CONTENTS

Director’s Message 2
60 Second Interview – Dr Kristin M. Bakke 3
Nicola Sturgeon visits department 4
PDR Sherrill Stroschein – International book awards 5
Professor Peter John – new book 5
Swedish visit to the department 6
IPAS – New fundraising project 6
Newly launched religion and political theory centre 7
Forecasting the future 8
International public policy review 9
News from the UCL Constitution Unit 10
  Code of Constitutional Standards 10
  New Constitution in Egypt 10
Scottish Independence and the UK general election 11
Meg Russell’s new book 11
Internships 11
Undergraduate affiliate programme news 12
MA human rights film series 13
SPP Open Day 13
PhD Programme news 14
New staff 15
Past Students – Where are they now? 16
As term finishes, I look back on another vibrant term at the School of Public Policy. It really seemed that there was something exciting going on every day. A very successful “Policy and Practice Seminar” series with distinguished academic and political guests, events organised by the newly-launched Institute of Global Governance, career events, departmental open days, as well as all the classes and events by our student-led societies.

One of our main highlights this term was Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister of Scotland, who visited London to speak to our Policy and Practice Series about Scotland’s future and the case for an independent Scotland. An audience of more than 350 people filled the biggest UCL Lecture Theatre and the event attracted great media coverage. The timing of her speech could not have been better with George Osborne announcing that Scotland would not be given the pound on the very same day. The result was that the talk for Nicola Sturgeon appeared in all the papers and was shown on the BBC Parliament channel.

Together with Nicola Sturgeon’s talk, there was a nice mix of policy practitioners and leading academics; some of the highlights have been Colin Crouch, talking about his new book ‘Making Capitalism fit for Society’, Sir Stephen Wall and Vijay Rangarajan, Europe Director in the Foreign Office, discussing topical debates on the role of the European Union and Professors Wolff and Anderson about peace negotiations and political issues in the digital age respectively.

In terms of other events, we have welcomed Steven Rathgeb Smith, the new Executive Director of the American Political Science Association, talking about his current project into the welfare-state regimes of Canada, the US, UK and Australia; Ian Goldin, Director of Oxford Martin School, speaking about the global challenges of sustainability and policy implementation; and a topical debate on Chinese investments abroad organised by our student-run society, the International Public Policy Review (IPPR).

The Department has also continued to grow with new appointments made in Human Rights, Public Policy, International Security and International Political Economy. This is all part of the interesting plans for the School to launch a new PPE degree in 2015 which aims to compete with Oxford’s hegemony in the field of training of future worlds Prime Ministers and Presidents. This is a very exciting initiative lead by Professor Neil Mitchell and involves SPP working very closely with two of UCL’s leading departments in Economics and Philosophy and Dr Jennifer Hudson’s new QSteps Quantitative Methods centre. It is hoped that this new degree will train a mix of Political Economist and Political Philosophy students with the appropriate methods and public policy skills to make them ready to enter policy positions.

Best wishes for the summer exams and the thesis writing.

David.
What is your name?
Kristin Marie Bakke

When did you join UCL?
September 2009

What are your responsibilities in the Department?
Research and teaching. I do research on political violence, self-determination movements and post-war societies. I teach undergraduate and postgraduate courses (both in SPP and in ESPS, the programme on European Social and Political Studies) on conflict resolution and post-war development, political violence and intrastate conflicts and international relations theories.

What do you particularly like and dislike about your job?
I felt like I hit the jackpot when I got this job and I still think so. I like that I can spend my days writing and talking about topics I care about. I like that every day, I’m surrounded by smart, interesting and motivated people, both colleagues and students. I like that no two days are the same and I like that, as part of my job, I get to go to out-of-the-ordinary places in the world. Most recently, my research on post-war state-building has taken me to some of the de facto states in the Caucasus. An academic job can be all-consuming but I love how it allows for tremendous freedom to do something that feels meaningful.

What do you consider your greatest achievement to date?
Professionally, the greatest sense of happiness has come from occasions when students have told me that the courses they’ve taken with me have made them realise what they’re good at and what they care about and have inspired them to think about what they want to do with their lives. Personally, I guess it’s an achievement to wake up every morning feeling that I, somehow, lucked out with the combo great job/great city/great life.

Most inspirational person that you have met whilst at UCL?
I work in a department with a whole bunch of fabulous colleagues, whose work and drive create an intellectually exciting—and fun—environment. If I were to single out anyone, it would be my office mate, Christine Reh, whose enthusiasm (for whatever topic we discuss) never falters. I’ve also met some extraordinary students at UCL, whose wish to ‘change the world’ is a real inspiration.

Favourite location in UCL?
My bright office, with red chairs and a view of Tavistock Square. Tavistock Square itself is a perfect spot on sunny days. I also really like some of the small independent coffee shops around Bloomsbury.

What would your ideal afternoon/evening in London include?
As a good Norwegian, I think that the perfect Sunday afternoon includes some kind of Sunday walk—be that along the east end of Regent’s Canal, Hampstead Heath or somewhere out in the ‘wild’ English countryside. On the programme for the perfect night out in London town is dinner with friends at one of my favourite local restaurants in Angel, drinks at a cute cocktail bar and live music.

What is your favourite book?
The Harry Hole books by Jo Nesbø.

What are your hobbies?
I like staying active so I do my share of pilates, yoga, swimming and running and I like going hiking (as long as it doesn’t involve sleeping in tents). In the last couple of years, I’ve started playing tennis, which I really enjoy—especially if I play with my colleague Lisa Vanhala. I’ve gone from being exceptionally bad at it to just plain bad, which I consider quite an achievement.

If you had not gone into academia what would you be doing now?
Before going to graduate school, my plan was to become a journalist but then I got hooked on the research bit.

If you could implement one policy in the world today, what would it be?
I’m writing this right after International Women’s Days and although there are a number of achievements to celebrate, I still find it depressing how far we have not come in terms of equality of opportunity. Part of the solution lies with changes in policy but part of it lies with changes in norms and it’s not always clear what comes first.
Following a fevered morning fielding responses to George Osborne’s announcement that the three main UK parties would reject the option of a sterling currency union between the UK and an independent Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s deputy first minister, stood before an audience of students and journalists in UCL’s Cruciform Lecture Theatre to put forward a compelling and impassioned case for a “yes” vote in the upcoming September 18th referendum on Scottish independence.

On the empirical question—can Scotland become a successful independent state—Sturgeon presented evidence of Scotland’s robust economy and public finances. Noting revenues from the North Sea oil reserves, she also reeled off favorable facts and figures, such as the deficit in Scotland is smaller than in the UK as a whole. Sturgeon said, “we’d be in the top 20 countries in the world in terms of GDP per head and in the top 50 in terms of GDP overall -quite something for a country of just five million people.”

On the normative question—should Scotland be independent—Sturgeon said “it is to me a statement of the obvious that our interests will be better served by decisions taken in our own parliament rather than at Westminster by governments that are all too often at odds with the political instincts of the majority of people living in Scotland.” She argued that under the freedom afforded by devolution, Scotland has demonstrated that it can manage a balanced budget while protecting the welfare state, resisting coalition policies such as NHS privatisation and the trebling of university fees.

Moreover, the SNP’s White Paper proposed growing the economy in part by a “sensible” approach to immigration that would expand the working age population and by helping more women stay in the workforce through free universal childcare.

Sturgeon explained that independence is the only way to achieve these policy objectives because “when you operate within a fix block grant as we do now you don’t benefit from the increased tax revenues that are generated by sensible economic policies that you implement...So right now no devolved Scottish government can make a great commitment like that without making big cuts elsewhere.” Just as important as economic independence, Sturgeon said, was the problem of a “democratic deficit”, in which big policy decisions in Scotland are taken by a coalition led by the Tories, a party which Sturgeon cited has won “zero, one, one and one Westminster seats in Scotland” in the last four UK general elections.

Further, Sturgeon fervently attacked the unionist claim that the current Westminster system engenders a beneficial pooling of resources and hedges demographic and fiscal pressures by sharing risk across the UK. She stated it’s “an argument built on sand because people can see with their own eyes that Westminster isn’t sharing resources and pooling risk. Instead, the resources are being taken away and the risk is being borne by the poor and vulnerable. We’ve already seen the return of means test for child benefit, the iniquitous bedroom tax, cuts to the income of the working poor.” She pointed to austerity’s hostile demonisation of the poor that she believes is rending the very social fabric of the UK, saying “it’s not just the cuts themselves that are destroying the safety net, it’s the rhetoric of scrounger and striver, the abandonment of the universal principal, it’s the politics of division from those who claim that they’re trying to keep people together.”

Thus, through independence, Sturgeon wishes to signal to the rest of the UK “that more equal societies really do result in more prosperous economies.”

Sturgeon’s final point was to affirm that rather than dismantling 307 years of deep-seated ties, a ‘yes’ vote would foster a healthier relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Forging a new partnership of equals, independence would dispel the notion that Scotland is “subsidised by rest of the UK” and Scotland would no longer be able to “blame London for things that go wrong.” She asserted independence “is emphatically not separatist or insular”, elaborating on this point in the Q&A stating, “we’re not asking people to decide their identity...We’re asking people to decide how they want the country to be governed.” Thus, for the SNP independence is about taking responsibility for Scotland’s future while working together with the rest of the UK as friends and neighbours: “We’ll continue to trade with each other, we’ll enjoy the intricacies of family connection, we’ll cheer on Andy Murray and Mo Farah... These bonds were forged not by governments or constitutions but over generations by my ancestors and yours and the strength and depth of these bonds means relationships don’t depend on Scotland being run by Westminster.”

A video of the event can be found at: www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/spp-news/140214
DR SHERRILL STROSCHEIN – INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARDS.

Dr Sherrill Stroschein’s book *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, and Democratization in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge 2012), has been recognised by two international book award committees. The book recently received honourable mention for the Distinguished Book Award from the International Studies Association’s section on Ethnicity, Nationalism and Migration (ENMISA). In addition, it received honourable mention for the 2013 Joseph Rothschild Prize in Nationalism and Ethnic Studies, with the Association for the Study of Nationalities.

The book starts with the premise that problems of democracy are magnified in societies divided on ethnic religious lines, particularly where groups are mobilised into parties. Due to the principle of majority rule, minorities should be less willing to endorse democratic institutions where they persistently lose elections. These problems should hamper democratic transitions as well but Eastern Europe contains several states that managed such transitions in spite of these conditions. Stroschein argues that sustained protest and contention by ethnic Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia brought concessions on policies that they could not achieve through the ballot box – with some contrast to Transcarpathia, Ukraine.

In Romania and Slovakia, contention during the 1990s made each group accustomed to each other’s claims and aware of the degree to which each could push its own. Ethnic contention became a de facto deliberative process that fostered a moderation of group claims, allowing democratic consolidation to slowly and organically take root. The book involved extensive fieldwork in each country and archival work with newspapers in four languages: Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak and Ukrainian.

More information about her book can be found here and there will be a paperback version published this spring:

http://thecasscentre.co.uk/uk/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9781107005242

Dr Stroschein says that she is honoured to be listed with the other books that received awards from both committees. Dr Fotini Christia of MIT was awarded first place by the International Studies Association’s ENMISA section and her book *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge 2013) is a complex, fieldwork-rich study that is well worth reading. Another book receiving honourable mention is by Christine Chin of American University, for her important and pathbreaking book *Cosmopolitan Sex Workers* (Oxford 2013).

PROFESSOR PETER JOHN – NEW BOOK.

Peter John has been working with Tony Bertelli (University of Southern California) on a new approach to understanding the policy-making process. This work has now been written up in a book published in December 2013, called *Public Policy Investment: Priority-Setting and Conditional Representation In British Statecraft* by Oxford University Press.

In this book, Tony and Peter have developed the term policy investment: the idea that governments seek to assess the risk of their policy choices when deciding to pay attention to topics, such as the economy or foreign policy.

They have compared their estimation of the risk of policy choices with the actual decisions that governments made, using the period of 1971-2000 in Britain as the example. With some exceptions (such as in the Winter of Discontent of 1978), British governments do pretty well with their policy decisions, making astute choices about which policy topic to concentrate on.

The most striking finding is that these policy choices help governments secure better election results, which is demonstrated in a large dataset of election races especially collected for the project.

The book also contains case studies of particular prime ministers and how they dealt with risk, such as Edward Heath before the election of 1974 and Margaret Thatcher’s successive election victories and argues that the management of the portfolio of policies played a role in the electoral success or otherwise of a term of office.
In February 2014, the School of Public Policy was delighted to play host to a group of Master’s students from the Department for Social Science at Ersta Sköndal University College, Stockholm. The group, led by the Vice Dean of the Department, Dr Ola Segnestam Larsson, had travelled to London to explore international perspectives on leadership and capacity development in civil society organisations; as well as coming to UCL, the group were visiting a range of international, national and local voluntary organisations in order to ground their learning in practice. The visit was an integral part of the students’ studies towards a Master’s degree in social work.

The group was welcomed to SPP by Professor David Coen, who briefly described the work of the School and emphasised the value which the School places on international collaborations. Dr Sarabajaya Kumar and Dr Jonathan Roberts of SPP delivered a presentation on the voluntary and nonprofit sector in the UK, its role in society and the distinctive leadership and capacity building dimensions faced by UK voluntary and nonprofit sector organisations. The presentation was followed by a discussion about contemporary challenges for voluntary and nonprofit organisations and the wider third sector in the UK and in Sweden.

Dr Segnestam Larsson expressed his gratitude to Professor Coen for the opportunity to visit the School of Public Policy. He commented that the visit “was very valuable for our overall visit to the UK and the students appreciated the introduction to the voluntary sector in the UK, as well as the discussion about leadership in voluntary organisations.”

Dr Kumar, Dr Roberts and Dr Segnestam Larsson plan to meet again in Muenster, Germany in July, where they are delivering presentations at the 11th International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research.

IPAS – NEW FUNDRAISING PROJECT.

IPAS is the student-run society of UCL’s School of Public Policy contributing to the Department’s social life. Following its consecutive success over the years, IPAS is focused generally in developing a sense of community within SPP, bringing together students from a plethora of degree backgrounds, ultimately aiming to break the ice and allow everyone to socialise and network. Each year, IPAS organizes a number of social events for SPP students. This year, IPAS is going to be raising money for the Children’s Health Project (CHEP), an incredible project under the Wonder Foundation. This project targets families in Kenya, in the rural area of Limuru. It is for families who may be living on less than £1 a day, unable to pay the medical costs to keep their child healthy, prevent malnutrition and other basic needs to keep their child alive. This programme will provide essential health care for these children and their families in a sustainable and wide ranging project. Many of us at the School of Public Policy are studying international development or international issues and we feel strongly that support for projects like this are essential to help alleviate some extreme inequalities in the world and at least go some way to addressing the most fundamental human right: the right to live. With the wealth we see in the world today no one should be suffering from malnutrition or a lack of basic health care. To learn more about the project please see the Wonder Foundation’s web pages: www.wonderfoundation.org.uk.

Throughout the year, the IPAS committee will be encouraging all our fellow masters’ students at the School of Public Policy, who are all members of the IPAS Society, to help raise money for this fantastic cause. This could be through getting sponsorship for a 10km run, getting involved with our events, auctioning an item on eBay and giving the proceeds or any of the wide range of activities we will be helping to organise this year. If every other student out of the 450 of us studying a masters in the School of Public Policy at UCL were to each raise just £40 by the time we give in our dissertations, we could raise £9,000! This would be enough to give 225 children in Kenya 10 years of medical assistance. Please help us to reach our target and give what you can to this great cause.
NEWLY LAUNCHED RELIGION AND POLITICAL THEORY CENTRE.

The newly-launched Religion and Political Theory Centre (RAPTc) is the home of the ERC-funded research project, ‘Is Religion Special? Secularism and Religion in Contemporary Legal and Political Theory’ (RAPT). The 5-year project started in January 2012 and is led by Professor Cécile Laborde; Aurélia Bardon and Lois Lee joined the team in September 2013 as Research Associates. The Centre was launched in March at the second of its lecture series (further details below).

As well as its events programme and website, RAPTc houses five research projects. Cécile Laborde’s ‘Freedom of Religion without Religion’ project explores the concept of religion, especially as it has been understood by liberals arguing for the extension of religious freedom to include the protection of secular conceptions of the good. Lois Lee’s project investigates ‘Religion’s Singularity and Its Others’, drawing on sociological and anthropological research to interrogate the grounds and legitimacy religion’s various ‘others’ – ‘secularity’, ‘secularism’, ‘atheism’, ‘irreligion’, ‘non-religion’ and even more problematically, ‘liberalism’ and ‘democracy’. Aurélia Bardon’s Public Justification and Religion research focuses on the concept of public justification and the question of whether religious reasons can legitimately be used to justify state action in liberal states.

As well as these individual projects, the Centre is associated with two collaborative projects. Secularism and Liberalism provides a re-assessment of the concept of secularism and its relation with the concept of liberalism, whilst Negotiating Religion explores new and on-going negotiations between religious and secular cultures and spaces as the idea of the two as clearly and cleanly separated is called into question.

The RAPT Centre has recently launched a new lecture series in which prominent international scholars present their work on religion and political theory. This series is open to all. Forthcoming speakers include:

- **Jocelyn MacLure** (University Laval), ‘Religious Freedom and Fairness: an Egalitarian View’, Wednesday 28 May
- **Slavica Jakelic** (University of Virginia), ‘Modes of Secularism’, Wednesday 4 June
- **Jeff Spinner-Halev** (University of North Carolina), ‘Hinduism, Christianity, and Religious Liberal Toleration’, Thursday 3 July

More information about RAPT can be found on its website: [www.ucl.ac.uk/religion-political-theory-centre](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/religion-political-theory-centre)

If you want to be updated with news concerning RAPT events and publications, please email: Aurélia (a.bardon@ucl.ac.uk) or Lois (lois.lee@ucl.ac.uk) to be added to our mailing list.
FORECASTING THE FUTURE.

Prediction based public policies in peace and conflict research
Nils W. Metternich, March 17, 2014

FORECASTING IN POLITICAL SCIENCE:
Forecasting and predicting has now fully reached peace and conflict research, probably representing one of the most exciting developments in the field. Increasingly scholars present prediction results in their publications and sometimes even forecasts. Current conferences and workshops are addressing forecasting frameworks and governments are increasingly interested in conflict forecasting. In fact, almost every large international organization and most government systematically assess risk around world to address humanitarian, military, and political crises. However, the discipline is still searching for forecasting standards and ways of comparing forecasts. In fact, many of us may still be wondering what forecasting actually is. This contribution wants to clarify what forecasting is and how we can use them to inform prediction based public policies.

Before turning to predictions in the context of peace and conflict studies, I want to highlight that generating predictions to inform public policies might be one of the most effective paths in making political science research assessable for policy makers and generate wide reaching impact. Consider the impact that election forecasting has on party politics, public perception, and even the stock markets. In fact, election forecasting has lead to a whole industry of election monitoring and campaign management.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT FORECASTING?
The wish to ultimately forecast peace and conflict is probably one of the fundamental but unspoken motivations of our discipline. If we could have early warning mechanisms that would indicate risks early on, we would probably be in a better position to prepare, intervene, or build resilience for future conflicts. Human catastrophes like the Rwandan genocide might have been prevented, the Arab Spring more thoroughly supported, and international conflicts avoided. Indeed, new data projects and innovative methods are getting us ever closer to making conflict forecasts that may not be as accurate as election forecasts, but more precise than dart throwing chimps. But what exactly is forecasting in peace and conflict research? While there is probably not a perfect definition, most scholars would agree that forecasts are predictions about tomorrow given information we have about yesterday and today. Maybe even more precisely forecasts are predictions about unrealized outcomes given model estimates from realized data. This means there are two important inputs to make forecasts: realized data and estimators; and one important output: predictions. Current advances in conflict data moving towards “big data” and new statistical forecasting approaches make it ever more possible to predict one of the most complex phenomena we know: Social behavior.

WHAT ARE WE FORECASTING?
When we are forecasting peace and conflict, we generally have something more specific in mind. Usually, we focus on an outcome that can either be binary, multi-categorial, or continuous. Examples of binary outcomes in the peace and conflict research are war onset (conflict begins yes/no), occurrence (conflict is present yes/no), or termination (conflict has ended yes/no). Multi-categorial outcomes include counts of conflicts,
numbers of events, or the number of actors involved. Finally, examples of continuous outcomes include peace duration, war duration, and many measures that might be related to the consequences of war and peace (e.g. economic development measured by infant mortality or GDP per capita).

FORECASTS AND PUBLIC POLICIES
Forecasting political instabilities, regime change, mass killings, and war are important to implement adequate policy responses, build resilience, and prepare early action. Especially, in the context of limited resources, when reacting to conflict around the world it is important that policy makers can assess risks and condition their responses accordingly. Translating basic political science research into forecasting tools is therefore an important avenue of bridging public policy making with the academic community. However, we have to be aware that forecasts are not certain statements about the world. Just as weather forecasts, conflict predictions provide some informed guidance about possible scenarios. They do not tell you what you should do, but rather what is likely to happen if we do nothing. However, current research is also exploring how best to assess the consequences of possible future public policy interventions.

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW.

The International Public Policy Review (IPPR) has seen huge enthusiasm and participation from UCL’s School of Public Policy this year. With a seventeen person strong committee and another thirty students on the editorial staff-list, we have put together a number of well-attended events, created a new blog and are compiling a journal to be published in the summer. The Society has traditionally had an editorial focus, however this year we have introduced more events to the programme, hoping to extend IPPR’s presence within the Department and the University.

On the editorial side, we have revived the IPPR blog which covers all sorts of international public policy issues ranging from understanding demonstrations in Brazil, to Egypt’s Constitutional Referendum, the politics underlying the Sochi Winter Olympics and much more. IPPR’s editorial team has worked in close cooperation with the SPP Event’s Programme, providing the opportunity to interview some of the prestigious speakers on their programme, including the Executive Director of the American Political Science Association, Steven Rathgeb Smith and Scotland’s Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. We are also putting together a journal to which there will be contributions from students and professors, from UCL and elsewhere.

The IPPR events programme kicked off in December with a Panel on Careers in Think Tanks and International Organisations, which included some UCL alumni from the European Council on Foreign Relations, ActionAid and the King’s Fund. The highlight event so far has been the panel discussion on Sustainable Development, based on the report Now for the Long Term. The panel included the Director of the Oxford Martin School Ian Goldin, the Director of the International Institute for Environment and Development Camilla Toulmin and two UCL professors Paul Ekins and Michael Jacobs. They highlighted the need to seek long-term rather than short-term goals as a way of overcoming the gulf between knowledge and action in reacting to the challenges created by globalisation, such as climate change and inequality.

Before the end of term the IPPR Events Team is taking a group of students for a historic tour of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and hosting a panel discussion on the topic, ‘Is China becoming a global hegemon?: Chinese investment and power in a multipolar world.’

We are looking forward to hosting a launch event for the IPPR journal in the summer and the possibility of working more closely with UCL’s Institute of Global Governance in future.

NEWS FROM THE UCL CONSTITUTION UNIT.

Code of Constitutional Standards

In January 2014, the Unit published a code of constitutional standards based on the reports of the Lords Constitution Committee. The code is based on 149 reports published by the committee since it started in 2001. The analysis was done by Jack Simson Caird, supported by Robert Hazell and Dawn Oliver. The resulting code contains 126 standards, organised under five headings: the rule of law; delegated powers and delegated legislation; separation of powers; individual rights; and parliamentary procedure.

The Constitution Committee scrutinises every bill for constitutional issues but has always adopted an ad hoc approach. It decided at the start not to draw up a set of constitutional norms to apply to its legislative scrutiny. But with over ten years’ work and almost 150 reports it is possible to derive a set of constitutional norms from its scrutiny work, some generic and some specific to the bill in question. As an example of part of the code, here is an extract from the section on the judiciary, derived from half a dozen different reports:

3.1.1 The independence of the judiciary should not be undermined.
3.1.2 Judges’ security of tenure should be preserved.
3.1.3 The politicisation of the judicial appointments process should be avoided.
3.1.4 Ouster clauses should be avoided.
3.1.5 The exercise of powers to combat terrorism should be subject to adequate judicial control.
3.1.6 The roles of Parliament and the judiciary should not be conflated.

There are now three parliamentary committees which conduct systematic scrutiny of every bill, the others being the Joint Committee of Human Rights and the Lords Delegated Powers Committee. It is no coincidence that this painstaking scrutiny is largely done by the Lords. Their work is insufficiently known. We hope through this report to make their work more accessible and to encourage further work on codifying Parliament’s legislative scrutiny standards.

The report can be viewed at: www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/publications/tabs/unit-publications/159

New Constitution in Egypt

Last year at this time, Egypt had just promulgated its new Constitution. Since then, there have been regular street protests, President Morsi was removed from office, the military returned to power and the 2012 constitution was suspended and subsequently amended. The amended Constitution was overwhelmingly approved in a constitutional referendum on the 14th and 15th of January. More than 98% of those who voted in the referendum supported the constitutional changes, although turnout in the referendum was less than 40%.

Although some changes to Egypt’s constitution are commendable (e.g. the expansion of women’s rights, stronger protections for the press and the protection of intellectual property) many of the changes are worrisome. For instance, the President has gained a significant number of new powers under the amended constitution. He can now initiate and veto legislation and has the power to propose referendums to dismiss the legislature without any repercussions (previously, a failed referendum required the President to resign). The military has also been strengthened. The Minister of Defence will be selected by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, rather than by the President and the military will be given an independent budget to use as it wishes.

Given the fact that Defence Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is likely to run for President in 2014, it seems that the Egyptian military is poised to maintain its grip on power for the foreseeable future. Let us hope that it uses its control over the state’s institutions to implement and legitimise the tenets set forth in the constitution, which will require somehow convincing the Muslim majority to work within them.

Scottish Independence and the UK general election

At Nicola Sturgeon’s lecture on Scottish independence on 13 February, she was asked about the 2015 general election and how that might affect the timetable for Scottish independence.

If Scotland votes Yes this September, then the timing of the UK general election in May 2015 presents difficulties for the Scottish government and for the UK government. It presents difficulties for the Scottish government because they propose an 18 month timetable for the independence negotiations, from September 2014 to March 2016 and the UK general election falls right in the middle of that. The negotiations will be very intensive and involve every senior Minister in the UK government, with separate teams leading on finance, defence, energy, transport etc. If there is a change of government in the UK in 2015 all those ministerial teams would change; and the new Ministers might start to unpick what had been agreed so far. That could slow down what is already a very tight timetable.

The UK government will also be in difficulty if there is a change in 2015. It will be in particular difficulty if Scottish MPs hold the balance of power in the new Parliament. That is most likely to happen if Labour is the largest party in the May 2015 elections but depends on Scottish MPs to form a government (as happened in 1964 and 1974). On the SNP timetable, those Scottish MPs would be short lived and due to leave Westminster in March 2016, when Scotland becomes independent. If the removal of those MPs meant that the government was unlikely to command the confidence of the House of Commons thereafter, the government would be a lame duck government from the start.

Formally there is an answer to what would happen in March 2016 (if that is Independence Day and the date when the Scottish MPs depart). It is provided by the Fixed Term Parliaments Act. Under that Act, if the government loses a formal no confidence motion and no alternative government can be formed within 14 days, then fresh elections must be held. But that formal constitutional answer might not be a sufficient answer to the political difficulties facing the government from the outset.

We could have a ‘temporary’ or ‘transitional’ government for a period of time until Scotland formally leaves the union. Public sentiment in the rest of Britain is unlikely to be sympathetic to the idea that the Scots who are leaving the Union are ‘imposing’ a government on the rest of the UK (think of the headlines in the Sun and the Mail). Another twist is that the UK government negotiating the terms of Scottish independence would be responsible to a Westminster Parliament which still contains Scottish MPs. The UK government should be negotiating on behalf of rUK, the rest of the UK after Scotland has departed but if Scottish MPs held the balance of power at Westminster, they might be able to ensure terms which were more favourable to Scotland.

For Ed Miliband being reliant on short lived Scottish MPs to form his first government would be a nightmare scenario. He will be praying even harder than David Cameron for a No vote in September.

Meg Russell’s new book on the House of Lords has been shortlisted for Practical Politics Book of the Year

Meg Russell’s book ‘The Contemporary House of Lords: Westminster Bicameralism Revived’ has been shortlisted in the Practical Politics Book of the Year category at the Political Book Awards 2014.

Last year Robert Hazell and Ben Yong’s book ‘The Politics of Coalition: How the Conservative-Lib Dem Government Works’ was shortlisted for the Political Book of the Year category and also the Political Process Book of the Year category.

See:
www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/parliament/house-of-lords/the-contemporary-house-of-lords

Internships

Part-time current SPP students and SPP alumni may be interested in applying for the Constitution Unit internship scheme.

An internship at the Constitution Unit is an ideal way for recent graduates to gain experience of work in a think tank which is also an academic research centre and to do research which is linked to policy. Interns are invited to assist in one of the Unit’s project streams, which currently include parties and politicians, parliament, comparative constitutions and judicial independence.

Please find details at: www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/aboutus/internships
UNDERGRADUATE AFFILIATE PROGRAMME NEWS.

U.S. STUDENT FIRST VISIT TO UK PARLIAMENT

Selene Hsu, current student on the Affiliate Political Science and International Relations Programme writes about the class visit to the Houses of Parliament:

On 5 March 2014, our Introduction to British Politics class took us on a tour of Parliament to see the innermost workings of UK’s highest governmental institution. Despite living in London for over three months, I had never visited Parliament until that day.

What I first noticed about walking into Parliament was the NSA-like security procedures, complete with pat downs, metal detectors and x-ray machines. Although passing through security was expected, our professor felt the need to warn us that the guards were armed with guns, which I understand is not a common sight in the UK. Yet back in the US, all police personnel carries weapons of some kind and may use them to “keep the peace.” Although I am not desensitised to the dangers of guns, I almost chuckled at that warning nonetheless. Aside from the seemingly high levels of security, I was more amazed that we were able to access so many places that would probably not be offered on a tour of US Congress!

We first stopped at the Scottish Affairs committee to hear questions about the Referendum on Separation for Scotland. Staff had us sit in chairs off to the side with incredibly good views of the Committee affairs. The MP’s from both British and Scottish parliaments are currently undertaking research on the possible implications of Scotland leaving the UK. That day, they held an economics panel to discuss how pensions would be affected by separation. For 30 minutes, we saw an economics professor who in my opinion failed to answer many direct questions. I was surprised at how polite every politician was to this man. The other MPs in the room did not always seem very engaged in the discussion but I assume it is due to their different roles and positions, not their disinterest. Aside from what seemed like a lacklustre discussion to an American affiliate student, the committee meeting was a wonderful example of the political process.

 Afterwards, we moved on to the House of Commons where they discussed the Supply and Appropriation Bill. Truthfully, I was half-expecting to see a crowded room like you see in the movies with people in powdered wigs shouting over each other in one huge ruckus. Yet when we entered the visitors’ gallery, I was thoroughly surprised to see only ten people in the chamber. Instead of yelling, every MP spoke very civilly and softly. Their volume did not help since we were behind a thick bullet proof barrier.

Lastly, we went to the House of Lords to listen to them talk about the Francis Bill, a piece of legislation I was not at all familiar with. Whilst listening to the debate, I could not help but crane my neck to absorb the gorgeous architecture of the chamber! The House of Lords was definitely a swankier version of the House of Commons complete with gold trimming, red velvet couches and gilded ceiling. Although I had little understanding of the formal procedures, I found sitting in the House of Lords the most enjoyable since we were not behind a bulletproof barrier and we were able to listen to the Lords speak! I noticed that the Lords were, on average, much older than the MPs in the House of Commons. A few of them were even sleeping in the pews! In comparison, the Lords procedures seemed more organised and efficient than the Commons and debates were very quick and topical.

Overall, visiting Parliament was educational, slightly frustrating, confusing and exciting! While it is far from what you see in the movies, Parliamentary procedures seemed just as outwardly civil and polite as American politics. I am sure if I stayed longer, I could try to pick out the little details but for the time I was there, it was a great glimpse into the everyday life of an MP.

Parliamentary copyright images are reproduced with the permission of Parliament
MA HUMAN RIGHTS FILM SERIES.

Will Clark, current MA Human Rights student, writes:

Beginning from typically universalist concerns, the students on the Human Rights MA selected documentaries of varied origin and theme for their film series this Spring Term.

Things got off to a controversial start with Joshua Oppenheimer’s The Act of Killing, in which he invites unrepentant and grotesque killers of the Indonesian genocide to re-enact their tales of murder in the style of their favourite gangster-flicks, Westerns and war movies. While some have found this to be an utterly compelling and often bizarre exploration of the film’s subjects, others have seen a needless glorification of violence that ignores the silenced and forgotten voices of victims.

The piece finishes with the protagonist dry-heaving for minutes on end, having finally been compelled to register what he has done. On this note a subdued room turned to discuss an array of reactions with Joram Ten Brink; the film’s executive producer and professor of film at Westminster University. Any timidity in the room soon dissipated as Joram elaborated on everything from the current situation in Indonesia to the role of myth in the documentary, making frequent reference to the director Jean Rouch as an interpretive lens for The Act of Killing.

Other highlights in the series included Werner Herzog’s Into The Abyss also scored high on the surreal scale in its depiction of life on death row. Throughout the film Herzog gently tugs at strands of narrative emanating from each of his interlocutors to present a highly nuanced picture, even extracting a bewildering love story from a tragic situation. A member of Amnesty International’s anti-death penalty campaign was then able to enlighten us about the current state of play in trying to combat this mad practice.

Other highlights in the series included A Waltz with Bashir by Israeli film-maker Ari Folman. Nightmares of the Lebanon War are told through stunningly hyperreal animations that piece together the story of the Sabra and Chatila massacres, in which Israeli forces allowed Christian Phalangist militia into Palestinian refugee camps to slaughter civilians. We were privileged to have two of our very own - Hana Farhat and Theo Boutruche – to share some of their experiences of life in Lebanon in the aftermath of civil war.

All of us who have loved attending and working on film series are extremely grateful to the staff at SPP and in particular Dr Lisa Vanhala, for making it possible. We hope that next year’s students will bring yet more fresh and exciting ideas to keep it alive!

SPP OPEN DAY.

Helen Elliot and Genavive Sarkis, Department of Political Science write:

This year’s Departmental Open Day took place on Wednesday 12 March 2014 and was a great opportunity for prospective students to learn more about our programmes, meet our staff and take a look around the School.

This year’s event was held entirely in The Rubin Building and used a similar format to central UCL’s graduate open days. Each programme was allocated a stall from which programme directors were available to provide information and answer questions. Feedback from previous years had revealed that this format, where prospective students are given an opportunity to speak one-on-one with our staff, proved the most beneficial.

The Department itself looked great due to the recent renovations and the day was very well attended, we even had sunshine! Tours of the UCL campus were conducted by our very own research students, Sara Amighetti and Paolo Morini.

Feedback from the day was extremely positive with students commenting that they found it both informative and useful. We would very much like to thank all the staff and students who were involved in making the day such a success.
Dr Slava Mikhaylov, MPhil/PhD Programme Director reports:

Accepted or forthcoming publications


Awards and recognition

Paolo Morini and Orlanda Ward have been selected as project partner for NUS LGBT’s research into LGBT Equality in Education. They will conduct interviews to analyse how gender and sexuality (but more importantly their intersection) influence the educational experience of students in five universities, including UCL.

Conference Presentations

John-Paul Salter is presenting at the UACES post-graduate research forum at Aston University on 24th April. The paper is titled “Varieties of Lobbying in EU financial sector policy.”

In September 2013, Katharina Kieslich was invited to give an expert presentation on methods of prioritisation in health care at the University of Mainz in Germany. The expert presentation formed the introduction to a citizen conference entitled ‘Resource allocation in health care: Who should decide and how?’

Sofia Collignon Delmar attended a course “Introduction to Bayesian Analysis” at the University of Manchester, 23-24 January. The goal of the course was to familiarise with the principles of Bayesian inference and estimation as well as with simulation-based methods. The course offered a hands-on approach with a lot of time dedicated to the implementation of models in WinBugs, which makes it particularly interesting. Giving the flexibility of Bayesian approaches Sofia recommends this course to researchers who have to deal with complex structures.

Employment

At the beginning of March 2014, Katharina Kieslich started a job as a research assistant in the School of Medicine, Division of Health and Social Care Research, at King’s College London. Together with Professor Peter Littlejohns she is working on a project in health care decision-making. The project is about piloting and evaluating a decision support tool for Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Javier Sajuria has been appointed as Associate Lecturer in Introduction to Statistics at the Department of Political Science at Birkbeck, University of London. This is a temporary contract to teach statistics to PhD students from the Department of Politics and the Department of Management, as well as PhD students from other universities in the Bloomsbury Network. Javier has also been appointed a Visiting Scholar in the Institute for Public Affairs, University of Chile. During his time there, he will be presenting his work, giving a couple of special lectures to PG students and exploring research opportunities with the staff of the Institute.

Successful defense

Nick Martin successfully defended his dissertation on 5 March 2014.

The Insider’s Guide to Publishing

The SPP PhD cohort will be holding a half-day workshop “The Insider’s Guide to Publishing” on 08 May 2014 aimed at demystifying the publishing process. The first part will be a talk delivered by Professor Peter John, who will give students the perspective of a journal editor and explain how the reviewing stage is conducted. The second part will be a set of ‘break-out’ groups where SPP staff with a range of methodological or substantive backgrounds will offer tips and hints from the writer’s perspective.
The Department would like to welcome the following new staff:

Dr Jonathan Monten  
Lecturer in Political Science

Dr Jonathan Monten was most recently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma. His research and teaching interests are in the areas of international relations, international security and U.S. foreign policy. Specifically, his research interests include the causes and consequences of military interventions intended to impose democracy in foreign states; insurgencies, terrorism and civil conflict; and changing foreign policy attitudes in the United States.

His work has appeared in a number of peer-reviewed journals, including International Security, International Studies Quarterly, Security Studies and Perspectives on Politics. He has previously held postdoctoral research fellowships at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University and the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy at Yale University. From 2009 – 2011, he was an LSE Fellow in Global Politics in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics. He received his PhD from the Department of Government at Georgetown University.

Dr Lauge Poulsen  
Lecturer in International Political Economy

I am delighted to be joining UCL in September 2014 as a Lecturer in International Political Economy. I am currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow based at Nuffield College, University of Oxford and a Senior Research Fellow at University of London, SOAS. At Oxford, I am also a Research Associate at the Global Economic Governance Program.

Before my PhD from the London School of Economics (LSE), I did my graduate course-work at the LSE and University of California, Berkeley. I have been a visiting scholar at the Brookings Institution and LSE’s Law Department.

Most of my research has been on the protection of foreign investment in developing countries. I have published in World Politics and International Studies Quarterly on aspects of this subject and am currently in the process of finishing two books extending on my previous work. Other projects include the political economy of energy crises and the politics of international arbitration.

Dr Jonathan Kennedy  
Teaching Fellow in International Development

I am joining the Department as Teaching Fellow in International Development and will be teaching the masters course on the political economy of development (PUBLG054). I completed my PhD in the Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge in 2013. My thesis used a variety of quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the relationship between social stratification, political leadership and insurgency in the context of India. I am also interested in the political, social and economic determinants of public health and issues related to natural resource dependence.

My published work has concentrated on India but I am interested in developing and transitional societies more generally. Since finishing my PhD I have been working at the Sociology Department in Cambridge as a research associate on an ERC-funded project that is undertaking 100,000 survey interviews in order to understand the relationship between mass privatisation and mortality in the former Soviet Union. I am very much looking forward to interacting with a diverse community of students and staff at the Department of Political Science.
PAST STUDENTS WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Since the launch of the first Tavistock Times in the summer of 2008, we have been kindly contacted by many past students informing us of their progress since leaving the Department. A progress report follows:

Sonia Chohan
MSc Public Policy, 2010–11

I entered Law originally with a desire to work within the criminal justice system at a level where I could influence policy and legislation. After completing my corporate legal training, during 2010/2011 I undertook the MSc Public Policy at UCL in order to bridge the gap between being a private-sector lawyer and the more policy-based, public-focus of working in central government.

After my MSc, I worked in consultancy, specifically in the energy sector and last year went on secondment at the UK energy regulator working in one of their Policy and Regulations teams. This re-affirmed my desire to work within government organisations and earlier this year I was fortunate to start my current role as a lawyer at the Ministry of Justice. Responsibilities include advising Ministers and policymakers on public, private law and human rights legislation, as well as drafting secondary legislation and carrying out the necessary legal work to support new government initiatives.

The MSc equipped me with both the academic and practical skills to pursue a career at the very heart of Whitehall and the justice system. I have a lot to thank UCL for, especially my tutors whose guidance was invaluable for my dissertation (examining David Cameron’s foreign policy towards India). One of my proudest moments was shortly after leaving UCL, when the Prime Minister personally asked me for a copy of my dissertation in order to read my research. I have framed the letter he sent back to me after reading it! UCL placed me in good stead to pursue a career within central government and it is wonderful to finally bring my previous legal training and MSc together.

Stephen Clarke
MSc Public Policy, 2012–2013

Just before finishing my MSc in July 2013, I was offered a position as a Research Analyst at the Legatum Institute in London. The Legatum Institute is a think-tank whose research seeks to promote economic and political liberty balanced with personal and institutional responsibility.

The Institute hired me to work on the Legatum Prosperity Index™ and the upcoming US Prosperity Index. Both indices are composed of a range of variables, weighted using econometric analysis. As a result I believe that the module on quantitative analysis, my dissertation and the wider training in research methods that I completed at SPP was vital in helping me obtain the position.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the first six months or so that I have been at the Institute. Currently, I am involved in producing an index that evaluates US states on a range of factors that affect subjective and objective wellbeing. As part of my work I had the opportunity to visit Washington DC and New York to meet American academics and policy-makers and will be back in the United States in June to present the Index at the Second International Wellbeing and Public Policy Conference.

On a day-to-day basis I particularly enjoy the quantitative aspects of my work, something I developed a taste for during my MSc and I have been able to further develop my statistical research skills while at the Institute. Aside from my own research, it’s great to work in a place with people from a range of academic and intellectual backgrounds and in the last three months I have been fortunate enough to hear the economist Angus Deaton and the reverend Rowan Williams talk at the Institute.

I enjoyed immensely my time at SPP; I am also very grateful because I feel that it prepared me very well for my current job and for the future.

Susan Fuchs
Research Degree: Political Science, 2009–2014

My name is Susan Fuchs and I recently completed my PhD at the School of Public Policy. The title of my thesis is Member state performance in intergovernmental negotiations: the case of the European Union Stability and Growth Pact. My thesis analyses the performance of Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands during the original and reform negotiations.
over the Stability and Growth Pact, which took place between 1995-97 and 2004–05, respectively.

It tests the argument that original and reform negotiations differ for a variety of reasons relating to the fact that, in original negotiations, there exists no EU-level policy, whereas in reform negotiations, there exists the EU-level policy that states established in original negotiations. My main finding is that states rely on distinct bargaining resources in order to negotiate successfully in original versus reform negotiations and more specifically that Germany negotiated successfully in original negotiations, owing to their credible threat to exit said negotiations in the absence of certain concessions, while the Netherlands negotiated successfully in reform negotiations, due to the technical knowledge of their delegation members.

I arrived at these conclusions through a qualitative, process-tracing analysis, which involved consulting documents in national archives and the institutional libraries in Brussels, as well as conducting interviews with representatives of the member states and EU institutions that participated in the original and reform negotiations over the SGP. This need to be close to the data is one reason why I chose to base my PhD at a European university. As well as getting to know and love London, my research took me to multiple cities in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, among other places, and as I travelled so seamlessly between them, the concrete benefits of the EU became apparent to me, even as I studied the inner workings of the institution.

My time at UCL was incredibly rewarding and I had the opportunity to do much more than work on my thesis. For example, Alex Katsaitis, a fellow PhD student and I collaborated on a project that examined the debt crisis in the Eurozone, for which we received funding from the European Institute of UCL. We organised several roundtables with prominent academics, speaking on the subject of the Eurozone troubles and how to address them.

Having successfully defended my thesis on 31st October of last year, I find that my time at UCL has drawn to a close and while I will miss studying in such an exciting department, full of talented students and faculty alike, I know that the skills I gained over the course of my studies have equipped me for an equally exciting future.

Valerie Petit
MSc European Public Policy, 2005–06

After my MSc in European Public Policy at UCL, I continued to study for another two years at LSE and the American University in Cairo where I graduated from an MSc in International Relations and learnt Arabic for one year. My interest in European public policy, International relations specifically oriented to the Middle East and my eagerness to learn Arabic brought me to complete an internship within the Political press and information section of the European Union Delegation to Egypt. After this six month internship, I prepared the EPSO test and like many of my colleagues from university, succeeded to be put in the EPSO cast relax 2008 database. This gives options open in case anyone would want to go back to work for a European institution in the future.

Since my internship within the EU Delegation to Egypt, I worked as a research assistant for a Brussels-based consultation, Policy Action but decided to go for further adventures and discoveries. I applied to the United Nations Volunteering programme and was asked to participate in the organisation and technical support of UNMIS (United Nations Mission in Sudan) to the 2010 general elections in Sudan and the 2011 referendum.

Working for democracy through electoral assistance reminded me the courses held on Democracy at UCL and never thought at the time of my stay at UCL that I would one day work for the organisation of free, fair and transparent elections. Of course, I learnt the limitation of such assistance and democratic support, especially through my professional experience as an electoral observer.

Following my stay with the UN, I decided to work as an electoral observer in various countries with the Carter Center in Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia and with other organisations in various countries including Benin, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kazakhstan. Following this pretty nomadic life, I passed an exam to work as a professional staff of the UN. I applied to the Civil Affairs roster job and was allocated Kinshasa as a duty station in 2012. This was also a fantastic experience as this peacekeeping mission was going to go through key internal changes, including the introduction of a more robust mandate to eradicate armed groups in DRC.

Following almost two years in Kinshasa as a Civil Affairs Officer, I decided to go for an even more challenging life in Juba. I have just taken up the position of information analyst within the UN Mission in South Sudan where the core of the Mission’s mandate is currently the protection of civilians in the context of a national crisis/internal armed conflict.

I feel that I am currently very far from the academic world but I believe that the skills acquired through an MSc at UCL is key to provide researched, well-informed, unbiased, analytical papers and briefings.

Anne Reckitt
MSc International Public Policy, 2009–10
International Public Affairs Society President, 2009–2010

Life post UCL and the exciting year with SPP led me to Washington, D.C. I started off with an International Development Consultancy as a Project Manager, implementing USAID projects mainly in francophone African countries. The work focused on civic engagement, transparency, conflict resolution and local governance.

Currently, I am now working on a long-term project for the Bureau of Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department
of State. The primary mission of the Bureau of Counterterrorism is to forge partnerships with foreign governments, non-state actors and multilateral organisations to advance the counterterrorism objectives and national security of the United States.

My work centres on strategy and performance, with a focus on monitoring and evaluation. A normal day can include briefing senior officials, producing analysis of our foreign assistance, designing intelligent enterprise tools and working with my colleagues to ensure our efforts produce tangible results. The work is exciting and challenging and I feel privileged having the opportunity to be a part of this effort.

This year I was lucky enough to spend the New Year in London visiting friends from our SPP cohort. It is a testament to the School and the relationships it fosters that four years from completing the course, separated by many miles, we still come together. During my time at UCL, from the very start I felt that one of the strongest components of SPP is that it truly draws in a student body that is both diverse and rich in unique experiences. Being challenged by my fellow students in class discussions, on the IPAS committee and in study sessions resulted in my learning just as much from peers as from lectures and readings. The opportunity to be exposed to new points of view, to share ideas and debate the validity of arguments is something that is instrumental to the learning experience and something that my fellow students brought to the table in droves.

Additionally, a faculty dedicated to students, cultivating an environment of intellectual curiosity and rigor, cements a solid foundation within SPP. I am especially grateful to Dr Alex Braithwaite, Dr Jennifer Hudson and Dr David Hudson for their invaluable support and guidance during my time at UCL.

As this publication comes out well before the end of the 2013/2014 programme, I strongly encourage current students to take the time in the coming months, especially those that will be spent slaving over dissertation work, to seek out your peers and take advantage of this time together. September will arrive before you know it and there are many experiences yet to be had.

Yannis Theocharis

Research Degree: Political Science, 2006–2011

Upon completing my PhD, I left the School of Public Policy in February 2011 to take up an Alexander von Humboldt postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Mannheim in Germany. Despite the continental system’s differences to the Anglo-Saxon one – along with the obvious problem of language - adaptation was smooth. I have been based at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES), an interdisciplinary research institute with a strong analytical-empirical and comparative tradition in social science research.

It would be a lie to say that I didn’t miss UCL’s and London’s vibrant rhythms and its intellectual and cultural life but Mannheim’s melancholic industrial scenery, the multicultural mix of people and the smell from the chocolate factory spreading into the entire city every morning are charming and inspiring in a way hard to describe. At the University, apart from successfully completing my Humboldt-funded research project ‘Bowling Online: Political and Cultural Consequences of Social Networking Sites’, I had the opportunity to establish collaborations with top scholars working in the Institute. All this led to a number of publications in international peer-reviewed journals, presentations in academic conferences, engagement with the public in various public events and most importantly, to the further initiation of research projects.

Specifically, since March 2012 I have been co-director of the ‘Social Media Networks and the Relationships between Citizens and Politics’ project, while as of February 2013 I am co-directing the ‘Social Capital Oscillations in Times of Economic Crisis: The Case of European Democracies’ project. Since April 2013, I am also working together with my PhD supervisor, Dr Jennifer Hudson, and with Drs David Hudson and Niheer Dasandi on a project investigating the impact of social media use on the organisation and coordination of development campaigns.

Upon finishing my post-doctoral fellowship I was granted funding by the MZES to develop a project on the effects of new media on democracy. After the proposal’s submission for consideration by the German Research Foundation (DFG) last November, I took up a full position as an MZES senior research fellow at the University of Mannheim starting in April 2014. Along with my teaching duties, which involve lecturing on internet politics, social networks, institutions and engagement, I am currently acting as coordinator for the preparation of a Horizon 2020 proposal. The project will bring together scholars and experts from eight European countries to study new forms of political participation and the role of new media in empowering young citizen engagement.