

International History Department Student Staff Liaison Committee meeting minutes

Wednesday 13th February 2013

Present:

Justin Lau (BA History year 3, Co-Chair)
Nico Nalbantian (BA History year 3, Co-Chair)
Raphael Bousquet (BSc IR and History year 3)
Alistair Hughes (BA History year 2)
Emma Forth (BA History year 2)
Jack Kelly (BSc IR and History year 1)
Lodewijk Vriens (BSc IR and History year 1)
Eleonore Lazat (BSc IR and History year 1)
Ani Chen (General Course)

Dr Steve Casey (Deputy Head of Department)
Mathew Betts (UG administrator)

1. Welcome and introduction

The committee members introduced themselves.

2. National Student Survey

Mr Betts highlighted that the NSS is now available online for third year students to complete. A high response rate is important so that a meaningful profile of results can be derived from the survey. The results are used by the School and the department, as well as in league tables in the wider public domain. The third year students present at the meeting confirmed that they had already completed the survey, and that they would encourage their peers to do the same.

3. Mechanisms for feedback to students on work

All student representatives reported that the mechanisms for feedback that are currently in place in the department are working well e.g. meetings with class teachers after the first essay of a course, feedback pro forma, meetings with academic advisers to receive feedback on the previous year's exams.

4. New Course Proposal - The Soviet Union: Domestic, International and Intellectual History. Professor Vladislav Zubok

This course proposal was considered, welcomed and approved by the meeting.

5. New Course Proposal – The Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires in the Early Modern Era. Dr Gagan Sood

The course proposal was considered, welcomed and approved by the meeting. This course will bolster the range of options available for the BA History paper 5: Early Modern list. Students noted that the course is thematically organised, but still chronologically structured. A session comparing the empires in question could be helpful. It is anticipated that there will be adequate stock of relevant texts in the LSE Library due to the reading list of a former course, HY234.

6. First year reps - feedback

BSc IR and History:

Students of HY113 had found that it was difficult to find texts in the Library for East Asia topics, or to link some of the Moodle readings with discussion questions for Africa topics.

Action: First year reps to e mail Mr Betts with titles of books that could not be found in the Library.

There was some positive feedback about LSE100. Students liked that the breadth of LSE expertise is employed in the course. The three week structuring of topics is better than the previous weekly topic structure. However, the IR department's lecture on climate change coincides with the LSE100 lecture on the same topic, and would be better placed elsewhere.

Some students had found that their class teachers (GTAs) at times lacked the depth of expertise to answer some queries about specific topics on survey courses. In these instances students are encouraged to attend the office hours of the lecturer for the topic to ask any in-depth questions. Dr Casey underlined that serious concerns about class teaching should be reported to the Teacher Responsible for the Course (TRC) and that GTA performance in the Michaelmas term teaching surveys is monitored by the department.

BA History

Written feedback had been sent by the reps, which echoed the point about the HY113 East Asia readings and welcomed the new course proposal by Dr Sood.

7. Second year reps – feedback

BA History

Students would like the department to provide a kettle for the E509 study room. Students would provide beverages, mugs, keep the area clean and be responsible for unplugging the kettle at night.

Action: Mr Betts to follow this up.

The HY208 and HY226 Moodle sites are somewhat unclear on the format and topics of the courses.

Action: Mr Betts to speak to TRCs

8. Third year reps - feedback

BSc IR and History

Students are generally satisfied.

Third year courses could make more use of Moodle to post supplementary materials relating to the course content such as films and recordings.

BA History

Students are generally satisfied.

9. General Course rep – feedback

The student rep had received no specific comments; it appears that students are generally satisfied.

10. Undergraduate Forum – Library Services report and CLT (Moodle)

Bar the current space and building works in the Library, there are no particular issues. Students were reminded about the restricted access to visitors from other universities and the general public during the exam season, which prioritises the space for LSE students.

Some third year students have experienced problems booking their presentation ceremony tickets. They follow through the booking process but then receive a notification saying that they have not booked a ticket.

Action: Mr Betts to raise this with the Ceremonies team.

11. Any other business

One rep raised the School initiative to publish teaching survey results as part of course guides. It was generally felt in the meeting that this is not a good idea, as it could lead to grade inflation and to students choosing courses for reasons other than academic and intellectual interest.

Dr Casey asked students for their views on continuous assessment. There was mixed opinion, but fewer students than in previous years expressed a desire for this, saying instead that they prefer assessment by 100% examination especially in year one (when they are still learning how the system works) and in year three (when they are focusing on their dissertations). Students were more in favour of assessed essays in their second year, seeing a 5,000-word piece as a pathway into the dissertation.

There was positive feedback about the two Careers panels that had been organised this year; they had made many students start considering career planning where they had not already begun to do so. Suggestions for panellists from various fields/occupations at future events included the following: MPs, Foreign Office, Financial Consultancy, Academia, the Arts, Publishing, Broadcast media, Masters application advice.

12. Date of next meeting

The summer term meeting will be held at the end of Lent term, as is customary so as not to clash with the exams revision period.

Week 9 Lent term: Wednesday 13th March at 4pm in E509.