Five members of Birkbeck staff were promoted to the post of Professor in 2013–2014

Richard Cooper
Professor of Cognitive Science
Professor Cooper’s research is concerned with the cognitive processes underlying the control of thought and action. He combines computational and empirical methods to address questions such as how we are able to do multiple tasks concurrently, what constraints there may be on these due to cognitive limitations, and how these processes may break down following brain injury. In 2011, he co-authored a major monograph, The Organisation of Mind and how these processes may break down, with particular reference to the Roman Empire.

Karen Hudson-Edwards
Professor of Environmental Geochemistry and Mineralogy
Professor Hudson-Edwards studies the processes and products of the biogeochemical cycling of contaminants and nutrients in mines, wastes, waters, dusts and contaminated land (see also 22). She is particularly interested in how minerals dissolve in the presence and absence of bacteria and organic materials, and how toxic elements are released during this process. Her team is using this knowledge to inform remediation schemes and to protect humans and ecosystems. Professor Hudson-Edwards has recently conducted work in Australia, Bolivia, Cyprus, Spain and Pakistan.

Carolyn Moores
Professor of Structural Biology
Professor Moores’ research focuses on the cytoskeleton – the skeleton-like structures found inside all cells. The cytoskeleton is essential in providing shape and organisation to cells and acting as a track for molecular motors transporting cargo within cells. The Moores Group takes pictures of individual cytoskeleton filaments using an electron microscope, then analyses these pictures computationally to calculate the three-dimensional shape of cytoskeleton filaments. Studying the cytoskeleton helps us to understand both how healthy cells work and how malfunctions of the cytoskeleton cause disease. Accordingly, the Group’s research involves aspects of brain development, cancer and malaria. Professor Moores also acts as Academic Co-ordinator for doctoral programmes in the Institute of Structural Molecular Biology and is involved in the Athena Scientific Women’s Academy Network project.

Nikolai Wachsmann
Professor of Modern European History
Professor Wachsmann specialises in the history of discipline and punishment in modern Germany, with a focus on policing, law, terror and resistance in the Third Reich. Before joining Birkbeck in 2005, he was a research fellow at Downing College, University of Cambridge, and a lecturer at the University of Sheffield. He is director of doctoral students in the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology and teaches BA and MA modules. His first book, Hitler’s Prisons: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany (Yale), was widely translated and joint winner of the 2005 Longman-History Today Book of the Year Award. He has since published extensively on modern German history and has directed a major Arts and Humanities Research Council research project at Birkbeck on the early Nuremberg system. Professor Wachsmann’s general history of the concentration camps will be published in spring 2015.

Caroline Humfress
Professor of History
Before moving to Birkbeck in 2004, Caroline Humfress was Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Law at the University of California, Berkeley and prior to that a research fellow at the University of Oxford. Since October 2012 she has been Assistant Dean for Postgraduate Research Students in the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy at Birkbeck. Her research explores the fundamental question “What is the “state” and how might it – or how should it – reflect law and religion?” with particular reference to the Roman Empire.

Inspiring and innovative teaching are the hallmarks of the winners of the 2014 Birkbeck Excellence in Teaching Awards

Dr Frederic Dick (above), Reader in Cognitive Neurosciences in the Department of Psychological Sciences, and Dr Amber Jacobs, Lecturer in the Department of Psychosocial Studies, have both been recognised this year for their contributions to teaching at Birkbeck.

Very interactive classes
Dr Dick teaches the Plasticity, Constraint, Expertise and Talent module of the Psychology BSc or MSc. He was nominated for a Birkbeck Excellence in Teaching Award (BETA) for his innovative work and his commitment to making this challenging subject matter accessible to a diverse group of learners. He said: “The module looks at how the brain adapts to optimum learning and skill acquisition. The aim is for students to understand the science of how and why it is that some people become experts in different fields, such as music, sport or chess. They also get to understand how this can be directly applied to their own studies.”

“The class is very interactive: the students learn about each other’s skills as well as learning new methods in areas such as functional magnetic resonance imaging. The BETA is a nice affirmation of my teaching. I particularly enjoy the diverse nature of the teaching group, as mature students, they are frequently experts in their own fields. A student’s past experience is really important to this course.”

Videos essays
Dr Jacobs said: “My research and teaching focus on the feminist analysis of cultural production, ranging from literary and philosophical texts to visual cultures.

“In my most recent Master’s course in Visual Culture, I introduced the ‘audiovisual essay’ as a process of getting inside the visual effect and experimenting with the specific visual medium, using simple software such as Adobe or the Windows equivalent.

“Students were asked to make video essays as a practice-based response to the films, photographs and theoretical texts that were set. After one practical workshop, almost all students produced ambitious video essays.

“Many students expressed how the process gave them deeper insight into the ‘constructed-ness’ of the film image, as well as achieving new digital skills and confidence as image makers. Feedback consistently referred to the ‘inspiring experience’ of making the video essay and watching other people’s, and how this process of getting inside the visual medium transformed their approach to visual culture, making them more politically and critically aware about the ways in which images are constructed and manipulated.”