

INSIGHTS

Spring programme
February – May 2024
Free admission

Thursday 25 April

British Academy Lecture

The sign language myth

Professor Annelies Kusters, Heriot-Watt University

Sign language is not universal – hundreds of different types are used throughout the world – but could there be one common system that everyone could understand? Might International Sign be that language – the answer to global signed communication? The lecture will be illustrated with clips from ethnographic films the speaker has directed.

This lecture will be live signed and will have closed captioning.

Tuesday 30 April

The theatre in the public conversation

Michael Billington, drama critic *Country Life*

Drawing on 60 years of reviewing and broadcasting, most prominently as drama critic of the *Guardian* from 1971 to 2019, the biographer of Harold Pinter, Alan Ayckbourn, and Tom Stoppard will discuss the state of the British stage, in conversation with Jo Robinson, Professor of Theatre and Performance at Newcastle University.



Tuesday 7 May

The future of a peaceful and prosperous global order (on earth and in outer space), for all

Professor Nayef Al-Rodhan, Oxford University

Marginalisation and exclusion exist in liberal democracies; political rights do not guarantee a dignified life. Applying frameworks from neuroscience, philosophy, international relations, geostrategy, applied history and disruptive technologies, dignity must be made a central focus in policy-making, or risk social unrest and, ultimately, global order.



Thursday 9 May

Robinson Prize Lecture in Cosmology

Dark matter through the looking glass of Homo Narrans

Professor Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, University of New Hampshire

Dark matter is invisible but plays a highly visible role in the evolution of spacetime, while challenging our conventional notions of what 'stuff' is. Our speaker will reflect on the scientific questions raised by our cosmic search for understanding, as well as what it means to do this work as a storytelling species.

Tuesday 14 May

Three tales from the frontier of medical sciences research

Winners of the Faculty of Medical Sciences postgraduate public speaking prize describe their quests at the cutting edge of science, and how their research will underpin the medical treatments of tomorrow, and improve our health and care.



Thursday 16 May

The Russia-Ukraine War: The future of conflict, or the past?

Professor Mark Galeotti, University College London

Full-scale war in Europe was meant to be a thing we no longer had to fear. So what can we make of the Russia-Ukraine War: must we question our assumptions about 21st century conflict, or is it an atavistic brawl from the past? Is it, as Vladimir Putin claims, part of a global war against Western hegemony, or an expression of 19th century geopolitical thinking?

KEY: The INSIGHTS programme is designed around the University's world-leading research and the five key areas of strength identified by our Vision and Strategy. To find out more please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/who-we-are/strengths

From Newcastle.

For Data For One Planet For Cities and Place

For Ageing and Health For Culture and Creative Arts

For the world.

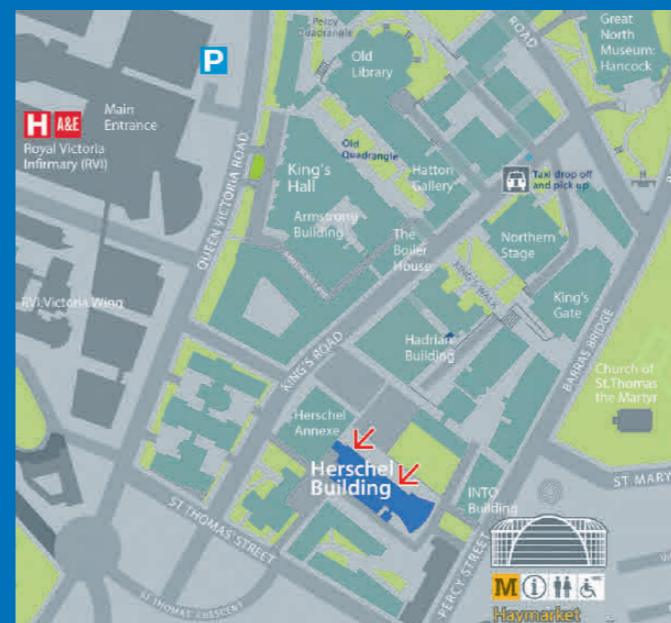
Newcastle University welcomes you to its spring 2024 INSIGHTS programme. Given by public figures and eminent scholars, the lectures cover a wide range of topics and are held in the Curtis Auditorium, Herschel Building. Unless otherwise stated, lectures begin at 5.30pm and last for approximately one hour, including time for questions.

All our events remain free and open to all, but **pre-booking is required**. Bookings for lectures will open at **10.00am one week before the event**. To reserve your place visit www.ncl.ac.uk/events/public-lectures or telephone our booking voicemail line **0191 208 6136**.

Recordings of some lectures will be available on our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/events/public-lectures after the lecture has taken place. Additions or changes to the programme will also be published on our website. To join our mailing list, please complete the online registration form.

The University will make all reasonable efforts to deliver INSIGHTS events. However, it may be necessary to make changes at short notice.

Stay connected: Website: www.ncl.ac.uk/events/public-lectures
Email: public.lectures@ncl.ac.uk



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■ Thursday 1 February

Defence Lecture

Can we manage a very dangerous world?

The Rt Hon Lord Robertson of Port Ellen KT

The crisis in the Middle East pushed the crisis in Ukraine into the shadows. And yet the stakes over both could not be higher. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are openly challenging the liberal democratic order we have grown used to. If they win, it will be a very uncomfortable world to live in. The former UK Defence Secretary, and Secretary General of NATO, considers what can be done.

■ Thursday 8 February

Darwin Day Lecture

Why your DNA is not your destiny

Professor Jelena Mann, Newcastle University

This lecture on epigenetics will demystify the science behind genes and identity, and demonstrate how lifestyle and environment can influence gene expression. It will explore the dynamic relationship between our choices and our genetic script, and how this understanding empowers us to shape health and destiny beyond our DNA.



■ Tuesday 13 February

Science *sans frontiers*

Sir Keith Burnett, President, Institute of Physics

In this lecture the speaker will reflect on his personal scientific journey, from being taught by refugee scholars who fled Nazi Germany, to discoveries in quantum computing and dark matter. From Bose–Einstein condensates to the ethics of AI, he will consider why it matters that scientific talent sees no borders and how a truly open scientific community is critical to all.

■ Tuesday 20 February

LGBTQ+ History Month Lecture

Collecting, archiving and celebrating LGBTQIA+ and alternative sexualities: The adventures of an archivist

Stef Dickers, Bishopsgate Institute

Home to the UK's largest LGBTQIA+ archive, the Bishopsgate Institute tells a story of monumental political and social struggles in London and further afield. Its special collections manager will reveal how the archive developed, the stories and adventures behind the collections, and how he has sought to collect the history of LGBTQIA+ in a different way.



■ Thursday 29 February

Sophia Lecture

General Election 2024: Is change really possible?

Pippa Crerar, political editor, *The Guardian*

Drawing on her experiences at the heart of Westminster, the former political editor of the *Daily Mirror* looks at the state of the parties in the light of the general election. With the chance of a different party in power for the first time in 14 years, what change could that bring?



RIDDELL MEMORIAL LECTURES

Curb your technological enthusiasm: When should we be tech-prudent?

Justin L Barrett, founder and president of Blueprint 1543

■ Wednesday 6 March

What makes cultural innovations attractive? Lessons from the cognitive science of religion

Many new technologies spread so broadly and deeply that they are difficult to uproot once their negative impacts are better understood. How, then, might we estimate which technological innovations are likely to spread relatively quickly and become deeply entrenched in human lives? The cognitive science of religion has enabled us to better understand why some forms of cultural expression are attractive to individuals and groups. Psychological 'naturalness' leads to cultural attractiveness, helping innovations to spread broadly and deeply.

■ Thursday 7 March

From AI to social media: Natural psychological reactions as a guide to tech-prudence

Psychological 'naturalness' makes certain technologies likely to spread broadly and deeply impact individual lives. Applying this way of viewing new technologies to digital social media and contemporary artificial intelligence tools, reveals that many social media platforms deserve great caution, and many new uses of AI merit measured adoption. This sort of analysis can make even stronger predictions about the promise or peril of new technologies when integrated with theological considerations concerning human thriving.

■ Tuesday 12 March

British Science Week Lecture

Chiral molecular materials and changing the world

Dr Jess Wade, Imperial College London

Working together, physicists, chemists and materials scientists can create more efficient and sustainable technologies. Chiral molecular materials offer unparalleled opportunity in optoelectronic, spintronic and quantum technologies due to the unique combination of the optical, electronic, and magnetic properties. Technological breakthroughs of this scale are only possible when diverse teams of people work together, which means we need to do more to inspire, educate and celebrate scientists from all backgrounds.



■ Thursday 14 March

Fickling Lecture

We chose you

Kate Adie, journalist and broadcaster

Being adopted shaped the speaker's life and led her to consider what it means for others. Adoption arouses curiosity. It's a departure from the usual – a legal term, but about the most personal matter: who you are. It follows you through life. Almost a century ago adoption began officially to influence the future of thousands. Attitudes have changed and now the law frames action to deliver care to vulnerable children.

■ Thursday 21 March

Jacobson Lecture

Amanda Pritchard, Chief Executive, NHS England

Our speaker leads one of the 10 largest employers in the world, responsible for £150bn of annual funding. She has worked in the NHS since 1987, including in the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, and speaks about the service at a time of unparalleled pressures and demands, as it wrestles with demographic change and political challenges.

