

# Digital Labour Seminar Series

This seminar series brings together researchers from the UK and USA for two events at Highfield (7th February) and Winchester School of Art (16th April) to explore transformations, debates, and tensions associated with digital labour. The first seminar focuses on the home-work conflicts of digital labour for those endeavouring to make a living on digital platforms. The second seminar focuses on social media careers and fashion blogging.

This series is convened by Dr Dan Ashton (Transforming Creativity/Winchester School of Art) and Dr Rebecca Taylor (Work Futures/Sociology) with support from the Web Sciences Institute.

## **Seminar 1: Negotiating home/work boundaries in the digital economy**

**Wednesday 7th February 2018**

Highfield 67/1003, 4-6pm

- Darja Reuschke (University of Southampton): Home-Based Self-Employment and Business: Conflicts and Resources of Homeworking in the Digital Economy
- Al James (University of Newcastle): Digital Work-Lives and Gender Inclusive Growth in the "Sharing" Economy?

## **Seminar 2: Negotiating professional/amateur boundaries in the digital economy**

**Monday 16th April 2018**

Winchester School of Art, Lecture Theatre A, 4-6pm

- Agnès Rocamora (London College of Fashion): Fashion Blogging as Invented Labour
- Brooke Erin Duffy (Cornell University): Digital Dream Jobs: The Promises and Perils of a Social Media Career

All University staff and students welcome.

For abstracts, please see:

<https://transformingcreativity.wordpress.com/2018/01/16/digital-labour-seminar-series/>



Transforming Creativity

Work Futures Research Centre



WEB SCIENCE  
Institute

## **Seminar 1: Negotiating home/work boundaries in the digital economy**

**Wednesday 7th February**

Highfield 67/1003, 4-6pm

### **Darja Reuschke - Home-Based Self-Employment and Business: Conflicts and Resources of Homeworking in the Digital Economy**

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have significantly changed the work-residence relationship with the result that the home is not external to the economy but is itself a workplace. At the same time, ICTs have enabled micro enterprises to serve dispersed markets and compete with larger organisations. Consequently, business owners and the self-employed form a significant proportion of the home-based worker population in many mature economies such as the UK – which is both outcome and driver of the digital economy. Based on a larger international project on home-based self-employment and business (ERC WORKANDHOME), the presentation will focus on the conflicts of digital workers when working in their homes, the practices and materialities that are used to create the digital workplace and the resources that homeworking provides to these workers and households

### **Al James - Digital Work-Lives and Gender Inclusive Growth in the 'Sharing' Economy?**

This presentation emerges from feminist economic geography debates around social reproduction and the future of work in the so-called 'sharing economy' or 'gig economy'. Within this framework, it documents the lived experiences of female returners with young families juggling gig work with the messy and fleshy everyday activities of social reproduction, in ways that potentially disrupt (versus reinforce) stubborn gendered labour market inequalities. The paper presents some preliminary findings from ongoing fieldwork with women using popular online jobs platforms (TaskRabbit, Upwork, PeoplePerHour) in two UK cities (Leeds and Manchester) which are actively positioning themselves as 'Sharing Cities'. Despite widespread claims surrounding female emancipatory work-life possibilities ('mumpreneurship') enabled by the gig economy, supporting evidence is limited. In short, we know relatively little about the everyday work-lives of women trying to make a living using online work platforms – not least, the much heralded 'emancipatory' experiences of female digital workers seeking to reconcile work, home and family, and to negotiate better labour market outcomes via digital work platforms relative to 'mainstream' employers. Reinforcing these problems, the expansive work-life balance research literature is limited in its engagement with gig work in the 'Sharing Economy'. Rather, most WLB studies focus on the challenges of juggling work, home and family amongst employees in 'standard' workplaces governed by HR managers; rather than the diversity of 'alternative' workspaces occupied by gig workers, whose abilities to reconcile competing activities of work, home and family as 'dependent contractors' are governed by digital algorithms and the work allocation models built into them by platform developers. In so doing, this presentation brings debates around gendered social reproduction into new productive conversation with labour geography and digital economies.

**Seminar 2: Negotiating professional/amateur boundaries in the digital economy**

**Monday 16th April 2018**

Winchester School of Art, Lecture Theatre A, 4-6pm

**Brooke Erin Duffy**

**'Digital Dream Jobs: The Promises and Perils of a Social Media Career'**

Against the backdrop of profound transformations in the technologies, economies, and politics of creative labor, enterprising young people are flocking to social media with aspirations of capitalizing on their passion projects. To these digitally networked content creators, fashion blogs, YouTube, and Instagram represent prospective paths to lucrative and rewarding careers. But to what extent do their investments pay off? In this talk, I draw upon dozens of in-depth interviews to highlight both the promises and perils of a social media-enabled career.

**Agnès Rocamora**

**'Fashion Blogging as Invented Labour'**

In this talk, drawing on a series of semi-structured interviews I have been conducting with a broad range of UK-based fashion bloggers since 2013, I interrogate the strategies they have developed to invent and legitimate their practice. I engage with the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu to look at the idea of the discursive construction of fashion blogging as well as at the rules and techniques that have emerged to regulate it. In particular, I comment on the journalists vs bloggers debate; on the idea of authenticity; and on the issue of monetization.