

## **SSLC Minutes – 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2011**

### **Present:**

Astrid Barsk (Chair, BA History year 3)

Catherine Capone (BA History year 3)

Calum Young (BA History year 3)

Benedict Sarhangian (BSc IR and History year 3, undergraduate forum representative, first 10 minutes)

Eduardo Baudet (BSc IR and History year 2)

Francesca Washtell (BA History year 2)

Raphael Bousquet (BSc IR and History year 1)

Nicholas Nalbantian (BA History year 1)

Justin Lau (BA History year 1)

Sanaz Tailafar (General Course)

Dr Joan Pau Rubiés (UG programme director)

Mathew Betts (UG administrator)

- Letter from Benedict and Eduardo about the IR+History programme will be forwarded to the IR department
- The Chair for next year was voted upon. The committee decided that Francesca Washtell and Eduardo Baudet will be co-chairs for the 2011-2012 session. First and Second year members who are currently on the committee will continue to sit on the committee in the 2011-2012 session.
- Benedict raised several points:
  - o The phrasing of exam questions, that leave too much room for deliberation, and don't allow students to come down strongly on one side of the argument, or that have too many components to the question.
    - Dr. Rubies pointed out that exam questions are only edited to ensure clarity and succinctness, and to avoid overlaps, according to national standards of best practice. Regulations only disallow questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
  - o Lecturers should be reviewed before lent term – to be reviewed in the middle of term instead of the end, so that there can be improvement. It was noted that lecturers are permanent staff and thus are able to implement changes based on feedback from year to year, but also that any change to the timing of the surveys would be directed by the Teaching Quality and Review Office. The meeting heard from the undergraduate forum representative that the matter had been discussed in similar terms there.
  - o GTAs to be reviewed earlier on (can tell English level and style of teaching already in Michaelmas term) and to have continuous feedback
- Need to make sure that more people show up for the review
  - o Possibly also have SSLC chair send out email to undergrads, and some people may not read emails from Ih.Ug.Admin immediately
  - o Similar with message to fill out the NSS
- Dissertation concerns
  - o Need to have some longer sessions with supervisors

- Encourage students to book an appointment outside of office hours, so that can meet for more than a few minutes?
- 1<sup>st</sup> years
  - Concerned that the LSE100 assessed essay was at the same time as the history mocks
- Change in Assessment
  - Some felt that third years had too few essays, and felt ill prepared for exams by the end of the year
    - Third years were happier with three essays and one other form of assessment
  - Second years preferred two essays and two other pieces of formative work
  - → although, second and third year reps will speak to people in their classes to get a better idea of what structure of formative work, worked best for students.
- HY314
  - As it will become a second year option, third year students felt that the first week or two should be lighter and draw students in more than the Thucydides/Gibbons and Ranke topics, which may put students off HY314. More engaging first weeks!
- HY208
  - After the last meeting, students in the HY208 class felt that their feedback had a strong impact, as they promptly received an email from the lecturer. Students found it reassuring to get an email clarifying the course content from the lecturer.
- Continuous assessment
  - Move towards mixed assessment of exams and assessed essays in order to more accurately reflect the skills needed and gained from a history degree. 100% exams suggests that the ability to write an essay to hand in is not a valuable skill for a historian.
  - Different students can display knowledge in different ways
  - Some students felt that writing formative essays was not useful, and that if exams are worth 100% then should have more mocks (or, at least, a three hour 'real' mock)
- Presentations
  - Some students hadn't been receiving feedback on presentations
  - Need wider circulation of the presentation feedback form to GTAs?
- History Socials
  - An important way to create bonding within the department and within classes
  - One or two socials means that people can get to know each other, and from there can organize own get-togethers.