Guidelines for the Britcult Postgraduate Forum

Format and Overall Aim

The forum is open to all postgraduates with a PhD project in cultural studies. There are no thematic restrictions and the papers usually offer a very broad variety of topics. There will usually be a mixed audience from students to professors (of approximately 30 people).

Apart from succinctly giving the audience an idea about what your research is about, the paper should aim at triggering discussions and an exchange of ideas. You present your PhD project in order to get critical feedback and further suggestions; not everyone will be familiar with the finer points of your topic, hence the input most probably will concern your methodology and line of argumentation.

Formal Framework

- Papers should be in English and not longer than 15 minutes.
- They will be followed by a discussion also not longer than 15 minutes.

Structure of Your Paper:

- Present a "work in progress".
- Give the audience a brief introduction into your topic: what are you dealing with? Which texts/materials/data are you using? What is so fascinating or intriguing about it that you want to spend quite an amount of time on it?
- State your basic premises, hypotheses and research questions: what do you try to find out? Why?
- Which methodology and which theoretical approaches do you use? Do not just drop big names ("Deleuzian rhizome"), but explain what you are planning to do with these theories (N.B. You are attending the Britcult Forum, i.e. you should also make clear what the project has to do with cultural studies).
- Give one or two brief examples.
- Show how all this fits into your overall project. What will be the main points of analysis? What will be the overall line of argumentation?
- Point out problems that you have not been able to solve so far, or open questions, which the audience might be able to answer.

Style of Presentation

- On the one hand: do not try to stun your audience by glibness, gimmicks or flashy PowerPoint presentations.
- On the other hand: "work in progress" does not mean that you should give an improvised, spontaneous talk.
  - Make sure that you keep to the time limit.
  - If you are using handouts, bring enough with you.
  - If you are not sure about the availability of technical equipment and/or software or if you have special wishes, contact the organisers in advance.
  - Bring a backup to be on the safe side.

Discussion

- The discussion is not an exam. You do not have to have an answer for every question; you do not have to be able to spontaneously integrate all the contributions into your project. Make notes and think about them later. Or ask the audience how they would integrate these new ideas into the project.
- Do not be defensive. Either people would like to know more about the topic or they would like to point out some oversights and share their knowledge with you and others. In any case: take the questions and remarks as productive input for your project and not as personal criticism.
- Do not be wowed by big names ("Deleuzian rhizome"). If you do not know the names or concepts which participants in the discussion use or if you are not sure that you have understood them correctly, ask the people to clarify their points.
- You will not be able to discuss your topic exhaustively in the 15 minutes following your presentation. Fortunately, the postgraduate forum opens a three-day conference: talk to people. Keep an open mind. You might get new ideas when and where you least expect them.