

IMAGINING THE HISTORY OF THE FUTURE: UNSETTLING SCIENTIFIC STORIES

27-29th March, 2018 | University of York, UK

The future just isn't what it used to be... not least because people keep changing it. Recent years have seen a significant growth of academic and public interest in the role of the sciences in creating and sustaining both imagined and enacted futures. Technological innovations and emergent theoretical paradigms gel and jolt against abiding ecological, social, medical or economic concerns: researchers, novelists, cartoonists, civil servants, business leaders and politicians assess and estimate the costs of planning for or mitigating likely consequences. The trouble is that thinking about the future is a matter of perspective: where you decide to stand constrains what you can see

With confirmed plenary speakers Professor Sherryl Vint (University of California, Riverside, USA) and Professor Charlotte Sleigh (University of Kent, UK) this three-day conference will bring together scholars, practitioners, and activists to explore ways in which different visions of the future and its history can be brought into productive dialogue.

Focused on the long technological 20th Century (roughly, 1887-2007) and looking particularly at the intersections between fictional/narrative constructions of the future, expert knowledge, and institutional policy development, the themes of the conference will include but are not limited to:

- The relationship between lay and expert futures, especially futures produced by communities marginalised in public dialogue by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, species or political orientation
- How have different forms of fiction (novels, films, games, comics) created different visions of what's to come? How have their audiences responded to and shaped them?
- The role of counterfactuals/alternate histories, as well as factional accounts and popular science: how have different forms of writing positioned the future?
- What's the relationship between past and present scenario planning in government or commerce? How have they fed into wider cultural conceptions of impending developments?
- Disciplinary influences: how have different academic disciplines – sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences – fed into developing futures? Has this changed over time?
- The role of futures past: how can we recover them, and what do they tell us about futures present? What are the forgotten or marginalised sites of future-making
- How have different themes – time, the apocalypse, the individual, among others – changed over the last century of future-thinking?

We invite proposals based broadly on these themes. Individual papers should take the form of 20 minute presentations, but we would also be delighted to consider three or four paper panel submissions on a related topic, workshops or round-table discussions.

Proposals for individual papers should include an abstract of no more than 250 words, together with a short author biography (100 words). Panel proposals should also include a short (150 words) commentary on the overall theme. Please email proposals to unsettling-science@york.ac.uk (as email attachments in Word format) by **FRIDAY 15th SEPTEMBER**. Authors will be notified of decisions by Friday 27th October. Prospective organisers of other formats should contact the steering committee by email as soon as possible to discuss possibilities. Please direct all enquires to unsettling-science@york.ac.uk.

This is an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded event, run by the Unsettling Scientific Stories project based at the Universities of York, Aberystwyth and Newcastle.

Website: <http://unsettlingscientificstories.co.uk/imagined-futures>

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