

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Undergraduate SSLC Minutes

**Present:**

Francesca Washtell (Co-Chair, BA History year 3, minute taker)

Eduardo Baudet (Co-Chair, BSc IR and History year 3)

Justin Lau (BA History year 2)

Nico Nalbantian (BA History year 2)

Maria Coelho (BSc IR and History year 1)

Maryan Osman (BSc IR and History year 1)

Ali Hughes (BA History year 1)

Hoang Vu (BSc IR and History year 1)

Jonathan Jeutner (BSc IR and History year 1)

Emma Forth (BA History year 1)

Georgia Derrett (BA History year 1)

Brianne Evans (General Course)

Raphael Bousquet (BSc IR and History year 2)

Dr Piers Ludlow (UG programme director)

Mathew Betts (UG administrator)

From the Department of International Relations: Hilary Parker and Chris Alden

**Topic of Discussion:**

Comments from the IR and History Reps for Hilary Parker and Chris Alden

- The committee thanked Hilary Parker and Chris Alden for attending the meeting
- **First year BSc IR and History SSLC reps** agreed that so far they generally had quite positive feedback for the IR100 course.
- A problem that two people picked up on was that all of the essays- for both the IR and History departments- fall on the same two weeks. It was suggested by the first year that perhaps not all of the essays could be due within the same week of each other or that there could be more warnings that after the first three weeks there are a lot of essays due.
- Piers pointed out that there is an inherent structural problem with the ten week term.
- **Second year BSc and History SSLC** reps raised the issue that it is hard to get hold of books for the Foreign Policy Analysis second year course.
- In terms of class timetabling it was pointed out that there is a **clash** between **IR202** and **HY235** and that this could be addressed in future as there are a number of students who would like to take HY235.
- **Exam feedback** was raised as the History department have the policy of giving exam feedback whereas IR does not. Chris Alden and Piers mentioned an incidence where feedback from IR exams was given by request to a joint honours student who had not done well in their IR exam- pointing out that it is possible in some circumstances on request. The difficulty would be the set of advisers attached to the student as joint honours students would have History academic advisers. Hilary mentioned the upcoming IR TLAC review of the entire IR programme and that any changes made would be applied to the joint degree.
- **Third year BSc IR and History SSLC reps** raised then raised the worry about exam grades of the 2011 International Organisations exam and that students taking the course in their third year do not want to score similarly. Hilary responded that IR students didn't think it was fair either and while they had tried to vet the teacher and

paper properly many students had felt the same way. It was suggested that perhaps two mock exams could be drafted to help prepare students taking the course this year and Chris Alden agreed that this could possibly be done, though it would need to be done with all students doing the course.

- Chris Alden also mentioned that books are a perennial issue, partly due to the essay timetabling system that means there is a general high demand at specific times. It was then explained that the new library policy of all books in the Course Collection being three day loans had impacted availability because previously set text volumes could now be kept for much longer. Chris Alden said that he would talk to the library staff the next day about the quantitative issue with the IR202 books as he had not realised that the library system had changed.
- Eduardo reported that some students feel constrained by having to take the core modules, mostly International Organisations. Chris Alden responded that it is a crucial and logical module that cannot be opted out of to do an International Relations degree and is core to the joint degree as it is understood.
- The letter drafted to the IR department by joint honours students during the last academic year was discussed:
- Point 1 of the letter related to doing a dissertation in the IR department. The IR department representatives said that doing a dissertation in the IR department is not the structure of the degree that was originally agreed to and an IR dissertation is not in the spirit of what was originally established. This is an issue that had been raised a number of times and they have considered the request but have always ruled against it. The degree itself was a history department initiative and the IR department has obliged this request. When formulating the joint degree they were very clear on three points- 1. That the administration would be in the International History department, 2. That advisers would be in the IH department and 3. The dissertation would be in the IH department. This was what was agreed to then. In order to alter this part of the deal, the whole deal would have to be re-examined
- Matthew pointed out the situation with Government and History students, who are treated very much as department of Government students and not given exam feedback or invited to all IH department social events- this is partly just the structure of the joint degree.
- It was suggested that perhaps the name of the joint degree should be changed to History and IR to make it clearer that it is a history department degree.

### Nigel Ashton's manifesto

- The idea of Roundtable discussions was agreed to be a very good idea and something to push forward with. Piers agreed and said that hopefully there will be several more. Last year there were two Roundtable discussions and that the key thing to establish is undergraduate attendance as the events are available for anybody in the department.
- First year students noted that no first years had had a problem with GTA teaching. They have found it is actually more accessible to be taught by GTAs than professors.

### General Issues

- General Course students would like it to be clearer which marks throughout the year will constitute their class grades. It needs to be clearer how they are being graded and where the marks are coming from. It was suggested that perhaps during the department introductions this could be mentioned in more detail and teachers could

mention it in class and, at the same time, General Course students should be encouraged to ask their individual class teachers how they will be assessed.

- Some teachers need to improve their presentation skills in the lectures.
- Students of HY114 would prefer to have more post-lecture notes on Moodle. Students of HY116 also mentioned that some lecturers upload videos or notes onto Moodle while others don't but that they would like to be much more aware of when notes or lectures will be uploaded. Perhaps lectures could be filmed and put up for revision?
- Francesca raised the fact that the HY315 1 hour seminar is not really long enough to have a full discussion of the reading material, though as this is more a question of Dr Hochstrasser's teaching hours this is probably unlikely to be resolved this year.
- A logistical point raised by first years is that the IR100 lecture is straight before the HY116 lecture but as IR always runs over time about ¾ of the HY116 audience are always late.
- Second years had 5 general comments: 1. A lot of students are happy this year about having lecturers for their class teachers. 2. The complaints last year about the HY208 module were being rectified by class teachers assigning additional weekly readings. 3. Almost all students were in agreement about disliking LSE100 and the scheduling of the exam, but it was pointed out that this is an LSE100 issue and not one for the history SSLC. 4. Some students were experiencing having to change academic advisers when theirs go on sabbatical, though this is a recurring issue and one without a definitive answer. 5. All students felt very positive about receiving exam feedback.
- A social issue from last year was that there were no Christmas drinks and some students were asking for better communication about social events and events being held by the LSESU History society.
- Justin Lau was chosen as the Undergraduate Forum Representative.