

UCML Executive Committee



Friday 2 November 2018 12.30 – 16.00

Monnet Room, Europe House

32 Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU

Lusophone (Portuguese & Brazilian) studies

Research and Conferences

- **The 8th ABIL** (Association of British and Irish Lusitanists) Biannual Conference will be held 6-7 September 2019 at the University of Edinburgh. It is hoped that TROPO ((Teachers and Researchers of Portuguese Language) and REBRAC (Rede Europeia de Brasilistas de Análise Cultural) will continue to field specialist panels at ABIL. The ABIL organiser will be Dr. Raquel Ribeiro. <http://www.abil-lusitanists.org/>
- **The 41st ACIS** (Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies) Annual Conference will take place in Lisbon at the Universidade de Lisboa. ACIS is also happy to report a growing number of Brazilian participants, some of whom are undertaking PhD studies in Portugal, focusing on colonial and post-colonial Luso-Brazilian-African studies. <https://www.iberianstudies.net/wp/>
- **The 19th WISPS** (Women in Spanish and Portuguese) Annual Conference will be held 2-3 November 2018 at the University of London. <http://www.wisps.org.uk/2018-annual-conference/> This will mark the 20th Anniversary of the founding of WISPS.
- **TROPO** (Teachers and Researchers of Portuguese Language) held their 2nd annual conference 29 September 2018 at Senate House, University of London. The theme was ‘Teaching Portuguese through Literature’ and featured sessions on ‘Using literary texts to promote language learning’ and ‘Transmediality, Literature and Social Media’. Tropo was newly constituted in 2018 and its officers are:
President – Sofia Martinho (University of Leeds)
General Secretary - Ana Reimão (University of Liverpool)
Website: <https://tropouk.weebly.com/about.html>
- **ABIL** has become increasingly concerned about the difficulties which staff in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies experience with securing sabbatical leave, particularly in one-person teaching programmes. We will be discussing the possibility of conducting surveys among the ABIL membership about this to ascertain the extent of the problem and share best practice for solutions.
- **ABIL** members have expressed grave concern about the potential impact of a Jair Bolsonaro victory in the forthcoming Brazilian General Elections. This would have very serious implications for education, the arts, research funding, and the personal safety of minorities. Members are especially worried about the possible impact on existing research links and future research in Brazil, particularly given the fact that the research councils via GCRF (Global Challenges Research Fund) encourage academics to work in partnership with external groups such as activists and NGOs, who are precisely the groups directly threatened

by Bolsonaro and his political representatives. This is a situation that ABIL will continue to monitor closely with regard to the work of our staff and postgraduate populations in Brazilian Studies in the UK, as well as our teaching staff who are Brazilian nationals.

- The *Portuguese Studies* journal published by MHRA now has a Social Media presence on Facebook and Twitter: @PortugueseStudiesMHRA.

Teaching and Admissions

- Some Portuguese programmes have reported a fall in admissions for 2018-19. This will be due to many factors. One definite factor for some institutions, however, concerns the high A level tariffs now required for many Modern Language programmes, particularly where entry grades cannot be reduced at Clearing.

AHRC Strategy Consultation

ABIL responded to the AHRC Strategy Consultation, under all headings. Particular areas of concern worth highlighting here included, the need for greater public understanding of culture and its contribution to society in a world of fake news, and the effect on culture of the shift to the Right in emerging economies (ie those that the AHRC no longer focuses on as a result of the shift in focus brought about by GCRF [Global Challenges Research Funding] priorities). In terms of making the case to UKRI/government/the taxpayer for the future of arts and humanities research, it was felt that we need to go back to the drawing board and re-explain what exactly it is that we do and why it is important. When those in STEM subjects (for example) in our own institutions don't have a clear sense of what our work entails and why it is important, we can't possibly expect those outside our ivory towers to understand. This seems to be a particular issue with those researching in Modern Languages: we frequently are misinterpreted as language service providers within our institutions and nothing else. The fact that we continue to be identified by the old-fashioned moniker "Languages and Literature" even by the AHRC doesn't help. In respect of the AHRC re-emphasising the relationship between research and practice, one example suggested is that they consider recognising formally the contribution to research and scholarship of the film essay, podcasts, radio broadcasts, etc, and perhaps offering training for researchers to present their research findings using audio-visual technology that is more likely to engage a public that increasingly relies on this technology for its information. It was also felt that the AHRC should consider recognising formally the importance of translation as research practice within the arts and humanities. On the issue of placing a greater emphasis on the relationship between research and teaching, the suggestion was to recognise the important contribution that teaching fellows (language teaching fellows in the case of Portuguese, for example) make to scholarship, and by extension, the vital role that healthy scholarship plays in the development of undergraduate curricula, for example. A recommendation was also made to acknowledge the importance of public engagement in relation to the current impact agenda. Researchers could play a fundamental role in bridging the gap between schools and research/scholarship. A final suggestion was to offer funding to support translations, critical editions and companions, which often have students as their readership but which are increasingly not valued within the REF framework, yet are important for diversifying curricula.

UCML Survey by Incoming Chair

This was circulated to ABIL members. There were not many responses but those received emphasised the following three points regarding Modern Languages in general and Portuguese and Brazilian Studies in particular.

- Defining ourselves clearly and systematically in counter-distinction to Comparative Literature. Retaining specific language-area identities and brands whilst maximising cooperation and best practice-sharing across languages and institutions.
- Supporting staff in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies who feel alienated and over-burdened by inequitable treatment in matters such as sabbatical leave and who feel isolated where they are the only member of Portuguese academic staff. Protecting language tutors in our field when they are required to carry a lecturer's load during research staff sabbaticals.
- A root and branch review and where applicable, reform, of our relationship with the secondary school sector and MFL student recruitment practices.

Prof. Hilary Owen

25 October 2018