Floods: living with water in the past, present and future

Flooding is a major global hazard causing severe environmental damage and destroying lives, communities and economies. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of flooding through sea level rise and increased precipitation. Consequently, we are facing greater challenges living with floods: the threat of floods and the impact of floods are transforming landscapes and livelihoods.

Three fully-funded White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities network studentships are available within the Environment Department, University of York, Archaeology Department, University of Sheffield and Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds to commence doctoral study in October 2018.

The three projects are connected through their shared interest in the stories of floods and how these can be mobilised to understand and mitigate the future impacts of flooding on humanity. They differ in their historical and geographical settings, and in their methodologies. A summary of each project is provided below.

Flooding at Hungate, York, in the early 20th century
(Image source: York Explore Libraries and Archives)

1. Tracing coastal storm flooding in landscape and literature

PI Dr Katherine Selby, York katherine.selby@york.ac.uk
Co-I Dr David Higgins, Leeds

Coastal floods, resulting from a combination of high tides, storm surges, and waves, are a serious global hazard. They will become more prevalent over the coming century due to sea level rise and continued growth of coastal populations. Coastal flooding has also occurred in the past, as recorded within landforms such as saltmarshes and dunefields, as well as in

written descriptions such as Daniel Defoe's *The Storm* (1704). Drawing on methodologies from environmental archaeology, geography and literary studies, this PhD will integrate fieldwork and textual analysis in order to investigate how flooding has affected UK coastal areas and the people who inhabit them, over the last 500 years. The project will also reflect on how this novel integration of field and discursive evidence can offer new perspectives and insights into present and future responses to flooding and storminess.

2. Living well with water: complex stories, democratic decision-making

PI Dr Helen Graham, Leeds h.graham@leeds.ac.uk
Co-I Dr Anna Jorgensen

Management of flood risks will affect where and how people live and the heritage and aesthetics of well-loved places. This PhD will use action research to experiment with different storytelling approaches for collective exploration, debate and decision-making. How might different constituencies from public institutions to people directly affected co-produce understandings of change in order to underpin flood planning and make together a viable future? Key points of reference will be Catlin DeSilvey's 'anticipatory histories' and 'visualisations' where key moments of past change are brought to life in order to imagine different futures. The project will use the capacities of stories to explore the links between place, well-being and democracy; how to respond to things beyond your direct control yet also feel what you do makes a difference in a complex world.

3. Water takes land: interactive deep maps of England's lost villages

PI Dr Bob Johnston, Sheffield r.johnston@sheffield.ac.uk
Co-I Dr Debbie Maxwell, York

How do we remember and engage with landscapes lost to flooding? This question has resonance in the present day as humanity faces large-scale land loss due to climate change. It is also, in a more discrete sense, an experience in our recent past when valleys were deliberately flooded to create reservoirs. These floods destroyed farms and villages and dislocated communities. The student will research the landscape histories and the human stories of selected flooded valleys in northern England. The student will work with communities living close to the reservoirs and those affected by the floods to create different, interactive 'deep maps' of land loss (e.g. media-rich digital storytelling or augmented reality). The project's methodology and technologies will have applicability in regions where future flood waters will take land and transform landscapes.

For further details about these PhDs please contact Dr Katherine Selby (katherine.selby@york.ac.uk), Dr Bob Johnston (r.johnston@sheffield.ac.uk) or Dr Helen Graham (h.graham@leeds.ac.uk). The award will provide fees at the Home/EU rate and a stipend paid at standard Research Council rates (£14,777). Applicants must have at least an Upper Second Class Honours degree. A Master's degree is desirable, or demonstration of equivalent experience.

The closing date is May 30 2018.

For additional information and details on how to apply, please see http://wrocah.ac.uk/new-student/networks/ and http://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/ and also http://wrocah.ac.uk/funding/current-students/ for training opportunities.