

## **PodMag July 2017**

### **Karen Foley:**

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

I'm Karen Foley and in this edition we're going to focus on some of our new modules that will be available to study for the first time this September. We'll give you a flavour of what they're about and if you're interested in finding out more about them you can watch the 25 minute videos that we made recently at the FASS Show Case Events. The links for all of those are in the transcript.

But first we're going to look at two third level psychology options. I spoke to Stephanie Taylor about DD317, Advancing Social Psychology.

Stephanie can you tell us about your new module.

### **Stephanie Taylor:**

Yes. A wonderful new module. We're at this really exciting point because everything is now pulled together and we're really looking forward to it starting in October.

We've been writing about it, some of you may have seen our blog 'Advertise Advertise' and if you haven't seen it we strongly recommend you have a look. And in that we're pulling out really what are the main themes of the module. It's about social psychology which is about people in society and people as society makes us. And it's also about psychology in society and that's a lot of what we're talking about on the blog. How has psychological thinking, how have psychological theories impacted on how we think about ourselves, what we take for granted, what we think is normal.

So in the module itself we take those sort of twin areas of interest and we pull out lots of areas which I think are particularly interesting and relevant as applied areas. We talk about politics. We talk about gender. We talk about work which of course is my own particular area of interest; work and employment.

We talk about happiness. We talk about relationships and conflict, and what it means when we give things to charity, for example. What's our relationship to other people in that and what's it doing to who we are. And we try to show how there are really all these interesting different sets of ideas that can verge in social psychology. Psychoanalytic ideas. There are even areas which are sort of more of the cognitive tradition though we don't play that up so much. Social constructionism, philosophy.

And we again and again come back to how psychology goes in a kind of loop. It's about society, about people but then it feeds back in to society and it shapes how we think. So Paul Stenner, for example, has written an interesting critique of positive psychology which of course is very big at the moment. And Eleni Andreouli looks at the psychology of culture and how it has in fact impacted on ideas like multi cultures and multicultural societies.

There's a block about politics, not just sort of big P politics like voting though that's there, but also small p politics. So it's a very, I think, contemporary module, a very

interesting module. We invite people, because it's Level 3, we invite them to follow through on their own interest. Do a lot of independent study. And we think it's going to be great actually.

**Karen Foley:**

It sounds fascinating. I mean you've got so much content there that would apply to anybody let alone psychologists. But you mentioned some of the psychological approaches that you're applying to get a deeper understanding of some of these issues. Can you briefly sort of talk us through how that might look?

**Stephanie Taylor:**

A key idea that we use is the social individual interface. And so what do we imagine, what do we theorise, is the connection between the person, the individual, who of course psychologists have always been interested in, and the context, the social context. Do we kind of think of it as being, the context as being a kind of room that the individual moves in to and out of, you know, pretty much unchanged. Or do we sort of turn it around the other way and say it's almost like a kind of, I don't know, ether or ectoplasm which makes a space which shapes the individual so that in that case we would be saying that people of a particular, say, socio historic period might actually be psychologically different to people of another socio historic period. We're not talking about lightening changes here obviously.

So throughout we look at the way that people have understood this social, psychological interface. How far do we retain some kind of agency and choice about making ourselves or how far are we made, are we determined by the larger society? By class, by notions of gender that are currently in play. Is there something different about being a woman today? And we talk about a lot of the research which has been done about contemporary young women who are quite often sort of theorised and discussed as kind of rather a problematic species, you know, they're supposed to have all these issues and problems. And we consider what ideas are in play there and why again psychology might be reinforcing a certain way of thinking about people.

It's all about this interface, the point where the person meets the social context.

**Karen Foley:**

Stephanie Taylor thank you very much.

Another third level psychology module is DD310, Counselling and Forensic Psychology: Investigating Crime and Therapy. Catriona Havard filled me in.

Catriona can you give us a brief outline of DD310?

**Catriona Havard:**

Yeah. So DD310 is Counselling and Forensic Psychology: Investigating Crime and Therapy. And it's a brand new, I think, very exciting module to do where we've combined forensic psychology and counselling psychology. We've got a series of blocks where we look at different topics. So it starts off setting a scene, looking at the tensions between being a therapist working in a prison setting or forensic setting compared to like a normal GP setting.

We then look at things like the history of mental health and treatment. We look at diagnosis, categorisation. So we also look at social cultural factors and with people with mental health problems or those involved in the Criminal Justice System. So we look at age, gender, race and class. We then look at sex and sexuality and sort of what's been labelled as sort of being mad or bad when it comes to sort of sex and sexuality. And things like sex in the therapy, consent.

And then we look at different types of treatment. So treatment for people with mental health problems and also different therapies that have been used in the Criminal Justice System.

Then in the last block we look at things like false memories versus sort of suppressed memories of sexual abuse. We look at how therapy can be used in prison. So one example is Grendon which is the only therapeutic prison in the UK. And we talked to some people who've worked in the prison and people who have been prisoners as well and how that therapy's helped them.

And then finally we look at prevention. So how can we help prevent people from having mental health problems and how can we prevent people from ending up in the Criminal Justice System.

**Karen Foley:**

So lots and lots of things there. You can see it would appeal to a very diverse group of students. Who might be studying it?

**Catriona Havard:**

Well it's core for the Forensic Psychology degree and for the psychology and counselling. And it's an option for psychology students. And it's an option for quite a lot of other degrees where you can pick a psychology module. It's also obviously available for the Open Degree so if anybody wants to come along on the Open Degree we've designed the module so that you don't need to have a background in statistics and things like that. So it's not like some of the other psychology modules where you will have to have done Levels 1 and 2 to have that statistical research methods.

Hopefully we've been quite aware of the fact that people might not have a lot of psychological knowledge when they do this module, so they shouldn't struggle because we're not doing research methods and we're not doing statistical analysis.

**Karen Foley:**

So it's very much focused on the content and because this is Level 3 there's this aspect of, I guess, criticality towards the whole thing. So can you just briefly explain a little about the assessment then?

**Catriona Havard:**

I think they're quite innovative assessments. So, for instance, one of them is to critique a media article. So it's an article written kind of like tabloid newspaper articles and how newspapers misrepresent psychological data or crime stats. And what we're trying to do is get students to actually analyse this and be able to critique, well hang on, how have they misrepresented a real scientific study.

One of the other TMAs that we have is to produce a presentation. So it's to a documentary film maker, so you've got to produce a presentation to them. You're not actually going to have to stand up and do it, you know. We've tried to focus on employability skills with these TMAs. One of the other TMAs is to create a treatment plan. So you're given a case study of an individual and you've got to imagine that you're a therapist, they've come to see you and you have to create a treatment plan for them with obviously dealing with the particular issues that they have.

And then with the EMA we've got a project. So we basically asked quite a few students how they felt about having an exam or an EMA and we found that there was an overwhelming majority that wanted to have a sort of EMA project report as opposed to having an exam. So that's what we've done.

**Karen Foley:**

Excellent. Catriona Havard thank you very much.

**Catriona Havard:**

You're very welcome.

**Karen Foley:**

There have been exciting developments in postgraduate study and I spoke to Kesi Mahendran about the first level module DD801, Principles of Social and Psychological Inquiry that is linked to three Masters qualifications.

Kesi, can you tell us about DD801?

**Kesi Mahendran:**

So DD801 is about principles in social or psychological inquiry. And I think it's a very exciting module that students might be interested in if they're interested in inquiry. How does it work? When you hear stories about psychologist have said today or criminologists believe, well how have they got there? So this is a really nice first step in a Masters qualification that allows you to explore how knowledge is conceived, what questions get asked, what methods have been used and what kind of are the trade-offs in methods, especially if you already have a methods training.

This will be a chance to sort of start thinking about what are the trade-offs in methods and then how knowledge is received. So the public receives knowledge and if you get involved then you'll do a campaign poster for the public. You'll also do a report for government as well and that will be one of the TMAs. So that will be about in that getting towards the end of the module, that's about how knowledge is received by publics, governments and other interested parties. And how, if you imagine it is going around in a big circle again how it's being received in forms, the very questions that asked in the first place.

**Karen Foley:**

Now you've mentioned some components of the assessment and you've used a very innovative approach to the assessment strategy for this module. Can you tell us about that?

**Kesi Mahendran:**

Yeah, it's very applied. It's about your own settings, we call it authentic assessment. And it's about taking the opportunity to go in to the settings that either you work in or you live in or you're interested in. And what you can do is you can start to build your assessments around that. You can do a case study. If you're interested in leadership and women and you think well where I work it's kind of a little but unusual, there are a lot of female leaders. I'd like to explore that. Well then you can make your assessment about that. So we're really encouraging and supporting you to take it in different directions.

It's also about developing an expert voice. And what you'll find – and you'll get the confidence during the weeks and the months – is that you need to speak differently to different people. Academics are always told they're really lousy at this and what we want to do is train you right up at the beginning which is that when you're writing a blog you would write it in one way, when you're writing a report you'd write it in a different way. If you're appearing on the radio you would speak in a different way. So we're giving you opportunities to develop an expert voice for working with academic audiences and also engaged but not necessarily academic audiences.

**Karen Foley:**

Now you mentioned before that this was the first year of three qualifications, the F73, F74 and F75. I wonder if you can tell us who might be able to apply for one of these Masters modules and what the criteria are to get accepted?

**Kesi Mahendran:**

So this again is an innovation of these qualifications. You can apply for these qualifications if you have a first degree at 2:2 or above. The first degree, however, can be in any subject you like and that's a real strength of the qualification, it opens access and it also means that when you study you're going to be with a really fascinating mix of people who come from all manner of different backgrounds. In fact I've just signed off a couple now where the person's actually done an MBA. I mean they've done an MBA, that's not been in the UK that's been in another country and they've become interested in psychology and so they'd like to do some study here at the OU.

**Karen Foley:**

And in addition to the range of content and the opportunity to do a dissertation what's the key value, I guess, or skills, that one might get from doing a Masters?

**Kesi Mahendran:**

I think the key skill is this expert voice. And then another thing that I haven't mentioned yet is that you become a good detector of, hey hang on a second, I'm not sure if I'm so convinced by that. So you are able to evaluate knowledge and ask the key questions, you know, who did the research, what methods did they use when they say people or so on. Who do they actually mean? Do they mean undergraduate students by any chance or did they go in to this specific field. And because it's designed using case studies, it has a case study approach all the way through DD801 and then on to the three second specialist modules. I think that students will, you know, that will be really interesting. Their ability, their skills to understand that the movement from particular to general.

**Karen Foley:**

They're very likely to change the way you think?

**Kesi Mahendran:**

Yes, certainly.

**Karen Foley:**

Kesi, thank you very much.

**Kesi Mahendran:**

Thank you.

**Karen Foley:**

And last but by no means least the MA in Creative Writing already launched a year ago but this September is the first time that the second year presentation will be taught. Siobhan Campbell told me all about it.

Siobhan, I wonder if you could give us a brief outline of A803?

**Siobhan Campbell:**

Sure. Well A803 is part 2 of the MA in Creative Writing. And it's longer than part 1 at 120 credits. It covers an entire calendar year. And like part 1 it's taught wholly online in a very exciting multi modal way. A803, it includes a substantial block of independent study towards the end of that period when students will want to consolidate work on the longer project. And like most MAs it allows for a long dissertation type assessment at the end and our one is 15,000 words. And that follows six tutor marked assessments along the way.

And during the year students will interact with their tutor group forum which is the smallest of the forums that they attend. But then they also have module-wide genre-based forums so they can expose their work to the whole cohort actually. And then we have the workshop tool which is a very specific way of interacting with your peers where you receive feedback under certain headings from four of your peers and you give feedback to four of your peers.

So there are several ways for the whole cohort to interact and also to build relationships within your own tutor group forum in small, more intimate ways.

**Karen Foley:**

And what do you think students might enjoy about it most?

**Siobhan Campbell:**

Well I think students particularly enjoy the fact that it's taught completely by practitioners. All the tutors are operating certainly in the genre they're teaching and possibly in one other because often writers do that now. And actually just on that the students also appreciate the fact that while they choose a primary genre themselves in the part 1 of the module, part 1 of the MA rather, they've been exposed to writing in another genre. And they can actually continue some of that in part 2 if they wish because they can be part of the module bi-forums so they can expose that other kind of work as well.

I think also students appreciate the fact that they have a substantial amount of work actually receiving tutor feedback. So up to 23,000 words or the equivalent, so maybe a

full feature length film for instance. And that's quite a lot to get feedback on and it doesn't all come at the end. Because of the way we work there are six tutor marked assessments throughout the year and then the final assessment. So you've had a chance to really interact not only with your peers but also with your tutor on that work and hopefully bring it to its finest iteration by the end.

**Karen Foley:**

Siobhan Campbell thank you very much.

And that I'm afraid is all we have time for but the August edition will also focus on other new modules that are coming out this September. So be sure to keep an eye out for that.

Also we have a student hub live event on 31<sup>st</sup> July that's all about progressing your studies so please come along and see some of the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences academics contribute to that if you're going to spend a little time this summer getting mentally ready before the autumn module starts.

And don't forget to keep connected with us on Facebook and Twitter. I hope you have some sunshine this summer and are able to enjoy some of it.

Goodbye for now and thanks for listening.

FASS Showcase videos - <http://studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk/?q=content/fass-showcase-event-recordings>

Student Hub Live - <http://studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk/>

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