



Fully-funded TECHNE Collaborative Doctoral Award: History of UK Television Drama (*Play for Today* at 50)

Applications are invited for a fully-funded PhD at the Centre for the History of Television Culture and Production Royal Holloway, University of London, in partnership with the British Film Institute, London. This fully-funded studentship will focus on the history of UK television drama with specific reference to the *Play for Today* series which reaches its 50th anniversary in 2020. The project is designed to revisit the history of the series, assess its place within the history of television drama and examine how it is regarded fifty years after its launch.

The Project

Play for Today was launched in October 1970 and ran until 1984. Although it is generally recognised to be one of the most significant of television drama series in the history of television, there is as yet no major academic or popular study of the series. Its reputation, moreover, has rested upon a small number of high-profile plays and writers (such as Dennis Potter) with the result that many of the plays that made up the series have been lost, forgotten or critically ignored. The purpose of the project, therefore, is to revisit the history of the series and its historical and critical legacy through an examination of its original context of production and reception as well as its subsequent influence and critical standing. In doing so, it will seek to address both the range of the work produced and the critical paradigms through which it has been addressed. It will also consider the ways in which the 50th anniversary of the series is being marked and how this relates to television archiving practices and changing perspectives on television history.

In particular, the project will seek to investigate:

- the origins and ideas underpinning the emergence and continuation of *Play for Today*
- the significance of the anthology series in television history
- the range of genres and aesthetic conventions employed by the series
- the range of issues addressed and how these related to contemporary discourses of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality
- the critical responses to the plays at the time and the controversies surrounding specific productions
- the subsequent availability (or otherwise) of the dramas and changes in critical standing of individual plays
- the influence of the series upon subsequent television drama and its historical legacy
- the processes of preserving and making television drama of the past available and the significance of these for modern audiences.

In terms of methodology, this will involve:

- textual analysis of individual plays
- generation of quantitative data through the application of video recognition software
- archival research of documentation held by the BBC and BFI
- interviews with programme makers, television archivists and BFI personnel
- the collection of promotional, critical and technical material relating to the 50th anniversary of the *Play for Today* series.

The project will coincide with a series of screenings at BFI Southbank, organised by the BFI, and a conference organised by the Centre for the History of Television Culture and Production at Royal Holloway (of which Hill is co-director) and the PhD candidate will be engaged in the planning and implementation of these as well as critically reflecting upon them.

The project, due to begin in September 2019, will be supervised by Professor John Hill, Royal Holloway, Dr JP Kelly, Royal Holloway, and Mark Duguid, British Film Institute.

Award Details

Students may apply for full-time or part-time study (50% FTE). The award, tenable for three years full-time and covering fees and a maintenance grant (£16,777 per annum according to current rates, plus an additional £550 per annum for Collaborative Doctoral Awards), is made by the TECHNE AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership. As a TECHNE student, the selected applicant will have full access to the TECHNE Doctoral Training Partnership development activities and networking opportunities, joining a cohort of almost 60 students per year from across ten universities in London and the south-east.

Student Eligibility

Applicants must satisfy AHRC eligibility requirements and terms and conditions:

International (overseas) students are not eligible to apply for AHRC studentships and EU students may be eligible for fees and maintenance, or fees only.

<https://ahrc.ukri.org/skills/phdstudents/currentawardholders/#AHRC%20current%20award%20holders>

Candidates should have obtained a minimum of an Upper Second-class (2.1) honours degree in a relevant discipline. In addition, candidates should normally have gained a qualification at Master's level, or equivalent. Familiarity with debates in television history and an awareness of television archiving will be an advantage.

Application Process

Expressions of Interest should consist of the following:

- A 1-2 page statement outlining your interest in this research project and how you would address the topic
- A copy of your first degree and postgraduate qualifications
- A current CV (no more than 2 pages)
- A sample of academic writing

The chosen candidate will be invited to complete, with the support of supervisors and partners, an application for final submission to TECHNE in February 2019. The studentship is then subject to final approval by the TECHNE board in April 2019.

Expressions of interest (consisting of the above) should be sent to john.hill@rhul.ac.uk by no later than: **Monday 26 November 2018**

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will take place shortly afterwards.

Enquires about the studentship may be made to Professor John Hill: john.hill@rhul.ac.uk.

For more information on the Centre for the History of Television Culture and Production at Royal Holloway, University of London see: <http://www.tvcentre.org.uk/>