Head of the Department of Political Science and Director of the School of Public Policy welcomes you to the second edition of Tavistock Times for 2009–10.

The new academic year started with a veritable bang with the arrival of a record number of Masters students – almost 400, getting on for 40% more than we have ever had before. Although applications had been higher than normal, the increase stems mainly from a much higher than usual conversion rate of offers into firm acceptances, with far more students actually turning up than has been the case previously.

There are a number of factors that explain this change – our growing reputation obviously plays its part but so have the new immigration rules that oblige students from outside the EU to commit to one institution and perhaps most of all, the credit crunch that has reduced graduate employment opportunities, leading more people to decide to stay on in higher education to gain additional qualifications that they hope will make them more competitive once the job market improves.
Coping with the influx of new students has posed a challenge for all concerned and led to the hiring of additional administrative and academic staff on both a permanent and a temporary basis. Selina Uddin has gone from a part time to a full time post and we are currently hiring another full time administrator. In January we will be joined by Professor Albert Weale from the University of Essex as a new senior colleague (details on his work appear elsewhere in this Newsletter) and we are in the process of appointing a new lecturer in International Public Policy.

We have also been mounting a number of additional events that we hope will add to the student experience. As is reported elsewhere in this Newsletter, 21 students participated in an EU Negotiation Moot in Brussels and we will be organising visits again this year to EU institutions and to the UN in Geneva. As part of the International Organisation Policy Simulation Lord Hannay came and spoke to the students about how the UN Security Council ‘really’ works. We have also arranging for a number of other encounters between students and real world practitioners, such as a visit from Dr Tony Wright MP – Chair of the Public Administration Committee and the Select Committee on Reform of the House of Commons – to discuss MPs' expenses with students on the Public Ethics course.

Although we expect the exceedingly high student intake of this year to be exceptional, due both to the world economy slowly pulling out of recession and our maintaining and even raising our already high standards, we do anticipate numbers will continue to grow over the next few years and the department along with them. This development should allow us to offer students an ever more varied programme of courses and related events through the appointment of new staff.

Meanwhile, as if things were not busy enough in the department, I seem to have been more active than ever with outside engagements related to my research. The first year for a while I did not attend the American Political Science Association, it also turned out to be the time I was awarded a prize for my book on Political Constitutionalism. I am normally rather cynical about such awards – not least because they invariably go to other people – but was as pleased as I was surprised to get this one.

However, I did manage to attend the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Italian legal and political theorist Norberto Bobbio as a speaker and member of the International Advisory Committee. Bobbio played a remarkable role in Italian cultural and political life. He was at one and the same time the Italian H L A Hart, introducing an analytical form of legal positivism into Italy; their R A Dahl, promoting the normative study of ‘actually existing democracy’, their Michael Walzer, who also attended the conference, developing international political theory as part of his long campaign against nuclear weapons and their Tony Crosland, working for the conversion of the Italian socialist and communist movements to social democracy and playing an active role in politics, first as a leading intellectual of the antifascist movement Justice and Liberty and eventually becoming a life Senator appointed by the then President Sandro Pertini, who Bobbio came close to succeeding.

Despite his immense stature in Italy he was extremely modest and very friendly, especially to younger scholars – he lectured at the university well into his 70’s, seemingly changing his courses every year and was wonderfully welcoming to me when I first met him some twenty years ago as the translator of two of his books.

The event was extraordinary in many respects – it was opened by the President of the Republic, Georgio Napoletano, who used the occasion both to recount Bobbio’s role in convincing him of the need to take the then PCI in a social democratic direction and to assert his constitutional independence against the attacks on Prime minister Berlusconi, of whom Bobbio had been a harsh critic in his columns in La Stampa, while the whole city seemed festooned with quotes from Bobbio’s books and somehow a part of the celebrations. One cannot imagine any academic or political figure being celebrated in a similar fashion in the UK.

Reading week was then taken up with a mini lecture tour of the East Coast, with talks at Syracuse, Cornell and Princeton and then back for a conference at Oxford discussing British constitutionalism in relation to my book. My final outing for this term was a trip to Barcelona as part of an international team of evaluators of social scientists within the Catalan region. Of the 50 or so academics I was asked to assess two features are very striking: first, the degree to which they are targeting the top international journals for their work and second the extent to which they are part of pan-European networks. As a result, a critical mass capable of rivalling the USA – and in certain respects the UK – is forming, evidenced by their success in breaking through into the leading North American journals. With my Directorship of the School coming to an end in August 2010, a new challenge is looming as a possible Director of a new UCL European Institute that is partly a response to this new situation, of which I shall say more in my last Director’s message in the next Newsletter.
What is your name?
Dr Meg Russell

When did you join UCL?
Somewhat scarily, in 1998: over 11 years ago!

What are your responsibilities in the Department?
I’ve always done research in the Constitution Unit, where I am now Deputy Director. My main interest is parliaments. I’m also responsible for three Masters modules: on British Politics, Gender and Politics and Parliaments and Political Parties but I’ve currently got a 3-year Research Fellowship so I’m only teaching the last of these myself.

What do you particularly like and dislike about your job?
I love that it’s intellectually challenging, you’re always learning and you work with some very impressive people (staff, students, politicians and others) but I hate that there’s always far too much to do.

What do you consider your greatest achievement to date?
Professionally, I’m pleased that I’ve now written two research reports with clear influence on policy. First, a 2001 report on the legal framework for women’s quotas, which helped bring about a change in the UK law. More recently a report on House of Commons reform which led to the Wright committee and influenced its conclusions (see page 17).

In terms of personal achievements, I was a member of a community ‘self build’ scheme where about 20 of us, mostly unskilled, built 13 houses with our own hands. That was quite an amazing feeling.

Most inspirational person that you have met whilst at UCL?
Definitely Robin Cook, former Foreign Secretary and Leader of the House of Commons. In 2001, when he got the second of these jobs, I went on secondment to work for him full-time: in particular focusing on parliamentary reform. He was phenomenally clever, a famously impressive debater but also incredibly witty and warm. It was a real shock when he died suddenly in 2005.

Favourite location around UCL?
The cafes and bookshops but particularly the leafy squares where you can sit reading or chatting with colleagues, on a summer day or evening.

What would your ideal afternoon/evening in London include?
Perhaps a film at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, with a drink on their lovely terrace or an exhibition then dinner in Chinatown.

What is your favourite book?
Difficult. I read a lot of Italian books: If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller by Calvino is a lot of fun. If This Is a Man by Primo Levi is definitely not but is extraordinary.

What are your hobbies?
Studying and reading Italian. Yoga, Pilates and swimming. DIY projects, gardening and cooking.

If you had not gone into academia what would you be doing now?
I previously worked in the policy world so probably would have stayed there: as a political adviser or in a campaigning charity. Else maybe working as a carpenter!

If you could implement one policy in the world today, what would it be?
Tough question! For now perhaps I can just say I’d like the House of Commons to adopt the recommendations of the Wright committee.
SIMULATING NEGOTIATION IN THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

Antony Herrmann, MSc International Public Policy student 09-10, writes:

On 22nd and 23rd October 2009, 21 students from the Department of Political Science took part in an EU Negotiation Moot in Brussels. Already accustomed to examining the ins and outs of policy theory after three weeks of their first term, the participants had to combine their academic diligence with two key skills of politics: cut-throat negotiation and hard-won compromise. The days (and nights) spent negotiating roaming charge regulation in the European Parliament, Council and the corridors of Brussel’s Hotel Manhattan proved an experience that will most likely leave its mark on all who took part – whether or not they decide to serve Europe in the future.

It all began with a sheet handed to new students together with their induction pack on day one of enrolment. Thanks to Dr Christine Reh, the School’s Lecturer in European Politics, SPP was able to take part in the game which was organised by the European Parliament and by the EU Negotiation Moot Association, with Gergely Polner of the European Parliament and Marton Hajdu of the European Commission leading the initiative. The School’s participants included students on the European Public Policy programme, as well as many studying Public Policy and International Public Policy, all eager to learn more about the legislative process of the European Union.

The ten days before the trip were spent juggling module registration and course reading lists with detailed research on the EU institutions, the telecommunications industry and the economic rationales for regulation. Each student was assigned an EU member state, two team-mates from two of the other universities participating (institutions spanning Hungary, France and Belgium as well as the UK) and was given a list of priorities with some preparatory questions to complete. The game was based on the EU regulations on roaming charges that came into effect in 2007 and 2009, though for the purposes of the game, the two real Commission proposals were rolled into one.

Lively debate in the European Parliament
After a comfortable Eurostar journey to Brussels, players could finally meet their team-mates outside of cyberspace and begin consolidating strategies in the hotel dining room. Due to a late change in schedule, country-specific plans for the Council simulation soon had to make room for the political roles being assigned for the Parliament negotiations. Despite conceding ideological preferences through muffled whispers of ‘Yes!’ and half-suppressed sighs, students were allocated to political groups at random. The groups then rushed off to begin appointing roles, electing nominees for parliamentary elections the following morning and formulating strategies.

Following this, the thorny process of coalition-building began, a hard night’s bargaining that would end only as players were partitioned into their political groupings in the plenary chamber the next morning.

The day in the Parliament clearly showed that everything is far from settled before the voting. Rather, the Socialist/Democrat party (S&D) watched as their coalition crumbled around them in the morning elections and endured a day of bitter defeat to the European People’s Party coalition. Following lunch in the impressive refectory, all participants reassembled in one of the large committee rooms to begin the plenary debate. After a variety of arguments, pleas and diatribes persuasively conveying the interests of all sides, three amendments were narrowly defeated, resulting in a total rejection of all regulation and a centre-right coalition victory.

On the plus side, UCL was well represented in the prize giving as Daniel Phillips (president and EPP member), Ralph Swann and Antony Herrmann (both S&D) won three of the four awards.

After a short pause to sample Brussels’ cuisine, preparations began for the day at the Council. Generally, much had been learned from the previous night’s ups and downs. Country delegations broke off into their groups of three to discuss tactics before approaching other ‘like-minded’ states, forming coalitions and drafting speeches for the country presentations.

Upon arrival at the EU Council building, each delegation took its place behind its country’s name tag at a large table in one of the working group rooms. After presentations from participants representing the Swedish presidency and the Commission, member states took turns to put forward well-researched points about their country’s opinion on the regulation proposals. Following a round of comments, the delegates spilled into the corridors to begin the tough negotiations and after numerous crisis meetings and coalition re-jigging, it was time for a final vote. Once again, the proposals for regulation were defeated along with a coalition of small states that doggedly supported them. A deregulation proposal by Germany started a cascade of approval and – five minutes before the room had to be vacated – a compromise was reached. Several real-life Council members awarded first prize to the German delegation (including Nazli Basoglu, an MSc European Public Policy student) and offered some valuable insights, confiding that ‘a good compromise is when all parties are equally unhappy’. Food for thought for the journey back, but despite mixed positions on the results table all were happy with the outcome of a fulfilling trip.
Basak Cali spent October as a visiting fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Oslo, Norway. Here, she tells the Tavistock Times what she was up to and how she experienced one of the most surprising political events of the year up close.

I was fortunate to be able to spend October 2009 in Oslo as a guest of the Centre for Advanced Studies. I was taking part in the research project ‘Why Do States Ratify Human Rights Conventions’ - a project led by Andreas Follesdahl and Geir Ulfstein of the University of Oslo. I was invited to the Centre because Andreas and Geir’s project overlaps in many ways with my own study into the European Court of Human Rights. During my stay in Oslo I carried out work on legitimacy of human rights institutions and reasons for compliance with human rights judgments.

The Centre for Advanced Studies is part of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Every year, it funds three ‘basic research projects’ - basic meaning that they are research projects that ask questions that are fundamental in nature. The funding is only awarded to Norwegian academics - but the projects are very international in design and bring together researchers from all over the world. Along with the Human Rights project I was involved with, other academics were identifying themselves as being part of the ‘Cacoons’ group or the ‘Happiness’ group. That is, the two other projects at the Centre this year are biologists looking into the nature of ‘cacoons’ and classicists trying to understand the notions of happiness in antiquity. An interesting mix.

I was given an office in the Centre’s home - a grandiose nineteenth-century mansion built by a dried cod trader - where I reported there daily at 8am (unusual for me with my erratic working times). I read and wrote and more importantly, shared ideas and thoughts with a fabulous group of academics - lawyers, philosophers and political scientists alike.

Aside from the research atmosphere, Oslo proved to be a charming city. Okay, London it isn’t - but I was pleased to discover some lovely retreats from the established literary cafe “Lorry” to the cool area of Grunerlocke and most impressively, the year-old opera house with it’s playground roof.

October, they say, is the second worst month in Oslo – and it’s true, you really feel the winter coming. But, it’s also the month five people sit in a room only fifteen minutes walk from the Centre to decide the year’s Nobel Peace laureate. I hadn’t given much thought to that before heading to Norway – in the past few years the prize had gone to several unknowns and rumours pointed the same way again. So, it was a shock, on one the first Friday that I was there, to suddenly receive exclamatory, surprised emails from friends and colleagues the world over - “have you heard!?” , “what!!”. This year’s laureate wasn’t an unknown - it was US President Obama. Conversation over coffee was not about ‘cacoons’ or ‘the meaning of happiness’ that morning.

Dr Cali, Lecturer in Human Rights
Richard Bellamy’s *Political Constitutionalism: A Republican Defence of the Constitutionality of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) has been awarded the David and Elaine Spitz Prize 2009. The prize is awarded by the Conference for the Study of Political Thought (CSPT) for the best book in liberal and/or democratic theory published two years earlier. Former recipients include R A Dahl, John Rawls, John Dryzek, Martha Nussbaum, Sheldon Wolin and Joseph Raz. The prize committee of Nadia Urbinati (Columbia University), Chair, Joshua Dienstag (University of California, Los Angeles) and Sharon Krause (Brown University) praised how ‘in a lively and powerful style, Bellamy’s book brilliantly discusses the three main political traditions (liberalism, republicanism and democracy) according to a very timely and important issue: the relationship between politics and human rights.’

Professor Albert Weale joined the department as Professor of Political Theory and Public Policy on 01 January 2010. A Fellow of the British Academy and Chair of its Research Committee, he also chairs the Nuffield Council on Bioethics. He currently holds an ESRC Professorial Fellowship on ‘Social Contract, Deliberative Democracy and Public Policy’, which he will be transferring from Essex to UCL along with his research team.

As well as contributing to on-going research and teaching within the department on political theory and public policy, particularly on democracy and citizenship in the EU and projects in the Constitution Unit on the deliberative qualities of Parliament, Professor Weale’s work on health and environmental policy will bring new policy areas to the department and add respectively to the UCL cross-faculty initiatives within the Institute of Global Health and the Centre for Philosophy, Justice and Health and its MA in the PPE of Health and UCL’s Environment Institute.
I am delighted to be arriving in the Department of Political Science and School of Public Policy in January 2010. I come with the title of ‘Professor of Political Theory and Public Policy’ and relatively rarely in academic life, this is one of the occasions when the formal title does say something meaningful about what I do.

I have spent the bulk of my working life looking at ideas of justice and democracy and seeing how these principles are played out in practical public policy decisions. I first embarked on these issues in my PhD thesis at Cambridge, during the 1970s, when I examined political arguments about the welfare state, looking in particular at the idea of equality. This was at a time when few people thought there were any political arguments about welfare and that the only questions about social policy was how quickly public expenditure could expand to meet needs.

Yet it was clear to me, even all those years ago, that value choices were being made about such things as access to health care and pension provision, choices that altered the life-chances – sometimes literally – of those affected. The key insight I tried to develop at that period was taken from a distinguished economist Thomas Schelling, who wrote a paper entitled ‘The Life You Save May Be Your Own’. From this perspective, once we see that welfare provision is a form of collective agreement to look after our needs at the vulnerable times of our lives, we can make a link to the idea of social justice as a form of social contract. On what terms can individuals fairly agree to arrangements that advance their general interests? This is a classic example of the sort of questions that political theorists look at. Ideas of a fair social contract are still at

**Professor Albert Weale writes:**

Professor Albert Weale, Albert Weale is currently ESRC Professorial Fellow and Professor of Political Theory and Public Policy in the Department of Political Science, University College London. He currently chairs the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and is a Vice-President of the British Academy.
the heart of contemporary debates about public policy, especially in health care and pensions, as any consideration of how drugs are assessed for cost-effectiveness in the NHS goes to show.

During the 1980s I moved to the University of East Anglia and began working with Timothy O’Riordan in environmental sciences on comparative and EU environmental policies. Central to those debates is an idea that is still influential, namely the precautionary principle. How can a society define an appropriately responsible attitude to risks when evidence is hard to obtain and interpret? Later chairing a working party for the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on animal-to-human transplants, the same question recurred in a practical form, when it was a question of considering the ‘unknown unknowns’ of such transplants, most notably the transmission of animal pathogens to humans. Since 2008 I have chaired the Nuffield Council and I am aware that such questions about precaution do not ever go away, particularly in relation to emerging technologies like nanotechnology or synthetic biology.

During the last eighteen years I worked at Essex, specialising in democratic theory, a third stream of work alongside justice and precaution. If you care about precaution or think about the design of social contracts, you quickly understand that how decisions are made is as important as the substance of those decisions. Innovative forms of public consultation as well as the body of theory known as deliberative democracy have transformed both practice and thinking about such matters, in the form of citizens juries or deliberative polls, sometimes for good and sometimes for ill.

My aim at UCL is to bring these three strands of work together in a programme of work funded by an ESRC Professors Fellowship, with the title ‘Social Contract, Deliberative Democracy and Public Policy’. The theoretical challenge is to explore how political equals seeking their common good but under conditions of fallibility could write social contracts that made sense. In addition, with the help of a research officer, Sarah Clark and a linked ESRC studentship, held by Nicholas Martin, the idea is also to show the implications of this approach for important issues of public policy. I cannot think of a better place than UCL in which to be doing this work, and I am thrilled to be joining an institution that is itself testimony to the progressive role that ideas can play in politics and policy.

Sarah Clark joins the department as a research officer on the ESRC project, ‘Social Contract, Deliberative Democracy and Public Policy’. She is currently completing a PhD in the Ethics and Policy of Human Tissue Procurement at the University of Essex. Sarah holds MA’s in Theory and Practice of Human Rights and in Political Theory and has previously worked as a civil servant in the Department for Children, Schools and Families and as a researcher and campaigner at a Sudanese human rights organization. Her research interests include resource allocation in health, bioethics and theories of justice. Sarah’s paper, co-authored with Albert Weale, ‘Co-payments in the NHS: an analysis of the normative arguments’ is forthcoming in Health Economics, Policy and Law.
Dr Jennifer van Heerde, MPhil/PhD Programme Director reports that:

**Shin Osawa will be defending his thesis in January 2010, Shin writes:**

I graduated from the Keio University in Tokyo in 2002. In 2005, I obtained an MA in political theory from the University of Essex and joined the School of Public Policy. I am interested in the debates regarding principles of distributive justice provided by current Anglo-American political theorists. My PhD research is about the place of ‘work’ as a market activity in liberal egalitarian theories of justice. While current liberal egalitarian justice aims to provide reasonable principles to distribute the benefits and burdens of social cooperation, how work should be incorporated in such a reasonable distributive scheme is still under-investigated. My thesis is a contribution to the academic debates in this regard. I am also interested in the application of theories of justice in Japanese context. From the perspective of distributive justice, I am now writing an article which argues how we should understand the moral foundations of Japanese pension-system which calls for further reformation in rapidly aging society. My future goal is to be in a position where I can give advice to policy makers.

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**Publications**


**Conferences**


Theocharis, Y. 2010. ‘Cybercultural values and extra-institutional political engagement in Britain’. Annual PSA Conference, 29 March – 1 April, Edinburgh, UK.


**Media**


www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/10/12/the_safe_haven_myth


**Awards**

PROVOST ON THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Dr Colin Provost, Lecturer in Public Policy, reflects on the financial crisis and publicises the upcoming SPP conference ‘Public Governance and the Crisis’:

In September, 2009, academics, journalists and pundits reflected on the one year-old global financial crisis and what it has taught us. September of 2008 was an extremely traumatic month for global financial markets, as Lehman Brothers collapsed and governments were forced to rescue ailing banks and investment houses brought to the brink of insolvency. By now, many observers agree that the crisis was caused, in part, by irresponsible lending by bankers, who mistakenly believed that lending risk could be minimized, if not eliminated entirely, through the sale of sophisticated securities and debt instruments. Securities that were derived from mortgage loans (mortgage-backed securities) became toxic when the housing market bubble burst and home values crashed, producing catastrophic results for global financial markets.

However, what generates less agreement is deciphering which institutions and policies sowed the seeds of this crisis.

Some observers surmise that the financial institutions themselves are largely to blame, as profit incentives caused the sale of these sophisticated instruments to explode, without adequate oversight and risk evaluation.

Such critics have also suggested that the ‘pay for performance’ philosophy was actually a one-way street in which high profits produced large bonuses but losses failed to result in a contrary punishment, which may have pushed employees to indulge in even more risky behaviour. Moreover, oversight from the boards of directors of some of these institutions may have left regulation to be desired as well. Edward Walker-Arnott, an Honorary Visiting Professor in the UCL Laws Faculty, said as much at a seminar on corporate governance in October 2009, when he claimed that members of the boards often have little expertise in banking or finance and are therefore ill-equipped to police the banks on behalf of shareholders.

Of course, those government officials charged with regulating the financial sector have also taken a beating in the media, as well as academic circles. Nobel Laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz once claimed that the financial crisis has a “made in USA label on it”, a claim that is not so astonishing when one examines the fragmentation of financial regulation in the U.S. Regulation of banks and thrifts is spread across four federal agencies and numerous state-level agencies and because agencies are financed by fees they collect from banks they regulate, these agencies essentially compete to regulate banks. While there is little systematic evidence of a ‘race to the bottom’ in regulatory standards, some banks, prior to the financial meltdown, evaded regulatory action by switching regulators and pursuing a lighter touch. Given such a fragmented regulatory structure, proposals have come and gone over the years to consolidate these agencies into one ‘super’ agency, and such a proposal has been put forward recently by Senate Banking Committee Chairman, Christopher Dodd.

However, banks have enjoyed having the ability to ‘shop’ for their regulators and there is no reason to think they will quietly give up that privilege now. Rather than merge these regulators into one, the Obama Administration proposes to give the Federal Reserve Board greater oversight powers over financial markets, while also creating a new federal consumer protection agency. However, this proposal does little to reduce regulator-shopping and the idea to empower further the Fed, when it failed to foresee the financial crisis in the first place, is not without controversy either.
In the United Kingdom, the ‘tripartite’ system of regulation (run by the Bank of England, the Treasury and the Financial Services Authority) does not allow for the same levels of fragmentation but the system has also come under fire for its alleged laxity in the run-up to the crisis. Gordon Brown’s government has also advocated a strengthened Bank of England and has attempted to persuade bankers to limit their own bonuses, with modest success thus far.

Additionally, a significant reform on the agenda, which is noticeably absent from the American reform agenda, is to break up or downsize the behemoth banks that devoured so much in state aid just over a year ago. In the U.K, much of the pressure to do this comes from the E.U. Competition Commission but Gordon Brown appears to agree with the remedies as he is pushing the Office of Fair Trading to keep a close eye on competition among banks.

Perhaps more surprising was Brown’s November proposal to create a global tax on financial transactions, the purpose of which would be to establish an additional insurance pool, in the event that banks need to be bailed out in the future. The proposal may help to shore up Brown’s reputation among economic populists heading into election season but the Economist (November 14–20, 2009) noted that this proposal, coming from the former champion of free financial markets, ‘was the kind of idea a French minister would once have floated simply to annoy Gordon Brown.’

With consensus on these proposals unlikely to emerge anytime soon, discussion on financial crisis causes and solutions is prevalent at the School of Public Policy in 2009–10. In October, MSc in Public Policy students energetically debated the merits of stronger central banks in the module ‘Law and Regulation’ and exhibited some scepticism over the current proposals. In late January, former Maine Attorney General and current consultant to the American National Association of Attorneys General, James Tierney, came to SPP to discuss the roles of both the federal and state governments in cleaning up the mess, left in the wake of the crisis.

Finally, in May 2010, SPP will host a high-level conference entitled Public Governance and the Crisis, organised in part by Professor David Coen. This conference will bring together scholars from the United States and European Union to examine changes to monetary and fiscal policy practices, the sustainability of corporate self-regulation, the ability of international organisations to coordinate financial regulatory policy and the capabilities of domestic agencies charged with regulating banks. As the tortoise of government regulation struggles to keep up with the hare of re-energized financial markets, SPP looks to be an important venue for future events and discussions, within UCL.

**DR MAKI KIMURA JOINS THE DEPARTMENT**

Maki Kimura joined the Department in December 2009 as a Teaching Fellow in Gender and Politics. She holds a PhD in Gender Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science and an MA in Political Science from Waseda University, Japan.

Throughout her research career, Maki’s research focus has been in social justice, gender, differences and identities. In her doctoral research she explored the process of construction of subjectivities and agencies of sexually exploited women through their narratives. It also examined the politics of regulation of sexuality and race relations within nation-states and beyond and how this impacted on the (re)configuration of social orders and socio-political relationships.

She is currently developing a small project exploring the experience of displacement through the framework of gender and citizenship. She also teaches at The Open University in London as an Associate Lecturer.

Dr Maki Kimura
Teaching Fellow in Gender and Politics
Not ones to shy away from attempting to set a Guinness World Record, a group of students from the department brought the record-breakingly large campaign, Stand Up Against Poverty, to UCL on 15–16 October 2009. 189 world leaders promised in September 2000 to pursue the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s), and this campaign was their alarm-clock. You can’t keep pressing the ‘snooze’ button on this. The MDG’s are probably some of the most pressing issues of our time.

They are briefly:

1. End Hunger
2. Ensure all boys and girls complete primary schooling
3. Eliminate gender disparity in education
4. Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate of children under 5
5. Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate
6. Halt and begin to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases
7. Integrate the principles of Sustainable Development into country policies and programmes
8. Develop open trading and financial systems that are non-discriminatory

A little research into the history told us that London had not been a big participant in this massive global campaign before and we thought it would be a fantastic opportunity to make a difference. We hoped that by doing this so early on in the academic year (and since most of us are only here for one year) we would lead the way for other campaigns and student activism. Perhaps, a little optimistic.

Our team was buzzing with ideas for the campaign. We wanted to have posters showing what living with $1.25 was like, highlighting what percentage of a loaf of bread or rice you could get for that money here in the U.K. We wanted to set up a table in the quad (which got shifted to the North cloisters, but we were warmer and drier there), where we could hand out information on the campaign. We also wanted to get loads of people together on the second day of the campaign to read out the global call to action, the same pledge that would be read out in every campaign.

One of the main features of our effort was a petition calling for the realisation of the MDG’s towards eradicating poverty worldwide. With the help of our stellar student volunteers from both within and outside the SPP department, we collected 411 signatures over 2 days, exceeding our expectations of impact! Most people were happy to engage in conversation with our team about the campaign, an objective we hoped to achieve beyond just giving out a piece of campaign literature.

Our table, which was effectively our base over the two day campaign, was almost overflowing with information to disseminate, from posters to petitions. We also contacted UCL Volunteering Services to get some information on what poverty busting action can be done right here in London. In addition we had materials from two charities in Kenya and India, promoting access to education and clean drinking water.

We really wanted to invoke student interest in the MDG’s and our leaders promises. We may be studying international disorder but what about that old nugget about being the change you wish to see? It was also surprising during the campaign to find many people who didn’t know about the goals before. Last year this campaign, launched originally by the UN Millennium Campaign End Poverty 2015, brought together 116 million people around the world. That was a world record for the largest mobilization around a single cause in history. This year we were 173,045,325.
Dr Mark Bennister joined the School of Public Policy in September 2009 as a Teaching Fellow in British Politics. He is currently teaching British Politics and Government at Masters level and the Introduction to British Politics and Constitutional Revolution modules on the Political Studies Affiliate Programme.

Mark studied at the University of Sussex from 2004 to 2009 gaining his DPhil in Politics and MSc in Social Research Methods. He continues to work in the Department of Politics and Contemporary European Studies at Sussex University as a Teaching Fellow, teaching courses in British Politics, Political Concepts and the Politics of Australia and New Zealand.

Prior to returning to academia in 2004, Mark worked as an Executive Officer at the Australian High Commission in London, advising and supporting Australian diplomats. Mark also holds a Masters Degree in Contemporary European Studies from Loughborough University (1993) and a BA in Social Sciences from Nottingham Trent University (1987).

Dr Bennister’s doctoral research was funded by the ESRC and considered the relationship between predominant leaders and institutional change in the core executive and the wider impact of predominant leaders.

The comparative research examined prime ministerial predominance in Britain under Tony Blair and Australia under John Howard. Mark has published in Parliamentary Affairs and the British Journal of Politics and International Relations. He contributed a chapter ‘Tony Blair as Prime Minister’ to The Blair Legacy: Politics, Policy, Governance, and Foreign Affairs, (ed T. Casey), published in 2008 by Palgrave.

Mark is currently working on material for a book titled Prime Ministers in Power: Executive Dominance in Britain and Australia to be published in 2011.
NEWS FROM THE CONSTITUTION UNIT

The Constitution Unit is an independent research institute situated within the School of Public Policy. The Constitution Unit is the UK’s leading centre for the study of constitutional change and has a long track record of conducting high-quality research and influencing policy debates through publications and events.

The Unit is led by its director, Professor Robert Hazell, who conducts research on a wide variety of constitutional topics and comprises another two teams responsible for conducting research on parliament and freedom of information. The Unit also frequently recruits interns to assist in its research projects, including many SPP graduates. Robert Hazell, Meg Russell and Ben Worthy all teach courses within SPP and act as supervisors for students’ dissertations in relevant areas. SPP students can get involved in the Unit’s research through their public seminars and conferences which are attended by practitioners and policy makers. The Unit has extensive networks for all aspects of constitutional research.

Full details of the Constitution Unit’s activities can be found at: www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit

Events

The Constitution Unit has had a busy autumn hosting a number of high profile events both as part of our Public Seminar Series and Government Information Policy Seminar Series:

• On 13 October 2009, the Unit was pleased to host Jeremy Hayes from the BBC at our Government Information Policy Seminar Series. The seminar series is for civil servants, policy makers, NGOs and other interested parties to hear about FOI from experts. Jeremy has recently completed a study about journalists’ use of Freedom of Information requests. The seminar elucidated his argument that the FOI Act has changed journalism in Britain and the flow of news stories based on information gained through FOI requests is continual.

• On 22 October 2009, Lord Jay of Ewelme, Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission, discussed the work of the Commission as well as his thoughts on how its role and status could be improved in the future. Lord Jay highlighted the consultancy work being undertaken by Dr Meg Russell and her colleagues at the Unit on the backgrounds of the current members of the House of Lords and how this research will be used to inform future appointments.

• On 9 November 2009, Michael Russell MSP, Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution, spoke on the constitutional debate regarding Scotland’s future in the United Kingdom. The Minister focused on a number of significant issues including, the Scottish Government’s response to the Calman Commission’s Report and his party’s commitment to hold a referendum on independence in the near future. The event was very well attended and generated a lively discussion and debate among those in attendance.

• On 25 November 2009, Dr Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Select Committee on Reform of the House of Commons, gave the first public seminar on the work of his Committee and on the topic of reforming Parliament more generally.

Forthcoming Seminars

We are in the process of putting together an exciting programme of seminars for the autumn which will be advertised shortly.

Information regarding all forthcoming events at the Constitution Unit can be found at: www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/events/booking.htm
Research Updates

In December 2009, the Constitution Unit along with the Institute for Government published the report, Making Minority Government Work: Hung Parliaments and the Challenges for Westminster and Whitehall. The report is authored by Robert Hazel, Akash Paun, Mark Chalmers, Ben Yong and Catherine Haddon and is the product of eight-month collaboration between the Unit and the IfG. With a general election likely in the spring of 2010, the report investigates the potential impact of a hung parliament on the British political system. Based on detailed study of recent experience of minority and coalition government in Canada, New Zealand and Scotland, as well as a brief review of the 1976–79 minority era at Westminster, the report sets out a series of targeted lessons for ministers, civil servants, the Crown, parliament and political parties.

With the possibility of a Conservative victory in next general election, the Constitution Unit has been looking at the Tory’s constitutional reform agenda and the implications it has for constitutional policy in the future. Having identified the party’s core principles through analysis of various speeches and Taskforce papers, we are making connections between their principles and policy goals. The briefing aims to offer impartial advice on how they might best go about implementing these policy goals and what the most appropriate ordering and timescale would be for this. So far the first few chapters have been seen by the shadow Justice Secretary Dominic Grieve MP, with the completed briefing to follow in the near future.

The Unit has recently been approached by the World Bank to commission a project on indicators for the success of Freedom of Information regimes. Increasingly, access to information is being seen not only as an aspect of good governance but as universal human right. With the emergence of dozens of new FOI laws across the world in the last few decades, characteristics of ‘an ideal’ FOI regime are being developed by various NGOs and academics in the sector. There is new understanding that it is important not only to assess the laws as they stand ‘on paper’ but also their implementation - their effectiveness in helping citizens get the information they should be entitled to and the democratic activity which flows from this. The Unit is analysing how others have attempted to measure FOI across the world and developing some recommendations for the World Bank on how they should attempt to do the same.
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH
A KEY INFLUENCE ON HOUSE OF COMMONS REFORM

The Department’s Constitution Unit has made its name for high-quality but practical research which is of genuine use to policymakers. It is hard to find a better example of the influence of this research than the recent report of the Select Committee on Reform of the House of Commons: whose establishment was inspired by the work of the Unit’s Dr Meg Russell and whose report backed many of her conclusions.

The new committee was one consequence of the recent MPs’ expenses crisis. It was initially proposed by Dr Tony Wright MP, in a letter to the Prime Minister, as an essential part of rebuilding public confidence in parliament. In his letter Dr Wright drew particular attention to a research report by Meg Russell and former Unit researcher Akash Paun, which analysed how backbench MPs could be given greater control over the running of the Commons. The report, The House Rules? International Lessons for Enhancing the Autonomy of the House of Commons, was the result of a large research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation in which Meg and Akash studied the functioning of several other parliaments in order to inform possible future UK reforms.

Gordon Brown accepted Tony Wright’s suggestion and asked him to chair a new committee looking at reform. It was established in July 2009 and Meg was invited to act as its specialist adviser. The committee had a tight timetable, being required to complete its work by the end of the parliamentary session and its report, Rebuilding the House, was published on 24 November 2009.

The committee’s conclusions echo many of the recommendations in Meg’s original report. This had suggested that there should be a clear distinction between “government business” and “non-government business” in the Commons. Government, which largely controls the Commons agenda, should relinquish control over scheduling non-government business to a committee of backbench MPs. The committee backed this recommendation, recommending the establishment of a Backbench Business Committee which would control scheduling of items such as general debates and debates on select committee reports, thus removing power from the government whips. This business would in future be allocated at least one day of time per week.

The committee also supported Meg’s proposal that the House of Commons should be given power to vote on its weekly programme, as currently applies in the Scottish Parliament. Her report had suggested that chairs of departmental select committees should in future be elected by the whole House of Commons (though this proposal had also been made by others) and this too was supported by the committee.

Commenting on the outcome Meg said “it is immensely satisfying to have produced a piece of research which has been so substantially taken up by parliamentarians and which may shape the future House of Commons”. She added “it was very interesting and at times challenging, to work alongside the committee on these matters in what was a pressurised environment but I feel very pleased with the result”. Parliament has yet to vote on the committee’s recommendations but should do so before the general election. If they are agreed, Meg suggests, “the Commons will become a more internally democratic institution and backbench MPs will have substantially more power. It would be great to think that I had helped to bring that about”.

Adam Hickmott / FreeDigitalPhotos.net
http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/London_g83-Houses_Of_Parliament_p8415.html
DOES FOI WORK?

CONSTITUTION UNIT STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 UPON WHITEHALL

Dr Ben Worthy, Constitution Unit Research Associate, writes:

In July 2009, the Unit completed its ESRC/ MOJ funded two and a half year study of the impact of the Freedom of Information Act upon Whitehall. The book is due to be published by Palgrave in the spring.

The UK passed a Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in 2000, which came into force in January 2005. British central government receives around 30,000 requests a year for information. From MPs’ expenses to Iraq, recent events have shown how FOI can have a powerful effect on the political system.

The project aimed to identify and analyse whether FOI had met its six objectives set for it in the UK. The objectives comprised two core aims of increased transparency and accountability and flowing from these, four secondary aims of improved decision-making in government, better public understanding of government decision-making, increased public participation and increased public trust in government.

It also sought to assess the impact of FOI on various pillars of the Whitehall system such as the culture of secrecy, ministerial accountability, cabinet collectivity and efficient government. In particular, the study examined whether FOI changed how and indeed if, records were kept, creating the so-called ‘chilling effect’ which many claim is a recurrent side effect of FOI legislation.

The project interviewed 102 people including Whitehall officials, requesters and campaigners. It also created an online survey of FOI requesters and analysed over 1000 FOI stories in the national press.

The study concluded that FOI has increased transparency, as the amount of information released has significantly increased and the government is more open. And FOI has strengthened accountability. It has been used by the media, MPs and campaigners to make government more accountable.

However FOI has not met the secondary objectives. Officials did not think FOI had improved government decision-making. Nor has it increased public understanding of government decision-making, as few requesters use the Act to access papers about decision-making. Public participation has not increased as a result of FOI. 99.9% of the population do not make FOI requests. Finally, FOI has not increased trust. Two thirds of the press stories which we analysed were likely to decrease trust. This is not a failure of FOI but a failing of the context into which FOI is placed, reflecting editorial values which strongly select negative stories and the reporting of conflict between government and press about disclosing information.
This is not to say that FOI has ‘failed’ more than FOI was oversold by its supporters. Moreover, the wider political environment, notably media and government relations and public attitudes towards politics and engagement, shape how the Act is used.

If FOI has not realised its proponents’ more ambitious objectives, neither has it realised its opponents’ worst fears. We found no evidence that FOI undermined collective Cabinet responsibility or ministerial accountability to Parliament. Civil servants are no less willing to give free and frank advice and civil service neutrality is not jeopardized. Nor has FOI caused a ‘chilling effect’.

When information is not properly recorded or circulated, it is due to factors other than FOI, such as leaks or wider changes in the way modern government makes decisions.

Our research challenges some common misperceptions around FOI. First, although the focus is often upon the official or requester, the media are central players. Not only are the media key users of FOI; but given that so few people make FOI requests, they are the key conduit for shaping public perceptions. Second, despite the discourse around FOI being framed as a progression towards perfection, FOI never settles down.

In terms of bureaucratic routine and a body of case law FOI does begin to settle down after the early years. But at a wider political level it never does. Third, a few FOI requests cause most of the trouble and it is the few high profile cases cause disproportionate effort, media attention, public controversy and political pain. Finally, despite the hopes of Tony Blair and Barack Obama, FOI does not increase public trust. This is because of the context of press and government relations, particularly the media’s predominantly negative reporting, exacerbated by government resistance to media requests.
The UCL Institute for Human Rights (IHR) was launched on 15 October 2009 with the event ‘Corporate Social Responsibility & Human Rights: Have Ten Years of Voluntarism Worked?’

Professor Dame Hazel Genn, Executive Dean of UCL Laws, welcomed guests to the launch of the UCL IHR, a joint venture between UCL Laws and the UCL School of Public Policy.

In the first of two keynote speeches, Professor Robert McCorquodale, Director of the British Institute of International & Comparative Law, asserted that while most businesses engaged with corporate social responsibility (CSR) to further commercial aims, their engagement with human rights was more likely to be on a moral basis. He said that the state’s legal responsibilities should be enhanced, particularly in matters beyond its own borders, while corporate decision-making should become more transparent and accountable.

Dr Susan George, President of the Board of the Transnational Institute, a worldwide fellowship of committed scholar-activists, followed by acknowledging that while there were model companies, they tend to be those subject to the influence of consumers. The real aim of CSR programmes was to prioritise self-regulation over state intervention; the latter was made more difficult by the growing complexity of multinational conglomerates, associates and subsidiaries.

The UCL IHR’s co-directors emphasised that the institute was ‘for’ rather than ‘of’ human rights.

Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia (UCL School of Public Policy) said that it reflected UCL’s founding principles of tolerance and laudible history, and that engagement with human-rights practitioners would be key to the UCL IHR’s work.

Dr George Letsas (UCL Laws) reflected on Jeremy Bentham’s assertion that rights were ‘nonsense on stilts’, simply aspirational unless enforced by law. Central to the institute’s concerns would be the question, ‘How can human rights be better enforced?’ This topic would be addressed through raising awareness of, and discussion and debate about, human rights, through public engagement and through applied research.

UCL Visiting Professor Stephen Rubin (UCL Laws 1958; UCL Fellow 1995), Chairman of Pentland Group plc, sponsored the launch. He thanked the institute’s co-directors and expressed his confidence that it will produce work of great importance and impact. He also reflected on Pentland’s long and rewarding engagement with CSR.

UCL President and Provost Professor Malcolm Grant closed the event with thanks to Professor Rubin.

The video for this event is available from: www.ucl.ac.uk/human-rights/events
To mark International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2009, the Chargé d’Affairs of the Argentinean Embassy and a senior Amnesty International expert were at SPP to launch the staff-student project Nominal Commitment to Human Rights: A Global Survey.

Dr Basak Cali and Alice Wyss led a team of four students from the MA in Human Rights class of 2008–2009 – Cristian Anton, Andrew Shaugnessy, Salma Dean and Gizem Akyil. They spent a year conducting research together to create a database of states’ legal commitment to human rights, humanitarian law and international crimes treaties. This major data collection exercise culminated in the launch of the database and its key findings at the event at SPP on Human Rights Day. The Argentinean Chargé d’Affairs, Minister Osvaldo Marsico and Amnesty International expert Ashfak Khalfan joined the team and audience members to discuss why states show commitment to human rights through ratification of international treaties and whether this makes any difference in practice. An engaging discussion saw lots of questions from the audience as well as suggestions to expand the database to include areas such as standing invitations to UN human rights rapporteurs, core ILO conventions and to investigate tipping points for the ratifications of treaties.

The research team was motivated by a very basic question: who is the most plugged state to human rights in terms of legal commitment to human rights law, humanitarian law and international crimes regimes? On most online web sources, one can identify which states ratified which international agreements but it is not possible to find this information in a comprehensive and systematic way. The central aim of the project was to provide an online resource to students and practitioners of human rights and international relations just that: a way of seeing the state of legal commitment to human rights. Such suggestions leave the door open for further student collaborations on such projects in the future and to go by the comments of the students who worked on the project, that would be no bad thing. Cristian Anton said that “Working on the project was a great opportunity to be part of an exciting project, develop my research skills and get in-depth knowledge on the subject we were exploring”. This enthusiasm was shared by Andrew Shaugnessy who said that “Being able to be a part of this research team was one of the highlights of my time spent at UCL”. 
Key findings of the research are:

• Argentina is the single highest ranked ratifying nation, with 24 out of a possible 24 points. The states with the lowest number of points – 3 – are Kiribati and Bhutan;

• France is the highest ranked member of the permanent UN Security Council (4th), with the UK 6th, Russia 8th, China 11th and USA 17th;

• The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has the highest ratification rate at 99% and is a treaty that only two states have failed to ratify, Somalia and the United States of America;

• The least ratified of the core United Nations human rights treaties is the International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which has been ratified by only 22% of nation states;

• Only 8% of states (16 in total) accept individuals to bring human rights violations complaints against them before all core United Nations human rights treaties. 10 of these states are from Europe, 5 from Latin America and only 1 (South Africa) from Africa;

• 57% of states have ratified the Rome Statute, recognising the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Of the 110 states who have ratified the Rome Statute, 30 are African, 14 Asian, 17 East European, 24 Latin American and Caribbean and 25 Western Europe and other states (Australia, New Zealand and Canada).

• The USA shares the same overall ranking as Somalia, Guinea-Bissau and Eritrea.

The full research project can be seen on the SPP website at: www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/research/research-projects/nchr