

Writing Difficult Subjects: Approaches to Research Storytelling

ONLINE Roundtable and Discussion

Tuesday 27th October, 3pm-4.30pm (UK time)

Communicating difficult and sensitive research in writing presents complex challenges in relation to ethics, style and voice. It is not always possible - or desirable - to limit ourselves to the norms of academic writing found in monographs and journal articles. We may want to speak to other audiences or express a wider range of feelings and creative responses to our work.

This panel session brings together two writers working at the intersection of research, journalism, fiction and creative non-fiction to explore how we might use the structural, stylistic and creative approaches of different storytelling forms. Our speakers will share their insights and experiences in relation to key questions, such as:

- How do we ethically and effectively represent someone else's perspective or point of view, especially when their lived experience is not our own?
- Can we deploy dramatic writing to build reader engagement and investment without becoming voyeuristic or sensationalising?
- When we describe or analyse violence (including sexual violence) or harm, how do we avoid reproducing it on the page?
- What is the balance between evoking deep emotions and moral responses, and maintaining a commitment to the integrity of the research?
- How far can we creatively work into the 'gaps' in our research, particularly in relation to marginalized or erased narratives? What are the limits of rhetoric and 'critical fabulation'?

Following a chaired panel discussion (55 minutes), we will open up wider audience discussion (30 minutes).

Attendees may like to look at the [Writing Difficult Subjects: A Trauma-informed Creative Writing Toolkit](#) before and/or after the session.

Speakers

[Dr Julie Wheelwright](#) is an honorary fellow at Birkbeck, the co-author, with Dr Ruth Beecher of *Writing Difficult Subjects*, a creative writing toolkit and was the programme director of the MA creative writing non-fiction at City St George's University of London. Her most recent book is *Sisters in Arms: Female Warriors from Antiquity to the New Millennium* (Osprey 2020).

[Dr Lisa O'Donnell](#) is the author of the award-winning *Death of Bees* (2013) and *Closed Doors* (2014), novels which tell emotionally complex stories from a child's perspective. She

is also a screenwriter, winner of the Pathe/Orange Prize for New Screenwriters (2000) and teacher of creative writing at Curtis Brown Creative. <https://www.writingtinker.com/about-lisa>