University of Birmingham

Dr Niall Livingstone MA, DPhil

Senior Lecturer in Classics

Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology

Contact details

Telephone +44 (0)121 414 6045

Email n.r.livingstone@bham.ac.uk

Department of Classics, Ancient History & Archaeology
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
United Kingdom
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT
UK

About

Niall works on ancient Greek literature and thought. His research focuses on the relationship between myth, philosophy, science and drama, and how these different ways of thinking and putting forward a view of the world paved the way for one of antiquity's most important – and most challenging – legacies to the modern world: democracy.

Other interests include the cultural impact of widening use of alphabetic writing in Greece from the 8th century BC onwards – a technological revolution comparable with the modern internet revolution, from the Web itself to Twitter and beyond – and the development of distinctive styles of political action in democratic Athens, across a spectrum that would include modern ideas of spin, statecraft and political theory.

Feedback and office hours

I am regularly available to meet current and prospective research students and other researchers with shared interests. To arrange a meeting, please e-mail me (**N.R.Livingstone@bham.ac.uk**).

Qualifications

1985-89 Marjoribanks Open Scholarship in Classics, Christ Church, Oxford University

1987 Gaisford Prize for Greek Prose Composition, Oxford University

1989 BA (Honours) in Literae Humaniores (Ancient Greek & Latin Literature and Philosophy), Oxford University

1992 DPhil in Greek Literature, Oxford University

2002 PG Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education, University of Birmingham

Teaching

CURRENT TEACHING

Languages:

- Ancient Greek and Latin at all levels, PG and UG, including ancient Greek of all periods (archaic to late Byzantine); Greek inscriptions; Greek dialects; Greek metre

PG options:

- Greek myth: literary forms, cultural contexts, modern reception
- Herodotus' *History*
- Greek oratory and rhetorical theory

UG options:

- Myth, wisdom and inquiry in early Greece
- Greek tragedy
- Greek and Roman comedy

UG core modules:

- Athenian drama in practice
- History of Greek literature

Postgraduate supervision

I welcome proposals for research projects in any of the subjects described above or in related areas. I am particularly interested in supervising projects on myth, writing and cultural memory in ancient Greece; citizenship and performance in democratic Athens; and the various ways in which participants in modern politics of every hue have used, or been inspired by, ancient Greek models.

Completed research degrees supervised:

- Dr Efthymia Karaouza: PhD, 'Cohesion and text structure in Attic Greek prose' (2007). Co-supervision with Prof. Michael Toolan (English)
- Dr Jacquelyn Austin: PhD, 'Writers and writing in the Roman army at Dura-Europos' (2010). Co-supervision with Dr Tom Davis (English). External examiner Prof. Alan Bowman
- Matthew Kears: PhD, 'Resident aliens and the concept of citizenship in democratic Athens' (2014). External examiner Prof. Stephen Todd
- Deborah Kerr: MPhil, 'Hags versus sorceresses: the figure of the witch in ancient literature' (2007). External examiner Prof. Daniel Ogden
- Annabel Heath: MPhil, 'Ancient Greek tragedy: a study in the nature of dystopianism' (2010). External examiner Dr Ian Ruffell
- Nick Silverman: MPhil, 'Reception of Plato's *Republic* in 20th-century utopian literature' (2013). External examiner Dr Katherine Harloe

Current research supervision:

- Lucy Felmingham-Cockburn: PhD, 'Horses and horsemanship in the symbolism of gender-identity in archaic and classical Greece'
- Deborah Kerr: PhD, 'Doorways, ideas of liminality and magic-working in ancient literature'
- James Nowell: PhD, 'Stoic ethics in the characterisation of women in Senecan tragedy' (co-supervision with Dr Diana Spencer)
- Maria Petropoulou: PhD, 'Aeschylus: a commentary on selected fragmentary plays'
- Victoria Schuppert: PhD, 'Animal fables and dystopian literature: Aesop, Aristophanes, Orwell'
- Nicholas Shiaxiate: PhD, 'Reinterpreting pseudo-Xenophon *On the Constitution of the Athenians*'
- Helen Tank: PhD, 'Women's speech in Herodotus' *Histories*'
- Sarah Wilkowski: PhD, 'Political invective ancient and modern: the Philippic model'
- Emmanouela-Maria Giamalaki: MPhil, 'Demosthenes and the rhetoric of the prooimion'

Research

The book I am writing at the moment, *Athens: The City as University*, looks to the first great democratic society we know for a better understanding of how we define our identity as members of a community, how we learn to succeed and play our full part in society, and how we can take control of the way our society is run: in other words, of the idea of citizenship.

Citizenship is about three inseparable things: a sense of solidarity and belonging, willingness to contribute to the common good, and the right to have a say in how we live together. I argue that, for all its problems and complexities, the example of ancient Athens – a society in which individual citizens routinely voted on the most important decisions, on both policy and executive action; in which ordinary people were summoned by lot to fill top government jobs; and where there was a process for ejecting unpopular politicians not just from government, but from the country – can help us renew our understanding of citizenship, and get beyond some of the problems of political disengagement that face us today.

Other activities

Assorted more specific, and more miscellaneous, interests include:

- writing in early Greece, especially epigrams (poems written, originally, on objects like gravestones or gifts to the gods), graffiti, and the place of writing in symposia and other playful activities
- the historian Herodotus of Halikarnassos, especially his interests in myth, writing, memory and popular traditions
- learning, performance, and citizenship in ancient Greece and today (see below)
- magic and other marginalised or unofficial traditions of wisdom, philosophy or religion in ancient Greece
- Isocrates of Athens and Alcidamas of Elaia, 4th-century BC political writers less well known, but no less interesting, than their contemporaries Plato and Xenophon
- the 3rd-century BC epigrammatist Nossis of Locri
- modern performances of ancient Greek drama, especially when used to explore what it means to be a member of a community and how, against all odds, humans ancient and modern have striven to interpret and change the world
- ancient Greek language: rhetoric, style, grammar, and the application of modern linguistic techniques and theories to ancient Greek texts

Niall Livingstone on academia.edu

Publications

- K. Dowden and N. Livingstone (eds), *A Companion to Greek Mythology* (Malden MA, Oxford & Chichester: Blackwell, 2011). Includes K. Dowden and N. Livingstone, 'Thinking through Myth, Thinking Myth Through' and N. Livingstone, 'Instructing Myth: From Homer to the Sophists'
- N. Livingstone and G. Nisbet, *Epigram*. Greece & Rome New Surveys in the Classics 38 (Cambridge: CUP, 2010)
- 'Isocrates: *Philosophia* as Refined Civic Discourse', in F. Woerther (ed.), *Literary and Philosophical Rhetoric in the Greek, Roman, Syriac and Arabic Worlds*. Europaea Memoria: Studien und Texte zur Geschichte der europäischen Ideen 66 (Hildesheim, Zurich and New York: Olms, 2009)
- M. Fox and N. Livingstone, 'Rhetoric and Historiography', in I. Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Malden MA, Oxford & Chichester: Blackwell, 2007), 542-61
- *Isocrates'* Busiris: *a Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001)

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