

PodMag October 2016

The PodMag

Karen Foley:

Hi and welcome to the PodMag, the audio news magazine from Arts & Social Sciences at the Open University.

I'm Karen Foley and in this October edition we're going to focus on new modules. But first in our spotlight section we take a look at just a few highlights from the range of media we've been working on.

Autumn is always an exciting time in broadcasting. Look out for 'Sleuths, Spies and Sorcerers: Andrew Marr's Paperback Heroes' which is a three part series on BBC 2. It takes an innovative and engaging approach to the worlds of genre fiction, which like many genres of writing is all about rules. This series will unpack the tried and tested formulae and uncover how our most popular novels actually work.

There are also a range of MOOCs, Massive, Open, Online Courses on FutureLearn. The Open University are involved with a range of these, but one that's been very successful and is starting in October is 'Challenging Wealth and Income Inequality'. A four week course that explores the concerns about raising generational and economic inequality in developed countries.

If you haven't participated in a MOOC before, they're a great way to learn more with the support of a lead educator and cohort of other learners.

But there are also flexible ways to learn that you can pick up at any time. OpenLearn is the place to find all of this and on spotlight today there is 'Music and its media', which is a free 16-hour intermediate level course that examines some of the main ways in which music is transmitted. The course focuses on three examples of music and media that allow us to study music of the past. Manuscripts of 16th century Belgium, prints of 18th century London and recordings of 20th century America.

On OpenLearn there are also a range of BOCs, Badged Open Courses that are in production for release this autumn. These are a great way to upskill, perhaps enhancing your employment skillsets. There are other BOCs on OpenLearn that are also useful if you're returning to study or you want to brush up on English and Maths skills. But these are the new ones to keep an eye out for this autumn: The Digital Scholar, Introduction to Cyber Security, Succeeding in Postgraduate Study, Working in the Voluntary Sector, Commercial Communication and Negotiation, Resilience and Flexibility, Understanding Autism, Understanding your Section, Leadership and Followership and finally Working in Diverse Teams.

So now we return to the theme of the PodMag. There is so much happening with module production at the moment, and there are lots of exciting new qualifications and modules that are being developed. Some of these are now available and others are still in production.

To give you a flavour of some of the modules I've interviewed Paul Lawrence about his Level 2 History Module, Helen Kaye about the third level Psychology Core Module that is in its first presentation, and Catriona Havard about the third level Interdisciplinary Modules that's still in production.

We're deep in production on a brand new Level 2 History Module. Paul Lawrence the module chair has some really innovative ideas about how history can be brought to life for the students studying this module. And I managed to get some time in his busy schedule to see how it's all coming together.

Paul Lawrence, thank you so much for talking to me today about A225. What is the title of your module?

Paul Lawrence:

The module's title is The British Isles and the Modern World 1789 to 1914.

Karen Foley:

And when is this going to be released for students?

Paul Lawrence:

To be October 2017, so we're just in the kind of the heat of the production process.

Karen Foley:

Now what are you most excited about in terms of this module. There's so many fascinating areas within that period but broadly speaking what's it all about?

Paul Lawrence:

Well we're very much seeing this, the two terminal dates of the course are bracketed by the French Revolution at the early end, and the start of the First World War at the second end. And what we really see there is the birth of the modern world, the Britain we know today. So 1789 you have the vast bulk of the population living in the countryside on a kind of very patriarchal semi-feudal system, the remnants of it at least. By the time you get to 1914 you have electric lights, cars, the telephone, it's really that massive transition that happens in Britain across that period.

Karen Foley:

And even though this is history obviously there's a very subjective aspect to it. How are you giving the students a flavour of what life was like at the time?

Paul Lawrence:

Well one of the things we really try and do throughout the course is access as many points as possible individual testimony, individual stories, the lives of ordinary people. So while we do cover the Industrial Revolution, the big shifts in politics, this is very much also interrogated from the angle of what was happening to ordinary people. How did this feel from their point of view?

Karen Foley:

And so you're looking at different sources aren't you to explore some of those areas. Can you tell us about that?

Paul Lawrence:

Well you know, for example, in one of the first blocks we're talking about industrialisation, the way in which the shift from the bulk of the population working in farming to far more people working in factories and workshops. But one of the ways we look at is two diary entries. So we have a diary entry from an aristocratic lady who's travelling the potteries, Stoke-on-Trent, and commenting from her point of view on how all the smoke and smut kind of spoilt countryside. But then equally we have a diary, a very unusual diary actually written by a publican's daughter in London. So someone who's involved in the pub trade in the 1810s, how did it seem to them?

Karen Foley:

And what do you think the students might enjoy most from this module?

Paul Lawrence:

I think one of the things that I think I've been struck by is the massive diversity of topic, of experience, of source. So, for example, a student who is really interested in politics there's plenty in there about how the working class came to assert their rights to have political voice, demonstrations, protests. But equally if you're interested in daily life there's plenty on what it was like, you know, in the role of work or in, you know, what the home looked like in 1910 and how that compared to what a home looked like in 1810. So we cover a very, very broad range I think will interest a lot of students.

Karen Foley:

And typically which pathways might students be on who come in to contact with this module? Are they doing history, are they doing open degrees? What sorts of students might you expect to come to it?

Paul Lawrence:

I think any really. I mean obviously with the Open Degree they could access that. We have a history named degree, some of those students will be doing it. The BA Humanities is also a feature of that. So any of the kind of broad arts and humanities pathways I think it would be appropriate for.

Karen Foley:

Thank you Paul, that's really, really interesting, the overview of the module, I'll look forward to it coming out.

Paul Lawrence:

Thank you.

Karen Foley:

Those of you in Psychology are probably aware that there have been changes to many modules and we now see the launch of the core third level module, DE300. What's interesting about this is that it offers students the chance to undertake their own supervised research as well as having the chance to specialise in one methodological area. So to fill us in I caught up with module chair, Helen Kaye.

Helen Kaye you're the module chair for DE300. Now this is a very new and exciting module for Psychology students. It's a main piece of research work. So can you tell us what you're most excited about now that this module's going live?

Helen Kaye:

I think seeing how the students get on with their project. It's the first time that students are being able to have a say in which method they use to do their project. It's their idea. Their tutors are supporting them as supervisors would support them rather than trying to teach them bit by bit all the time. And also just seeing how the students adapt to the new models. So they're learning about the core areas of psychology, all of the, you know, cognitive, biological, social, all of them in specialist forums. So in the advanced stuff from specialists in those areas and they're also being supervised while doing their research.

Karen Foley:

So I guess it gives them more of a flavour about what postgraduate work might look like, because they're having a supervisor and they're doing an independent project. Can you tell us a bit about the scope in terms of what projects students might be able to do?

Helen Kaye:

The scope's really wide. They could choose from all of the topics that they've covered at Level 2, either on DE200 or in DSE212. They can look at the topics that they've covered say, in Social Psychology, in Cognitive Psychology. They can't actually experiment or study children but they can look at people's attitudes, the way children learn for example. So it's a really wide range of stuff.

Karen Foley:

And can you tell us a bit about how that process works in terms of the overall module? Do students need to decide what they want to do at the very start?

Helen Kaye:

Before they even start their module, students give us their preference for which method they'd like to use. And that means that we can allocate them to a tutor who's got expertise in that method. They're just starting the module now on Saturday and they're going to start a conversation with their tutor right from the start about what they're actually going to do. Devising their research question, doing their literature search, thinking about what methods they're going to use, what procedures they're going to use. And then come January, February, we expect them to have a nice well developed project proposal. And then after that they actually do their study. They collect their data, they analyse their data, they report their data.

Karen Foley:

Now you've mentioned this idea of supervision, and that the tutors are allocated to the students, and I guess the tutors are specialist within those methodological areas. So how does that relationship work then in terms of the taught aspect and the supervision aspects? Like how did the students get on with the ALs? What sort of happens in that space?

Helen Kaye:

Well they've got the best of both worlds in a way because they've got a one-to-one relationship with their supervisor. In fact they've got a forum that they share solely with their supervisor tutor. But on the other hand for their specialist teaching they go in to a cluster which is staffed by experts in core subjects. So people who have got expertise in cognitive psychology and biological psychology will tutor them in those subjects, and

support them through their assessment of those subjects. Then they'll be taught by developmental psychologists, social psychologists who will support them in the assessment of those subjects too.

Karen Foley:

And what can the students most look forward to, aside from obviously having a wonderful choice of project to work on and a very innovative way of doing so. What do you think students are most going to get out of this module?

Helen Kaye:

I think actually investigating psychology. The module's called Investigating Psychology 3. It's the third module in the series. And this is where they actually get to do it themselves. So they actually do some psychology.

Karen Foley:

I'm sure the students are really going to look forward to it. Thank you very much Helen Kaye.

Helen Kaye:

OK, thanks.

Karen Foley:

If you're a student studying DE300 and you would like to tell us how it's going for you, please drop me a line at Podmag@open.ac.uk and we can arrange a short phone interview. Or if there's a news story you'd like to include please do get in touch.

In our final interview I spoke to Catriona Havard who's in the process of editing a book, 'Mad or Bad?' which forms a core component of the new third level module DD310.

Catriona Havard you're working on DD310 which is Forensic and Counselling Psychology. And this is due for release to students in October 2017. So you're nearing the end of module production. Can you tell us a little bit about how the module is shaping up?

Catriona Havard:

It's actually shaping up really well. So at the moment I am editing our book which is called 'Mad or Bad?' and we've got all the chapters written. And at the moment I've been reading through all of the different chapters and just making sure that they all fit together before we can send it off to the publisher. And that should be available autumn next year.

Karen Foley:

Now this is an interesting idea because you're making a book that is available to the public as a book with Sage Publications. But it's also going to be a core part of the module material. You're also working with some of the academics at the Open University and a range of practitioners in a variety of settings to combine various different perspectives around forensic and counselling psychology.

How are you working with those interdisciplinary approaches?

Catriona Havard:

That's right. So we've got OU academics that are helping to write the book and we've also got some external academics. So, for example, one of the chapters that I'm writing is looking at the historical perspective of mental health, prisons and forensic mental health. And I'm working with a historian so she's bringing along her historical side and I'm using the psychological perspective. I've also worked with a counsellor from HMP Grendon which is the only therapeutic prison in the UK.

Karen Foley:

Now there's something really interesting to students I guess who are studying a whole range of qualifications, counselling, criminology, forensic psychology, etc. What are they going to enjoy most about the module?

Catriona Havard:

Oh gosh that's a difficult question. We've tried to sort of cover all of our bases, so we've got a lot of things that people who are studying the counselling psychology qualification will find fascinating because we're looking at different types of therapy like CBT, mindfulness therapy, just to name a couple and seeing how they can be used in the forensic setting and obviously in the therapeutic setting. But then people that are studying the forensic psychology degree will also find it fascinating, because all of the different applied aspects are all looking at forensic settings as well as therapeutic settings.

Karen Foley:

It sounds so interesting in terms of content and I want to touch on the idea of assessment also because at Level 3 we're after looking at very different, more complex kinds of tasks. And in psychology, for example, we've spoken to Helen Kaye earlier about the project work that people will be doing. So what will the students expect from the assessment in this module?

Catriona Havard:

So that's a really good question. So we actually had a poll on our 'Mad or Bad?' website to see whether our students would like to do either an EMA, sort of more of a project type End of Module Assessment, or whether they'd like to do an exam. And there was a unanimous decision that it was an EMA that people wanted to do and not an exam so that's what we're doing to do.

Karen Foley:

So you've delivered on what the public have said.

Catriona Havard:

Yes.

Karen Foley:

You're also asking people for various ideas within this forum though aren't you? What have you taken up and integrated in to the module that students have wanted?

Catriona Havard:

So one of them obviously was not to have an exam but to have an End of Module Assessment. We were also looking at sort of different ways to do collaborative learning

and sort of collaborative exercises. So we're going to try and incorporate those in to the module as well.

Karen Foley:

It sounds really, really interesting. I'm sure students are going to really enjoy it and I'm really looking forward to seeing it coming out at the end of next year. Catriona Havard thank you very much.

Catriona Havard:

Thank you.

Karen Foley:

That is all we have time for in this edition.

Bye for now and thanks for listening.