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# TRANSITIONS

RECRUIT, SUPPORT, RETAIN

BIRKBECK EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD TALK / THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER 2016

**Dr Joanne Leal** (Cultures & Languages)

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# CREDITS

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**STUDENTS:** of Step Up 2013, 2014, 2015 & 2016

# INTRODUCTION [JOANA]

**STEP UP** to Postgraduate Studies in **ARTS** is a standalone module on study skills created to bridge the gap between undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the School of Arts.

It is innovative in a variety of ways, and it was designed as a blended delivery module with focus on *flexibility*.

Its life started as a different project, then entitled *Special Blend*.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

In 2013 we received support from the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education's Changing the Learning Landscape scheme for a project entitled:

***Special Blend: Towards a New Model of Flexible Learning at Birkbeck***

This support took the form of a number of hours of advice from consultants with a specialism in the field of flexible learning.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Overarching Aim of the Special Blend Project

- The development and use of learning technologies to expand the concept of flexible learning in ways which will allow Birkbeck to offer more support to its existing student body and attract new students.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Thinking Flexibly

- Although we perceive technology as a key element in making the module flexible, the use of TEL does not in itself constitute ‘flexible learning’.
- According to the HEA, flexible learning is
  - ***about providing learners with choices***
  - ***helps to attract and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of students and includes making appropriate use of technology***
  - ***is about enabling choice and responsiveness in the pace, place and mode of learning.***

Source: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/flexible-learning>

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Our Proposal

- Develop a new model for flexible teaching and learning which
  - will encompass flexible delivery, combining face-to-face, self-managed and distance learning elements;
  - should have the potential to impact on teaching across departments in the College at all programme levels, allowing Birkbeck to reach and support students who require more flexible teaching patterns than those we currently offer.



# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Specific Aim

- To pilot this model by developing a module which will help Birkbeck both to deal with recruitment and retention challenges and to meet its commitment to life-long learning.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## The Module

- A pre-entry module to bridge the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate studies, using flexible delivery to address the recruitment of students at Masters level.
- Directed at potential postgraduate students who require skills training before starting a programme, for instance because they come from a non-standard educational background or lack the confidence to start postgraduate studies.
- The module should be disciplinary based in a broad sense, i.e. there should/could be one for each School.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Phases of the Project

- Phase One: development of a generic teaching plan using flexible delivery
  - Determine choice of ratio between different kinds of pedagogic elements (distance learning, self-managed study, face-to-face), taking into account their distribution over time, interrelationship and appeal to different audiences.
  - Set out the appropriate combination of technology and traditional pedagogic elements which will make up the 'special blend' of teaching elements to sustain Birkbeck's teaching identity.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Phases of the Project

- Phase Two: creating the content to fill the generic plan
  - This phase will allow us to test the effectiveness of the model for delivering flexible learning in different disciplinary contexts.
  - Results from the second stage will serve as feedback for the initial model, which might need to be modified to encompass results from the testing phase.

# HOW IT CAME ABOUT [JOANNE]

## Feasibility of Project

- Factors to bear in mind:
  - The project needs to be aligned to Birkbeck's learning and teaching and retention strategies
  - The choice and proportion of blended pedagogic elements needs to take into account how the flexible delivery mode might appeal to existing and new students
  - The final module needs to be cost effective both in terms of cost to the student and in terms of running costs.

# WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO [LIZ]

**STEP UP**  
to Postgraduate Studies in  
**ARTS**

**Date:** Wednesday 23rd July 2014  
**Time:** 5:45 to 9:00  
**Location:** 43 Gordon Square Room 110

5.45 – 6.15 Registration and workshop allocation  
6.15 – 6.45 Introduction to the Module: How to do this course  
6.45 – 7.45 Interactive lecture/workshop

**Theme:** Arts and the City/the City in Arts:  
Photography with Dr. Patrizia De Bello

Finally, please also find attached an article (PDF) and link to a video which you will find helpful to read and to watch in preparation for Wednesday's lecture and interactive workshop. Please find time to look at these if at all possible:

Vivian Maier: BBC Imagine series (2013)  
<http://www.veoh.com/watch/v70590131KPFY7N>

Another documentary has just been released and is showing at the Barbican in London:  
<http://www.barbican.org.uk/film/event-detail.asp?ID=16843>

Guardian article:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/19/our-nanny-vivian-maier-photographer>

7.45 – 8.00 Information on Assignments including assessment  
8.00 - 9.00 Drinks Reception

## Vivian Maier: Who Took Nanny's Pictures?

Summer 2013

The incredible story of a mysterious nanny who died in 2009 leaving behind a secret hoard - thousands of stunning photographs. Never seen in her lifetime, they were found by chance in a Chicago storage locker...

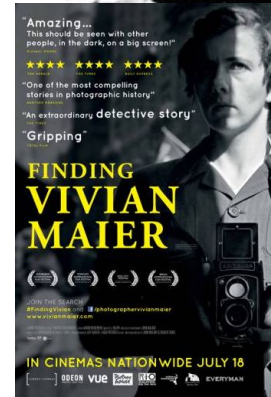
1 hour, 10 minutes

## The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity

Janet Wolff

### Abstract

The literature of modernity, describing the fleeting, anonymous, ephemeral encounters of life in the metropolis, mainly accounts for the experiences of men. It ignores the concomitant separation of public and private spheres from the mid-nineteenth century, and the increasing segregation of the sexes around that separation. The influential writings of Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin and, more recently, Richard Sennett and Marshall Berman, by equating the *modern* with the *public*, thus fail to describe women's experience of modernity. The central figure of the *flâneur* in the literature of modernity can only be male. What is required, therefore, is a feminist sociology of modernity to supplement these texts.



# WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO [LIZ]

**STEP UP** ARTS  
to Postgraduate Studies in

STEP UP ONLINE ON MOODLE

THE SIX TOPICS

# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]


## Student response

- The response from students was a key part of our approach
- Evaluation of the success of the module's content (breadth/ depth, pitch/level)
- Testing our design and delivery with a view to iterating
- Framing the project in these terms in the pilot year helped secure buy-in
- Various approaches to gaining student feedback used...



# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]

## Getting student feedback

- The Arts Cafe (discussion forum)
- The Reflection Room (reflective journal tool)
- End-of-module surveys
- Pre-module survey 
- Face to face discussion at closing event

*Of these methods the end-of-module surveys actually specifically asked about the things we wanted to know about ...but were the least engaged with.*

*The richest source of feedback was the Reflection Room.*

# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]

Student Feedback

## What students have told us

- Mostly we got things just about right!
- Students have frequently commented that they feel better prepared, more confident, less anxious about starting their MAs
- Some of the most interesting reflections relate to 'becoming postgraduate', or where they challenge the module content.

# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]



- *I really enjoyed [the launch]... it made me feel reassured already that I might be ok doing the MA. It all feels like scary big steps but also that there's lots of people to help and support.*
- *A lot of [BA] students were not very confident to speak in class, I can see that this may well be different on an MA! This is both a relief and a challenge.*
- *I have a natural tendency to 'put my head in the sand' when it comes to unfamiliar technology - doing this course has made me realise I should at least find out more.*
- *I realised I haven't in the past used the introduction as fully as I could, just as a road map.*

# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]



Step up to Postgraduate Study in Arts (2015\_16)  
The Reflection Room

- *I'm not so sure I entirely agree with the presenter in the video in her defence of academic English, some of the journal articles I have read on my BA course seemed willfully obscure and over complex in their sentence construction and vocabulary.*
- *On the module as a whole I felt that the slightly strident anti-plagiarism message rather drowned out the role of proper referencing as a tool for effective academic communication ... and avoidance of inadvertent plagiarism was an added, almost incidental benefit.*

# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]

## But they also told us

- The module, while being non credit-bearing, comprising six sets of learning materials to work through and six assignments, is **too much work**
- Not everything in it is perceived as useful by/for each person
- Materials don't always work across all devices

# RESPONSE AND AFTERLIFE [LEO]

## Across the College and Beyond

- Second CLL consultancy project built upon our initial work on flexibility
- Included by Jisc in a [list of exemplar projects](#) that help students to learn with technology
- Presented at HEA and Birkbeck L&T conferences
- Other schools and departments have adapted the model or are working on similar projects
- SATELLITE working group, 'Step In' and 'Stay On' projects in Arts
- BETA award!

Q&A (JOANA)