

Audio Transcript

John Clarke - knowledge, theories and concepts

Julia Waldman: You write about this and so many other things, how do you hope students will use the knowledge, theories, concepts encompass in your work?

John Clarke: I guess I'm most interested in two things. One is that they might be exciting or interesting. I think the most thing academics can do for students, is to be dull. I'm excited by social policy, I think it poses real interesting, difficult challenges to us all, and therefore I hope what I do makes it possible to think these issues are exciting. And the second is I hope I guess that people don't get stuck with a mechanical version of social science theories. I think theories should open things up and make them available, they shouldn't be something that just grinds on and so I guess why I want to talk about welfare state and nation is to try and open up a set of fields in which its possible to look for connections, disjuncture and changes and residues of all things and think that its complicated. And for me it ought to be complicated not just because that's what proper academics do, but actually the life of welfare states, the politics of welfare states look to me like complicated issues. So our thinking, don't even want to make it as grand as theory, but our thinking, ought to be flexible enough to look for those sort of complicated relationships and make something of them.