

In a contemporary world of fake news, orchestrated social media presence, individual-specific advertising

and advanced editing software, we need to think more carefully about what we are told, when and by who.

This year, the Difference Festival focuses on the term 'truth'. We will explore this term in its entirety via a diverse programme of events curated by academic staff from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The University of Westminster has always been intent on assisting the public in its pursuit of truth. In 1838, The Polytechnic Institution at Regent Street was created as place for the public to explore new ideas, discover inventions, acquire knowledge and learn

skills. We strive to continue those ambitions and to make a difference, embodying the link between theory and practice and changing the world for good.

Join us as we navigate the complexity of modern truth via workshops, discussions, activities and talks.

Tickets for evening events (after 6pm) are essential

Book now at:  
[westminster.ac.uk/difference](http://westminster.ac.uk/difference)

## EXHIBITIONS

MON 24 – FRI 28 FEB

### IMAGERY OF NATURE: THE TRUE ART OF THE MICROSCOPIC

9.30am – 5.30pm daily  
Regent Street Foyer

#### Exhibition

This exhibition of microscopic images, curated by a team from the School of Life Sciences, inform and engage, and seem out of this world!

Come along and enjoy patterns of nature in stunning works created through our research and teaching in Life Sciences. The pictures explore cells and tissues from the body, or are grown in our laboratory. With this display, we hope to awaken curiosity, stimulate the mind, evoke emotions and, fundamentally, encourage intrigue in science.



### IMAGERY OF NATURE: PHOTOGRAPHY AND NATURE

9.30am – 5.30pm daily  
Regent Street Foyer

#### Exhibition

This exhibition of photographs of landscapes and urban environments explores nature – capturing the world both as we see it, and sometimes as we do not.

All works are by Mara Leite – multiple award-winning photographer (National Geographic, Outdoor Photographer of the Year award, Top 100 Landscape Photographer of the Year, EPSON International Pano Awards) and current doctoral researcher in Astrobiology at the University of Westminster.

Image: © Mara Leite Photography

## GETTING HERE

Unless otherwise indicated, all events will be held at:

University of Westminster  
309 Regent Street  
London W1B 2HW

🚇 Oxford Circus Station

## KEEP IN TOUCH

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#DifferenceFestival



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# DIF FER ENCE

This year's Difference Festival focuses on 'truth'. The concept is

explored [redacted] programme of events curated by academic staff from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at The University of Westminster.

[redacted] contemporary world of fake news, orchestrated social media presence, [redacted]

[redacted] individual-specific advertising and advanced editing software, we all

*“How do we discern truth, who discerns it for us?”*

need to think more carefully about what we are told, when and by who.

Visit to learn how lie detectors work, and when they can't be trusted; how

selective truth can win over a nation, and when it can't; how old you really are and how age is just a number; how metaphysical phenomena and medicine intersect, and

how we heal; how truth can be reached, if [redacted]; [redacted] can really b

[redacted] rev truth; how clean your hands are, and how many [redacted]

they have on them [redacted] now; how clean the air is, and who should be

accountable; how alone we really are in the universe.

and what alternative may look like; how good

Space smells, if go [redacted] who really writes h [redacted]

humanity or the Earth, and, lastly, how much you should trust your memorie

A free festival exploring truth  
24 – 28 February 2020

UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTMINSTER

## MON 24 FEBRUARY

### THE LIE DETECTOR: CAN POLYGRAPHS REALLY TELL TRUTH FROM LIES?

1–3pm, Regent Street Foyer

#### Demonstration (Drop-in)

This is a demonstration of *PowerLab* – hardware used to perform polygraph measures, sometimes the machine is known as a ‘lie detector’. Come and experience the polygraph and see for yourself how accurate it is, if it really does measure lies and how it is used in psychology for research. Led by Haulah Zacharia from the School of Social Sciences, University of Westminster.

### THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

6pm, UG05

#### Screening

*Taste of Cement*, directed by Ziad Kalthoum, is a Kubrick-style film/documentary recounting daily life of Syrian construction workers in Beirut, Lebanon. After the film there will be a discussion with Syrian activist Amina Khouli and reporter Leila al-Shamim. Each offers their first hand testimony of the Syrian revolution since its inception through the past eight years in what international media have labelled as ‘a civil war’. The talk looks to reignite discussion about the genuine nature of the popular uprising that swept through Syria in 2011 and well into 2014.

Led by Dr Alessandro Columbu from the School of Humanities, University of Westminster and accompanied by Syrian activist Amina al-Khouli and reporter Leila al-Shami.

### ASTROBIOLOGY – THE HUNT FOR ALIEN LIFE

6pm, UG04

#### Talk

‘Astrobiology’ is an emerging field of science, encompassing research into the origins and limits of life on Earth, and where life might exist beyond it. What actually is ‘life’ though, and how did it emerge on our world? What are the most extreme conditions terrestrial life can tolerate? Also, what would an alien actually look like? Lewis Dartnell will take you on a tour of planets and moons which may harbour life to explore one of the greatest questions ever asked: Are we alone?

Led by Lewis Dartnell, Professor of Science Communication based at the University of Westminster, studying how life, and signs of its existence, might survive the intense cosmic radiation on the surface of Mars.

### THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION OF POWER: NATION, ETHNICITY AND TRUTH IN MODERN CHINA

6pm, Fyvie Hall

#### Talk

Since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has maintained strict control over information in the media and educational material across the country. What kinds of ‘truth’ has this environment produced, and how have ‘truths’ allowed the CCP to retain its legitimacy as China’s sole ruling organisation? Focusing on how ethnic minorities have

been represented in visual propaganda materials from the Mao era to the present, Séagh Kehoe and Anna McNally examine how certain ‘truths’ about ethnicity in China have been produced, and, furthermore, the role these ‘truths’ have played in consolidating notions of a unified China.

Led by Dr Séagh Kehoe, Postdoctoral Fellow, and accompanied by Anna McNally, Senior Archivist at the University of Westminster.

### AROMATOM: THE SMELL OF SPACE

7pm, Regent Street Foyer

#### Workshop

This event is an olfactory encounter with space during which participants learn about exploration, the solar system, the origin of life and the kind of life that we are searching for beyond the Earth. The space-smells act as vehicles for the science being discussed, and are based on the composition of planets, moons and molecular clouds, as well as on the smells experienced by astronauts.

Led by Marina Barcenilla, an Astrobiology doctoral researcher, School of Life Sciences at the University of Westminster.

## TUES 25 FEBRUARY

### HOW OLD ARE YOU?

1–3pm, Regent Street Foyer

#### Demonstration (Drop-in)

Age is just a number, right? Do we have to age, and why do some people seem to age differently than others?

Instead of saying how old you are in years, we can also talk about how old an individual’s biology is. This Biological Age score, or the body’s function expressed relative to normative values, is a more meaningful number for overall health than chronological age, or how old a person is. This interactive session will allow people to test their biological age against two common tests and compare their results to population values.

Led by Dr Bradley Elliott, School of Life Sciences and accompanied by researchers of the Translational Physiology Research Group, University of Westminster.

### SEEKING THE GRAIL: THE QUEST FOR SCIENTIFIC TRUTH

6pm, Boardroom

#### Workshop

How can science be both true and constantly changing? Is there even such a thing as scientific truth? This workshop explores the nature of scientific knowledge and takes a journey through theories about the use of reason and observation to learn about the world. It is illustrated with stories and examples from the history of science. Learn what scientists believe about how science works, how it influences the way that they carry out research, and what this teaches us about life in a world where we are drowning in information.

Led by Dr Stuart Thompson, School of Life Sciences University of Westminster, and accompanied by Rhiannon Thompson, doctoral researcher at Imperial College London.

## WEDS 26 FEBRUARY

### THE LIE DETECTOR: CAN POLYGRAPHS REALLY TELL TRUTH FROM LIES?

1–3pm, Regent Street Foyer

#### Demonstration (Drop-in)

See Monday 24 February for event description.

### THE TRUTH ABOUT HAPPINESS

6pm, Boardroom

#### Talk

It is universally accepted that we should strive to be as happy as possible; that negative feelings must be banished.

Background information on the rise of happiness studies, and world happiness reports, sets the scene to allow questions regarding how reliable statistics actually are – and why they have become so popular. Focus turns to an exploration into different views on happiness from other cultures and civilisations across the globe – not all of which idealise happiness. The aim is to allow ourselves to think critically about the ‘happiness imperative’, and to find common denominators on happiness across cultures.

Led by Professor Gerda Wielander, specialist in Chinese Studies and Associate Head of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Westminster.

### ARE CARS THE NEW TOBACCO?

6pm, Fyvie Hall

#### Panel Discussion

Climate breakdown, air and noise pollution, habitat destruction, road injuries,

and negative health are linked to car-dominated transport systems. The Dieselgate scandal exposed industry deception and regulatory failure, but business as usual seems to have continued for the car industry. Why do cars and the industry still have such a hold over us? And how should academics, policy-makers, and the public challenge this? Led by Dr Rachel Aldred School of Architecture and Cities. Joined by an expert panel, including leading active travel journalist Laura Laker, psychologist Dr Ian Walker, and Transport Lead for Hackney Jon Burke.

## THURS 27 FEBRUARY

### SUPERBUGS!

1pm and 6pm  
Regent Street Foyer

#### Demonstration

Despite having microscopic size, superbugs are a grave threat. It is estimated that antibiotic resistance will cause 10 million deaths a year by 2050. Antibiotic resistance has been found in numerous common bacterial infections, including tuberculosis, gonorrhoea and salmonellosis, making them difficult – if not impossible – to treat. We are on the cusp of a ‘post-antibiotic era’ in which common infections and minor injuries which have been treatable for decades can once again kill. Join this workshop to learn the truth about the recent rise in superbugs, and how you can protect yourself!

Led by Dr Manal Mohammed, School of Life Sciences, University of Westminster.

### SINK WITHOUT TRACE: INVESTIGATING THE TRUTH ABOUT MIGRANT DEATHS AT SEA

6pm, UG04

#### Discussion

For over three decades, unknown numbers of deaths have been occurring amongst migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe.

This roundtable discussion considers the misreporting of these deaths by the media and governments, the widespread use of misleading statistics and the lack of regulation relating to the recovery and identification of migrants’ bodies. This will be the first in a series of discussions aimed at creating a document of agreed truths on the subject of migrant deaths at sea.

Coordinated by Dr Federica Mazzara, School of Humanities, and joined by Maurice Stierl (University of Warwick Research Fellow and Alarm Phone), Laura Padoan (External Relations Officer, UNHRC), Daniel Trilling (Journalist, *The Guardian*), Lorenzo Pezzani (Goldsmiths – Forensic Oceanography).

### ORIGINS: HOW THE EARTH SHAPED HUMAN HISTORY

6pm, Fyvie Hall

#### Talk

When we talk about human history, we focus on great leaders, revolutions, and technological advances. But how has the Earth itself determined our destiny? How has our planet made us? Geological forces drove our evolution in East Africa;

mountainous terrain led to the development of democracy in Greece; and today voting behaviour in the United States follows the bed of an ancient sea. By taking us through millennia of human history, and billions of years into our planet’s past, Lewis Dartnell tells us the ultimate origin story. Led by Lewis Dartnell, Professor of Science Communication at the University of Westminster, whose research examines how life, and signs of its existence, might survive the intense cosmic radiation on the surface of Mars

## FRI 28 FEBRUARY

### AROMATOM: THE SMELL OF SPACE

1–3pm, Regent Street Foyer

#### Workshop (Drop-in)

See Monday 24 February for event description.

### MEDICAL TRUTH AS A METAPHYSICAL PHENOMENON

6pm, UG04

#### Demonstration

Illness must always have an aspect open to interpretation. Ancient Chinese and modern psychoneuroimmunological theory suggest a wider social and cultural foundation to health and wellbeing that moves away from logical positivism.

Via pulse readings, from the perspective of Chinese medicine, participants learn more about how we can make sense of the world and ourselves, utilising both intuition and categorisation. Ultimately, questions about medical truth will rise, when

it is a human being that is the subject of investigation. Led by Jane Wilson, School of Life Sciences and member of the EASTmedicine research group, University of Westminster.

### BASS CULTURE

6pm, Regent Street Cinema

#### Screening and Q&A

*Bass Culture* retraces grime’s origins through the genres that preceded it. Those familiar with grime will know success is hard-won, but, for those less familiar, the film provides insight into the efforts of an underground, predominantly black British music community that continues to defy the industry’s assessments of its potential. It showcases a journey fuelled by enterprise, entrepreneurialism and creativity. Coordinated by Mykaell Riley and staged by Bass Culture Research – a project exploring the impact of Jamaican music in the UK. Produced by Fully Focused – a youth-led media organisation using film to raise awareness, challenge perceptions and transform lives.

### I SWEAR TO TELL THE TRUTH

6pm, Boardroom

#### Workshop

This event challenges and explains the truth of our own personal memories. It encourages participants to consider to what extent they can trust memory to be a true record of their experience, whether false memories are possible, and what ‘truth’, from a psychological and philosophical viewpoint, is. Led by Catherine Loveday and Coral Dando, both Professors from the School of Social Sciences.