

The Open University

Spring 2010 Issue 244

DEATH DEFYING

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Day 6. Colditz Castle

An excursion to Colditz, with a guided tour of this infamous World War Two prison. Visit the castle's museum, which includes a variety of escape devices, and descend to the tunnel built by French prisoners

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Day 8. Discovering Prague

Enjoy a day's sightseeing, including the castle district, St Vitas' Cathedral, and the wonderfully preserved Old Town with its atmospheric Square and Astronomical Clock

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Day 10. To Nuremberg

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Welcome



THIS SPRING ISSUE of *Sesame* arrives with you a little earlier than usual. We hope it comes as a welcome surprise.

In this issue you'll find the usual stimulating mixture of intellectual and entertaining content, from student and graduate stories to academic opinion and new courses information. If you have any comments about the articles in this issue, or any other OU-related matter, please

get in touch using the contact details below.

In this issue you can discover how members of the OU got on at the much anticipated climate change talks in Copenhagen in December. You can also discover why you've been invited to play a role in an exciting new web-based project to record environmental changes across the UK and beyond.

Our academic comment includes an interesting and diverse mixture of material. We find out the view on something that touches all of us at one time or another: death. Research student Tom Farrell questions the use of shock-tactic advertising, such as that often employed recently in public health campaigns, asking whether they are effective and ethical. Meanwhile, a prize-winning lecture tour on cancer started at the OU; also included are contributions from some of the OU academics whose research interests lie in the same area.

Also featured are honorary graduates Kate Humble (reflecting on her travels to South Africa in the '80s and more recently Afghanistan); Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, on civil rights; John Drysdale talks about corruption in business; and Dame Stephanie Shirley gives a personal view on Asperger syndrome – also the topic of this issue's Student Support feature.

You can contact the team at sesame@open.ac.uk. For inclusion in the Letters pages please mark 'Letters' in your subject header.

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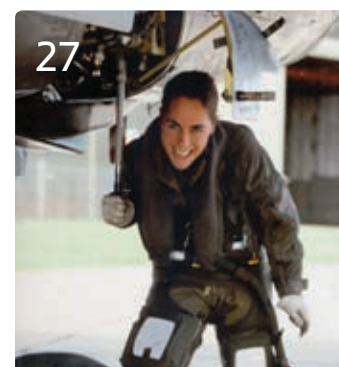
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Top award for OU

TESSA programme 'having a significant effect'



TESSA is benefiting teachers and schoolchildren in Africa

● THE OPEN UNIVERSITY has won the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further

wider community, and its winning entry was the ground-breaking Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA)

"TESSA will make an even greater impact during the coming years"

Education for a second time.

The University was one of 20 higher and further educational institutions to be recognised for exceptional contributions to the

programme. TESSA is now Africa's largest teacher education research and development community, extending across 18 institutions

and nine African countries. Since 2005 the consortium has established an extensive bank of original open education resources to support improvements in teachers' classroom practices, leading to more effective learning experiences for pupils.

More than 200,000 teachers used TESSA materials in 2009, with 300,000 expected to use the material this year. Funding for the programme has come from the Department for Education and Skills in England, the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and donations from alumni of The Open University.

Professor Bob Moon, founding director of the TESSA programme, said: "TESSA is not solving all the education problems in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it is having a significant effect. It is being replicated elsewhere, which has demonstrated its robustness."

Head of Open Africa Office Danni Nti said: "TESSA is now making a significant impact in nine African countries and we believe it will make an even greater impact in the rest of the region during the coming years, which is great news for all teachers in the region."

www.tessafrica.net

Support connection



In Africa each day, some 38 million children do not attend primary school and there is a desperate shortage of teachers in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Severe economic and health problems are at the root of the crisis. Despite this, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are pushing forward to meet the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. As a lead member of the TESSA consortium, the OU has a vital role to play and is helping to develop a school-based training programme for unqualified and under-qualified teachers working in the primary schools of the region.

For further information about how you could support this project, please contact the Major Gifts team on +44 (0)1908 654813.

OU states case

Part-time students deserve better

VC's address to funding review



OU Vice-Chancellor Martin Bean

● THE OPEN UNIVERSITY is turning up the pressure in its fight to get a better deal for part-time students.

The OU and Birkbeck, University of London, have made a joint submission to the Independent Review of Higher

Education Funding and Student Finance, highlighting the undervalued contribution of part-time students to the economy and serious funding problems that the sector is facing.

The submission argues that legislation has created a two-tier system in which full-time undergraduates receive tuition loan fees and generous grants while part-time students do not, despite making up 39 per cent of the undergraduate population.

OU Vice-Chancellor Martin Bean said: "The disparity in funding between part-time and full-time students runs counter to three key national policy objectives: creating flexibility in higher education, raising skill levels and widening

participation. Our submission highlights these issues.

"Quality is something we will never compromise on, but without changes to the current funding system the range and number of professionals we are able to help train and re-skill will have to reduce drastically."

He addressed the review panel in late January to explain how the changes introduced as a result of the 2004 Higher Education Act have affected the OU and the part-time sector in general. The panel will make recommendations to the government on future fees policy and financial support for full- and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students.

For more see <http://hereview.independent.gov.uk>

Widening Participation landmark

100,000 Openings!

VC stresses equality of access

● THE OPEN UNIVERSITY'S Centre for Widening Participation celebrated its 10th birthday with an award ceremony in Birmingham in November, to mark the achievements of more than 100,000 Openings learners.

Baroness Morris of Yardley opened the event and other external speakers included Tony Whelan, an OU alumnus and former Manchester City and Manchester United football player.

In a pre-recorded address, the Vice-Chancellor Martin Bean reminded guests that equality of access to education is still an issue all over the world.

He added that the role of The Open University and the Centre for Widening Participation improved equality



Some of the awardees at the Centre for Widening Participation celebration

of opportunity and of outcome for those who, for whatever reason, have faced difficulty accessing higher education through traditional routes. The day included a number

of awards, including the first person to graduate having begun with an Openings course and to go on to achieve an MA; and a former Openings student who is now an Openings tutor.

Just in...



New welding scheme

A NEW FOUNDATION degree in Materials Fabrication and Engineering will enable technicians to gain a higher education qualification and enhance their career prospects, and could help to bridge the gap into senior engineering management. Under the scheme, students will gain credits for welding engineering diploma courses taught at The Welding Institute. These courses start at a practical level, and successful completion of the exams will provide points towards an OU degree.



What a bright idea!

DESIGN STUDENTS AT the OU have been competing to design a safe and efficient way to recycle low-energy light bulbs. The competition was organised by Recolight, a not-for-profit organisation set up by the lighting industry to promote the recycling of used low-energy bulbs.

OU design students were able to submit designs for light bulb recycling containers which would be safe and easy for the public to use. The winning design came from Clive Eyre, a student on *Innovation: designing for a sustainable future* (T307), who won £5,000.

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OU link with Adam Smith College

PM launches partnership

Gordon Brown cites Jennie Lee's vision

● THE PRIME MINISTER Gordon Brown, MP for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath, launched the Jennie Lee Partnership at the Lochgelly Miners' Institute in Fife, Scotland, in October. The partnership brings together The Open University and Adam Smith College to provide direct links from the college's higher education qualifications to those offered by the OU.

Speaking at the launch, the Prime Minister said: "By working together these two leaders in lifelong learning can offer people – and employers – accessible and responsive ways to develop their skills. It is particularly fitting to launch this agreement in Lochgelly, birthplace of Jennie Lee, in the OU's 40th anniversary year. Her vision of a flexible



approach to lifelong learning that is open to all is as relevant and as important today as it was 40 years ago."

Other speakers included OU social work students Moira Angus and Gillian Stewart (pictured above). They gave an inspiring insight into how a combined and flexible route from an HNC at the college to an OU degree in social work has aided their career development.

OU Chancellor

New taskforce

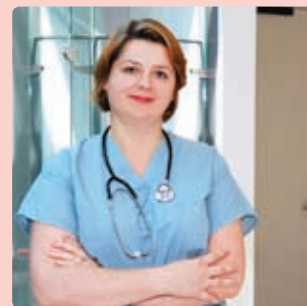
Technology in education

● OU CHANCELLOR LORD Puttnam is to co-chair (with Ian Ferguson, chairman of the communications group Metaswitch) a new government taskforce to investigate how the UK can build on its standing in the educational technology market to support the development of further opportunities for UK businesses overseas.

The UK now leads the world in technology for education. UK education and skills exports are worth around £28 billion annually, making the UK a world leader in meeting the accelerating demand in this dynamic sector.

The taskforce will report jointly to the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Just in...



Nursing degree requirement

All new nurses in England from 2013 will have to be educated to degree level – a move welcomed by the OU's Director of Nursing, Professor Jan Draper.

The plan, announced by the Department of Health, aims to help nurses meet the increasingly complex needs of patients more safely and effectively. "The OU offers a unique pre-registration nursing programme delivered through flexible, work-based distance-learning, and is already preparing for the move to a degree in the time frames laid out," said Jan.

The OU's programme is for seconded healthcare support workers sponsored by their employers.



Who's the DADI?

The Open University and its agency DigForFireDMG has won a DADI award (Drum Awards for Digital Industries) for its Darwin website, www.open.ac.uk/darwin in the category of Best Public Sector Website or Campaign.

Growing demand for learning opportunities

Training for foster carers

Fostering Network and the OU form partnership

● A UNIQUE RANGE of courses to help foster carers with their personal and professional development is now available through a new partnership between the Fostering Network and the OU.

The launch comes at a time of growing demand from foster carers for more learning opportunities. A recent report from the Fostering Network, revealed that 83 per cent would like to improve their skills and 70 per cent have asked their fostering service to provide more training. Furthermore, three-quarters of foster carers have turned down training in the past because they were unable to secure childcare, the location was hard to reach or it was scheduled at an inconvenient time. The OU's distance learning approach –



There is a growing demand from foster carers for more learning opportunities

supported 'open learning' – will therefore remove many of the barriers to professional development and enable more foster carers to access professional training alongside the demands of looking after the children in their care.

For those new to higher education there are introductory courses in topics

such as healthcare, nutrition and psychology.

Foster carers wanting to move into specialist areas of fostering and develop their careers can gain formal qualifications including undergraduate degrees in childcare and health and social care. For more, see www.open.ac.uk/cam/foster

Environment project

Dear diary

With your help, a new project at the OU aims to document the course of climate change throughout the next 10 years. Discover how your observations could inform future generations...



A rubber tree forest in Brazil

● CLIMATE SCIENTISTS believe the current decade will be a turning point for the future of our planet – so The Open University wants to record what happens. In order to document what occurs, a global online web diary has been launched called Creative Climate – and you're invited to play a key part. The Creative Climate project is inspired by the Mass Observation movement of the 20th century, when British people in all walks of life kept diaries about their everyday lives from 1937 to the early 1950s. The resulting material now provides a unique window into the times they lived through.

"Everyone's story counts when it comes to action on the environment," said Creative Climate's Director Dr Joe Smith, who is Senior Lecturer in Environment at the OU.

"Creative Climate invites you to start an online diary that helps to tell the stories of environmental change"

"Creative Climate invites you to start an online diary that helps to tell the stories of environmental change and humanity's responses. Taken together, the diaries will grow into a huge living archive of our experiences and ideas in one of the most important decades in

human history."

He said the aim is to record everything "from doorstep to workplace, from lab to garden, from international conference to community meeting – from

all over the world".

"Many people will keep a diary as an individual, but others will want to post as a group, or as an institution. You may want to start a diary on behalf of something or someplace else; track changes in a street; or follow the

fortunes of an animal or a habitat." He said the environmental debate needs to move away from trying to frighten people into good behaviour, and encourage a creative response to climate change.

"This is not naïve optimism. We're trying to open up people's thinking. The next 10 years will be an extraordinary period to live through, and we want to capture that sense of energy across all of society.

"It's an opportunity for any individual or group to have their diary standing shoulder to shoulder with diaries of top scientists, engineers, indigenous people, industrialists, CEOs of multinationals, politicians and others from all over the world."

Keeping a diary need not be too time-consuming. "Creative Climate is not another Facebook for the environment, with the obligation to come to your computer every day," said Joe. "We'll invite you to update your diary entry every four months. Go to www.open.ac.uk/creativeclimate to start your diary and study other entries. You'll also find advice on writing, and on making video and audio diaries."

The Creative Climate website also has free learning material from OU environmental courses. And the BBC's World Service is supporting Creative Climate with programmes broadcast across the world, including John Liu's film *Hope In A Changing Climate* (find out more on p13), which is available to view on the website.

www.open.ac.uk/creativeclimate

Climate change

The OU and COP15

The UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen gained massive media attention in December. And the OU was there to monitor the proceedings...

● THE OPEN UNIVERSITY'S rich tradition of environmental research and teaching stretches back to the 1970s, when it was one of the pioneers in the field. So it was no surprise that the OU was represented at COP15, the

attended the very first UN Environment Conference in Stockholm in 1972, and said there has been a lot of progress since then, when renewable energy was seen as a minority interest.

Other OU academics at the

Smith, who are part of the Creative Climate project.

The OU also maintained its own media website www.open.ac.uk/blogs/OU-COP15 with expert comment from OU academics and information on relevant OU courses and research.

And the OU's Platform website offered users the chance to submit questions that they would like to put to COP15. The top six questions, chosen by a website poll, were selected and taken to the conference where they were answered by experts.

You can see a round-up of the COP15 content on Platform – including the top six questions and their responses – at www.open.ac.uk/platform/news/science-and-technology/plenty-debate-around-climate-change

With a rich tradition of environmental research and teaching, it was no surprise that the OU was at COP15

United Nations Climate Change Conference which took place in Copenhagen from 7 to 19 December 2009.

The Open University environmentalists attending COP15 included Godfrey Boyle, Director of the OU's Energy and Environment Research Unit, and a long-standing advocate of renewable energy. Godfrey had

conference were Dr Chris High, an expert in agricultural and rural development; Dr Stephen Peake an environmental lecturer who formerly worked for the secretariat of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change as an official on adaptation, technology transfer, information networks and outreach; and Dr Janet Sumner and Dr Joe



Fishermen in the Arctic

Just in...



John Sinton, Broadcast Project Manager at the OU, reflects on COP15...

"As a non-academic member of The Open University delegation attending COP15, I approached the conference with little idea of what to expect.

"I was there to oversee the creation and delivery of audio-visual diaries for the Creative Climate website (see story on p8).

"My plan on the first morning was simple: get to the Bella centre (a bit like Birmingham's NEC) as early as possible for processing.

"With more than an hour's wait in a truly global queue, all shivering in the cold, I felt the buzz of anticipation and optimism.

"I later met up with the rest of the OU delegation, most of whom had arrived a couple of days before.

"On day two we set up a base camp for the diplomatic and diary recording activities and then worked out of this base for the next week, gathering interviews for diaries and some research.

"My days were spent mostly working on the creation of diaries, with my evenings spent editing the audio and video materials for the website.

"Nearly everyone I met felt optimistic and that the COP could do something to help climate change.

"Everyone we encountered had an interesting perspective and often a compelling story relating to climate change."

We've got mail!

If you'd like your letter or email to *Sesame* to be considered for inclusion in the Letters pages, then please email your correspondence to sesame@open.ac.uk or *Sesame*, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit letters. Letters will be permanently available to read online at www.open.ac.uk/platform

I PREFER HARD COPY

Sorry, but I am not going to read an online version of *Sesame*. When I'm at my computer I am working, with specific objectives and tasks in mind. I don't have time to browse through an online *Sesame*. When the physical version used to arrive, I would read it bit by bit until I had read it completely. But I am just going to delete the email to the online version. Reading a 'hard copy' is quicker, easier and more comfortable than reading an online one.

Ever so sorry, I know you are trying to save costs by doing it online but it doesn't work at this end. I bet that significant numbers of alumni will just stop reading *Sesame* for exactly the same reason as myself – trouble is they won't all email you to tell you. A real magazine beats online every time (and I make this comment as someone who has been used to working with computers since they first became available in the business world). Computers are great but I never read any online publications at all – if they can't supply a hard copy that I can read at my leisure – then I don't read it.

GRAHAM AARON, VIA EMAIL

Roz Allison, Deputy Director of Development: Alumni, responds: Thank you for your email. We have historically sent alumni two issues out of the four annual editions of *Sesame*. As an additional service, we have decided to notify alumni that the other two 'student-only' editions are available online. As postage costs increase and our concern for the environment grows, we are developing online alternatives to *Sesame* such as *Platform*. Your feedback is helpful and I would welcome more on this matter, as it helps us shape our plans. Please email alumni@open.ac.uk



ARE THERE EVER ANY OU OPEN DAYS?

I have never visited The Open University in 'real life'. Do you ever have 'Open Days'? I would like to have a look round if that would ever be possible.

DAVID GOTT, HALIFAX

Roz Allison, Deputy Director of Development: Alumni, responds: Thank you for your question – we have had 'Open Days' on campus before, but there is no current plan for another at this stage. We'd love to hear from any alumni or students who would like to visit the campus, as we may be able to organise group tours. Please contact us at alumni@open.ac.uk (please add 'Campus

tour interest' to the subject header) or call us on 01908 653815 to register your interest.

ADDICTED TO THE OU

I am an addicted disabled Ouer (addict to the OU!) who is extremely proud to say I'm an OU student. I regard the University as my main educator, like many others I'm sure, and have enjoyed the diverse range of science courses I've done. But, the cold spell we all recently endured in the UK meant I was stuck in the house for five weeks. Boy was I glad I was studying SK121, otherwise I would have been completely off my trolley.

Thank you, OU!
IAIN STEPHEN,
MORAYSHIRE, SCOTLAND.

AM I ENTITLED TO A STUDENT CARD?

I wonder if you could point me in the right direction? I'm a 2008/09 OU graduate who is now studying with the OU for an MSc. I seem to recall having a student card which entitled me to some discounts in the cinema,

shops, transport etc. – is there anything similar available for alumni or postgrad students?

ALI MULLIGAN, VIA EMAIL

Jackie Nunn, Alumni Services Coordinator, responds: Thank you for your email. When you study with the OU you are eligible for an NUS Extra Card – for further details on this, please contact OUSA on +44 (0)1908 652026 or visit www.open.ac.uk/ousa. You also automatically become part of the OU alumni association upon completion of a cert, dip, degree or higher qualification. As an alumna of the OU you do have access to a number of discounts and benefits that we put in place (see www.open.ac.uk/alumni/offers/alumni-benefits.php). You will need to log in using your username and password to view the benefits.



Honorary graduate Terry Waite

Please contact us again should you have any further questions.

A DISHONOUR?

Honorary graduates make those who actually do the work feel like idiots! Hopefully they pay the same fees?

ROY WHITEHEAD MSc (SALFORD) BA HONS (OU) PhD (DUNDEE)

Tony Barker, Head of Awards and Ceremonies, responds: Thank you for your email, Roy. Nearly all UK universities have the power to award honorary degrees and the OU has a series of criteria against which nominations for honorary degrees are to be judged.

Actual experience, and both formal and informal feedback from our graduates and their guests who attend our degree ceremonies, confirms that generally there is no ill feeling towards these awards. Indeed, we find that our honorary graduates and our 'normal' graduates, who have studied hard for their awards, stand in mutual appreciation of each other's different efforts and contributions made for their different awards. One reason for this happy state of affairs might be that the honorary graduates selected

fulfil criteria that reflect the same, inclusive and broadening ethos that is a cornerstone of the OU's mission. I would invite you to look at the cumulative list of those on whom honorary degrees have recently been conferred (see www3.open.ac.uk/ceremonies/graddir.pdf), as I'm confident that you will find the work of those featured has resulted in benefits that are entirely in tune with our own ethos.

ONLINE SESAME IS NOT WEB FRIENDLY

No reply required. *Sesame* is an excellent publication which I always read.

I hesitate to suggest anything that entails effort and cost, and I suspect that others have made the suggestion already, but it may be worth considering at some time in the future providing *Sesame* in a web-friendly read-right-across-the-page format as opposed to the column-based print-friendly PDFs. I think many people now read the magazine in electronic rather than paper form, often on smaller screens where the full page cannot be displayed and read without manipulation.

BILL STEVENSON, VIA EMAIL

Scott Russon, Editor of Sesame, responds: Thanks for your comments, Bill. The online version of *Sesame* is simply a PDF version of the magazine, which is printed and mailed to a select number of students and alumni.

If you are a currently registered student, then you can request to receive *Sesame* as a hard copy by emailing sesame@open.ac.uk. There are no plans to develop a *Sesame* website as we have developed www.open.ac.uk/platform, which is a vibrant virtual campus where OU students and alumni can meet, socialise, support, debate and engage with each other and with the University.



TWO DECADES AND STILL GOING STRONG...

Hi! I've just completed my nineteenth consecutive year of Open University study, and am about to start on my twentieth. Is it possible to issue an Open Challenge through *Sesame* to see if anyone can beat this?

DAVE LANE (CURRENTLY COMING TOWARDS THE END OF THE MSc IN MATHS), VIA EMAIL

Scott Russon, Editor of Sesame, responds: Well done, Dave. What a fantastic feat!

Now we do know that there are people out there who can beat Dave's nearly two decades of continuous study, but it's not for us to name names! But if you've surpassed Dave's 20-year mark, and want to shout about it, then get in touch with the details of when and what you studied by emailing sesame@open.ac.uk



WRITING'S A THRILLER

I thought I'd send this email just to express my gratitude to the OU for keeping alive my interest in creative writing. I was formerly a police officer, amongst other things, and retired a few years ago. I had always had a strong interest in writing despite years of intensive training and practice in writing bland unimaginative reports which probably destroyed any creative talent that I may have had.

When I retired, I wrote a crime story which I sent off to a couple of agents. It is an indication of how naïve I was that I thought my story would be immediately scooped up and published. I was soon to be enlightened. Cutting a long story

short, if you'll excuse the pun, I thought maybe I should take a course and learn a few basic writing skills.

The result is that I am currently doing *Advanced creative writing* (A363) and hope to complete my BA degree next year. With each course I have completed, I have learnt more and more – and my love of writing has grown.

I have also had the opportunity to do some work for a literature magazine and I was also a volunteer for BBC Radio 4 *It's My Story*.

It may be that I will never be a famous or successful writer but I will certainly be a much better educated reader thanks to the OU.

DAVID BELL, SOUTH AYRSHIRE.



Child Of Our Time

A family affair

BBC/OU co-production *Child Of Our Time* returns to our screens midway through the planned 20-year project and links to a major national online survey, the BBC 'Big Personality Test'...



Child Of Our Time has reached the halfway point in a planned 20-year project

● A UNIQUE PIECE of TV is celebrating its 10th birthday. The *Child Of Our Time* series began in 2000 to track the development of 25 children born to 22 families in the Millennium year. Since then the BBC and OU have built up a uniquely detailed record of childhood in the 21st century.

This year is the halfway point for what is planned to be a 20-year project. For the small but representative sample of UK families involved it's been an eventful decade. "One of the things the series shows is how well the families and children cope with challenges that they face. There have been ups and downs, with both positive and negative changes in most of the families, such as illnesses and geographical moves," says John Oates, Senior Lecturer at the OU, who has worked with the production team for the past eight years.

The new series marks its 10-year landmark by linking to a major national online survey, the BBC 'Big Personality Test', conducted at the end of 2009. The test gives individuals the opportunity to find out more about themselves and their own personality and think about the links between their personality,

"One of the strengths of *Child Of Our Time* and the associated OU website is that it's not just presenting 'facts'"

and their life. This nationwide investigation had more than 200,000 respondents by early January, making it the biggest ever UK survey of personality.

The focus for the 2010 series is not just on the individual families: the series will also reveal some of the results of the Big Personality Test. The test uses widely

recognised and well-used measures of personality, and links these to factors such as happiness, family, health and career choice.

This OU broadcast project will continue to develop the wide range of online resources available via our www.open2.net website where discussions,

debates and feedback have been provided throughout the years.

The website has also become popular with parents: "Here you can find a rich resource about children's development," says David Messer, Professor of Education, an OU academic adviser to the series. "For

example, there are free 'cards' with information on different topics, and activities for parents and children that have been downloaded in thousands from the website."

John Oates adds: "One of the strengths of *Child Of Our Time* and the associated OU website is that it's not just presenting 'facts'. There are many ways to be a good parent. The work we've done in the series is to improve communication and relationships between parents and children.

"Parents need to understand how important it is to really listen to their children. We are committed to using *Child Of Our Time* and the website to disseminate these messages in ways that can make sense to parents. It has been a particularly successful collaboration between the BBC and the OU. Viewers have been in the several millions, and we have a very big interest in the information and activities on our website." Material has also fed into OU courses, particularly *Child development* (ED209) and *Understanding children* (Y156) [see right].

David adds: "This project has also had great research value. The series has built up a massive and unique visual archive of the lives of 25 children. We recently completed a project looking at using this archive in conjunction with the big national 'cohort' studies that are following many thousands of children as they grow up.

"Bringing different types of research-based information to the general public is vital." See p15 for an interview with *Child Of Our Time* presenter Sir Robert Winston.

Biodiversity project

Animal attraction

New radio programme to track animals in the wild...



The widely studied Purple Emperor butterfly

● THE OPEN UNIVERSITY is joining with the BBC Natural History Unit to carry out an 'animal audit', marking the International Year of Biodiversity 2010.

The team will be doing this on *World On The Move: Saving Species*, a Radio 4 series of 40 weekly programmes

which will track animals in the wild and report on the big conservation stories.

"The idea is to get the audience close to the wildlife and to the people who are working with wildlife in the field," says Dr Janet Sumner, who is the OU's Broadcast and Learning Executive in Science

and Technology. "Because it's live, it's something like a natural history version of news magazine programmes. But it's more than just news, because it's very much covering the science as well."

The series will link into the OU's iSpot website (www.ispot.org.uk) and to activities which will be going on over the international year of biodiversity.

Supplementing the broadcast programmes will be extended interviews and podcasts available on iTunes U and YouTube. It's likely some of the material will be incorporated in OU courses.

World On The Move: Saving Species is due to air in spring on Radio 4. Check listings for details.

Course connection



Understanding children (Y156)

"I did this course after having my daughter, as I wanted to understand more about children of all ages 'in preparation' and I also plan to become a teacher.

"The DVD on other students' experiences was motivating and the whole package was easy to use and made the course very enjoyable."

Student Sharon Ann Linley Registration closes 17 May for a June start. For more details call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

Science with bang!

Bang Goes The Theory

Get set for more fun exploration of science...

● The prime-time OU/BBC science series *Bang Goes The Theory* returns to BBC One for its second run – and we're hoping one of the presenters will be tackling an Open University Science course. If that happens, viewers will be able to follow his or her progress in the programmes.

The series, which launched in July last year, aims to demonstrate to a very wide audience that science is accessible and can be fun.

"It has been incredibly successful in attracting a family audience," says Dr Janet Sumner. "The challenge for the BBC and the OU now is to engage the 25- to 35-year-olds, those who were perhaps put off science at school."

Subjects for the next series include G-force and steam



Bang Goes The Theory is back soon

generation, and some reflection on how old technology has influenced what we have today. There's also an insight into extreme weather, and a look at cutting down on CO₂ usage.

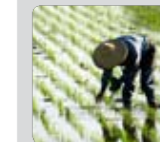
Bang Goes The Theory is expected to be shown on BBC One in the spring. Check listings for details.

TV round-up

Latest news

OU/BBC CLIMATE FILM AVAILABLE ONLINE...

HOPE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE



AT LAST, A good news story about what we are doing to the environment.

Parts of China's Loess Plateau faced environmental ruin as over-farming took its toll on the ecosystem. In *Hope In A Changing Climate*, John Liu documents how local people have turned the situation around in 15 years, transforming a barren wasteland into a life-sustaining environment.

The film-maker and environmentalist has recorded how the transformation was achieved, talking to scientists and local people about changing farming practices. And he has travelled to Rwanda and Ethiopia to see the impact that similar projects are having on equally challenging areas of environmental devastation.

You can watch *Hope In A Changing Climate*, a co-production between the OU and Environmental Education Media Project for the BBC, on the Creative Climate website. www.open.ac.uk/creativeclimate

The OU/BBC website www.open2.net has information about all OU/BBC series. You can also discuss issues raised in programmes in the online forums and follow up a topic of interest with more in-depth information.

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Robert Winston interview

How are the kids?

Robert Winston, Professor of Science and Society at Imperial College London and presenter of *Child Of Our Time*, talks to *Sesame* about children, education and controlling science...



● ROBERT WINSTON IS, among other things, a researcher, broadcaster, member of the House of Lords, Chairman of the Royal College of Music and Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University.

He's back on our TV screens for the next in the series of the BBC/OU co-production *Child Of Our Time*, which on this occasion is linked to a major national online survey, the BBC 'Big Personality Test'.

Can you reveal anything in advance about the results of the Big Personality Test?

What I can say is there has been a massive response. A quarter of a million people have done the test, so we have a big survey from right across the UK.

Why do you think *Child Of Our Time* is so popular?

Because we have all been

children, and most of us raise children, and children are an absolutely fascinating part of humanity. And, for most of us, they are the most important aspect of our lives.

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the next generation?

I've always been optimistic about the next generation, and I'm very optimistic about our society. I don't think working on *Child Of Our Time* has changed that view.

But a lot of people talk about kids nowadays not having a decent home life, the decline of families sitting around the table and talking, etc?

It's all rubbish. People who decry modern upbringing forget what it was like in, say, 1803 or 1710. I think there has been a steady improvement in our

"The best way of learning is by taking up new projects. As long as you are learning you are useful"

society. Children are much better off now in general than they were. It's not by any means perfect, but when we look at the Edlington incident and throw our hands up in horror and say our society is degenerating, as some politicians have said – they are talking through their hats. What they forget is these are exceptional, rare events. Yes, there are many ways in which we should be able to improve the childhood experience, but as a whole I think there are lots of reasons to be optimistic.

When it comes to improving the childhood experience, what should we do?

Value children more, and that means making sure that we have the best educational system, which I don't believe we have. I think our education system has improved, but not nearly enough. It could be more creative. Perhaps the slavish attention to results and to landmarks is not always in the best interests of children.

You hold a number of roles including researcher, broadcaster, Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University, etc. Where do you get the energy to fit all this in?

I feel the best way of learning is by taking up new projects. As long as you are learning you are useful, and once you stop learning there is no point in doing something. So in my view, making sure you continue to learn is a very good way of ensuring that you find energy to do new things.

What are your latest projects outside *Child Of Our Time*?

I've got a book coming next month called *Bad Ideas?* which is a history of technology. It looks at science from the beginning of mankind and before – i.e. from the hand axe right through to nanotechnology. It's arguing that science can either be for good or for ill, and we have to be much more aware of how we control the negative side of science.

Child Of Our Time, BBC One, is due to be screened in May. For more see www.open2.net

Course connection



The early years: developing practice (E100)

This course is for anyone currently working with young children aged between birth and seven years. You will focus on the responsibilities, knowledge and skills underpinning your work with young children and with other adults, including the nature of young children's learning and development.

Registration closes 16 March. For more information call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

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Martin Bean,
Vice Chancellor, The Open University

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Courses

The latest information on new and exciting courses

Science in sport

On your marks, get set...

What are the real physical challenges of endurance sport? How do sprinters make such rapid starts? How do you bend it like Beckham? A new science course has the answers to these sport-related questions and more...

● WHAT MAKES AN Olympic champion that little bit higher, faster or more accurate than all the rest? Talent, training and commitment, of course, but ultimately sports performance is governed by the laws of science. Understanding these laws is now an important factor in success in most major sporting events.

So anyone with an interest in sport should take a look at *Sport: the science behind the medals* (S172), a new 10-point course launching in May. The course introduces the physical concepts that underlie the way top athletes like cyclist Chris Hoy or swimmer Rebecca Adlington move and interact with their environment.

"We look at things like velocity, acceleration, the physics involved in jumping, the problems of moving through water, air resistance, the role of momentum in ball sports, the chemistry of sports drinks," says Professor Bob Lambourne, co-author of the course.

"It's oriented towards the physical sciences – physics, chemistry and materials science – rather than the biomedical sciences. What's been a great delight to me, as Professor of Educational Physics, has been the wonderful range of examples of physics in sport – it's astonishing how interesting and varied they are, and how they



"Understanding the science can improve performance at sports"

help illuminate the sport involved."

The focus is on Olympic sports, including track and field events, swimming and diving, and cycling. Science has had an impact on some sports more than others, Bob says. "Take tennis, for example – there have been tremendous developments because of our understanding of the nature of motion of a ball in the atmosphere, the interaction

between the ball and racquet, and the ball and court surfaces. But there are other sports where the impact of science hasn't been so great: people have tended to carry on doing them as they always have."

As well as improvements to technology, training and preparation is another area where science is to the fore, he says. "Understanding the science can improve performance at sports; elite

athletes are aware of these things, if only because their coaches tell them," says Bob.

The course is bound to interest sports practitioners and coaches but it is not a coaching course. "If people are thinking the course will help them improve their performance in sport – well, we hope it will, but we don't want to make any unrealistic claims," explains Bob. "This is a science in sport course, not a sports science course. What we can safely say is it will help people to consider their performance."

It's also safe to say the course will give sports enthusiasts an enjoyable introduction to physical sciences. "We are always looking to broaden the range of people interested in science, and looking for ways of making science more approachable and appealing – and that's what this course is trying to do," says Bob.

The course is also one of 19 short science courses that can be used to make up the 60-point Certificate in Contemporary Science (C70).

■ **Course connection**
Sport: the science behind the medals (S172): registration closes 14 May for a start later in the month. For more info, call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

New courses

Whether you want to develop your career path, retrain or just broaden your horizons, the OU has more than 570 courses for you to try. Here are some of the latest available...



What do you know about Britain's financial heart?

Introduction to financial services (BD131)

Spotlight on finance

Banking crisis makes course a hot topic...

● NOT MANY BUSINESS sectors move faster than financial services, as the current economic crisis vividly illustrates. *Introduction to financial services* (BD131) is, then, a timely arrival.

Course Chair Martin Upton says: "The fall-out from the recent banking crisis has made the regulation of financial services firms a very 'hot topic'. The course both provides coverage of the crisis and keeps abreast of the regulatory developments and other consequences for the sector.

"The course materials are provided entirely online,

thereby supplying the means for the course team to keep students up to date with the rapidly unfolding events in the financial services industry."

The market for this course extends not just to those working on the 'inside' of the financial services industry but to all who engage in business with financial firms, adds Martin.

■ **Course connection**
An integral part of the *Foundation Degree in Financial Services, Introduction to financial services* (BD131) starts in May, with registration closing on 30 April. For more information call **0845 300 6090**.

Foundation Degree in Primary Teaching and Learning

Chance to teach

Degree aimed at teaching assistants

● THE FOUNDATION Degree in Primary Teaching and Learning is an exciting series of courses aimed especially at teaching assistants and other adults in primary schools who support children's learning.

Kimberly Safford, Head of Awards, Primary Teaching and Learning, says: "You may be a classroom or teaching assistant, a special needs auxiliary, a behaviour support assistant, a cover supervisor, a learning mentor, a parent volunteer or a Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

"In the OU Foundation Degree you study the ways in which children learn in the

primary years and how adults can support this learning in the most effective ways."

To study for this foundation degree you must have at least one year's experience in a primary school, supporting children's learning in a paid or voluntary capacity. For the three compulsory work-based courses, you must be working with children in a primary school for a minimum of five hours a week.

■ **Course connection**
For more information on The *Foundation Degree in Primary Teaching and Learning*, including specific courses, call **0845 300 6090** or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring



Develop your skills to support children in the classroom

Working in virtual project teams (M891)

Virtual teamwork

Develop valuable workplace technology skills



Team working is no longer restricted by the location of people involved

● IN THE MODERN business world, team members scattered across great distances is an increasingly common experience. New course *Working in virtual project teams* (M891) will be a vital tool in this environment.

Course Team Chair Dr Kay Bromley says: "Virtual teams use a variety of electronic media to interact, but the basic principles of team working still hold. Choosing

appropriate media, however, can make a lot of difference to the experience. This course looks at the development of technology for collaboration. The course enables students from any sector to bring new ideas and skills to their work."

■ **Course connection**
Working in virtual project teams registration closes 31 March for a May start. Call **0845 300 6090** or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more details.

Contemporary Wales (D172)

Diversity of Wales

Explore the changing and distinctive culture

● THE OLD IMAGES of Wales are changing as the nation becomes an increasingly distinctive part of the UK – a change that has increased since devolution.

Contemporary Wales (D172) is a 15-point Level 1 course that explores what is distinctive about Wales and the Welsh identity through two main themes – the differences that are to be found within Wales and the connections that have been forged between people in the nation.

Course Chair Hugh Mackay says: "The course explores how things work and come together, and how they are fragmented – Wales has a



huge diversity of differences in a very small nation. The course looks at how people come together as a nation."

■ **Course connection**
Contemporary Wales registration closes 9 April for a May start. Call **0845 300 6090** or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more details.

Course updates



A good investment!

With the economy edging out of recession, there's never been a better time to launch the new Level 2 course *Personal investment in an uncertain world* (DB234).

The 30-point course looks at where, why and how you should invest, and examines the relationship between risk and return, and is particularly relevant to anyone working in, or aiming to work in, the financial services industry.

Registration closes on 9 April.



Chemical change

Chemical change on the molecular scale – in the laboratory, in industry, in a car exhaust – is the subject of the new course *Chemical change and environmental applications* (S345).

The 20-point Level 3 course aims to develop an understanding of the factors that guide and control a chemical reaction, and also to look at the practical consequences in an environmental context – for example, those relating to industrial chemical production, pollution and energy generation. Registration closes 9 April.

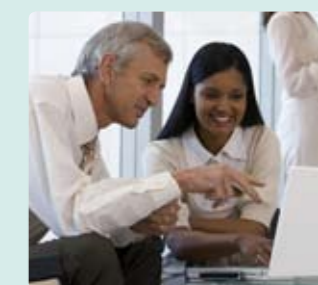
Workplace diversity

The Centre for Professional Learning and Development (CPLD) now has more than 70 CPD courses available for online study. Many of these courses are targeted to meet the needs of managers today, such as dealing with the complex issues of ethics, and religious and ethnic diversity in the workplace.

Ethics at work: professional and vocational ethics in the 21st century (GA028) uses cases and analysis to increase professionals' confidence and competence in handling complex, important and topical ethical issues.

Respecting religious diversity at work (GA063) is aimed at professionals who need to understand and respond to colleagues' and clients' different religious beliefs and practices, and addresses practical work implications of religious diversity.

Managing diversity (GB031) is for managers who need to understand and address equality and diversity issues in the workplace – staff, customers, suppliers. This course will help them improve working practices and promote respect and good business practice.



For more information on all of the above courses, including registration dates and applicable fees, please call **0845 366 6038** or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

Graduate interview

Best defence

After almost two decades in the police force, James Hartson decided he wanted to switch career to become a barrister – and will now be defending the kind of people he once apprehended...



Policeman-turning-barrister James Hartson (inset) collects his OU degree

OU LAW GRADUATE

James Hartson is set to leave the police service to become a barrister – defending people he has so far spent his career trying to arrest.

James, aged 37, who gained a First Class LLB (Hons), says he first became interested in switching legal professions when he gave evidence at a terrorism trial at the Old Bailey.

"It was that experience that made me think I would enjoy

way I could study for the degree and work at the same time.

"I don't see it as that much of a jump because I am moving from one legal profession to another. I will be an independent barrister, and both the police and barristers are concerned with facts, evidence and justice."

James joined the police at 18 and made the conscious decision not to go to university because he was keen to join

"I'm looking forward to learning a new profession, because Open University students like learning new things"

being a barrister," he said. "I am so glad I made the phone call to the OU, because it was the only

the Metropolitan Police. During his time with the Met, he worked in the 'busy' boroughs

of Lambeth, Brixton and Woolwich, and also worked as a detective in Scotland Yard.

In 2004, after 14 years in the Met, he moved back to his native Wales to work in Cardiff and realise his dreams of becoming a barrister.

He embarked on the OU law degree, studying during the two-hour daily train journey to and from his home in Swansea. He completed the four compulsory law courses – *Understanding law* (W200), *Law: the individual and the state* (W201), *Law: agreements, rights and responsibilities* (W300) and *Law: ownership and trusteeship: rights and responsibilities* (W301) – plus two additional courses, *Rules, rights and justice: an introduction to law* (W100) and *Start studying the arts* (A103).

"There was nothing better than preparing for an essay or reading a chapter of the course while I was travelling," said James, a father of three.

"I couldn't study at home because my children were very young and I was lucky to have those two hours a day which I could really capitalise on.

"I had been working in the law for 14 years, and even though criminal law is a small part of the degree, it was helpful to have a legal background."

Although James had a lot of support from his family, some of his colleagues thought he was crazy because a career in the police is seen as a well-paid job for life. Not only is James giving up a very secure job, but he is embarking on a career which is fraught with tough challenges.

At present, James is studying his Bar Vocational Course part

time at the University of the West of England in Bristol, while working full time as a Sergeant with the British Transport Police. He is only the second of 36 mature students on his course to gain a pupillage in Chambers.

"Barristers are tough, resilient, hard working and they have been around for 800 years," he says. "I'm looking forward to being part of a very noble profession and a solid justice system. I'm looking forward to learning a new profession, because OU students like learning new things. And I am looking forward to doing justice for my clients, whoever they may be."

Course connection



Understanding law (W200)

"The course was extremely interesting and enjoyable. I specifically liked the areas on European law. The tutors on the course were excellent and made the experience of studying a pleasure.

I would recommend this course to anybody interested in learning or developing their knowledge of the law."

Student David Herbert Herold

Registration closes 15 December 2010. For more information call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

Online learning material

Courses iTunes

While the presence of The Open University on iTunes U continues to grow and downloads rise, the site is now being used by some course teams to provide easy access to course material...

● The OU's presence on iTunes U has made huge leaps since its launch more than 18 months ago. Not only has the OU had its 15 millionth free download on the site, material is now being especially commissioned for iTunes U.

In addition, in the first course to hit the 'OU only' story, students on *Understanding global heritage* (AD281) have the option of downloading course resources to their mobile devices from a private iTunes U site to which they have exclusive access through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Course teams have been working with the OU's iTunes U teams to produce content that can be used in course production.

At present, audio and video clips from 120 courses are represented on the site, with new material continually being uploaded. A total of 20 per cent of the OU's downloads on iTunes U are in languages, with other popular areas being arts, humanities and science.

The 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and 150th of *On the Origin of Species* was marked with a collaboration between the OU's Open Broadcasting Unit (which develops high-quality



You can now access some OU course material direct from iTunes

one of his direct descendents, offers a series of unique insights into what he was like as a son, husband and father.

New material is also being created with an iTunes audience in mind, particularly to mark events or anniversaries, such as *The Internet at 40*, with the OU's Professor of the Public Understanding of Technology,

privately accessible to students on *Understanding global heritage* (AD281) – in addition to material from the course which has been reworked for a more general audience on the public site.

Members of the public can access some of the material, organised into four thematic albums, using The Open University's public iTunes U site. However, students can also access the material arranged as weekly downloads from a private iTunes U site by logging on to the VLE and clicking on the 'course resources' section which then takes them through to iTunes.

The full set of course materials is only available to students who are enrolled on that course. Rodney Harrison,

Lecturer in Heritage Studies, said: "It's all part of our philosophy to make study as flexible as possible, wherever our students are and in a way that suits them.

"Students will have the choice of using the DVD which is sent out in their course materials, or they can download the course materials in a weekly download on to their MP3 player.

"It is very easy to do, and it is a solution for providing students with large chunks of video that would not be very elegantly streamed or downloaded."

www.open.ac.uk/itunes/

Course connection



Understanding global heritage (AD281)

What is the nature and value of heritage? Why are certain objects, places and practices considered more worthy of protection than others? This course will introduce you to the study of heritage and its function at local, regional, national and global levels. You will learn about changing approaches to heritage and conservation in worldwide societies from the 18th to early 21st centuries.

Registration closes 9 September. Call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more details.

"It's all part of our philosophy to make study as flexible as possible, wherever our students are"

programmes) and the British Council, which supplied content to be distributed on iTunes.

Albums in the *Darwin Now* series include 'Charles Darwin – The Man' in which Ruth Padel,

John Naughton, being interviewed about the history and development of the internet during the past four decades.

iTunes has now gone full circle with albums being

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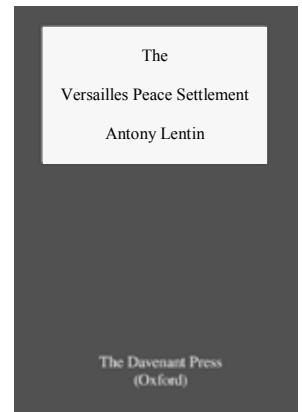
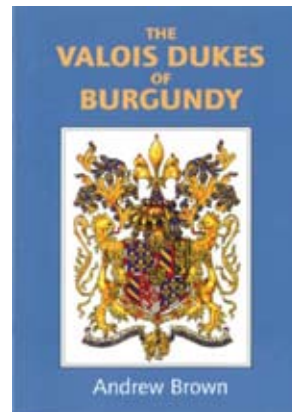
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People

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Graduate story

Streets ahead

Pursuing an acting career meant attending a traditional university was not on the cards for Katy Cavanagh. Instead she chose to study with the OU, while chasing criminals and drinking in the Rovers Return...



Katy Cavanagh in *Coronation Street*

● FOR MANY, KATY Cavanagh is most recognisable for her current role as Julie Carp in *Coronation Street*. Her breakthrough, though, came with the gritty BBC police drama *The Cops* back in 1998.

Gaining a place at the acclaimed Royal Academy of Dramatic Art meant the possibility of attending Cambridge University fell by the wayside. Instead, she decided to study with The Open University in tandem with her burgeoning career.

"I was about 23 when I got my first TV job," she recalls. "I work in a very precarious profession, so I wasn't certain

"I feel a massive sense of achievement and I now have the 'bug' to do an MA or perhaps another degree"

where that job was going to lead. Both my parents are teachers and it was my Dad who suggested that maybe I should consider studying with the OU."

Katy graduated in June 2009 at the Manchester ceremony, collecting a humanities degree. "It was a perfect day," she says. "There were so many people of different ages, and stories of people that had fought against all odds to get there. The evidence of the struggle that people have been through is massive and is really powerful. It was fantastic to be part of it."

Katy says studying for her degree has transformed her: "I feel a massive sense of achievement and I now have the 'bug' to do an MA or perhaps another degree."

During her time studying with the OU Katy was pregnant twice, which meant taking two exams as she was near to giving birth. "I look back on it now and don't know how I managed." Not having a nine to five job did mean that Katy could do work in fits and starts,

studying intensely between acting roles. And, as any actor will confirm, there's a lot of waiting around while on set, so that dead time also came in useful. "Other actors were

constantly asking what I was doing," she says. Though it turns out one enquirer wasn't co-star David Neilson, aka Roy Cropper. He graduated with the OU in 1996. "I didn't know that," she says when *Sesame* asked if he gave her any words of advice. "I'll definitely have to speak to him about it now!"

Course connection



The arts past and present (AA100)

"I nicknamed this The Crash Course In Absolutely Everything. It takes you on a journey from the ancient world to the modern, taking in a host of subjects from literature to art history to political history. With a different subject each week, you won't get bored. This was my first OU course and was a good way to start." *Student Paul Conway*

Registration closes 9 September. For more information call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring



Shami Chakrabarti

PHOTO: GURJIT NAHAL

Honorary graduate interview

Civil action

Director of Liberty, and Honorary Graduate of The Open University, Shami Chakrabarti, talks to *Sesame* about 'the War on Terror', civil liberties, Anglo-American relations and the financial pressures being placed on students throughout the United Kingdom...

● SHAMI CHAKRABARTI has been Director of Liberty (The National Council for Civil Liberties) since September 2003, having joined Liberty as In-House Counsel on 10 September 2001. She subsequently became heavily involved in the engagement with the 'War on Terror' and with the defence and promotion of human rights values in Parliament, the courts and wider society. She previously worked as a lawyer in the Home Office from 1996 until 2001. She is also Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University, a Governor of the London School of Economics and the British Film Institute, and a Visiting Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford.

In 2006 you were nominated for the Most Inspiring Political Figure award. You came second to Jamie Oliver but ahead of Tony Blair. Was it a strange losing to a chef but beating a Prime Minister? It certainly wasn't a strange feeling losing to Jamie Oliver. He had just fought his incredibly successful school dinners campaign and clearly caught the imagination of the country. So it was actually quite an honour to come second to him. Coming above politicians is maybe a sign of the times that people are perhaps increasingly sceptical of party politicians, which is not something I celebrate.

You're a keen supporter of Anglo-American relations: what are your thoughts on the relationship during the Bush era and what sense of

change is there in the relationship now Obama is running the country?

I think that the United Kingdom and the United States are great, old democracies, and I fear that during the Bush years, and in particular during the War on Terror, those two great democracies rather let themselves down and became a bad advert, rather than a good advert, for democracy around the world. That said, the great thing about democracies is that they are resilient and capable of correcting themselves. President Obama may disappoint: it would be hard not to given the build-up he has had, but let's see what it's like to work with a United States that wants to work with other countries around the world rather than bossing everyone.

You joined Liberty the day before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. How much do you think that event changed the direction of your role?

You could say that I am blessed with the best or worst timing in history. I can remember coming to work at Liberty the day before 9/11 and thinking what should we do now? What should the priorities of the organisation be? I wonder what lies ahead? To some extent my questions were answered the very next day. We quickly realised that there were going to be some very bad mistakes made in the name of this ill-judged War on Terror. The great potential for sympathy and unity that the democracies could have had at that moment was blown. So I guess the War

on Terror became Liberty's challenge in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and I guess to some extent we are still feeling the repercussions today. But out of adversity comes opportunity, and whilst it was a terrible moment and terrible mistakes were made afterwards, I think perhaps in Britain we have become a little less complacent about our human rights as a result. We've seen how laws passed for one purpose can be so easily used and abused. While that's all very sad, I think Britain has had a wake-up call out of that dark period, and for civil liberties and human rights maybe something more positive will come.

The OU has a course (see right) which examines civil and criminal sanctions, issues raised by human rights legislation, and the concepts of rights and justice. What advice would you give to students when approaching and critically assessing these issues?

I would say that particularly in the context of human rights but probably in relation to the law generally, you have to remember that the law slots into a wider world of policy and politics. You can't completely separate the world of the law, law making and the interpretation of the law from the society in which it sits. So my advice is always remember the political context in which these legal debates occur.

You are Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University. How has this role informed you about

the current state of university education and the financial pressures on students?

I have been surprised about how tough it is for students today compared to how it was when I was a student 20 years ago. The effect of tuition fees and the general tough times that student finance is going through, the general effect of that is very worrying. But it's also inspiring to see the work that universities are doing, not just for their own students and community but how engaged they are with the local community too.

Course connection



Rules, rights and justice... (W100)

"W100 is a wonderful starting point for anybody who is interested in law. There's a great deal of variety and, despite the size of some of the set books, it's not daunting if you keep steadily working at it. I would strongly recommend going to the tutorials. I had never been able to attend tutorials before and I was very apprehensive but they were so worthwhile." *Student Suzanne Taylor*
Registration closes 15 December 2010. Call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more details.

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Tutor interview

First flight

Formerly a fighter pilot, Open University Business School tutor Jo Salter tells *Sesame* how she still applies the skills and experiences she learned in the RAF in her day-to-day work...



Jo during her fighter pilot days (above); and now (inset)



● MANY AN aspiring talent has been labelled a 'high flier', but Open

University Business School tutor and graduate Jo Salter is the real thing.

Jo was the UK's first female fast-jet pilot when only five other women in the world held the same status. A member of the legendary 617 Dambusters

no-fly zone in northern Iraq?"

Jo initially joined the RAF at 18 to train as an Engineering Officer. But in 1989, the year she graduated, the ban on women pilots was lifted.

Jo decided to have a go at the pilot aptitude tests, and uncovered a hidden talent. "It wasn't until I actually flew my first trip that I found I loved it."

Her experiences taught her a lot about decision making and coping with stressful situations

"Experience and skills we learn are transferable: they become part of our character, part of our make-up"

squadron, while studying for her MBA she once asked her tutor "can I have an extension because I'm policing the

— like the occasion when enemy missiles locked on to her Tornado GR1 fighter plane. "It's something you've been trained

very well for, and you're surrounded by other people who are doing the same thing. You know what your mission is, you know what you have to achieve. You do it in a very controlled manner."

She still applies what she learnt in the RAF in her work. "Experience and skills we learn are transferable: they become part of our character, part of our make-up and the way we behave in our future life."

The most useful skills are the ability to cope with a number of things going on at once, handling stress and getting the right focus, she said.

"When you're flying, you need to look out a lot, as well as focusing on a target; similarly in business, sometimes we need a 'scattergun' approach, while sometimes we really need to narrow things down and pinpoint what we have to do."

After serving in Iraq, Jo went on to become an RAF flight instructor but left in 1999.

"It was a transformational time for the RAF. They were having women in the front line for the first time, which was a cultural change of quite mammoth proportions," she said.

"Being at the forefront of change is exhausting. I knew I didn't want to be in it for the long term." And the birth of the first of her two daughters in 1998 changed her priorities. She continues to fly at weekends, teaching air cadets and university air squadron students in the RAF's Air Experience Flights (training units).

Jo studied with The Open University Business School and achieved her MBA just six

months after leaving the air force. She went into e-commerce, until the birth of her second daughter precipitated another lifestyle shift to the portfolio career she now has: a mixture of management consultancy, public speaking engagements, writing, teaching and "making things happen".

Her second book, *Energize!*, was published last year. And she is also an Open University Business School tutor on the online courses *Managing 1: organisations and people* (BZX628) and *Managing 2: marketing and finance* (BZX629) in the OU's South region (Region 2).

Course connection



Managing 1: organisations and people (BZX628)

This course is the first in a suite of three courses that lead to the award of the Professional Certificate in Management. Designed for managers, aspiring managers, team leaders and supervisors, it uses activities and problem solving to take you through core topics in organisational behaviour and human resource management.

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Student interview

A helping hand

When Jason Quinn decided he wanted to study with the OU to become a youth worker, he didn't expect to be told he was dyslexic. Equally surprising was the level of support the OU offered him...



Jason Quinn and his son Joshua

● IT WAS ONLY after starting a course with the OU that 32-year-old Jason Quinn discovered he had dyslexia.

And it is thanks in part to donations to the OU (which can include money left in wills, see right) that students like Jason are able to have access to specialised equipment.

Jason never suspected he was dyslexic but found he was struggling with essay writing

Disabled Students, who booked a session with a specialist.

"Initially it was quite a shock to find out I was dyslexic," said Jason, "but the more I thought about it, it was good to know something was not right."

"At school I had been teased by other kids because I had difficulty with my writing. I always knew I couldn't spell and I have trouble writing sentences. I know what I want to say in my

how it affects his studies and what equipment was available to him. He was subsequently given a new PC, a printer, and a scanner, as well as recording devices for lectures. "The one thing that has impressed me is the voice recognition software that I can now use to write emails and essays," he said.

"One of the biggest things worrying me was wondering what people thought of me because of what I wrote. Now the equipment has given me the confidence because I am writing what I intend to write."

Jason took up a course with the OU when he decided that he wanted to embark on a career as a youth worker.

"I have been working as a security guard for eight years at Victoria Station," he said. "I would often spend time talking to young people who I had caught shoplifting as we waited for the police to arrive. I heard some horrendous things and decided I wanted to do something about it because it was upsetting me."

When Jason completes this year's studies, he will gain a Certificate qualification which will allow him to work with young people. At present he volunteers two nights a week at a local youth club.

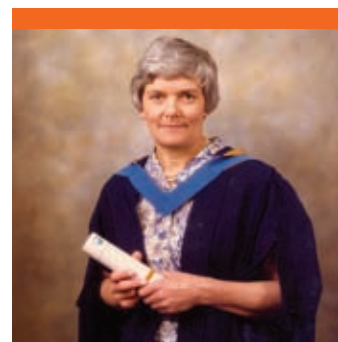
"I have now started the next stage of my University studies with *Introduction to working with young people in practice* (E118) and intend to continue through to a foundation degree in youth work.

"I have found that I can now do a lot more without help and this equipment has given me a lot more independence. This new-found freedom and belief in myself means that in a few years' time I will be able to

pursue a career as a youth worker." Jason added: "I am really impressed that I spent a little money at the beginning for the testing but what I got out of it was phenomenal."

"If someone is thinking about leaving money to the OU in their Will, I would say definitely do it – even if it's a small amount."

To find out more about fundraising at the OU, visit www.open.ac.uk/fundraising



Legacy donor: Pamela Denny

The OU was one of a number of charities to benefit from Pamela Denny's will after her death in 2008. Pamela (above) specifically left her gift for the OU's Student Assistance Fund to help students such as Jason.

A former teacher for children with learning and behavioural difficulties, Pamela obtained a BA from the OU in 1981. She also worked as a voluntary adult literacy tutor for many years, learning sign language in order to help deaf students.

To find out how you can leave a gift in your will to help fellow students, contact our Legacy Officer, Karen Hart, at k.i.hart@open.ac.uk or call +44 (0)1908 659141

"Initially it was quite a shock to discover I was dyslexic"

and keeping up with lectures on his course *An introduction to working with young people* (E131). His tutor suspected that there might be a problem and put him in touch with the University's Services for

head, and I type what I think is in my head, but when I read it back I am not reading what I have actually written, but what I intended to write."

After Jason was diagnosed with dyslexia he was shown

Student story

Waste not, want not

As a boy, Rob Sharpe's teachers thought he was disruptive and persuaded him that further education wasn't for him. Years later, he turned to the OU in the first step to a successful career in the waste industry...



Husband and wife Rob and Jan (inset) met while studying with the OU

● WHILE HE WAS at school Rob Sharpe thought he was like any other “normal, boisterous teenager” – but his teachers thought otherwise. Despite having an interest in science, Rob, now 39, was considered disruptive by the school and he was persuaded not to return to the sixth form. As a result, he decided to move from Ashbourne, Derbyshire, to the bright lights of the capital.

After taking up a job as a motorcycle courier for a merchant bank, however, Rob decided that London life wasn't for him and returned home. A series of “dead-end” jobs

to education and decided to take up the OU's *Science foundation course* (S102).

“I saw things about the OU and thought ‘that would fit – I can keep paying the bills and get the education’,” said Rob.

“I can remember being very nervous, thinking that only clever people passed degrees. But it was really a case that I had to do it or I would end up doing dead-end jobs.”

At that point, Rob was struggling financially, which meant that he was entitled to support for paying his fees.

“I can't see where I would have got the money from to pay

“I can remember being very nervous, thinking that only clever people passed degrees”

followed, but he kept having a nagging feeling about returning

for the courses if it wasn't for those support grants,” he

recalled. “Once I had got over the initial shock of actually being able to do the course, I found the first year extremely interesting and I started heading towards environmental science.”

Part way through his degree, Rob saw an advert for a job as a chemist at a hazardous waste company and thought a company working in the environmental industry would offer the opportunity of applying what he was learning.

“I didn't have a degree, but I thought I would chance my arm and say ‘if you have anything else available, I would love to work in the industry’. They invited me along to an interview and offered me the chemist's post. They saw someone who was working towards a chemistry degree and had demonstrated practical experience in previous roles.

“I was surprised when I got the job and wondered what I had let myself in for. But once I started applying what I'd learnt, it was all right.

“From then on I did the Diploma in Pollution Control which I was very interested in.”

STUDENT UNITY

It was during this course that Rob first noticed Jan, but didn't see her again until his last course *Ecology*. “It was at the summer school that we finally got to talk to each other,” he said. “Unsurprisingly, she couldn't remember me at all. This time I couldn't resist her smile, and forced myself to talk.” Rob and Jan now have a young daughter, Evie, and the couple married last August.

Meanwhile, Rob's career in hazardous waste took off, moving from chemist to senior

chemist to process manager, and later into sales. Having studied an OU creative writing course, he later wrote and marketed his novel called *Sleeping Dog* and wrote a book entitled *Selling Hazardous Waste Services*.

Rob currently works as Regional Business Manager for a recycling-focused Spanish waste company and is working towards an MBA with the OU.

“I decided to do the MBA, because I work with business analysts and it was difficult to speak their language or argue a case with them without having the language that comes with having an MBA.”

Support connection



Right from the start, The Open University has been committed to making higher education accessible to all. The famous ‘open doors’ policy has given many hundreds of thousands of people the chance of a first-class university education – regardless of their background or qualifications. Of course, for many people there are financial as well as academic barriers to overcome. Thanks to the generosity of its supporters over the years, the OU has been able to help thousands of disadvantaged students to study.

For further information about how you could help others study, please call +44 (0)1908 655044.

Kate Humble interview

Humble beginnings

Reflecting on trips to apartheid South Africa and more recently Afghanistan, OU honorary graduate and nature TV presenter Kate Humble tells Katherine Davison why travel really does broaden the mind...



Kate Humble at the Birmingham degree ceremony in 2009

● KATE HUMBLE GREW up in the countryside of Berkshire, living next door to a farm and surrounded by fields, pigs and horses. Kate was a tomboy, spending all her time outside, falling out of trees and climbing through hedges, while family holidays were taken in places such as Somerset.

When Kate left school she took an evening typing course

but I was very aware of this big wide outside world. When I was three I disappeared and no one knew where I was. They found me a mile down the road with my wheelbarrow just going on an adventure. I have always loved just exploring."

Kate had the most extraordinary experience in South Africa, spending time in the townships. She

"If anyone thinks they're going to win a war against an Afghan they are insane!"

and became friends with a South African girl who extolled the virtues of her homeland. At 19, Kate saved enough money working in a pub and as a secretary to make a trip. It was a bold move going to South Africa in the '80s, but she was determined to find out what was happening first hand. "I wasn't really that keen to go on a plane

persuaded a man working in a petrol station to show her around the township outside Johannesburg, hiding from the SA army patrols in the street.

She expected that she would be hated because she was a white girl, but she soon came to realise it wasn't as simple as that. "It was so much more complicated than that," says

Kate. "One thing I learnt was never take things at face value – what you read in the newspapers – there is always more than one side to every story. I completely fell in love with the country and people."

Kate marched against apartheid in Cape Town alongside black and white people, and was chased by South African police with dogs and sprayed with tear gas. It was an astonishing experience, and Kate felt that change had to happen. It took another four years for Nelson Mandela to be released from prison in 1992, and Kate knew she had to return to the country she loved. The opinions were mixed – no one could predict what was going to happen, with thoughts of civil war in everyone's mind. Kate, however, felt that the rugby world cup was the catalyst to change. "I'm not a big sport fan but it was astonishing to see how sports can really unite a very, very desperate country."

It was the first international sporting competition to take place after apartheid and it united the country in an extraordinary way. Even though rugby was then seen as a 'white' sport, there was so much national pride.

It was following Kate's first trip to South Africa that she travelled across the continent and also to Egypt. With no email, no mobile, not even guide books, she learnt much and enriched her life greatly.

Kate continues to travel to try to understand the world and its issues. She was recently on holiday in Afghanistan – in an area called the Wakhan corridor, right up in the north east where there aren't any

signs of conflict. Once again, Kate worried about her reception from the Wakhi locals, expecting hostility and hatred, but instead they were "amongst the most astonishing, hospitable, warm, genuine people" she has ever met.

They were also hard and tough and Kate believes that "if anyone thinks they are going to win a war against an Afghan they are insane!" Kate is now writing about her experiences there for a forthcoming publication, determined to show the world the Afghanistan she saw.

<http://bit.ly/4Eor89>

Course connection



Introducing the social sciences (DD101)

This course is an ideal introduction to the social sciences – psychology, social policy and criminology, geography and environment, economics and sociology, and politics and international studies. You'll explore a wide range of topics, including questions of identity and issues of social order and governance – all considered in their national and international contexts.

Registration closes 9 September. For more details call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

PHOTO: MARTINELLIOTT

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Africa

Aiding Ethiopia

The Open University is using its distance learning expertise to help upgrade the training of community health workers in rural Ethiopia, where 80 per cent of the population live...



The HEAT pilot will train 1,000 rural health workers in Ethiopia

● THE OU IS using its distance learning expertise to upgrade the training of rural community health workers in Ethiopia.

Since 2004, the Ethiopian government has built more than 12,500 rural health posts to serve local communities throughout the country. Each health post serves between 5,000 and 7,000 people, and is staffed by two community health workers (women

partnership with the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health to enable these health workers to learn new healthcare skills, or upgrade existing ones, while continuing to work in their communities. At the end of 2009, UNICEF awarded \$4m to HEAT and its partners to fund the pilot programme during the next two years.

The HEAT pilot launches this year and will train 1,000 rural

will study specially written distance learning theory modules which will be complemented by practical skills training. The first four modules will focus on antenatal care, labour and delivery, postnatal care and the integrated management of newborn and childhood illnesses. The modules are being written by Ethiopian health specialists working with the OU HEAT team.

The pilot will then be extended to address other competencies such as managing infectious diseases, family planning, nutrition and food safety, domestic hygiene, water quality and waste disposal, health education and community mobilisation. The aim is to roll out the curriculum to the remaining 30,000 rural community health workers across Ethiopia by 2012.

The distance learning modules will also be made available as open educational resources on the HEAT website, free to download, adapt and use by other countries in their healthcare education and training programmes.

Leading the OU's HEAT team is Lesley-Anne Long, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Health and Social Care. She said: "Ethiopia is a developing country with more than 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas. To have created a basic healthcare service serving its villages is a major achievement by the Ethiopian government.

"Now, using OU open and distance learning methods, we can help upgrade the service without the healthcare workers having to be sent away from

the communities they serve in order to complete their training. The initial cost is high but once the learning resources have been developed they can be used continually – and adapted and used by other countries."

She said that HEAT's focus is to "build capacity" – that is, to transfer skills to the local population. And HEAT is not just building healthcare capacity: it is also building distance learning capacity by training expert authors in distance learning methods.

Support connection



How you can help

In collaboration with partner institutions, the HEAT programme will deliver work-based learning to attract new entrants to health work and improve the skills, knowledge and retention of existing health professionals.

As well as the UNICEF award, the HEAT project has also received a generous donation from The Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust. Further development of this initiative is reliant on voluntary donations from its friends and supporters.

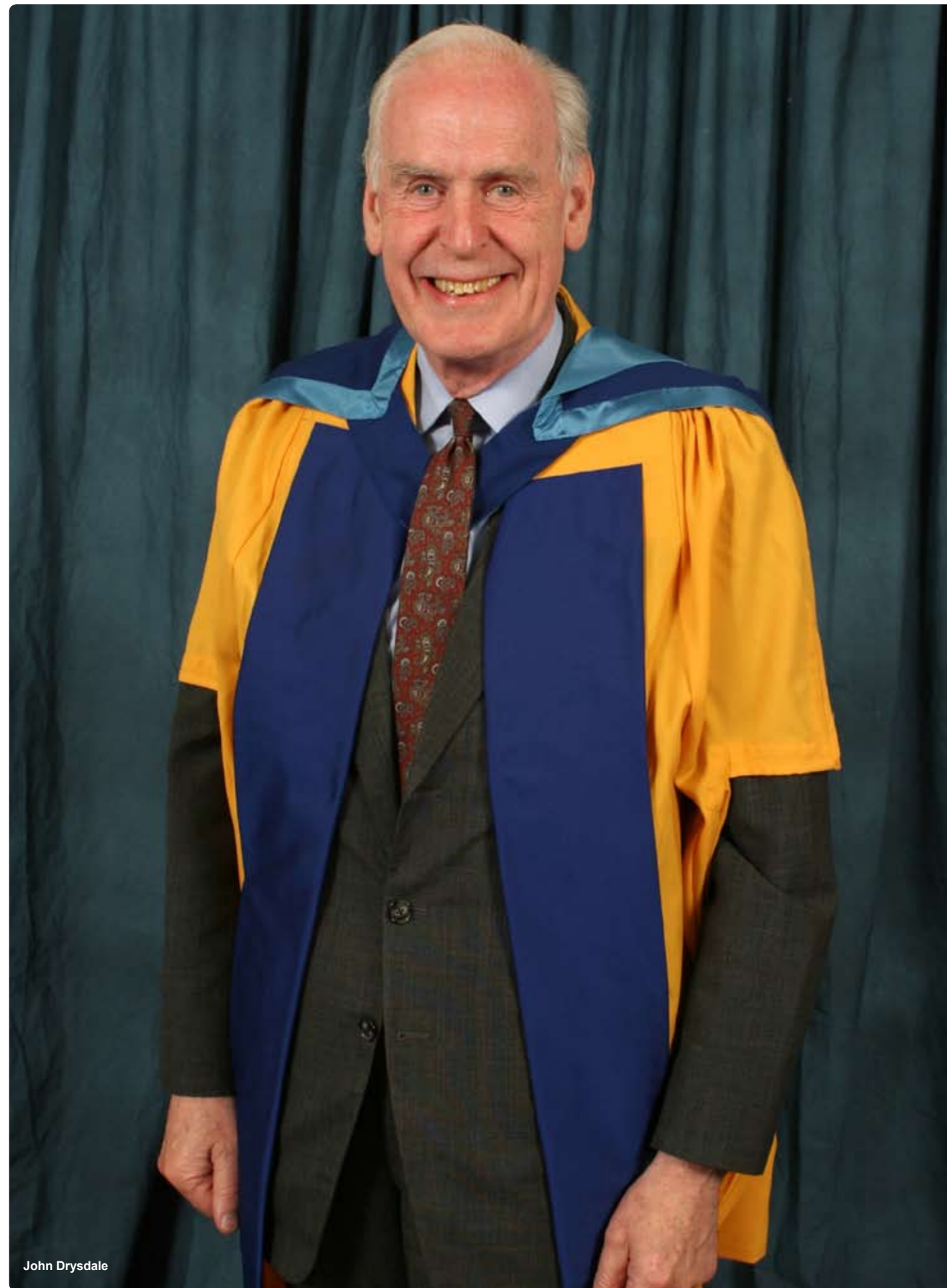
For further information about how you could support this project, please contact Anna Kelly on +44 (0)1908 654813 or email a.c.kelly@open.ac.uk

The pilot will train rural health workers in skills to reduce the country's child and maternal death rates

recruited locally and given just a year's basic healthcare training).

The OU HEAT (Health Education and Training) programme is working in

health workers in skills to reduce the country's child and maternal death rates, which are among the highest in the world. The Health Extension Workers (as they are known in Ethiopia)



John Drysdale

PHOTO: EDE AND RAVENSCROFT PHOTOGRAPHY

Interview

Keeping it clean

Honorary graduate John Drysdale's connection to the OU began after a chance meeting with the then VC John Daniel. He now heads Transparency International, an organisation committed to fighting corruption...

● IT WAS ENCOUNTERS with middlemen who asked for bribes while he was working as a merchant banker that led John Drysdale on his retirement to join Transparency International (TI) – an organisation committed to fighting corruption.

John, who was given an OU honorary doctorate last year, was appointed TI-UK's chairman in 2008 and recently gave evidence at the inquiry into MPs' expenses led by Sir Christopher Kelly.

"I looked after the Middle East and the Far East for the bank Robert Fleming and we used to pitch for business in these regions," he said.

"Sometimes we would win and sometimes we would lose. When we lost I tried to find out why, and it was quite often to do with bribes.

"I used to meet middlemen in London hotels who would say, 'pay us a million pounds and the contract is yours'. We would always firmly refuse.

"This made me realise that the culture of a company was

quality and integrity of its work to influence governments and corporations. Instead of using a very narrow legal definition of 'corruption', TI sees it as 'the abuse of entrusted power for private gain'.

He said: "When I gave evidence to the Kelly Committee inquiry into MPs' expenses and gave that definition, it was clear that the behaviour of many MPs' behaviour fell within it.

"One of my points was that the culture of the House of Commons was unhelpful. Corrupt practices had become accepted as the norm, but a culture of common sense, accountability, transparency and integrity should have prevented this.

"I do not believe these MPs are inherently corrupt, but the culture made it easy for them. There was a failure of leadership in that it was indicated to MPs that although their salaries could not be raised, a light touch on dealing with expenses would have the same result. That was

"I do not believe these MPs are inherently corrupt, but the culture made it easy for them"

really important when faced with such temptations. I was so incensed this was going on that after retirement I joined TI-UK and am now its chairman. Other people who have been equally appalled have also joined us."

John says TI does not campaign by naming and shaming. Instead, it "lurks and lobbies" and uses the

not very clever."

John, who was chairman of the former Open University Foundation (which at the time managed the University's donations fund), says he has always had an admiration for the OU and shares a commitment to lifelong learning. He completed courses in the history of music and harmony and counterpoint

before gaining a doctorate in musicology. He hopes to complete another doctorate at Oxford University, this

constitution which said we could not do that. When the Auxiliary Nurses Programme came along, I really promoted

"I used to meet middlemen in London hotels who would say, 'pay us a million pounds and the contract is yours'"

time on Elgar.

He says, however, that his association with The Open University happened by "an absolute fluke".

"I was at a dinner party and found myself sitting next to someone. I had no clue who he was. We spoke about the bank I worked for and how a number of our staff studied in their spare time.

"I said some of them were doing OU degrees and that it was a very good thing to have such stimulating outside interests. It transpired that I was sitting next to the then Vice-Chancellor of the OU, John Daniel!"

Following the dinner, the two kept in contact and John joined the board of the OU Foundation, subsequently becoming its chairman.

The most notable projects which were funded by alumni donations while he was chair were the Auxiliary Nurses Programme, £1m, and the International Fellowships Programme, £250,000.

John said: "Historically, the policy was to distribute the income in rather small amounts. However, I managed to persuade the trustees that we needed a few 'big bangs' even if it meant dipping into our capital.

"There was nothing in the

the idea that a big bang was better than a whole series of small bangs."

For more information on how you could support the OU visit, www.open.ac.uk/fundraising

Course connection



Ethics in real life (A181)

"I enjoyed this course, my only gripe being that it should be longer! The subjects covered are highly topical and some challenged my dearly held certainties about moral and ethical issues.

The online course materials are well written, but I suggest that you download the PDF files so that you can read them offline, as the course website crashed a few times." *Student Deanne Haseltine*
Registration closes 10 September for an October start. Call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for details.

Academic view

Shock tactics



Research student
Tom Farrell
questions

whether shock-tactic advertising is an effective and ethical campaign...

● MODERN CONSUMERS are bombarded by advertising at every turn: TV, computers, phones, posters, and even petrol pump nozzles.

Advertising is everywhere, even hidden in TV shows and movies as product placement. In order to 'cut through the clutter', some advertisers use shock tactics to get more bangs for their buck. A significant number of public information and charity advertisements utilise controversial 'fear appeals', the NHS advert for smoking cessation, for example, which portrayed nicotine addiction by showing smokers being dragged by fish hooks. An advertisement for Barnardo's showed a girl being verbally abused and slapped repeatedly about the head. Is it ethically justifiable for these organisations to use hard-hitting tactics to promote social marketing messages?

Advertising theory suggests that an audience can move through stages of attention, interest, desire, action. Fear appeals, however,

"Shocking" advertising is really an ad hoc one-off attention grabber"

overemphasise stage one brand and issue awareness. A key function of social marketing is the end stage of behaviour change. Whilst fear appeals using graphic violent imagery are effective in grabbing viewer



A recent NHS ad promoting that help is available to quit smoking

attention, research shows that these adverts overemphasise the issue of addiction or abuse, and may disempower people, turn them off or make them more entrenched, because they feel victimised. Paradoxically this is harming the people intended to be served by the organisation.

'Shocking' advertising is really an ad hoc one-off attention grabber – it does not build a relationship with consumers, as most commercial campaigns aim to do.

Commercial brands prefer to accentuate the positive and actively sell benefits. Negative or threatening fear appeals often have unintended and unanticipated consequences: objectifying, disempowering victims, scaring children, reinforcing bad behaviour.

Research shows that viewing scenes of abuse can trigger an emotional psychological response in victims and even lead to attacks or abuse. Complaints from viewers also damage brand reputations.

There is also the risk of having the costly advert campaigns pulled altogether, wasting taxpayers' or charity donors' financial contributions.

Social marketing campaigns promoting public health and charities can be more effective if they are less patronising ('we know what's best for you', 'don't do this or else') and use more empowering, supportive messages that promote ownership and engagement with the issues, and offer solutions to help change unhealthy behaviours.

Social marketers need a more holistic perspective incorporating both macro issues of public education and a micro individual behavioural focus. More research is needed to plan for intended and unintended consequences, not only for the target audience but for wider stakeholders.

By putting consumers' interests at the heart of the marketing, the message will be more 'carrot' and less 'stick'. In other words, promoting positive messages about health and wellbeing and behaviours that help make life better, happier and longer. Shock tactics are

the easy option, more likely to create controversy, flight or fight; making people feel bad, guilty or, even worse, turn them off completely.

Find out about the OU's Festival of Social Science, live from March 12, at www.open.ac.uk/platform/campus/festival

Course connection



Marketing and society (B324)

"I would recommend B324 to anyone interested in learning more about marketing or wishing to take a business course with fewer theories." *Student Guat Yen Tan-Mack*
Registration closes 9 April for a May start. Call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more details

Research

A round-up of the latest research news from The Open University

Feeling the heat

NHS climate challenge

Joint project sees OU tackle NHS temperature...

● THE OU IS working on a new research project to design and deliver hospital environments that respond to our changing climate. The NHS is facing a particular challenge: it needs to protect patients, carers and visitors from excess temperatures, but standard ventilation solutions or air conditioning can mean increased energy use and CO₂ emissions.

The research team will work with four NHS Hospital Trusts to establish the resilience of existing buildings. The team will consider issues such as the effect of elevated temperatures on patient recovery; infection control; working conditions; and

the impacts of extreme climate events on the operation of sites.

Dr Claudia Eckert, Senior Lecturer in Design at the OU, said: "It is very important that patients are not affected more than necessary by refurbishment. With the tight budgets of the NHS, the proposed changes should not have unexpected effects on the Trusts' buildings or patient care."

The project is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and is a partnership between the OU and the universities of Leeds, Loughborough and Cambridge.

<http://bit.ly/7R6n1z>



An optimum room temperature is not always easy to achieve

Other news

OU aids French officials

● THE OU PROVIDED climate modelling expertise for a system designed to help French negotiators at the COP15. Throughout the conference, the online modelling system analysed climate policy, energy and technology considerations, and the economic impact of different outcomes. The website offered a range of results for a host of scenarios.

<http://bit.ly/5Xyqeu>

British military music study

● PROFESSOR OF MUSIC Trevor Herbert has been awarded £256,000 by the Arts & Humanities Research Council for a three-year research project on military sponsorship of music in Britain in the 19th century and its relationship with the musical mainstream. One of the outputs will be a book, while another will be information for museums and archives.

Early warning cancer test

● RESEARCHERS AT THE OU have announced plans to develop a simple urine test that could indicate if people are at increased risk of bowel cancer. The two-year project is funded by World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF). The hope is that the test will enable the detection of DNA damage in urine, using an inexpensive and convenient method.

www.open.ac.uk/science

Mine of information

● JESSICA BUDDS OF the OU's OpenSpace Research Centre has been awarded £280,000 to research the use of water by the growing mining industry in the Peruvian Andes. Fieldwork will examine the social and environmental implications of increased demand for water by mining, particularly mining companies' strategies to access water and the communities defending water sources.

Scholars' address

Tackling cancer

A prestigious lecture tour on combating cancer began at the OU's Milton Keynes campus in December 2009. Also speaking were three members of the OU with similar research interests...



The talks focused on work being carried out to combat cancer

● A SYMPOSIUM AT the OU focused on research in chemistry and physics that is yielding promising treatments for cancer and other serious medical conditions.

Key speaker was Professor John Katzenellenbogen, the winner of the Royal Society of Chemistry Centenary Lectureship, who chose The Open University to begin his

tomography) scanning, he and his colleagues have discovered a new way to predict more accurately which patients will benefit from treatment of breast cancer drugs, which means patients can be spared unnecessary radiotherapy.

The researchers are also conducting ongoing studies using their imaging techniques to investigate prostate cancer.

All four presentations on cancer research can be viewed online

prize-winning lecture tour on 2 December. Three Open University researchers also described their work.

Professor Katzenellenbogen, from the University of Illinois, investigates oestrogen (hormone) receptors which drive cancerous cells. He uses specially designed molecules which stick to the receptors. Using PET (positron emission

DR EMMA REES from the OU Life Sciences department is working with a team looking at nervous system damage and repair, using a new three-dimensional cell culture model it has developed.

The model has been used to throw new light on the effects of PDT (photodynamic therapy) on the nervous system. PDT is used to treat cancer by injecting

patients with a drug which makes their body cells sensitive to light; a surgeon then directs light on the tumour to kill its cells. The OU team are working with the National Medical Laser Centre to see how nerve cells close to the tumour are affected, and on ways to enhance PDT to specifically target cancer cells.

LOW ENERGY ELECTRONS play an important role in radiotherapy used to treat cancer, but it can cause damage to the DNA in cells. Dr Sylwia Ptasińska from the OU's Department of Physics and Astronomy described how OU researchers are using mass spectrometry to reveal how much damage is caused, and how it happens. They are also studying how to use low-energy electrons to make radiotherapy more effective. Sylwia also described another area of research which looks at the medical use of a device called the cold atmospheric pressure plasma jet. This device, which generates electrons, is used in clinics for tissue sterilisation, wound healing, tissue regeneration and treatment of melanomas.

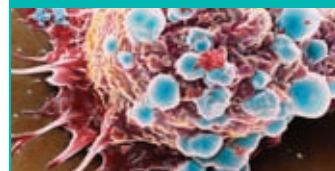
DR CHIARA DA PIEVE and a team from the OU's department of Chemistry and Analytical Science has been working on using aptamers for imaging and radiotherapy in breast cancer. Aptamers are single-stranded DNA or RNA molecules which seek out and bind target molecules. The team have synthesised aptamers which target cancerous MUC1, a breast cancer cell, and attached radioactive markers to these

aptamers. But they found the aptamer was eliminated from the body so quickly it didn't have enough time to act. So they have developed a technique to increase the aptamer's molecular weight to slow it down so it can reach the tumour.

Chiara said aptamers are an example of a 'magic bullet' treatment for cancer and other conditions. "Using these molecules we can have an efficient targeted therapy and also early diagnosis of many diseases, avoiding many harmful and undesired side effects."

You can view all four presentations online <http://stadium.open.ac.uk/berrill/>

Course connection



Understanding cancers (SK123)

"I really enjoyed this course. I have always loved human biology and this really opened my eyes about cancer. The course materials were excellent, well written and easy to understand. The DVD was especially good. I also enjoyed interacting within the forums, and got good advice."
Student Trevor Gill

Registration closes 31 March. For more information call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring

Dying days

Why are we reluctant to make plans for after our death? And what does a public outpouring of grief say about society? Senior Lecturer in Health Studies Carol Komaromy discuss these and other questions about death and dying...

● THE ONLY CERTAINTY in life is that at some point in time each of us will cease to exist. Among the group of OU academics examining the complex issues of death and dying are Lecturers in Health Studies Carol Komaromy and Kate Woodthorpe. Together, they have been seeking answers to such questions as: how does society handle death over time? Who delivers care to dying people? Has palliative care radically transformed end-of-life care for all dying people? What are the ethical dilemmas that make decisions about care at the end-of-life so complex and how helpful are theoretical explanations about grief to bereaved people? The questions are also addressed in the OU course *Death and dying* (K260).

Are the British afraid of the thought of mortality, and are there nationalities that can be considered better, or worse, at dealing with death? Britain is a diverse society and so it is difficult to pin down particular sets of attitudes to death. Certainly there is an assumption that the fear of death is common to all humanity and it might be relatively safe to assume that death as something that is unknown can provoke fear and anxiety. For example, the study of psychoanalysis suggests that death is an intrinsic fear and that individuals do much to protect themselves from this fear – Freud (the father of psychoanalysis) and some of his followers have argued that most people deny death in order

not to be overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety.

It is certainly the case that as death rates in western societies have declined, and as the care of dying people has been the business of healthcare professionals more than family members, there is less familiarity with death and the skills of caring for dying people have declined or been lost.

In societies where death is a more regular occurrence, it is more likely that citizens might be more confident about coping with the reality of death. But the claim that particular nationalities can cope better with death than others is too generalised. It is relevant to align attitudes to death with the ways in which people die. It is also relevant to make connections between medicine and death – even though it may appear to offer the answer to a long and healthy life, which it does not – many people die without recognisable diseases, in wars, natural disasters, famines and from taking their own life.

Have attitudes to death altered in Britain during the past century or so?

There have been significant changes in attitudes to death in Britain throughout the 20th century, owing a lot to the number of deaths as a result of two world wars, the decline of organised religion and the development of a nationalised system of healthcare. Death and dying is seen as the business of health professionals and this attitude is strongly reinforced by the dominant role



A funeral cortège of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan

of medicine in end-of-life care. The idea that death can be postponed by modern medicine is played out in popular culture, TV medical soaps, films and media accounts of miraculous cures. Of course, it is also the case that the media portrays death on a regular basis, but there is a sense in which new technologies have the capacity to control life and death. Putting aside political deaths and suicides, the ripples of a backlash to medical control are beginning to surface through demands for more people to die at home and for choice in how one dies. In terms of funerals, too, there has been a move away from traditional and rather formulaic services towards individualised events that reflect the qualities of the person who has died. This hasn't happened in isolation from broader

changes in society, however, as we now live in an increasingly commercial world where the purchase of services for other significant life events – such as weddings or the birth of babies – reflects the identity of the people involved. Perhaps it is little wonder that the song 'I did it my way' by Frank Sinatra is now so popular at funerals!

Have attitudes to death changed with the decline in religious faith?

Certainly a decline in organised religion has had an impact on attitudes towards life and death. For example, changes in attitudes towards heaven and hell, and the resurrection, have altered the way in which people attend church and account for their actions. However, with immigration we've seen an expansion in

“Certainly a decline in organised religion has had an impact on attitudes towards death, and also life”

religion in Britain, and there is more awareness of how people who belong to different religious systems of belief approach death. For example, readers will, probably have heard of Karma as a way of understanding the circle of life and death within Hinduism. The expansion in attitudes to death from increasingly diverse religious communities, and within them a mixture of beliefs, makes it near to impossible to define dominant attitudes.

Why do you think so few people make plans for after their death?
People who do not prepare

for death can leave the people who are bereaved in a difficult position. It is helpful to know the wishes of the deceased person, about what they want to happen to their body and their belongings after death.

The belief that death might not happen to people for some time – the sense that one will have time to make plans when one is actually dying, or wanting to deny death – can all explain why people do not make plans. Coupled with this is the lack of familiarity with people who are dying and the way that the funeral industry has taken on the role of making all arrangements.

In *Richard Wilson: Two Feet In The Grave*, the television programme produced corroboratively by The Open University and the BBC, viewers were told that the majority of people do not plan for their own death. Viewers were taken on a journey behind the scenes to show them what happens after death and to try to raise people's awareness of the need to make plans.

The discussion on the related website (*see the Open2.net weblink at end of this article*) indicates that there is a high level of interest in death and dying. This suggests that bringing 'ordinary' death (as opposed to dramatised death) into the open encourages people to think more about their needs in relation to death and dying.

Nearly 2,000 people die in the UK each day: how valuable is this seemingly hidden death-related infrastructure in terms of the economy?

It is difficult to put a figure on it, but UK Funerals Online estimates that the funeral industry is worth over £1 billion a year. There are a tremendous number of people who work to support this industry, too, alongside funeral directors, including coffin makers, florists, caterers, cemetery and crematoria staff, as well as car manufacturers, jewellers, artists, upholsterers, bereavement support groups and so on. This is before you even consider all the people who work or volunteer to support people before death in hospices and hospitals, or in care homes or through charities. So it is a not inconsiderable number of people who contribute to the system that supports those who are dying or are bereaved.

What do mass outpourings of grief, such as with the death of Princess Diana, and more recently Jade Goody and Michael Jackson, reveal about people and the relationship with death?

Although you might attend a number of funerals over a lifetime, many people will only be responsible for dealing with one or two deaths of immediate family members. Also, you might not have much contact with people who are bereaved; certainly, death does not impact on communities as it once did.

Many people today don't know how to respond to death. Even if you didn't know the person, you can still empathise and feel a sense of loss. But does this mean you shouldn't show grief? It has been argued that owing to the expectation that expressions of grief should take place behind closed doors, many find themselves in a position where to show feeling in public can lead to criticism or cynicism from others about its authenticity.



“Burial space is at a premium in the UK. There have even been legal moves to be able to re-use graves in London”

Do professions who encounter death regularly have a different appreciation for life or cope differently when encountering death?

My dealings with people in healthcare tell me that familiarity with death does not lessen the impact of loss. However, it does impact upon the way that they see death and what they might want for themselves. In general, it is harder for professionals to deal with deaths that appear to be untimely; either because they are the result of violence or trauma, or because the person was ‘too young’ to die.

I know from my own research with professionals that their requirement to be professional in the face of death does provide them with some distance. However, this does not, seem to translate into them being able to cope more easily with the death of someone close to them.

Do men deal with grief differently from women?

There have been studies that reveal differences in how men and women grieve. In part, these differences are related to

the social expectations that are still visible in gender differences. While it is the case that stereotypical gendered responses to grief are being eroded, despite the sexual revolution that has occurred in western societies, gender roles are still deeply entrenched. Women also remain the main carers in society and are thus more closely associated with end-of-life care and, as such, are potentially more affected by death.

Is keeping pets a way for the young to experience grief?

It could be argued that for many the first experience of death is that of a pet. Grief counsellors might argue that this is part and parcel of the preparation for the finality of death and is a helpful process for children to experience in adjusting to this reality. The closeness that some adults experience with domestic pets can make their death just as painful as any other, even though it is something that has been anticipated. It is certainly the case that the increase in the number of pet cemeteries

suggests that the mourning for a pet is not something that is simply a preparation for coping with the loss of humans.

Does the modern food production of meat mean we are also disengaged from the reality of death?

It is difficult to ignore the way that the industrialisation of the meat industry has sanitised the notion of animals as food. This distance as something that is unhelpful has been highlighted through various protests and TV programmes about intensive farming and calling for a return to the understanding that meat farming is about recognising the role of the consumer in this type of food production.

Is there a practical/ environmental consideration with death: does cremation mean pollution and does burial have impact because of available land space?

Burial space is at a premium in the UK. It is particularly problematic in urban areas such as London, where some boroughs have run out of space for new burial altogether.

There have been legal moves to be able to re-use graves in London, meaning those that haven’t had a new burial in them for a long period of time can be reclaimed by the local authority and reused. The remains of the previous residents of the grave are taken out carefully, the grave is deepened, and they are re-buried, allowing the space above them to be used for burial. Although it is a complicated process to identify which graves can be reused and relies on good record keeping, burial in unused land cannot continue indefinitely, so this change in the law is a significant milestone. Cremation is also under pressure in terms of emissions – many crematoria have now been fitted with costly filtration equipment.

Disposing of bodies is a challenging issue. There are

companies that are looking at alternative techniques, but these are in the early stages. One alternative being developed is a process whereby chemical and water are used to effectively dissolve bodies and create what have been called ‘ash shadows’, which look very similar to ashes after a cremation. This is still in its infancy in terms of developing the technique, let alone the time it will take to ensure it meets all relevant legal requirements, and then the culture change in terms of adopting a new procedure. And of course, alternative techniques may take even longer, if ever, for them to become socially acceptable. It took cremation more than 60 years before it overtook burial as the most popular option.

Thanks go to Kate Woodthorpe, former Lecturer in Health Studies at the OU, for her input into this article.

For more on death and dying, visit www.open2.net/deathanddying/index.html

Course connection



Death and dying (K260)

“I found this course very interesting and thought provoking. When I told people what I was studying, they thought I was really morbid but the course doesn’t come across that way at all. I really enjoyed it and found the materials excellent.”
Student Catherine Anne Harryman.

Registration closes 15 December for a February 2011 start. Call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more information.



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Student support

Asperger syndrome

The structure of the OU's distance learning, and the related support available, can be most welcome for people with Asperger syndrome...

● THERE ARE CURRENTLY more than 10,000 disabled students registered at the OU. The term 'disability' covers a broad range of impairments and chronic health conditions, including mobility, mental health, unseen disabilities such as heart disease, chronic pain and fatigue, and diabetes.

Asperger syndrome, which is considered the higher functioning end of the autistic spectrum, is a particular area of interest of the OU, which promotes awareness and understanding of the disability through academic excellence. The science course *Understanding the autism spectrum* (SK124) launched in 2009 and has proved popular with students on the autism spectrum, as well as parents of children with autism and other support groups. Significant research projects into the field are also conducted by many academics at the OU.

"Students with Asperger syndrome are able to access a range of support during their studies with the OU, and the Disabilities and Additional

Requirements teams in the regions and nations can offer advice, either before making the decision to enrol or during their study," explains Jane Swindells, Specific Learning Difficulties Adviser at the OU.

"Students with Asperger syndrome can't be pigeonholed in terms of what their needs are – each student is different."

People with Asperger syndrome can have difficulty with social settings and contexts where there is a lack of clear instruction or structure. This is particularly significant in respect of students with autism who attend traditional universities, as one former OU student explains.

"I wasn't used to the freedom that you get at university. I really thrive on structure and routine, and university wasn't anything to do with that. I only lasted about six weeks."

Choosing to study with the OU means students work in their preferred environment, avoiding the challenges and confusing social environment of campus-based universities. Additional arrangements can



There are currently more than 10,000 disabled students registered at the OU

also be made when taking examinations, which might include additional time, rest breaks, and the opportunity to sit an exam at home. OU tutors also try to ensure that the language they use is clear and precise, aware that some language choices may confuse.

"People with Asperger syndrome can find it difficult to understand abstract concepts and tend to take jokes and metaphors literally," explains Jane. "For example, saying 'I'll catch up with you later' could cause anxiety, as the detail isn't specific enough. It's much better to state a time."

The OU responds positively to any student disclosing a disability. The first thing the OU will do is to invite the student to discuss any impact that their

disability may have on their study and explore the ways in which the OU can provide additional support. Appropriate support may include accessing the Disabled Students' Allowance, setting up additional arrangements for examinations or providing additional support at residential schools. For example, the same student who reflected on his short stay at a campus-based university attended a residential school accompanied by a family member who was able to provide non-intrusive support and reassurance to enable him to benefit from the experience.

For more details on Asperger syndrome, the OU's autism course, and how the OU can help disabled students, see next page.



Dame Stephanie Shirley

● IN 2009, DAME Stephanie Shirley received an honorary doctorate from The Open University and was appointed by the Prime Minister as 'Ambassador for Philanthropy'. Her life has been successful, challenging and heartbreaking

"I'm trying to share philanthropy and the pleasure of philanthropy"

as she journeyed from child refugee to business entrepreneur. She is also heavily involved in the research of and fundraising in support of autism.

Dame Stephanie Shirley is known to most as Dame Steve as "no one took women seriously when I started out in 1962. So I would write to people and give my name as Steve Shirley. It worked and the name stuck".

She arrived in England as an unaccompanied child refugee from Austria in 1939 and upon completing a degree in mathematics discovered a keen interest in IT. In 1962 she set up Freelance Programmers, later re-branded Xansa, a leading business technology group which for many years employed only

women. Much of her work supported women in business. Dame Steve says, "Women were expected to rear kids and keep the home running sweetly, so I became a very early feminist and the computing industry was welcoming to women at the time

as it required mathematics and that's a skill I had."

The success of her business ventures has allowed Dame Steve to support and set up various charitable ventures, particularly in support of autism.

"I think the word fundraising, perhaps one should move away from it. Philanthropy is just an extension of what you do; something you might need in the future when you give to something that has helped you in the past. It's a wonderful relationship."

Dame Steve's son Giles, who died aged 35, was autistic and in his early years there was little support for the condition. As a result, she now supports research in autism as well as

setting up a school funded through her charity (the Shirley Foundation) to help others like him. Her son's "terrible quality of life" due to lack of support for children with autism inspired her to set up Prior's Court School. "That took £30 million and five years of my life to get it going, but it's the most satisfying of all my projects." The school is currently attended by about 60 children aged five to 19.

Dame Steve has supported IT projects but feels many invest in this area now. "In autism I can make more impact. My son died 10 years ago so it makes some sense of his life."

Dame Steve's current work as Ambassador of Philanthropy incorporates the use of her entrepreneurial skills and her passion for philanthropy. Initially a one-year post, she has three themes she wants to develop: young people, those of high net worth, and tax issues. "I'm hoping to improve philanthropy both qualitatively and quantitatively. I'm trying to share philanthropy and the pleasure of philanthropy. You get an enormous amount of return, it goes with compassion. I want to raise the bar."

Autism Speaks UK is currently funding research into autism at The Open University. The pioneering study "aims to establish a neuronatonic basis for the core behavioural changes observed in autism". For more information on this research please visit <http://bit.ly/7OK11>

There are 120 students studying with the OU with disclosed 'autism spectrum'. This figure has remained low since the Higher Education Statistics Agency introduced this new disability category, but numbers are expected to increase over time.

Money from the OU Supporters' Fund aids the development of services for 10,000 disabled students at the OU. To find out more visit www.open.ac.uk/fundraising

Insight

For information about, or to apply for, the Disabled Students' Allowance, contact the DSA Office on 01908 654136; textphone +44(0)1908 659955; fax +44(0)1908 659956, or email DSA-Queries@open.ac.uk

The OU DSA office does not handle applications from students in Scotland; they are dealt with by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS). Email scotland@open.ac.uk

If you are not eligible for a DSA, contact the Financial Support Office on +44(0)1908 653411 for more information about other financial support you may be able to apply for.

Course connection



Understanding the autism spectrum (SK124)

"Course materials present a thorough review of current approaches in autism. Those with rusty or non-existent biology and psychology, fear not. The course matches the description on the packaging: it is indeed an accessible introduction. I was looking for a course to consolidate experience and personal research and it has done that." *Student Nikki Scott-Despaigne*
Registration closes 14 October. Call 0845 366 6038 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/spring for more information.

Case study

Employer focus



Jim Hook,
Technical
Director of an
electronic and
software design company

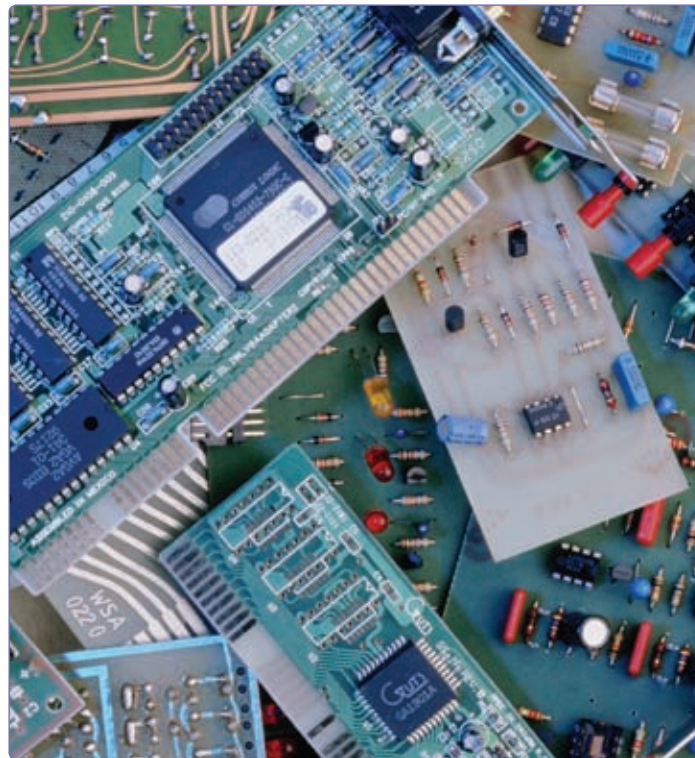
What appealed to you about establishing your own company?

Working for oneself gives you freedom to implement what you know is the right thing. I am the Technical Director; my business partner looks after the nitty gritty of actually running the business. I get to identify, develop and manage the creation of new, innovative and exciting products. In four years we have designed over 20 highly technical devices.

What made you decide on OU study?

I wanted to be an archaeologist so I looked to the OU to see what courses they ran. Unfortunately they didn't do archaeology and I was advised to study science as a foundation prior to going to a residential university to undertake archaeology.

I started with *Discovering science* (S103) and then moved on to geology, all in keeping with my plans to study archaeology later. In year three I essentially took a year out by studying a different course for



Jim wanted to be an archaeologist but opted to study IT and computing

that didn't worry me. If anything, it was exam results. I always performed really well with course work but struggled with exams. That didn't concern me, however, as the OU is more than exam results and I knew that.

What things do you now know that you wish you'd known during your study?

Nothing really. I actually agree with Donald Rumsfeld on one thing – you don't know what you don't know. I think that is a great thing, as it means there is something to investigate, to study and find out new things,

with my software engineers. It means I can identify solutions to customer requirements and then set my team off to implement that solution.

I found that the belief in my abilities provided by The Open University, by developing my mind and understanding, means I accept that there are things I don't know but understand that there will be a solution somewhere.

What skills do you feel you gained/developed?

Time management, hard work and commitment are probably the three main attributes that I have developed through studying with the OU.

What things do you think might make an application from an OU student stand out to an employer?

They have already demonstrated self-motivation and commitment. If I were to receive a CV from a OU graduate it would most likely take precedence over one from another graduate until after the interview and assessment.

www.open.ac.uk/careers

“Time management, hard work and commitment are probably the three attributes I developed with the OU”

a rest. I chose a C++ programming course for some reason and have never looked back. I eventually got a degree in IT and computing.

What were the high and low points during your time as an OU student?

I don't remember any low points. It was hard work but

and help you develop other avenues of opportunity. It's not something to worry about but rather something to embrace.

What parts of the course did you find most relevant to your current career?

I'm not a brilliant coder but I understand how coding is done and that helps me greatly

News

Careers website

THE OU CAREERS Advisory Service has been busy adding new content to its website. Recent additions have included: more information about self-employment, for those who might want to take this step; a new section on volunteering and work experience, giving links to further resources; and new content on career progression and development, for people who want to develop in their current career. The careers website can be found at www.open.ac.uk/careers

Skills shortages in science

DESPITE HIGH RATES of unemployment, there are still skills shortages in science, engineering and technology (SET), and while women make up a third of higher education students in SET they are still under-represented in the workforce, at around 19 per cent. The UK Resource Centre for Women in SET works with individuals and employers to provide advice and support for career progression. More information can be found at www.ukrc4setwomen.org

Thinking about going into teaching?

A NEW VERSION of the OU publication *Becoming A Teacher* is out now. This booklet is packed with information for prospective and current students who are seriously considering teaching as a career in the UK and Ireland. To view or to download the publication, visit www.open.ac.uk/becoming-a-teacher

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