



<b>Course Code &amp; Title</b>	<b>LISS217 Biographical Methods in Transdisciplinary Perspective</b>				
<b>Convenor(s)</b>	Dr Alvina Hoffmann, Liam McVay, Josh Walmsley				
<b>Institution</b>	King's College London	<b>Department</b>		LISS DTP	
<b>Academic Year</b>	2021-22	<b>Term</b>		Summer	
<b>Number of sessions</b>	7	<b>Research Platform</b>	Qualitative Research (QuL)	<b>Length of Session(s)</b>	2 hours
<b>Day, Date</b>		<b>Start : End</b>		<b>Room Location</b>	
Tuesday 10 May 2022 Tuesday 17 May 2022 Tuesday 24 May 2022 Tuesday 31 May 2022 Tuesday 7 June 2022 Tuesday 14 June 2022 Wednesday 15 June 2022		1500 : 1700		Via Zoom (Except last session)	
<b>Enrolment Links:</b>	<a href="#">Click here</a> to enrol on Skills Forge – you may be prompted to log in Questions? E-mail <a href="mailto:liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk">liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk</a>				

**Course Description:**

This course will introduce students across the social sciences to biographical methods, with a focus on biographical interviews and collective biographical analysis. The course will first introduce biographical methods and its broad employment in the social sciences, consider the role of the biographer and reflexivity, cover debates in oral history and sociology around the introduction and reflexive use of biographical data in research, poststructuralism, and finally put to use biographical interviews and/or collective biographical analysis in students' own projects with a practical 'surgery' session at the end of the course.

The first hour of each session will introduce the week's topic and central questions, followed by a discussion of the assigned (short) text(s). The second hour will be focused on students' own projects and help them design a strong research strategy to engage in and with biographical research reflexively.

**1. Introduction to biographical methods: The biographer & reflexivity**

*The interdisciplinary use of biographical methods: Explaining the social world through individual life experience?*

- C. Wright Mills (1959) 'The Promise' & 'Grand Theory' in *The Sociological Imagination* Oxford University Press
- Paul Veyne (1971) 'Only a True Account' & 'History Does not Exist' in *Writing History* Editions du Seuil



## 2. Oral history and narrative

What is at stake for history in integrating biographical data? How can we narrate biography creatively?

- Passerini, Luisa (1979) 'Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism' *Working Paper, History Workshop*: 84-108.
- Jenny Edkins (2013) 'Novel writing in international relations: Openings for a creative practice' *Security Dialogue* 44(4): 281-297.

## 3. Biography and the plural actor

What is the 'plural actor' according to Lahire? What is the role of the past in constructing dispositions?

- Bernard Lahire (2001) 'Outline of a Theory of the Plural Actor' in *The Plural Actor* Polity Press

## 4. The biographical illusion?

What is 'the biographical illusion'? Do you agree with Bourdieu's critical engagement with biography?

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) 'The Biographical Illusion' in Hemecker, Wilhelm and Edward Saunders (eds.) (2017) *Biography in Theory* de Gruyter
- Marie Kolkenbrock (2017) 'Life as Trajectory: Pierre Bourdieu's 'The Biographical Illusion' in Hemecker, Wilhelm and Edward Saunders (eds.) (2017) *Biography in Theory* de Gruyter.
- Margaretha Järvinen (2000) 'The biographical illusion: Constructing meaning in qualitative interviews' *Qualitative Inquiry* 6(3): 370-391.

## 5. Biographical interviews

How to conduct biographical interviews – An example.

This is a biographical interview in which socio-legal scholar Yves Dezalay reflects on his own academic/life trajectory (prompted by the interviewers) and the biographical methods he and his co-author Bryant Garth employ.

- Bigo, Didier and Antonin Cohen (2020) 'Investigating the Internationalisation of State Nobility: A Reflexive Turn to Double Game Strategies – An interview with Yves DEZALAY (Part One)' *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* 1 (2020). 103-116.
- Bigo, Didier and Antonin Cohen (2020) 'Investigating the Internationalisation of State Nobility: A Reflexive Turn to Double Game Strategies – An interview with Yves DEZALAY (Part Two)' *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* 1 (2020). 306-336.
- Beerli, Monique (Forthcoming) 'Biographic interviews' in Badache, Fanny, Emilie Dairon, Leah R. Kimber and Lucile Maertens (eds.) *Introduction to International Organization Research Methods* Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.



## 6. Prosopography

How to conduct more structural and collective biographical analysis.

- Jacob Aagaard Lunding, Christoph Houman Ellersgaard, and Anton Grau Larsen (2020) 'The Craft of Elite Prosopography' in François Denord, Mikael Palme, Bertrand Réau (eds.) *Researching Elites and Power* Springer

Take a look at chapter 2 in Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus* as an example of collective biographical analysis:

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1988) *Homo Academicus* Cambridge: Polity Press (Chapter 2: The Conflict of the Faculties)

## 7. Surgery session

The final 'hands on' session will be held in person to allow participants to ask specific questions on their project which they will submit to the convenors beforehand and to work on their research strategy in a collective environment. This will be followed by a social.

### Reading List:

Readings will be provided for each week.

### Eligibility:

*The course is open to all Master's and PhD students in the social sciences, specifically to those who consider conducting interviews and/or have identified a coherent class of actors they would like to study more systematically.*

### Pre-course preparation:

There is no need to prepare for the course, but it might be helpful to start building a list of potential interviewees or names of actors students would like to study. The convenors will circulate core texts and tasks in advance.

### Number of students:

*Minimum number required to run: 4*

*Maximum number of places available: 20*