

# The Girton/Newnham Debate: Two Ideas of Equality in 19th Century Women's Higher Education, 1 June 2021



00:46:21 Mike Ratcliffe: I'm interested in the co-incidence (?) of curriculum change with women's access. We see new specialised honours exams at Oxford & Cambridge, and new degrees at London at the same time. What about the weird creations of courses just for women - at the 'worst' in the case of the BSc in Household & Social Sciences at King's Women's Dept in London.

00:46:33 Simon Marginson: It's time to think about your questions and comments for the Q&A. All comments welcome - greedy buffoonery, historic beauty, majesty, pathos - come one and come all!

00:49:08 Maureen Ellis: Thank you, Eric, for tracking Kant's Moral Imperative, Hegel's Absolute Spirit, at work despite dangerous secularisations, e.g. the reduction of Go(o)dness Lakshmi to mere luck. A linguistic anthropology, a semiotic canvas, dialectic yin/yang, would certainly benefit our education system today.

00:49:13 Harriet Truscott: But don't forget that the great biochemist Marjory Stephenson began by teaching domestic science, including at KCL

00:49:14 Lindsay Hirst: Thanks so much for this very informative presentation! As an ex-Girtonian (who has since moved slightly further down the road to Fitzwilliam College for my PhD), and someone whose research also focuses on widening participation, this was fascinating to listen to!

00:49:18 Helen Carasso: This is very much like the current debate about contextual data - do we have any information about how the two different approaches to admissions impacted on student profiles and/or outcomes?

00:50:15 Trif Victorița: What is the future of women's higher education in your opinion?

00:51:45 Naomi Hetherington: Fry's?

00:51:47 C Sanger: Fry

00:55:15 David Law: Can you say something please about the connection between advocates of erosion/removal of gender barriers and religious non-conformity? I'm prompted to ask this because of the reference to the Fry family in Bristol.

00:56:29 Eliel Cohen: I was about to ask the same question as Helen Carasso regarding contextual data. In fact, I remember a member of the audience from The Economist who asked Vikki Boliver a question at one of her CGHE presentations about how she was going to make sure that uses of contextual data would not result 'lowering standards'! But I would also like to ask another minor point of clarification if I may.... My memory of George Eliot's biography is that she would have been signing these essays (e.g. on 'silly novels') as Mary Evans, rather than using her pseudonym. Is that right?? Or was she sometimes entering this debate with a male (or at least an ambiguous) gender identity?

00:56:29 Mike Ratcliffe: The goal of people going into teaching is important here: a reason why women went into arts & humanities degrees.

00:59:56 Mike Ratcliffe: Some of the contemporary review articles about those Household Science courses are absolutely excoriating ...

01:00:45 Naomi Hetherington: I had a further question about how women studied when they arrived at the colleges and the relevance of a flexible course of study to arguments today? At Newnham it was common in the late 19thC for women not to take the full tripos (one of my research subjects for my PhD poet and novelist Amy Levy is an example of this). Ironically much of my teaching since has been in the continuing ed/lifelong learning sector which in a different way has offered this kind of flexibility - a sector which as I'm sure you're aware has been drastically in recent years.

01:01:44 Astrid Favella: Thank you very much for your presentation. I am wondering whether women drop-out in the historical period that you have considered was an issue at all? Thank you!

01:04:20 Lindsay Hirst: Girton's location kind of works against it here as it's so far out so many people who do go there tend to get pooled which explains why it's not a very popular choice. Very Instagrammable though!

01:05:14 Harriet Truscott: There's an interesting new article on Newnham's architectural history here, and how Anne Jemima Clough thought of it:  
<https://www.countrylife.co.uk/architecture/architecture-for-education-newnham-college-cambridge-university-227288>

01:09:28 CGHE Webinars: Thank you for joining us today. A recording of this session will be on the CGHE website tomorrow morning: <https://www.researchcghe.org/events/cghe-seminar/the-girtonnewnham-debate-two-ideas-of-equality-in-19th-century-womens-higher-education/>

01:10:11 CGHE Webinars: Our next webinar is on Thursday, 'China's Young Talents Programs. How do returnees perform?'. You can register here:  
<https://www.researchcghe.org/events/cghe-seminar/chinas-young-talents-programs-how-do-returnees-perform/>

01:11:43 Cristina Costa: have to leave for a meeting, but thank you so much for the presentation

01:13:32 Cristina Carvalho: Thank you so much, Eric, for this relevant historical topic!

01:18:14 Michael Woolf: Thank you for excellent presentation

01:18:24 Yushan Xie: Thank you very much, very informative presentation :)

01:18:53 Naomi Hetherington: Thank you very much.