



## Faculty of Arts and Humanities Department of English Distinguished Lecture Series

Prof. Angus Nicholls

### From Technological to Digital Reproducibility: Teaching Literature in the Age of A.I

Thursday 6 November 2025, 16:00

Venue: E21A-G038

All are Welcome

#### Abstract:

Since the public release of ChatGPT in November 2022, intense debates have emerged within the humanities—and literary studies in particular—concerning the practice of teaching literature at universities. In this talk, I will explore these debates through the lens of Walter Benjamin's concept of “technological reproducibility,” developed during the 1930s to describe the emergence of photography and film.

Today, much digital content—including digitized literature—is instantly reproducible, transmissible, and marketable via online platforms and networks. Literary texts can also be repurposed as training data for Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, which may then be used by writers and students to generate new content. These developments raise critical questions: Is digital reproducibility fundamentally different from what Benjamin termed technological reproducibility? And if so, what are the implications not only for the teaching of literature but also for literature itself?



#### Biography:

**Angus Nicholls** is Professor of Comparative Literature and German at Queen Mary University of London. His books include *Myth and the Human Sciences* (2015), *Goethe's Concept of the Daemonic* (2006), *Friedrich Max Müller and the Role of Philology in Victorian Thought* (co-edited with John Davis, 2017), and *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought* (co-edited with Martin Liebscher, 2010). He was formerly co-editor of the journals *History of the Human Sciences* (Sage) and *Publications of the English Goethe Society* (Routledge). His current book project is a presentist history of Comparative Literature as an academic discipline, focusing on the second half of the nineteenth century.

\*Language: English