Alumna of the month

Introduction
Amelia Stewart graduated from the UCL Department of Greek and Latin in 2011 with an Upper Second honours BA Ancient World degree. She is now studying for an LLM with a focus on International Law in the Faculty of Laws at UCL.

What did you enjoy most about your time in Greek and Latin and at UCL?
I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and support of all my teachers at UCL. Having always been a huge fan of Roman Love Poetry, I took Maria Wyke’s class on the legacy of Horace’s Odes III and Fiachra Mac Góráin’s class on Ovid in my third year, both of which I remember so vividly and would do anything to do all over again.

What was your career path like after leaving UCL?
I always knew I wanted to work in an international environment and travel with my job, but I never imagined when I graduated that, one day, I’d be deployed to West Africa as part of the UN Ebola Response – coordinating the regional humanitarian logistics operations between Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Senegal and Ghana. I started working as an Information Management Officer in the Logistics department of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) at their HQ in Rome in October 2011. WFP is the food assistance arm of the UN and the world's largest humanitarian organisation addressing hunger and promoting food security. It provides food assistance to 80 million people in 75 countries each year. In my four years with the WFP, I travelled extensively to places including South Sudan, Cameroon, Kenya, Jordan, Lebanon, and Nepal – to name a few! Although at times it was incredibly stressful and intense, it was also a truly fascinating experience.
What do you like most about your current job?
I took a break from the UN to go back to University and am currently finishing my masters in Law (LLM) at UCL. Studying Law has been a significant challenge but it has been immensely rewarding and I am so looking forward to applying all I have learned to the next chapter of my career.

What was your first-ever job?
After I graduated, I worked for the UN, but as a teenager I did the usual baby-sitting and waitressing – in fact my first ever paid job was a dishwasher in my local pub! When I left school I qualified as an EFL teacher and spent my university holidays teaching at various summer schools in Oxford. It’s been such a great thing to fall back on; I have been tutoring English in London these last few months alongside my studies.

What has been your favourite job?
I had some amazing experiences working at the WFP, but perhaps the most formative was being part of the Ebola Response. I truly felt that I was contributing to a global effort. My role specifically, as part of the Logistics response, was helping other organisations, such as UNICEF, Oxfam and Save the Children, get their urgent cargo into these affected countries so that they could perform their crucial emergency operations. For example, a representative from Oxfam might call me and ask when the next plane for Freetown, Sierra Leone was departing from Ghana, or was there enough space for 5 metric tonnes of blankets in the warehouse at the airport. And when I wasn’t on the phone, I was writing progress reports to show the many donors to our operation where their money had been spent.
In what way did your studies help you in your subsequent work?
My studies played a huge part in improving my analytical thinking, as well as my overall ability to structure my ideas and thoughts in a concise and coherent manner. I was able to draw on these skills throughout my time at the UN; in particular, when I wrote the three-year strategic plan for WFP’s Emergency Preparedness Division last year, and the Nepal Earthquake Response Plan in 2013.

What do you remember most about your time in UCL Greek and Latin?
I had a fantastic time helping out backstage doing the hair and makeup for the production of Aristophanes’ ‘Frogs’ – the fantastic Classics Play directed by Hugh Viney in 2009: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/classical-play/archive/2009Frogs](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/classical-play/archive/2009Frogs). I met some of my best friends during that time, and was so proud to be part of such a brilliant show.

Who at UCL (past or present) has most influenced you?
My teachers Matthew Robinson, Fiachra Mac Góráin and Maria Wyke were all hugely influential and gave me such invaluable support even after I had graduated. I was also lucky enough to have been taught by the late Stephen Instone – who was both a sensation and an inspiration. My fellow alumna and great friend, Cherry Collard, and I were awarded a portion of the Stephen Instone travel fund, which we put towards a research trip Greece to in the summer of 2010. It was a truly formative experience, and inspired us to take Antony Makrinos’ Homer class in our third year.

Of what are you most proud about UCL?
The module ‘Slavery in the Classical World’ taught by Simon Corcoran (in the History Department) inspired me to get involved in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking. In my third year, I volunteered at the Holy Cross Refugee Centre.
near Kings Cross, which gave me such insight into the plight of asylum seekers, many of whom had been trafficked to the UK. This experience further inspired me to pursue a career in the humanitarian sector. I still maintain great interest in the field of modern slavery, having just submitted an essay as part of my LLM on the UK’s Modern Slavery Act 2015.

What is your favourite part of UCL?
The atmosphere in the Department of Greek and Latin was always so welcoming and I made some of my best friends from socialising in the Common Room.

What, in your opinion, would improve UCL?
I found it incredibly stressful, having many of my exams in locations dotted all over London. I remember that one of my final exams was at 9 a.m. in Liverpool Street and my battling the Central Line to ensure I arrived on time only worsened my anxiety. If UCL could try and stagger the exams so more could be located on campus it would make a huge difference.

Tell me something about yourself that most people don’t know!
I am rather an excellent ‘stress baker.’ In the middle of the Ebola outbreak, I managed to find the time (and an oven) to bake brownies for my colleagues on Valentine’s Day. In such a high-pressure environment to be fully in control of a process and see a tangible outcome gives me such peace of mind, and is definitely my go-to coping mechanism. Plus, it’s never a bad idea to sweeten up your co-workers – nothing comforts people in a crisis like coming together to eat delicious baked goods!