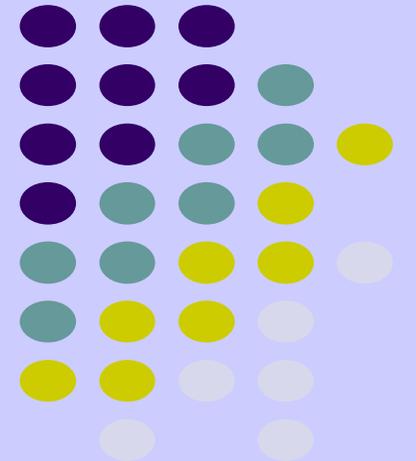


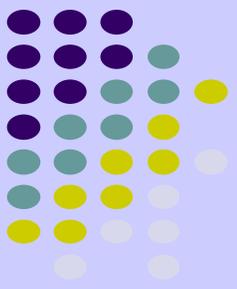
Not drowning, but waving

Peter Lucas

Keith Vernon

UCLan Humanities and Social Sciences



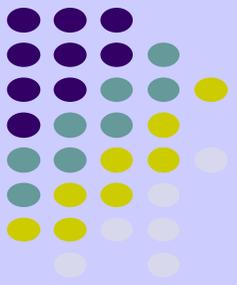


UCLan BA (Hons) Liberal Arts

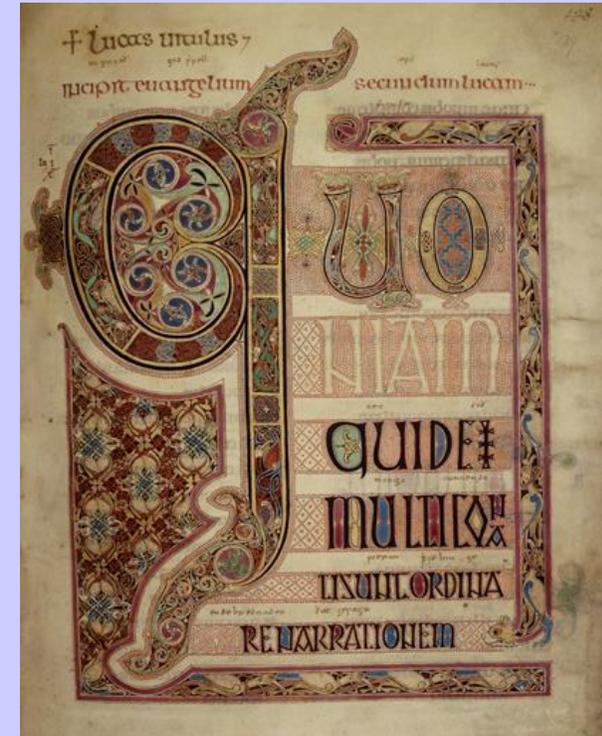
- Three-year degree programme
- First intake 2018-19
- One core Liberal Arts module per year
 - Year one: CS1000 Introduction to Liberal Arts
- Multiple additional options from:
 - History, Politics, Philosophy, Sociology, English Literature, Creative Writing, English Language and Linguistics, Film and Media, Religious Studies, MOLA, TESOL
- A conscious decision to restrict to these disciplines

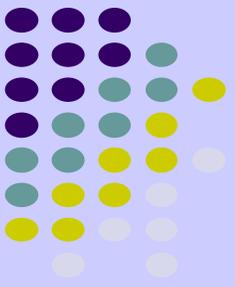


CS1000: Introduction to Liberal Arts



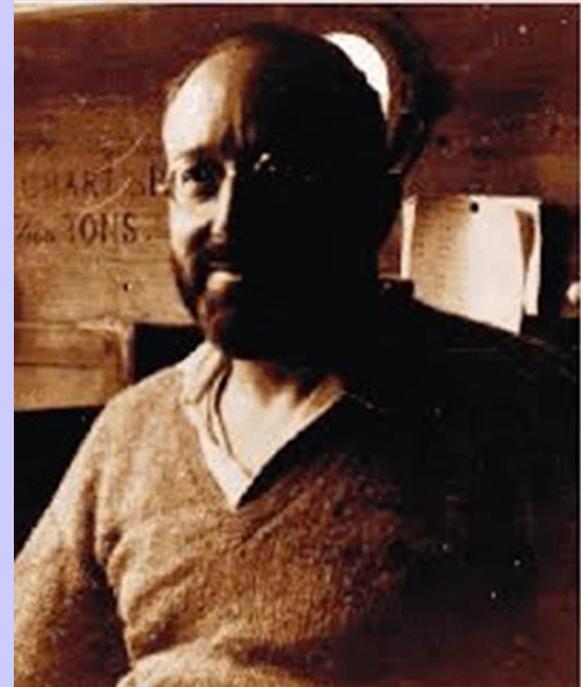
- Initial assumptions:
- Students will need help understanding what is distinctive about liberal arts subjects (as listed)
- Accordingly, they will need help understanding their distinctive methodologies...
- ...and encouragement to value their methods as embodying the *right sort of rigour*
- In particular, encouragement not to dismiss methods that rely heavily on interpretation

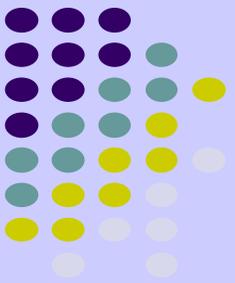




Interpretation and understanding

- R.G. Collingwood (“Human Nature and Human History”, 1934):
 - Both natural events and human actions have an “outside”
 - But only actions have an “inside”
 - = “that in [the action] which can only be described in terms of thought”- aims, desires, values, principles, beliefs, strategies etc.
- The historian’s task is to penetrate from the outside to the inside of the event, and thereby understand it

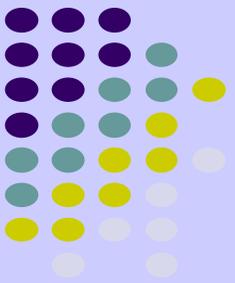




Q: Why is History so hard?

- A: Because we are capable of understanding it so fully!
- If that sounds paradoxical:
 - Interpretive methods unlock depths of understanding inaccessible to methods that focus only on (e.g.) behaviour, stimulus-response

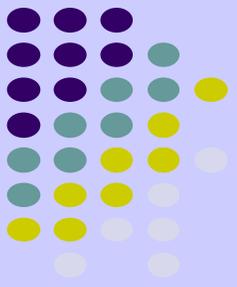




Who's afraid of interpretation?

- Waving, or drowning?
- To understand, we must *interpret*
- Hence openness-to-interpretation should be seen as an epistemic advantage, rather than a disadvantage
- So, let's celebrate our interpretive disciplines, and the depths of understanding they provide



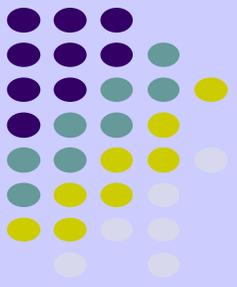


Historicising the Liberal Arts

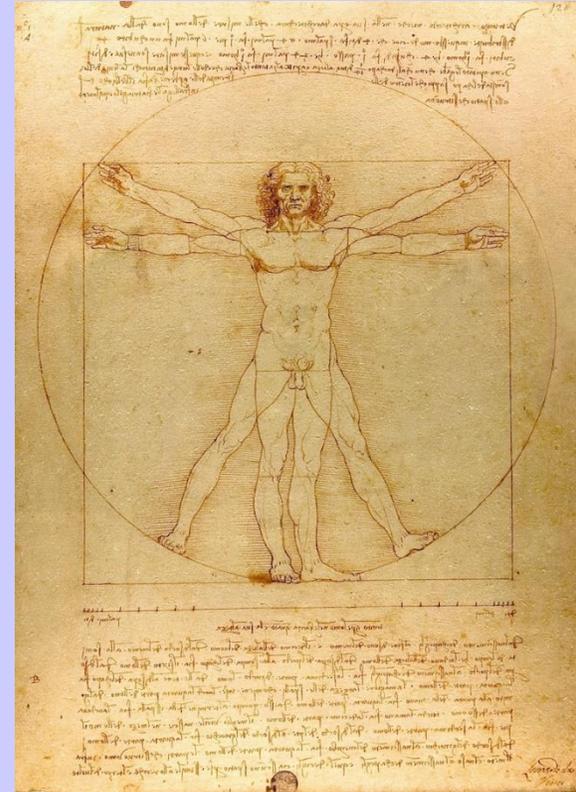
- The emergence of liberal knowledge
 - Renaissance Humanism
 - Enlightenment ideals
- Institutionalisation
 - Reform of universities C19 – C21
 - Debates about the place of liberal knowledge

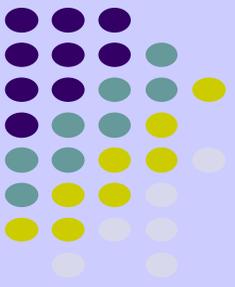


Meaning and interpretation in Liberal Arts disciplines



- Guest lecturers discussing issues of meaning in their subjects
 - English Literature
 - Linguistics
 - Creative Writing
 - Political texts
 - Sociology





Student Responses

- Perhaps struggled with early interpretive exercises
- Struggled with shift to historical approach
- But:
- Seemed to enjoy the discursive approach
- Are making connections with early ‘theoretical’ sessions and later ‘applications’ in different disciplines