**Zalfa Feghali, School of Arts (10.06.22)**

My name is Zalfa Feghali, and I’m a Lecturer in American Literature in the School of Arts.

At the moment I am working on my AHRC-funded project called ‘Vulnerability – A Research Method for Literary and Cultural Studies’, and what is really fascinating to me about the term ‘vulnerability’ is that it’s a term that has become really commonplace over the last couple of years. We all have a lot of opinions about what vulnerability means in the context of the pandemic, and so a term that is perhaps something that we wouldn’t have thought about very deeply, and certainly a clinical term, I started thinking about how as a term it is used differently across a range of different disciplines, and out of that I put together a project around thinking through how it can be used in Literary Studies, and what that means to me is trying to theorise a way in which we could understand vulnerability as a way of reading, that brings this really loaded, cross-disciplinary term, which is actually a term that we use in Criminology, it’s a term that we use in the Environmental Sciences, that we use in the Health Sciences and Allied Health Sciences, it’s one that is used in Security Studies and Resilience Studies, and Politics and Psychology and Public Health, and a whole range of areas, but it’s one that isn’t necessarily associated immediately with a mode of reading, or a reading praxis.

Another area where my vulnerability interests, or my interests in vulnerability, have benefited me is really a part of a project I was involved in funded by LIAS. This was a bigger international project funded by LIAS called ‘A Manifesto for Pandemic Sexual and Gendered Citizenships: Practising Urgent Witnessing’. We had really frequent conversations about how the pandemic was affecting people’s intimate lives, so we initially had started thinking about how lockdown was affecting people’s intimate lives, and we actually put together two LIAS working papers on the topic. These conversations were fruitful and productive because they were interdisciplinary, because we allowed our disciplines to both come to the forefront of our conversations, but also fade into the background at the right time, so we were able to – again, the benefit of interdisciplinarity is that you’re able to use your expertise to make a statement, and yet suspend your disbelief for long enough to hear different people use their expertise to make a statement, and bring those two processes together to create new knowledge. And that’s the amazing thing about interdisciplinary work, is that we do create new knowledge.

Whenever I’ve needed to go and clear my head I will either go for a walk, one of the shorter circuits around the park, or I will head over to a coffee vendor, get some fresh air, and then make my way up the tower.