# Better Practice: Neurodiversity, cognition and creativity in the arts and humanities. A two day workshop and conference

## Confirmed plenary speaker: Professor Nicola Shaughnessy (University of Kent)

**Date: Monday 20th – Tuesday 21st April 2020**

**LAHP only CFP open: Feb 21 - April 1st 2020**

**Registration:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/better-practice-neurodiversity-and-creativity-in-the-arts-and-humanities-tickets-91967823235>

* How can academics and artists challenge able-mindedness and ableism in their fields? Can academia lead the way in inclusive design? Has accessibility been co-opted by equality and diversity rankings? How do we become better neurodiversity allies?

**Please note: Our main CFP has now closed. Thank you to all who have submitted already. We will be in touch.**

**We are accepting *additional* *proposals* from the following institutions of the London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP):**  King's College London, London School of Economics and Political Science, Queen Mary University of London, the Royal College of Art, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, the Royal College of Music and the School of Advanced Study, University College London.

We are looking for the following formats: 20 mins papers or “lightening panels” of up to three ten min papers and 30 mins Q&A. These are intended for emerging scholars, postgraduate and PhD students. We will highlight the work done across the London Arts and Humanities Partnership on the topic or spirit of neurodiversity in the arts and humanities**.**

Please send proposals of no more than 300 words with a subject headline “**LAHP panel**” to [betterpractice2020@gmail.com](mailto:betterpractice2020@gmail.com)

# Call for Participation:

The debate about neurodiversity is changing the face of research and creative practice in the arts and humanities. Not only is the area of neurodiversity emerging from disability studies as a field in its own right, but the politics and practice of diagnosis, identification, adjustment, and policy is under review across higher education institutions. Closely related is the increased recognition of Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs) in adults within academia, as researchers, educators and in the students they teach. While there is a wealth of knowledge produced on SpLDs, Autism Spectrum Condition, ASC and learning differences as an object of study, very little light has been shed on the diversity of learning and teaching characteristics already in place as a result of an always already neurodiverse population. Too often has the deficit been localised in the individual, typically a student, and ways they overcome their impairments. This is the case even though ostensibly valuing atypicality and difference underpins much of the critique of cultural fields and is at the core of most artistic practice and training. This conference contributes to the work done in challenging the neurotypical paradigm.

A new frontier for justice, equality and rights is opening up for those who are not neurotypical. Normative and limiting creative and critical outputs are being challenged by empowered work that draws on the increased appetite for equality and awareness of difference across our societies. More broadly, cultural demands are being placed on a more inclusive society that recognises, promotes and fosters diversity and difference. Participatory research has been deployed as part of an emancipatory practice of empowering new voices in academia that would otherwise go unheard. Only now are conventions at the heart of our disciplines being reviewed for inclusive design and practicable access for all stakeholders across a spectrum of neurodiverse personalities.

“Better Practice: Neurodiversity, difference and creativity in the arts and humanities” is a two day event prioritising participatory critical and creative practice in the arts and humanities for and by those who recognise the atypicality in all of us. We will showcase work that questions deficit and promotes gain. We welcome artists, practitioners and researchers who are using the terminologies and precedents set by critical disability studies to investigate new areas of study with and through the means available to them.

Better Practice is a conference which embraces the term neurodiversity as a chance for working with different agendas for activism, advocacy and support, uniting them around a single focus. By thinking about practices of pedagogy, research, art-making, organising, advocacy and programming through the lens of “best practice” industry standards of support for disability, inclusion and accessibility, the conference will push for new methodologies and tools for each of our own practices. The conference seeks intersectional routes into increased participation for those with sometimes invisible cognitive differences (ADHD, ASC,) as well as learning differences (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia), alongside associated mental health impacts. We want to host workshops that facilitate different aspects of academic life in the arts and humanities, especially for those who feel participation has been barred, and will be actively seeking new best practices to take forward into our professional lives. Training and skill-sharing will be at the heart of the workshop days, alongside critical papers and key-note speakers and performances.

The project aims to promote awareness of the diverse experiences of postgraduate study and Early Career research, highlighting the depth of different study patterns, ways of being, and research outputs to which LAHP students, past, present and future are committed. Highlighting the breadth of talent in the LAHP consortium also aims to promote projects which don’t fit the normative mould, building talents and confidence for the work that graduates will embark on in the future.

**We especially invite participation in the form of ‘lightening panels’ or papers from those LAHP students who identify as neurodivergent or as having one or more SpLD(s) or** **who identify as disabled**. The conference is of course open to any who want to explore questions of critical disability studies, access, rights and responsibilities in academia and the arts. Support workers are encouraged to attend if required at no additional ticket cost.

**Any and all reasonable adjustments for attendance and participation will be considered**. Papers and presentations will be circulated to delegates in advance and regular comfort breaks will be offered.

Please contact us for more information on any of the above.

This conference is sponsored by the **London Arts and Humanities Partnership** student-led initiative fund and is hosted by **Queen Mary University of London.**

Topics for papers or joint panels could include (but are not limited to):

Neurodiversity and art practice

Academia and normativity

Participation and impairment

Methodologies for neurodivergent research

Disability studies in the arts and humanities

Literary studies: neurodiverse writers past and present; reading and experiences of neurodiversity; creative writing practice and neurodiversity

Critical disability politics

Disability justice

Invisible disability

Diversity and appropriation

“Dumbing down,” academic literacy and the deficit model

“Academic socialisation” and neurodiversity

Discrimination and social status. How does privilege impact disabling conditions? How does social status determine access to support?

Intersectionality and neurodiversity. Are difference protected characteristics treated differently? How do symptoms of neurodivergence express differently along lines of class, gender, etc.?

Gender, behaviour and treatment. How to challenge gender normative practices in diagnosis and beyond?

Access, careers and participation in HE

Celebration or intervention: thinking beyond a cure?

Comparativist disability studies. Is neurodiversity a “Western” phenomenon?

We look forward to reading your responses. Please check the website for up to date information.

Many thanks,

**John Dunn, Jade French, Julie Tanner, Theresa Heath, Georgia Heseldine, Denise Wong**

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