

A low-angle photograph of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral in London, showing its intricate architectural details and the golden weather vane at the top. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

# **University Challenge: Being a university in an interconnected world**

Institute of Lifecourse Development Public Lecture

Speaker: Prof. Ronald Barnett

Thursday 10 Nov | 5 - 6pm

Microsoft Teams



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GREENWICH**



**R**onald Barnett is Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at University College London Institute of Education (where he was both Dean of Professional Development and (subsequently) Pro-Director for Longer Term Strategy). In his academic work, he has been and remains a world leader in developing the new field of the philosophy of higher education, a project set out in his first book, "The Idea of Higher Education" (1990), and which he has followed over the past 30+ years, with 35+ books.

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Unusually and wonderfully, in its website, culture comes across as a strong theme in the way in which the University of Greenwich understands itself and its responsibilities and how it wishes to project itself to the world.

In Professor Barnett's talk, he will especially dwell on this matter of culture as an illustration of his larger set of concerns here, as to what it is to be a university in an interconnected world. Once we start to position the university – any university – in a world that is radically interconnected, a multitude of themes and concepts immediately appear. Alongside culture, these include complexity, conflict, indeterminacy, entanglement and unpredictability. The world is not just in motion but is totally destabilised. Moreover, the university is beset not just with complex systems – at the institutional, national and global levels – but with clashes of ideologies. Further still – consider the COVID crisis – while the natural world can affect our ideas, our ideas can also affect the natural world. (Culture, by the way, straddles all these worlds, of ideas, the natural world, human beings, and ideologies.)

What, then, is it to be a university in a world in conflicted and interconnected and total motion? Are there any secure foundations for it? Can the link between 'university' and 'universal' be sustained anymore or is it to be a free-for-all, with each university making up its way in the world for itself and by itself? I shall caution against such a view, and shall hold out for there being universal responsibilities that befall each university. After all, there is only one planet Earth.

**Join us on Thursday, 10 November  
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