The BBC World Service and British Soft Power in Perspective

Saturday 25 June, 14.00 – 17.00
Birkbeck College, Clore Management Centre, Torrington Sq, WC1E 7HX

EVENT PROGRAMME

• Session One, 14.00 – 15.20: The Political Economy of Soft Power

How does the BBC World Service balance the challenges of funding cuts with rapid changes in both international broadcasting and new social media? How does the British government value and perceive the World Service within its projection of Britain’s ‘soft power’?

Peter Horrocks, Director, BBC World Service, in discussion with;

Jean Seaton, Official historian of the BBC, Professor of Media History at Westminster University.

Chaired by David Styan, Department of Politics, Birkbeck College.

• Session Two, 15.40 – 17.00: Digital Diplomacy and the Arab Spring

Satellite broadcasters and internet media are playing key roles in changes in the Middle East. Is the BBC World Service successfully negotiating the move from radio to TV and interactive internet media? As audiences and agenda shift, can the BBC compete with Al Jazeera and others?

Roger Hardy, former Middle East and Islamic affairs analyst, BBC World Service; author of ‘The Muslim Revolt: A Journey through Political Islam’ (Hurst, 2010); and currently a visiting fellow at LSE, working on US ‘soft power’ and the Muslim world since 9/11.

Marie Gillespie, Professor of Sociology, the Open University, author of numerous reports on both Arab media and ‘digital diplomacy’.

Chaired by Firdevs Robinson, independent journalist, media trainer.

• Both sessions will be followed by an audience debate.

• 17.00 – 18.00: Drinks reception

Today’s seminar has been organised by Birkbeck College’s Centre for the Study of British Politics and Public Life in partnership with the Communication and Media Research Institute at University of Westminster, and the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change at the Open University.