

GAMBLING RESEARCH

ALBERTA
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INSTITUTE



16th Annual Gambling Research Conference to be Held April 6-8, 2017, in Banff, Alberta

Conference 2017 Theme: Just Gambling?

Ethical Challenges Pertaining to Gambling Provision, Policy and Research



The theme of the Institute's upcoming conference links gambling to questions of justice and integrity. Such questions have been posed with increasing urgency by scholars in the social sciences and humanities in recent years. Despite the widespread distribution of gambling opportunities in Canada, ethical debates concerning gambling policy and regulation continue to appear in news headlines. For example, the Ontario government recently withdrew its plan to sell its lottery business to private interests; the government of Newfoundland and Labrador again refused to allow casino gambling in the province; the Canadian Parliament voted against amending the Criminal Code to permit single-event sports betting; and there has been a serious pushback by citizens and municipalities to Ontario's 'Gambling Modernization Plan.' Meanwhile, major new gambling facilities are under development (e.g., a racino in Edmonton with 1,100 slots and new casinos in Lloydminster,

Saskatchewan, and North Bay, Ontario). This ebb and flow of gambling activity highlights deeper philosophical questions concerning where to draw the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable. It also raises issues related to civil liberties, individual and sovereign nation rights and governments' appropriate use of power.

Conference 2017 Learning Outcomes

This conference aims to apply critical thought to current gambling practices and "hot button issues" in the provision of commercial gambling. Participants will learn about efforts to promote gambling administration that aligns with principles of honesty, integrity, social responsibility and advancing the common good. They will also hear about the numerous strategies being used to ensure that the delivery of commercial gambling is safer, fairer and aligned with the public good.

Register online for
Conference 2017 from
the Institute web site.

www.abgamblinginstitute.ca

The primary aim of the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge, is to support academic research related to gambling.

MISSION

To facilitate evidence-based broad research that informs gambling public policy and educates Albertans and the wider audience about the effects of gambling.



Exploring Social and Cultural Conceptions of Gambling: An Interview with Dr. Fiona Nicoll

Dr. Fiona Nicoll was appointed as the Institute's Gambling Research Chair @ the U. of Alberta in July, 2016. She holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies from the University of Melbourne and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science. She has plans to establish a new journal to be entitled Critical Gambling Studies to disseminate research on gambling produced by scholars in the social sciences and humanities.

Dr. Nicoll provided the following answers to questions about her gambling-related research activities:

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your academic interest in gambling?

My Ph.D. research examined configurations of national identity in twentieth-century Australia. A central focus of this research was Australian war commemorations which I discovered had strong threads linking gambling to military history and remembrances. On Anzac Day¹, for example, it was legal in some states to play a heritage gambling game called 'Two Up' involving various bets on the outcome of two flipped coins. I also learned that in New South Wales clubs for returned servicemen were some of the largest venues for Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), or 'pokies' as they are called in Australia.

Several years later I became interested in another national moment of gambling: Melbourne Cup Day (see page six). After participating in Melbourne Cup

celebrations in my workplace at the University of Queensland, I became curious about what actually happens in Australia 'when the nation stops.' I began to conduct social research on what people did during the live coverage of the race and how they felt about this gambling moment. At the same time as my research focus was moving towards gambling topics, EGMs were becoming recognized as a problem for the health of individuals and communities in Australia. Despite its small population, Australia has a disproportionate share of the world's EGMs and many are located in areas of severe socio-economic disadvantage. While there exists much psychological literature dealing with the processes that make EGMs addictive, there has been far less written about their transformative effects on cultural spaces and on their iconography. The more I studied, the more I realized that gambling was an important lens for understanding broader cultural shifts at work in Australia and other neoliberal societies. Gambling products and activities that had previously been viewed as immoral had seemingly become central aspects of governance and state revenue raising.

In the Fall you taught the course *Governing Gambling: Sovereignty, Subjectivity and Play* (POLS470). Was it a challenge to incorporate a Canadian perspective so soon after arriving at the University of Alberta?

It was a challenge but a worthwhile one as graduates with a detailed understanding of gambling are far better prepared to inform future policy and public health initiatives. Within the course I included a four-week policy module that explored how the charitable model of gambling works in Alberta. We heard from experts on gambling in Alberta including Dr. Garry Smith and visited the River Cree Casino for a roundtable discussion with casino and GameSense staff. The Alberta policy module was placed in the context of the broader international scholarship on gambling spaces, experiences and products.

Students were exposed to different accounts of gambling developed over the past century. Among these were Walter Benjamin's connection of gambling to the emergence of a risky, masculine subject of leisure in the shopping arcades of nineteenth-century Paris² and Erving Goffman's

account of gambling as a prototype for social 'action' and a theatre for the display of 'character'³. Students also encountered more current research including Emma Casey's fascinating study of lottery gambling among working class women in the UK⁴ and Natasha Schüll's landmark ethnography based on a decade of observations and interviews with designers, executives and players in Las Vegas⁵.



Your research explores gambling through a Media and Cultural Studies lens. Can you tell us more about this discipline and why gambling is a topic of particular interest?

I've already mentioned aspects of gambling that link it to broader social and cultural conceptions such as national identity, gender and heritage. This seems to be the case particularly in nations formed from European settler-colonial projects where gambling acquired a mythical status in popular culture. Think of the ubiquitous poker scenes in Hollywood Westerns or the iconic stature of Las Vegas as a symbol of modern American capitalism. Perhaps a more pressing reason that this lens is required is because the industry is undergoing radical transformation; expertise on digital media platforms is needed to understand and respond to this transformation.

It has become almost impossible to study gambling in isolation from the online platforms through which it is increasingly delivered. As the space for traditional table games and racing within gambling culture shrinks, both literally and metaphorically, we need to pay more attention to gambling online and through mobile apps. Important developments in this space include the convergence between 'social games' and 'casino games' and between Hollywood film and television products and EGM design through licensed adaptations. Science and Technology Studies (STS) is a growing arena within cultural and media studies and equips a new generation of researchers with conceptual and methodological tools to understand new and emerging gambling products.

Your forthcoming book *Gambling in Everyday Life* is due out in 2017. What should readers expect in terms of content?

I don't want to completely spoil the surprise for prospective readers. I will, however, say that it provides a uniquely cultural studies approach to understanding gambling in a research environment dominated by psy-scientific⁶ approaches. The book acknowledges addiction as a serious issue for individuals, communities and governments but argues that it is impossible to ameliorate harms without also accounting for the specific kind of enjoyment that gambling offers. Included throughout are mixed methods of qualitative research, including cultural theory, original social research from surveys, interviews and focus groups and participant observation of gambling spaces, moments and products. Also examined are political and advocacy movements that have emerged in the past decade in response to issues associated with the rapid growth of commercial gambling since the late-1980s.

You suggest that in Australia there needs to be a shift away from identifying 'pathological' gamblers towards a public health and consumer approach for all gamblers. Is this true elsewhere?

That's right. I argue that the problem with a skewed research focus on addiction is that the problem gambler emerges in popular culture and media

discussions as a stereotype. My social research indicates that there is a widespread and simplistic understanding that the main issue for gambling policy is to identify and exclude a small minority of individuals who can be diagnosed as pathological. History tells us that stereotypes never affect positive social change. Stigmatization and violence (both symbolic and physical) most often follow in their wake. When we become fixated on the figure of the problem gambler, the lived continuum of gambling can recede from our view and we are unable to imagine creative and practical ways to address other pressing problems associated with the growth of commercial gambling organizations.

One example of a practical initiative designed to counter stereotyping and stigmatization here in Alberta is the staffing of GameSense booths in casinos. These are dedicated spaces within gambling venues where relationships of trust can be built between venue 'regulars' and trained professionals who can direct them to appropriate services if and when problems arise.

The promotion of gambling activities is pervasive within the media via advertisements, celebrity gambling, and televised sporting events. How does this affect cultural values in our society?

An excellent question. This is where cultural research is particularly important. What happens when gambling becomes inextricably connected to the pleasures and values of sporting events through advertising? We see children talking more about 'the odds' than the athleticism and courage exhibited in the sporting arena and gambling easily becomes a substitute for participation. You can win (or lose) all kinds of games without ever having an embodied experience of playing one. A few years ago these issues became acute in Australia, with representatives of online betting agencies appearing together on television sporting panels with seasoned sports commentators. While broadcasting regulations were amended after significant public outcry to avoid confusion between gambling and sporting experts, gambling continues to be advertised on prime time broadcasts of live sport in Australia.

Another important aspect is the rise of E-sports as popular tournament events on which bets can be

made remotely as play is streamed live and ‘fantasy sports’ where virtual teams based on actual sporting fixtures are formed and wagered on. These processes have brought values of gambling and gaming closer together and changed what it means for a new generation of players and audiences to have ‘skin in the game.’

Your research also looks at the intersection of gambling and finance which you call ‘finopower.’ What makes finopower an interesting topic for investigation? Can you provide some examples?

I developed this term to address a problem in my research. Specifically I was looking at how to bridge the gap between prevailing academic discussions about problem gambling – on one hand – and everyday experiences of individuals and specific communities – on the other. The term comes out of the literature on ‘governmentality’ and the concept of ‘biopower’ where particular regimes of power seek to foster or disallow life itself. These concepts derive from theoretical frameworks developed by Michel Foucault which have been widely adopted by researchers in humanities and social sciences. This body of scholarship shows how power is often applied and experienced indirectly via the internalized sense of an obligation to work on the ‘self’ to enhance our value and vigor. What is the role of gambling in the fostering or disallowing of life – both at the level of the individual and at the level of particular communities – and how does this intersect with the role of finance?

In everyday life, finance and gambling are not necessarily experienced as separate spheres of existence. We might buy a lotto ticket to intensify our hopes for a prosperous future; we might participate in a workplace gambling syndicate to express our sense of belonging; we might play online poker waiting at a bus-stop because we are bored and enjoy being part of a global competition of players. While some of these moments are relatively inconsequential, others present a serious hazard to our well-being. Some examples are: the choice not to go home after losing my pay cheque at the casino and to instead avail myself of a payday lending service at exorbitant interest rates; the belief that I can ‘beat the market’ after practicing on an



investment simulator provided by my bank; finding that I am spending more than I can afford at the casino because of direct marketing of deals on meals, drinks and entertainment to me through my ‘rewards card.’ Documented cases of bankruptcy and suicide related to gambling and finance shouldn’t only remind us that our choices can be a matter of life and death. They should also prompt critical consideration of the kinds of environments and products that support individuals to make choices destructive to their well-being.

What other topics related to gambling research are you currently investigating?

In the role of Gambling Research Chair in gambling policy I am developing the following four projects:

1. **A meta-analysis of academic literature on gambling from the 1990s to present.** Beginning with the decade when EGMs began to dominate the gambling market, it aims to map and compare topics, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and empirical sites of research in the psy-sciences and the humanities and social sciences.

2. An interdisciplinary investigation of intersections between gambling and finance.

This project will bring together scholars of finance, business and law to provide a snapshot of the relationship between regulated gambling and financial products and services in Alberta. It will investigate cultural logics of gambling embedded in trading simulations, judgements about bankruptcy and the rise of micro finance platforms as well as evaluating the efficacy of literacy initiatives aimed at gamblers and consumers of financial services.

3. A comparative investigation of Indigenous gambling and governance in settler-colonial societies including Australia, Canada, the U.S. and New Zealand.

4. A focus on a kind of gambling which U. of Alberta gambling researcher Dr. Garry Smith has referred to as 'salutary.'

This includes wagers between friends on the outcome of golfing competitions, gambling syndicates in the workplace and other kinds of gambling that seem to act as a 'social glue' between people and enhance the competitions of everyday life in our capitalist societies.

You've indicated that researchers can play an important role by contributing to informed commentary on issues such as gambling. Do you have any recommendations for readers?

Yes. I'd like to recommend three books that are quite accessible to non-specialist audiences and which have made (and are making) an impact on how we understand the power of gambling to shape economies and cultural values. The first is *Addiction by Design* by Natasha Schüll which provides an ethnography of the digital gambling environment mentioned earlier; the second is *The Labor of Luck*⁷ by Jeffrey Sallaz, a comparison between the governance of casino gambling in the United States and South Africa inspired by Erving Goffman's fieldwork and writing about Vegas decades earlier. The third book, *Moral Jeopardy*⁸ by Peter Adams, is hot off the press. It examines the ethical risks to individuals and organizations when basic research and services related to addictive products are more or less directly sponsored by their providers. I also highly recommend the online research site The

Conversation <<https://theconversation.com/au>>.

This searchable site disseminates some of the most important research on gambling coming out of Australia in language accessible to lay readers.

- 1 *Anzac Day* honours the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who fought at Gallipoli during World War I.
- 2 Benjamin, W., Eiland, H., & McLaughlin, K. (2002). *The arcades project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 3 Goffman, E. (1969). *Where the action is: Three essays*. London: Allen Lane.
- 4 Casey, E. (2008). *Women, pleasure and the gambling experience*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- 5 Schüll, N. D. (2012). *Addiction by design: Machine gambling in Las Vegas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 6 The term psy-scientific refers to scholarship on gambling addiction generated in disciplines including psychology, neuroscience, medicine and biology.
- 7 Sallaz, J. J. (2009). *The labor of luck: Casino capitalism in the United States and South Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 8 Adams, P. J. (2016). *Moral jeopardy: Risks of accepting money from the alcohol, tobacco and gambling industries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Melbourne Cup Day

Celebrated with a dedicated public holiday in Melbourne, Australia, this horse race has been a fixture of the national gambling calendar since the early twentieth century with visiting international journalists and academics commenting on its scale and popularity with a mixture of fascination and horror. Today, Melbourne Cup is a global gambling event with major international participation and sponsorship. It is conventionally referred to as 'the race that stops the nation.'

From the Library...

Beware of Predatory Publishers

by Rhys Stevens, Institute Librarian & Information Specialist

It is estimated that academic publishing has been growing at a rate that sees scholarly output doubling approximately every nine years. This growth is particularly true for gambling studies as academics produce an ever growing annual crop of articles reporting on the results of their scholarly investigations. Paralleling this increase in article outputs has been a trend for funders of research (e.g., Canada's Tri-Agency) to require grant-holders to make publications available in open access (OA) locations. This has meant that researchers have had to quickly familiarize themselves with their available options for enabling OA-compliance. One such option frequently offered by legitimate journals is for authors to pay an "article processing charge" (APC) to cover publishing costs. This payment is generally paid using research grant funds. It allows author manuscripts to become freely available via the web upon publication and meets funder OA policies.

What are Predatory Publishers?

The advent of APCs and widespread unfamiliarity with OA-publishing distinctions has proven to be an irresistible combination for a sinister new group

of online fraudsters. Known as predatory publishers, these journals exist to prey upon or hold hostage unsuspecting academics by extracting publishing-related fees for services of negligible or even detrimental value. Unfortunately distinguishing predatory from legitimate titles isn't easy as these publications often resemble – at least on the surface – other more-reputable OA journals.

*"Lions and tigers, and bears,
oh my!"*

- Dorothy in Wizard of Oz

What are the Concerns?

Concerns about publishing in predatory journals include the following:



- **Articles in predatory journals are not subject to rigorous peer review.** Predatory journals claim that published articles are subject to peer review but it is most likely the case that quality of peer review was poor or possibly never occurred at all. In some instances, the names of academics have been added to supposed "editorial boards" of predatory journals without their consent.
- **Articles in predatory journals are not findable in certain key scholarly discovery tools.** These articles are not indexed by discovery tools such

as National Library of Medicine MEDLINE¹ or PsycINFO. As such, they'll be difficult for people to discover using Library databases and related discovery tools. Google Scholar does index articles from both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed titles which means its search results must be carefully scrutinized².

- **Articles in predatory journals could end up branded as pseudoscience.** A lack of quality peer review in predatory journals means that an article's research content will face an uphill struggle to become part of the "accepted" or "established" literature in a particular subject discipline.
- **Research funds used to pay for predatory article processing fees are misallocated.** From a funder's perspective, article processing charges extracted from authors by predatory journals provide zero value for research funding.
- **Articles in predatory journals are not helpful to author research reputations or advancing academic careers.** An article published in a predatory journal holds little weight in comparison to those published in legitimate OA journals. As such, they are unlikely to be favourably viewed by funders or other committees adjudicating an individual's research contributions.

How Can Authors Avoid Predatory Publishers?

There probably isn't a single way to ensure that authors don't inadvertently submit articles to a predatory open access publisher. But by using the following simple strategies in combination, authors are far less likely to become prey for predatory publishers:

1. **Watch for predatory publisher red flags.** Including but not limited to: unsolicited email invitation to publish or join editorial board; false claims of journal impact factors that cannot be verified in ISI Web of Science or Scopus; false claims of content being indexed in legitimate abstracting and indexing services and less-than-professional or poorly maintained web sites with misspellings and grammatical errors.
2. **Verify lesser-known open access journals by checking with your peers prior to submitting work.** Determine if any of your colleagues read and/or publish in the journal.
3. **Check to see if the journal is listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).** Journals must meet strict criteria to be included in the listing. You DO want to see your intended journal title on this list!
4. **Check Beall's List of Predatory Publishers and List of Standalone Journals.** These resources are known as Beall's Lists and are maintained by Librarian Jeffrey Beall at the University of Colorado. You DO NOT want to see your journal publisher or journal title on this list!
5. **Publish in Well-Known and Reputable Open Access Journals.** Examples of recommended open access journals: [Journal of Gambling Issues](#) ; [FACETS Journal](#) ; [PLOS Journals](#); [PeerJ](#), and; [Open Library of Humanities](#).
6. Ask the AGRI Librarian & Information Specialist for help.

For More Information:

[What Are Predatory Open Access Journals And Why Should We Worry?](#) (2016, October) [The Huffington Post].

[Identifying and avoiding predatory publishers: A primer for researchers](#) [Canadian Association of Research Libraries].

[How to avoid predatory publishers](#) [American Psychological Association].

- 1 **MEDLINE** is distinct from **PubMed**. MEDLINE has relatively strict inclusion criteria while PubMed contains all MEDLINE content plus thousands of other journals including many considered low-quality and/or predatory. <https://scholarlyoa.com/2016/10/20/dont-use-pubmed-as-a-journal-whitelist/>
- 2 See <https://scholarlyoa.com/2014/11/04/google-scholar-is-filled-with-junk-science/>

In Case You Missed It

Dr. Daniel McGrath Presents Preliminary Research Findings @ U. of Lethbridge

University of Calgary Research Chair in Gambling Dr. Daniel McGrath was in Lethbridge in November to present on "The Influence of Tobacco Abstinence on Gambling Cravings and Behaviour in Gamblers who Smoke." His presentation described both past research on nicotine's effects on gambling behaviour as well as emerging findings from his current investigation of regular VLT gamblers who smoke. McGrath's study utilizes the recently constructed Substance Use and Gambling Lab at the U. of Calgary.

Responsible Gambling a Key Theme of GameSense Symposium in Edmonton

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission's 2016 GameSense Symposium was held in October and was well-attended by stakeholders from government, health care, research, and industry sectors. A group of Institute representatives were among the attendees who heard presentations relating to ensuring the effectiveness of responsible gambling initiatives. A research-related priority proposed by AGLC President & CEO Bill Robinson was the evaluation of Alberta's GameSense initiative <gamesenseab.ca> to ensure that is working as intended for the benefit of Albertans.

Annual Report 2015-16 Released

The Institute's latest Annual Report is now available from the web site. It details significant activities and accomplishments that took place during the period April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. Included are details concerning new and completed research grants at partner universities, a listing of research publications, and audited financial statements.

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