Susan Christopherson is a Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. She is an economic geographer (Ph.D., U.C. Berkeley) whose research focuses on economic policy and economic development. Her recent book, Re-making Regional Economies: Labor, Power and Firm Strategies in the Knowledge Economy (Routledge, 2007, coauthored with Jennifer Clark) addresses barriers to regional economic development in the U.S. economy. The book won the best book of 2009 award from The Regional Studies Association. Susan Christopherson is an expert on the film and television industries and particularly on work and the workforce in those industries. Her recent research has focused on the way in which trends in media work foreshadow changes in work organization across the economy.

Keat, Russell: Bringing ethics back in: cultural production as a practice
This paper will explore the possibilities for a moral economy of creative or cultural work provided by a MacIntyrean conception of social practices. Amongst the central features of such forms of social activity is the subordination of 'external' goods such as money, power and status to the 'internal' goods of the practice, and hence to its specific goals and standards of judgment. The possibility of cultural work as a practice thus depends on the existence of appropriate institutional forms, at the levels both of individual organisations and of overall forms of economic coordination. This focus on cultural work as a practice will be framed in terms of a broader argument for the inclusion of specifically ethical concepts in moral economy as a field of enquiry. That judgments about ‘the good life’ or ‘human flourishing’ should be excluded as grounds for social criticism or societal decisions - with these grounds being limited to issues of justice, rights, equality and suchlike - is a view shared by many otherwise disparate theoretical schools. It has also been central to ‘liberal’ justifications for the market as the preferred mode of economic coordination. Against this, it will be argued that both defences of, and objections to, the provision of cultural goods through the market depend on ethical claims.

Russell Keat is Emeritus Professor of Political Theory at the University of Edinburgh. His current research is concerned with the ethical character of market institutions and of different kinds of capitalism. This follows on from previous work on the boundaries between market and non-market spheres, with publications including Cultural Goods and the Limits of the Market (2000) and, co-edited with Nick Abercrombie and Nigel Whiteley, The Authority of the Consumer (1994) and Enterprise Culture (1991). Recent papers are available at www.russellkeat.net. Earlier research included work on realist philosophy of social science (Social Theory as Science, with John Urry, 1975/1982); Habermas’s critical theory (The Politics of Social Theory: Habermas, Freud and the Critique of Positivism, 1981), and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology (Understanding Phenomenology, with Michael Hammond and Jane Howarth, 1991).

Sayer, Andrew: Creative work: problems for moral economy

I’d like to suggest some ways of thinking about the normative, and especially ethical, implications of creative work for individual and social well-being. How should we value such work, and the institutions and social structures which support or inhibit it? In particular, I’d like to discuss creative work in the context of unequal societies: how is it affected by inequality, and how does it affect the reproduction of inequality?


Plenary panel abstracts

Gregg, Melissa: Labour politics and the state of exception
In State of Exception (2005), Giorgio Agamben describes how nations temporarily suspend the usual rule of law under conditions of sovereign threat. When the state is in danger, strategies are developed to justify heightened and/or extended powers for the period of presumed risk. Adapting this notion to the workplace, this paper draws on a three year study of information and communication workers to discuss the “state of exception” affecting labour claims in the technologically mediated workplace. It shows how employees learn to cope with a growing number of job related communication requirements, including email, instant messaging and social media, to maintain the viability and relevance of their positions. For these workers, the “normal” working day is suspended in order to maintain the outputs of the organization, just as attempts to quantify or articulate labour claims are suspended in the face of technology’s unique properties. This is despite the fact that communicating via technology can only ever be a structural feature of these jobs. The paper analyses the shared rhetorical strategies of workers who justify the extent of their labour given their exceptional status in privileged professions. This leads to a broader set of questions about the morality of academics who draw on similar discourses to justify their location in careers that enable them to study such circumstances.

Melissa Gregg is Senior Lecturer in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. She is author of Cultural Studies: Affective Voices (Palgrave 2006) and co-editor of The Affect Theory Reader (with Gregory J. Seigworth, Duke UP 2010). Her new book, Work’s Intimacy, is published by Polity Press in 2011.

Hesmondhalgh, David: Free creative labour and exploitation
A dominant theme of recent critical analysis of digital media, user-generated content and cultural industries is that they involve unpaid work (‘free labour’) on the part of participants. Critiques of ‘free labour’ have provided some stimulating and necessary interventions against complacent celebrations of creative labour, and of the relations between production and consumption in the digital era, but some significant conceptual issues concerning capitalism, exploitation, power and freedom remain underexplored. I argue that the frequent pairing of the term ‘free labour’ with the concept of exploitation is often unconvincing and rather incoherent, at least as so far developed by the most-cited analysts; and I explore what political demands might and might not coherently be derived from critical accounts of free labour (arguing that the internship system is by far the most significant example of free labour in the contemporary cultural industries).

David Hesmondhalgh is Head of the Institute of Communications Studies at the University of Leeds. He is author of The Cultural Industries (two editions, 2002 and 2007, another one coming in 2012) and Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries (2011), co-written with Sarah Baker. He’s now trying to write a book on The Politics of Music for Blackwell.

Schlesinger, Philip: Living on performance
This paper draws on small-scale research undertaken for the AHRC’s ‘Beyond Text’ programme. It focuses on dancers (company and independent) and musicians (composers and performers) and how they make a living by portfolio work. The research involved video-recorded focus group discussion and interviews, as well as some filming.
of performance. It addresses how interviewees think about their rights and the ethics of how these are distributed between groups of performers. As serious financial reward is not an issue for all those studied, the etiquette of attribution for creative effort assumes high importance. Non-pecuniary motivation to create and how creative work can be subsidized by commercial work is a further key theme. The paper will be illustrated by quotations. A short documentary based on the fieldwork (ca. 15 minutes) should be available for screening, should there be interest and time.

Philip Schlesinger is Professor in Cultural Policy at the University of Glasgow, where he directs the Centre for Cultural Policy Research. He currently chairs the Advisory Committee for Scotland of the UK communications regulator, Ofcom and is a Visiting Professor in Media and Communications at the LSE. His most recent book (co-edited with John Erik Fossom) is The European Union and the Public Sphere (Routledge 2007). He is currently completing an AHRC-funded project on ‘Music and dance - beyond copyright text?’ and working on a critical study of the creative economy.