



Sep 19, 2014 00:00 BST

Northumbria invites the public to step back in time to 18th Century Britain

Fifty Shades of Grey, Keira Knightley and Starbucks – what do they all have in common? Well let's just say they wouldn't be what they are today if it wasn't for the movers and shakers of 18th-century Britain.

Academics from Northumbria University, Newcastle, will bring their research on this period to life during Being Human – the first national festival of the humanities. From 15-23 November, the University will host a series of free film screenings, public lectures, debates and even an 18th century coffee house recreation at venues across the City.

The festival will explore a range of curious and inspiring themes from the long 18th century (1660 – 1832) and discuss their relevance to modern society.

The week-long programme launches on Saturday 15 November with an 18th-century coffee house recreation at Newcastle's popular café, Blakes. The venue will demonstrate the origin of the coffee house as a place of news and debate, rather than the more relaxed venues we see today. Visitors can expect to find replica 18th-century newspapers, artefacts, discussion and find out more about the less-palatable origins of one of the nation's favourite drinks.

There will also be a number of public lectures on subjects such as early actresses and celebrities, who paved the way for today's movie stars, and a discussion of Britain's first erotic novel, which gives modern day texts such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* a run for their money!

The fashionable diseases of Georgian Britain will also be explored, looking at why early poets were associated with melancholy, while a screening of *The Madness of King George* will delve into the mental health of George III.

An organised 'saunter through 18th-century Newcastle' will also take place during the week, as well as a re-staging by A-Level students of the famous 1820 Literary & Philosophical Society debate, which resulted in the venue banning Lord Byron's controversial *Don Juan* poem.

Other events include screenings of *A Cock and Bull Story* with Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon telling the story of Laurence Sterne's fictional character, Tristram Shandy, and Jane Campion's *A Bright Star* – a beautifully shot account of the Romantic poet, John Keats' brief but passionate affair with Fanny Brawne. Liberty and freedom will also come under the spotlight bringing the festival to a close on Saturday 22 November.

The events, entitled '18th-Century Legacies', are part of the national Being Human Festival which aims to inform, extend and ignite contemporary thinking around the humanities.

Dr Claudine Van Hensbergen, Senior Lecturer in Eighteenth-Century Literature, said: "Northumbria is excited to be part of the first national

festival of the humanities. It provides an excellent opportunity for our researchers to build on their continued work with public audiences and local cultural partners. We're looking forward to sharing ideas with the public and exploring where many attitudes and customs we hold today originate from. It's also a great chance for the local community to see the relevance and benefits of the academic research taking place in the region."

Northumbria's Being Human events have been supported by a grant from national festival organisers, the School of Advanced Study, University of London, supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council and the British Academy.

For more information about the Being Human Festival,
www.northumbria.ac.uk/beinghuman

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focussed, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk