

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
PARTICULARS OF APPOINTMENT
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES & CULTURES
MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (COMICS AND RACE IN LATIN AMERICA)
VACANCY REF: HUM-016146

Salary: Grade 6 £32,816 to £34,804 per annum (according to relevant experience)

Hours: 1 FTE

Duration: Fixed term from 01 March 2021 for 36 Months

Location: Oxford Road, Manchester

Enquiries about the vacancy, shortlisting and interviews:

Manager: Dr James Scorer

Email: james.scorer@manchester.ac.uk

A Research Associate is needed to work on a 3-year AHRC-funded project entitled 'Comics and Race in Latin America'. The principal investigator for the project is Dr James Scorer (Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies) and the co-investigator is Professor Peter Wade (Social Anthropology), both researchers at the University of Manchester.

The Research Associate will be based at the University of Manchester in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, though they will work closely with the Department of Social Anthropology, both with Professor Wade and with the other Research Associate linked to the project. They will also be linked to the interdisciplinary Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. The University of Manchester values a diverse workforce and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

The project starts on 1 March 2021 and contracts are for 36 months. In Manchester the Research Associate will undertake internet-based research, analyse primary sources and data, contribute to an online exhibition, participate in events, and write up findings. They will also undertake research trips to other libraries and archives, for example in Europe or the US, and spend some time in Argentina, Colombia and Peru (about 1 month in each), undertaking archival

research and participating in workshops. A summary of the project can be found at the end of the job description.

The successful candidate will have a doctoral degree in Cultural Studies or Latin America Studies, or a related discipline. They will need to combine skills in textual analysis (especially of comics, but also of other written and visual texts), archival research, and social data collection (e.g. tracing social networks of people and objects, including via social media, etc.). Experience of working with archives is essential, preferably in Latin America. They will be fluent in Spanish and will have an excellent command of written and spoken English.

The Research Associate will be a key contributor to the joint activities and outputs of the project. In addition, they will take responsibility for carrying out fieldwork and analysis in an independent manner, within the framework of the project and under the guidance of the PI and Co-I. They will write at least one single-authored and one-co-authored journal article (with either the PI or the Co-I) to be submitted for publication during the tenure of the project.

They will be involved in the planning of the research, the organisation of events, carrying out data collection, analysing data, and doing interpretive analysis of cultural texts, particularly comics. They will be involved in the creation, servicing and editing of the project's other outputs, namely two comics fanzines, a webpage, a curated online exhibition and a briefing document about comics work in Latin America. They will also assist the PI and Co-I with the administration of the research project as necessary. Initiative, motivation, effective teamwork and ability to liaise with other team members and comics artists working on the project, whether in the UK or Latin America, are crucial to the role.

Key Responsibilities, Accountabilities or Duties:

- To undertake research into the depiction and treatment of race in Latin American print comics and the wider Latin American field of comics work, with a particular focus on Argentina, Colombia and Peru
- To gather relevant primary sources and scholarship related to the project via archival and online research in the UK and other locations as required
- To undertake research in archives and libraries, and to liaise with the project's comics artists and other relevant professionals where required, in Argentina, Colombia and Peru
- To explore, in these countries, the field of comics work in which artists and other comics-related professionals operate, mapping their activities, career trajectories and social networks
- To analyse: the content, paratextual information and publication data for comics that address race in Latin America; how comics artists understand, produce and disseminate these publications; how these publications circulate and are received in different contexts, whether in print, online or at comics events and festivals; what comic narratives and techniques other consumers use to convey their experiences of race; how comics artists, as well as their creations and consumers, relate to discourses of multiculturalism, racial democracy and anti-racism in a national and transnational context
- To liaise on a regular basis with the PI and the Co-I and to assist in the administration of the research project as appropriate
- To write at least one single-authored journal article and one co-authored journal article (the latter with either the PI or the Co-I), both related to findings of the project

- To assist with the creation and editing of two comics fanzines, which will be created collaboratively by the project's artists and academic participants
- To produce content for and assist with the maintenance of the project website
- To produce content for and assist with the maintenance of the project's online exhibition
- To contribute to a briefing document targeted at comics artists that will provide information about the professional comics world in Latin America
- To help organize and be present at two week-long retreats held in Latin America for the project's comics artists (which will include interviews and discussion groups)
- To help organize and run two one-day workshops at the conclusion of each retreat period with other local comics artists and professionals
- To help organize and contribute to an international academic conference hosted in Manchester
- To contribute to and assist with the maintenance of the project website
- To actively support the University's Equality and Diversity Policies wherever possible

Essential Knowledge, Skills, Experience and Qualifications:

- A doctoral degree in Cultural Studies or Latin American Studies, or a related subject, awarded by 1 March 2021; or equivalent status (applicants without a PhD must demonstrate equivalent status in terms of research experience, publication profile, etc.)
- Demonstrable intellectual skills of analysis and synthesis [L] [SEP]
- Experience analysing written and visual sources
- Research experience in topics related to the project theme [L] [SEP]
- Experience of doing research in Latin America [L] [SEP]
- Experience of carrying out archival research
- Fluency in Spanish
- An excellent command of written and spoken English [L] [SEP]
- Initiative, motivation, ability to work in teams and to liaise with other team members and [L] [SEP] project collaborators [L] [SEP]

Desirable Knowledge, Skills, Experience and Qualifications:

- Experience of working in research teams [L] [SEP]
- First-hand knowledge of Argentina, Colombia and/or Peru
- Experience of doing research in Argentina, Colombia and/or Peru [L] [SEP]
- Proven experience in carrying out analysis of comics [L] [SEP]
- Experience of carrying out interviews
- Native or near-native proficiency in English [L] [SEP]
- Web-authoring skills [L] [SEP]
- Experience of organizing academic workshops or similar events [L] [SEP]
- Experience in research administration [L] [SEP]

Summary of project [L] [SEP]

From early caricatures to recent accusations of anti-Asianism, comics in Latin America have a troubled relationship to race. As comics use visual shorthands to communicate complex cultural histories quickly, they are susceptible to simplistic, stereotypical representations of cultural

difference. But comics artists in Latin America have also produced more considered explorations of race, sometimes constructing anti-racist discourses. Such work is vital in a region with a long history of racial mixture, produced out of indigenous populations, Iberian colonialists, black slaves and (especially Asian and European) economic migrants. Despite legislative advances addressing structural inequalities and growing awareness that racism is a widespread social problem, Latin America is still shaped by long-standing racial hierarchies, often obscured by celebrations of the region's *mestizaje* (race mixture).

The relationship between comics and race demands attention both because of those racial tensions and also because Latin America is currently undergoing a comics renaissance. There are now more independent publishers dedicated to comics; festivals take place in both countries with established comics traditions (Mexico, Argentina and Brazil) and also in others (Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Peru); and, as well as growth in print and digital comics, artists are developing international links, not least as festivals abroad are seeking to work with the region's comics creators. This is the perfect moment to unpack how comics in the region have treated issues of blackness and indigeneity, and how the comics world, which remains predominantly white, might seek out ways to be less inscribed by racial inequalities.

We cannot speak of Latin American comics 'industries' but rather of precarious, often self-funded grassroots activities. Like most creators in cultural industries, comics artists are underpaid (if at all) and sometimes even discriminated against (in Colombia, for example, drawing comics is not an 'official' profession, which affects employment status). Artists complain about the lack of shared knowledge of working practices and employment conditions. That is compounded by the diffuse nature of Latin American comics networks and the absence of any information about the relationship between race and the professional working environment.

This project, therefore, responds to the need for: (a) better awareness of the history of race in Latin American comics by looking at works from the nineteenth century to the present in three different countries - Argentina, Colombia and Peru - that have different racial backgrounds and comics histories; and (b) better knowledge of how race inflects the work of contemporary artists and of the nature of working practices for such artists.

To achieve (a), the project will undertake archival research in Latin America, Europe and the US and will focus on four key periods in the history of Latin American comics: Early interventions (1890s-1930s); The Golden Age (1940s-1970s); Crisis and Early Activism (1970s-1990s); Recent Renaissances (2000s-2010s).

To achieve (b), we will work with six contemporary Latin American comics artists. During two retreats, we will hold interviews and discussions with these artists, before opening up those conversations for networking events with other local artists, publishing houses, archivists and festival organisers. These meetings will foment shared knowledge about comics production, especially in relation to race. Artists and researchers will collaborate on two fanzines and a curated online exhibition. The former will be circulated around libraries and archives in Latin America and the English-speaking world, to encourage racism awareness. The latter will be promoted via comics platforms, including the Colombian project partner *Entreviñetas*, and will incorporate space for viewers to submit their own comics as responses to issues raised by artists and researchers.

Organisation of the research

The project will start on 1 March 2021 and the contracts last for 3 years. The PI and the Co-I will guide and mentor the Research Associate during the project.

The Research Associate will undertake research trips to Berlin (Year 1), Peru (Year 1), Argentina (Year 2), Colombia (Year 2), and the US (Year 2). The trips to Argentina, Colombia and Peru will include involvement at a week-long retreat with the project's comics artists and at workshops with other local comics professionals at the end of those retreats. The Research Associate will be expected to work closely with the project's comics artists throughout the project. For the remainder of the project the Research Associate will be based in Manchester, working with the PI and the Co-I and the project's other Research Associate on research, analysis and the project's diverse outputs. The PI, with the assistance of the Co-I, will coordinate the project overall, but both Research Associates are expected to be fully involved in discussions about the nature and dissemination of the research. The Research Associates will also be expected to work closely with Entreviñetas, the project's partner organisation when working in Colombia. As well as writing one single-authored journal article and one co-authored journal article (with either the PI or the Co-I), the Research Associate will also be involved in the international conference that will conclude the project.