyond Earth. Despite the difficulties of keeping people healthy in space, space health research offers valuable benefits for both crew and terrestrial healthcare. The accelerated physiological changes astronauts experience mirror ageing and sedentary lifestyles, providing insights applicable to healthcare on Earth, while space programmes drive technological advances in communications, medical imaging, and telemedicine.

Understanding these challenges helps us appreciate both the remarkable adaptability of the human body and the ingenuity required to protect astronauts as we venture further into space, knowledge that increasingly benefits life on Earth as well.

This presentation explores the head-to-toe physiological and psychological effects of spaceflight, drawing on current research in aerospace medicine, giving you a basic understanding of why space is bad for you, but we go anyway.

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

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Narratives Course: 3rd March to 17th March

The Valkyrie and Icelandic Heroic Literature: An Enthralling Tale of Non-

Tutor: Michael Ayton

Everyday Folk

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

Time: 10.30-12.30



Richard Wagner, howsoever repugnant some of his beliefs and behaviours, 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 three sessions, we'll focus on *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), the first of the three full-length operas following the introductory *Das Rheingold* (The Rhinegold).

Both Wagner's music and his poem-text are astonishing in their daring. We'll explore how he radically adapts his sources in the Icelandic *Völsunga saga* and the *Poetic Edda* to move the *Ring's* power-versus-love symbolism in new directions, as the action moves to the human realm where we encounter human lovers, and as the Valkyrie of the title, Brünnhilde, defies her father Wotan to succour them and is fearfully punished – moving us to ask, what is Wagner trying to tell us through this arresting, unsettling story, and what personal and social messages might there be here for us today? Come and be enthralled!

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

**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 (13.00 & 14.10 approximate session starts)



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

Date	Title
20 Jan	1.) Hotel Palenque, Robert Smithson visits Mexico (Blended) 2.) Debate and Discuss, Landscape and Art (F2F)
27 Jan	1.) Bill Brandt (1904-1983) Photographs of England (Blended) 2.) Debate and Discuss: Monochrome (F2F)
03 Feb	1.) Street Art (Blended) 2.) Debate and Discuss, Grafitti (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: *10th February*

Man With a Movie Camera [1929]

Tutor: Peter Quinn

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

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

Time: 13.00-15.10



Dziga Vertov's 1929 Man with a Camera was voted 9th in the 2022 Sight and Sound Great Films of All Time poll; innovative camera angles, montage, tracking shots, everyday life and a vision of a modern city make this an essential part of film history.

'An extraordinary montage of urban Ukrainian and Russian life in 1929, showing the people of the city at work and at play, and the machines that keep the city going. It was Dziga Vertov's first full-length film, and he used all the techniques - dissolves, split screen, slow motion and freeze-frames - to produce an exhilarating and intellectually brilliant feature. With new score by Michael Nyman.' [BFI](#)

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Tuesday

Art Course: 17th February to 17th March

Practical Art & Craft Studio

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

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

Time: 13.30-15.30



This season we will continue with our Art and Craft Studio work, over 5 weeks in the Art Room at the Hatton Gallery. The sessions will be introduced and critiqued by Jenny Alderson, a local artist who has worked with us over the past year.

The theme for this term we will be **Illustration**. Jenny will give us a brief introduction, drawing attention to the artists and some examples which might inspire us. Then we are encouraged to each select a text, such as a story, novel or poem, to create our own illustrations. Jenny suggests we look at developing an illustrative style, perhaps come up with a character or motif which can be easily repeated, and a colour palette, inspired by examples. Jenny will also be present on 3rd March/3rd session to offer advice and support.

17 Feb	Introduction to the theme by Jenny
24 Feb	Peer led
03 Mar	Guidance led by Jenny
10 Mar	Peer led
17 Mar	Critique led by Jenny

These sessions are open to any Explore member. We will happily welcome anyone wanting to join us for the first time. No experience required! Come and have a go!

Please Note: These sessions are held at the Hatton Gallery at Newcastle University

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Science One-off: *24th February*

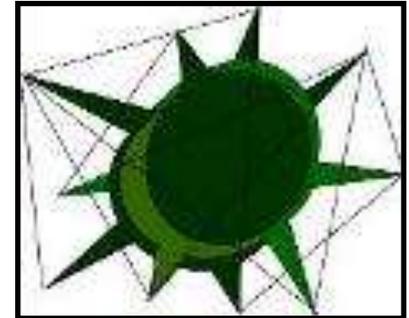
Non-communicable Disease Research in Sub-Saharan Africa

Tutor: Richard Walker

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

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

Time: 14.00-15.30



Dr Richard Walker is a Consultant at North Tyneside General Hospital, and Honorary Professor of Ageing and International Health at Newcastle University. He is the Clinical Lead for the Northumbria Parkinson's disease (PD) service and his research interests in PD include epidemiology, psychiatric symptoms, palliative care, respiratory symptoms, exercise and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Richard also has a research interest in other non-communicable diseases in SSA including stroke, epilepsy, hypertension, dementia, fluorosis and frailty.

This talk will look at non-communicable disease research in sub-Saharan Africa with particular reference to Tanzania, and the current NIHR Global Health Research Group, Transforming Parkinson's Care in Africa (TraPCAf) which is conducting research in 7 countries in Africa.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Culture & Society Course: *3rd to 17th March*

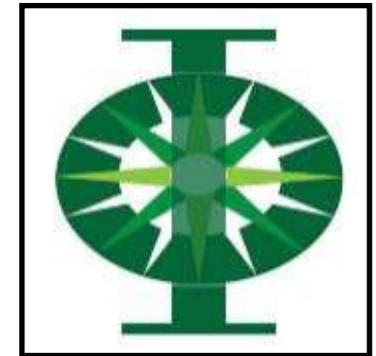
Hellenistic Thought: Philosophy after Alexander the Great

Tutor: Jordan Bayley

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 the approach 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.

- 03 Mar Stoicism in a new world order
- 10 Mar Epicureanism and the search for a happier soul
- 17 Mar Cynics and Sceptics and beyond

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Music One-off Specials: 24th February to 18th March*

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

Time: See below



In a change to our usual Tuesday evening Zoom slot, this season we will be doing some special one-off sessions, welcoming some familiar faces and guests to share their musical experiences and expertise.

Expect some live music and tales from the stage, music theory and plenty of cheer, offering an insight into three contemporary musicians and one historical. As a Zoom session, the queue for the bar is as short as a trip to your own kettle or fridge... and the taxi queue to get home is even shorter!

We're excited to welcome to the Explore stage this season:

- * Tuesday 24th February 18.00-19.00 - Nev Clay
- * Tuesday 3rd March 18.00-19.00 - Cath Tyler
- * Tuesday 10th March 18.00-19.30 - Michael Ayton 'Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*' ([More details here](#))
- * Wednesday 18th March 10.30-11.30 - Steve Luck

So come along, tap along and enjoy some special one-off music sessions from our special guests - more details including dates and times to be confirmed soon.

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

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

Wednesday

Literature Course: 14th to 28th January

Growing Pains - Female Coming-of-Age Films

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



The coming-of-age genre has always had universal appeal and it's easy to see why. Focusing on young protagonists as they seek to establish a sense of self and navigate their way through the challenges of adolescence, these films highlight the events that can contribute to one's transition from childhood to adulthood. That transition doesn't come easy, however, requiring as it does a significant loss of innocence...

- 14 Jan *My Summer of Love* (Paweł Pawlikowski, U.K., 2004) concerns 16-year-old Mona who seeks to escape her problematic home life and the tedium of her remote Yorkshire home. After a chance encounter, she embarks on an unlikely relationship...
- 21 Jan *Girlhood* (Céline Sciamma, France, 2014) concerns 16-year-old Marieme who lives in a deprived Parisian neighbourhood, has few real prospects and, like Mona, has a problematic home life. Her only escape, it seems, is to join a gang and reinvent herself...
- 28 Jan *Lady Bird* (Greta Gerwig, U.S.A., 2017) focuses on a high school senior who has a turbulent relationship with her mother and longs to escape her hometown of Sacramento to attend a prestigious college on America's East Coast.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Culture & Society Course: 4th to 25th February

The Demise of Democracy/Rise of Autocracy? Where is the Direction of Travel

Tutor: Malcolm Grady

for the Political World

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

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

Time: 10.30-12.00



This course will examine the current trends in international politics following the emerging balance of power between the USA and the China/Russia axis with the European powers caught in the middle.*

The role of the UK in its consideration of a renewed relationship with the EU will also be a focus of attention given the differing views of the main political parties on the 10th anniversary of the Brexit vote.

The EU or not the EU.... again.... that is the question?

*(*Reference the recently published USA National Defence Strategy 2025, the Russian reference to a 'peace plan' in Ukraine and the efforts of the EU to promote a Ukraine defence option.)*

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Wednesday

Culture & Society Series: 4th & 11th March

Welfare Reform 1800-1914

Tutor: Michael Greatbatch

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

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

Time: 10.30-12.00



In this short series, Michael will highlight the history and context of welfare reforms in Newcastle during this period:

- 04 Mar Parish Poor Relief in Newcastle and Byker, 1800-1840
- 11 Mar The Newcastle Union Workhouse and its Operation, 1840-1914

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Wednesday

Literature Course: 14th January to 18th February (no session 28th Jan)

Irish Literature 1990-2023

Tutor: Clare Jackson

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

Time: 14.00-15.30



Our focus for this course will be texts by Irish writers written in English between 1990-2023 - writings which reflect a time of great social, economic and political change in Ireland. Together, we will be discussing a range of poems, extracts from Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and the complete text of Donal Ryan's award-winning debut novel, *The Spinning Heart*. We will explore the themes the writers develop and the questions they raise. What is each author's intention? What influences are working on each author's writing, and what assertions are they making in each text? What choices do the authors make in terms of style to reflect the context, ideas and emotional life of their writing?

- 14 Jan Michael Longley's [The Quilt](#) (1995) and Carol Rumens' [Prayer for Belfast](#) (1995)
- 21 Jan Paul Durcan's *The One-Armed Crucifixion* (1990) Eavan Boland's [The Lost Land](#) (1998) and Colette Bryce's *And They Call It Lovely Derry* (2005) (*Texts to be provided in session)
- 04 Feb Brian Friel *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) Extracts to be provided in session or you can read the complete text [HERE](#)
- 11 Feb Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (2021) complete text (Clare will be using the Black Swan Ireland paperback edition)
- 18 Feb Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (continued)

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

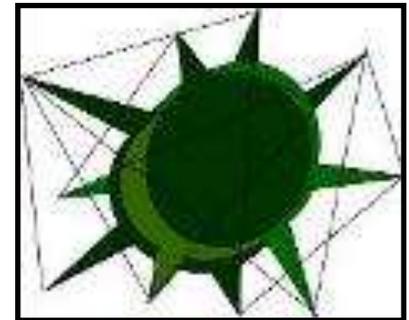
Wednesday

Science Series:

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 individual session details below)



Date	Tutor	Title
18 Feb	George Ledger	The Coronavirus Pandemic & Consett Corona Photo Project (14.00-15.30) George retired from Durham Constabulary as a Police Officer in 2010 and went on to become a professional sports photographer. In 2020, however, his life changed once again with the arrival of COVID-19. George will talk about the Consett Corona Photo Project documenting the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on a town and its communities. It captured how some individuals navigated the difficulties of the national lockdowns, while others continued working throughout as essential key workers. The project spans the earliest days of lockdown through to the vaccination clinics and the community's growing sense of hope for a return to normality.
25 Feb	Ann-Katrin Kraeuter	Fat for Thought - Ketogenic Diet for Mental Health (14.00-15.00) Dr. Ann-Katrin Kraeuter is a neuroscientist specializing in nutritional neuroscience, stress, and psychiatric disorders, with research spanning ketogenic diet mechanisms, stroke biomarkers, and survey-based and biological evidence integration. In this talk, we'll explore how a ketogenic diet, (high in healthy fats, low in carbohydrates) might support mental well-being. She'll share insights from two areas of her research: how the diet affects the brain in animal studies of psychosis, and how it may help improve mood and mental resilience in everyday, healthy adults. We'll also look at why it might work, including the role of our gut bacteria.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

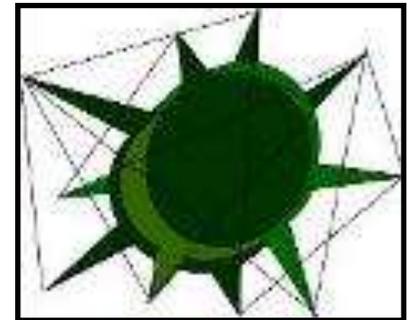
Wednesday

Science Series:

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 individual session details below)



Date	Tutor	Title
04 Mar	Wallace Arthur	<p>Early Animal Evolution (14.00-15.30)</p> <p>Following Wallace's talk last season, this session will look at the origin of animals and how the animal kingdom began to evolve. We will examine the earliest fossils of both possible and definite animals. This involves a journey through 'deep time', several hundred million years ago, long before the dinosaurs.</p>
11 Mar	Graham McClelland	<p>Prehospital Care of Time-Critical Conditions Latest Research (14.00-15.00)</p> <p>Graham is an academic paramedic based at Northumbria University leading research into prehospital care of time-critical conditions such as cardiac arrest & stroke. He will talk about research happening in the North East focussing on how paramedics ventilate patients when they resuscitate people in cardiac arrest. He will also describe some of the other research happening in the region, largely in partnership with North East Ambulance Service.</p>
18 Mar	Theo McCarthy	<p>The Challenges Caused by Semi Conductor Devices for Modern Aviation and Spacecraft (14.00-15.00)</p> <p>Electrical Engineering PhD (3rd Year, Durham University) Theo specialises in extreme environment semiconductors, focusing on optically simulating (using lasers) high energy particle strikes on power devices. Here we'll look at semi conductor devices - how they operate and how this links to the challenges for modern semiconductor devices used in modern aviation & spacecraft!</p>

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Culture & Society Series: *15th to 29th January*

Illuminated Books of Hours: From Invention to Apogee

Tutor: Richard Gameson

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

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

Time: 10.30-12.00



Books of Hours, prayer books for the laity, were made in large numbers from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and were owned by a wide cross-section of lay society, ranging from royalty to merchants. Customised to reflect their owners' interests, they offer a rich source of information about secular and religious concerns in the late medieval and renaissance world. Almost all have decoration and the finest examples are magnificent works of art.

This course will examine the origin and use of these highly decorated books and their social and religious functions, culminating with the most magnificent example of all (the subject of a major exhibition in summer 2025): the Très Riches Heures of Jean, duc de Berry.

15 Jan The Origin and Nature of the Book of Hours

22 Jan Hours for Queens (Jeanne d'Evreux and Blanche of Burgundy/Savoy)

29 Jan Jean, duc de Berry, and the most famous illuminated manuscript in the world

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Thursday

Law Series: *19th & 26th February*

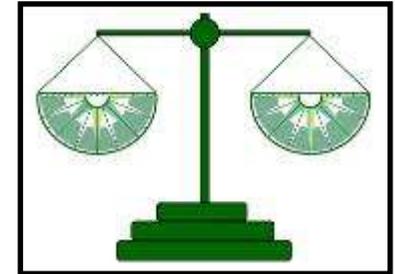
Is the Right to a Fair Trial Under Threat?

Tutor: Gavin Dingwall

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

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

Time: 10.30-11.30



Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 provides United Kingdom citizens with an absolute right to a fair trial. Yet what does this right entail?

Proposals currently going through parliament to, for example, limit jury trial, are being criticised widely on the basis that they threaten the right to a fair trial. But does the right to a fair trial demand the use of juries?

'Justice delayed is justice denied' may be a cliché but, with tens of thousands of serious cases outstanding and thousands in prison awaiting trial, is it the present system and not the proposed reforms that threaten the right to a fair trial?

Join us to learn more about this issue with Professor of Law Gavin Dingwall, and to discuss some of the ideas surrounding these questions.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Culture & Society Series: *5th to 19th March*

Stalin

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 (The details below are abridged - please read the full course details [HERE](#))



Born in Georgia in 1878, Stalin became a revolutionary in his early twenties, took office under Lenin in 1917, sought undivided authority after Lenin's death in 1924, secured it by 1929, then ruled the Soviet Union until 1953. These talks say a little about his rise and his legacy whilst concentrating on three crucial aspects of his years at the top.

05 Mar Stalin & Ukraine (Economics)

Marx expected communism to arrive in industrial societies. Because the tsarist empire wasn't heavily industrialized, the Marxists who took it over thought it was their duty to make it one as quickly as possible and embarked on forced industrialization in 1929. Largely agricultural, Ukraine was one of the hardest-hit parts of the country. Ukrainians resisted the abolition of private farming, killing their animals, not planting their fields. Famine broke out, several million people died. Industrialisation prevailed but the cost was immense.

12 Mar Stalin & the Purges (Politics)

In the later 1930s Stalin killed hundreds of thousands of people and sent many more to labour camps. Why? As punishment for resisting forced industrialization, to consolidate one-person rule, paranoid fear of foreign subversion, and opening doors for enthusiastic Soviet-educated loyalists. We'll canvass at least 11 answers before reflecting on the long-term consequences of the violence.

19 Mar Stalin & the Great Patriotic War (International affairs)

After trying to cooperate with western capitalist countries in the light of the threat posed by Hitler, Stalin concluded in 1938-9 that the West was not going to deal with him and decided instead to sign a pact with Nazi Germany. Two years later, Hitler turned on him. At the cost of 27 million Soviet lives, Stalin came out on top in the ensuing war and created a myth of Soviet might which framed his legacy and still plays a significant part in the outlook of the modern Russian Republic.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Literature Course: *15th January to 12th February*

Reading Contemporary Gothic

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



This season we will read three novels, all 21st-century works, which in some way will possess a 'Gothic' sensibility. This may reveal itself through the inclusion of otherworldly presences, weird spaces and places, supernatural transformations, and other themes and tropes associated with Gothic literature.

We'll consider how these writers create atmosphere, character, mystery and more, and discuss the various ways their works respond to the past (in literature and history) and reflect the present.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 15 Jan | Sarah Perry, <i>Melmoth</i> (2018) |
| 22 Jan | Finish Perry; begin An Yu, <i>Ghost Music</i> (2022) |
| 29 Jan | Finish An Yu, <i>Ghost Music</i> (2022) |
| 05 Feb | Silvia Moreno-Garcia, <i>Mexican Gothic</i> (2000) |
| 12 Feb | Finish Moreno-Garcia; concluding discussion |

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

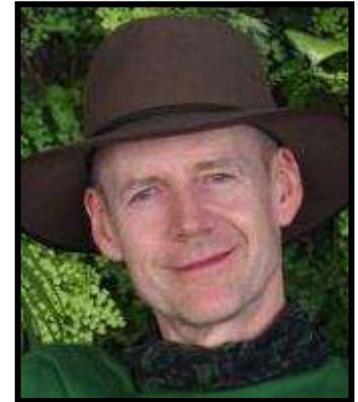
Literature Short Course: *19th February to 12th March (No Session 5th March)*

Rashōmon & Other Writings by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

Tutor: Tim Crocker

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

Time: 14.30-16.00



Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) is one of the all-time classics of film, inspiring interest in Japanese cinema for Western audiences for the first time. Less known in the West is the writer on whose tale the film was based, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (1892-27) – for Haruki Murakami part of the very DNA of Japanese culture. We will read a selection of tales from across his career, from his precocious early reworking of medieval folk stories to a late, disturbing portrait of a mind on the edge of madness.

19 Feb *Rashōmon*' (1914), 'In a Bamboo Grove' (1922)

26 Feb 'Hell Screen' (1918), 'Horse Legs' (1925)

05 Mar NO CLASS

12 Mar 'The Writer's Craft' (1924), 'Spinning Gears' (1927)

These can be found in the following Kindle and paperback edition:

Jay Rubin (translator), Haruki Murakami (introduction) (2006) *Ryūnosuke Akutagawa 'Rashōmon' and Seventeen Other Stories*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

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

Thursday

Literature One-Off: 19th March

Edward Young's *Night-Thoughts* as Illustrated by William Blake

Tutor: Tim Crocker

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

Time: 14.30-16.00



Edward Young (1683-1765) was one of the most important – and popular – poets of the eighteenth century. A pre-cursor to the Romantics, he was a significant influence upon J.W. Goethe (1749-1832) as well as Blake (1757-1857).

We will read selections from *Night-Thoughts*, (1745), the poem Edmund Blunden (1896-74) turned to for solace whilst serving on the Western Front in WWI.

A pdf will be provided in advance of the session.

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

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Friday

Culture & Society Course: 16th January to 13th February

**A Social History of the English Language from the Norman Conquest to
the Printing Press**

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



In 1066 the Normans took control of England, and they never left. So why don't we all speak a version of French?

This course starts by following Old English as it held on in the margins, and then took territory back. It emerged as Middle English, enriched with thousands of new French words but Germanic at the core. How and why did all this happen, and what are the key features of what survived? Where does Arabic come into all of this?

We'll turn to the late fourteenth century flourishing of Middle English in all its varieties, in the contrasting works of Chaucer and Wycliffe, before considering how things began to standardise in the fifteenth century (with a little "help" from the Tamperers). We'll meet trilingual farm workers, the development of surnames and the first French phrasebook for English tourists, along with the stories behind freedom and curfews, gravy and Alcatraz...

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Friday

Culture & Society Course: *20th February to 20th March*

Foundations of Empire: Britain's Rise to Global Power

Tutor: Nick Cott

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

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



This course explores how Britain transformed from a European power into a global empire. Drawing on historical scholarship, the course examines the forces that shaped its rise, the rivalries it sparked, and the profound impact on societies across the world. There has been much research done in more recent times on this topic and this has led to some new interpretations and debates in understanding of the origins of the empire, sources of its power, the experience of people in the British empire and its legacy. This series focuses on the foundations of the empire up to the end of the 18th century.

What you'll learn:

- How the United Kingdom emerged as a foundation for empire
- Britain's role in the Atlantic world and the transatlantic slave trade
- The colonisation of North America and the road to the American War of Independence
- The East India Company and Britain's expanding trade networks
- The legacies of empire in the eighteenth century

20 Feb	Introduction & The origins of Britain's empire before 1700
27 Feb	The British Atlantic empire, c.1700–1800
06 Mar	The loss of the American colonies
13 Mar	The origins and early development of Britain's global empire
20 Mar	India and the British empire in the era of the East India Company

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

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

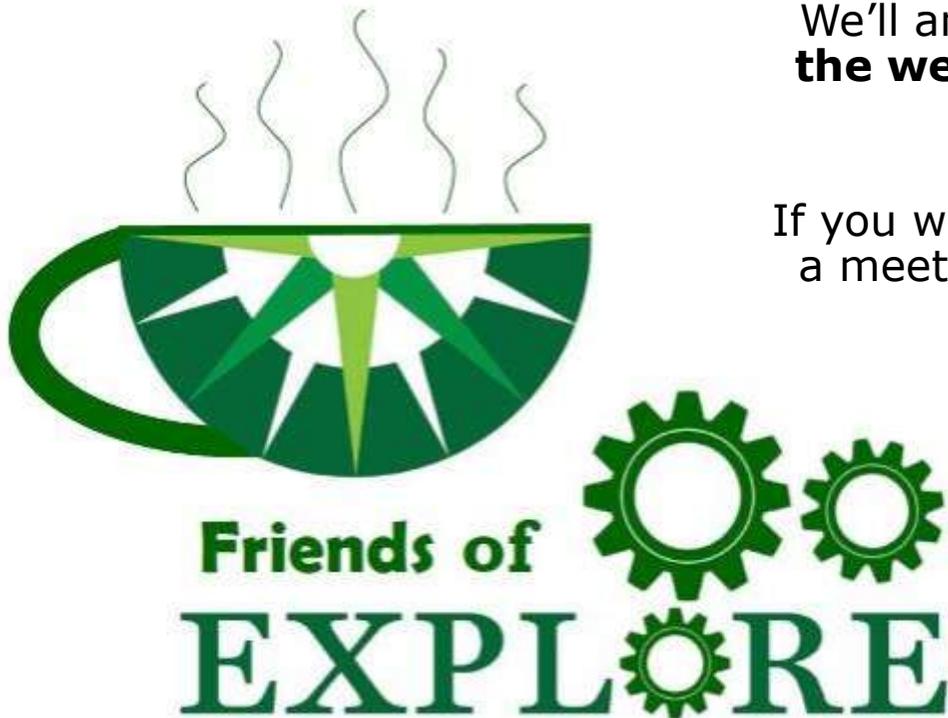
Coffee Morning, Lunch or a Catch Up with Friends of Explore

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 Two

**Season Three 2025-26 will start
Monday 27th April 2026**

JOIN

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Contact us, join or find out more about our Annual or Termly memberships via the link above

TEACH

Are you a researcher, artist, practitioner or tutor who would like to speak at Explore?

Contact our programme team via the link above

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Find out more and donate via the link above