Abstract:
Debates about meaning and interpretation cut across a number of disciplines and sub-disciplines, especially literary and cultural studies. These debates raise complex, important and sometimes divisive epistemological, philosophical, cultural and social issues, and often use highly specialized vocabularies.

The questions addressed in these debates, however, arise from commonplace situations and everyday practices. Nothing could be more ordinary than two people talking about their holiday reading. But mapping the interrelating - and often invisible - forces and structures, from many different domains of human experience, which make those ordinary conversations possible: this is a surprisingly complicated and challenging task.

This paper attempts to do justice to both the complexity and the ordinariness of talking about books. It tracks some key theoretical questions about reading and the limits of interpretation via a reading of a range of literary, popular and scholarly texts, opening with James Thurber's extremely funny short story "The Macbeth Murder Mystery".

Biography:
Dr Ika Willis is Lecturer in English Literatures at the University of Wollongong. She is interested in theories and practices of reception (how texts are read, remixed, and rewritten), and how these theories and practices can help us think differently about identity, politics, time, and history.