

International History Department Student Staff Liaison Committee meeting minutes

Wednesday 13th March 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)
Georgia Derrett (BA History year 2)
Emma Forth (BA History year 2)
Jonathan Jeutner (BSc IR and History year 2)
Sivi Sivakumar (BA History year 1)
Lodewijk Vriens (BSc IR and History year 1)
Eleonore Lazat (BSc IR and History year 1)
Ani Chen (General Course)

Paul Horsler (Library representative)
Dr Paul Keenan (Departmental survey manager)
Mathew Betts (UG administrator)

1. Welcome and introduction

The committee members introduced themselves.

2. Departmental survey results

Surveys had recently been conducted by the department of second and third year BA History students' views on the degree programmes. Dr Keenan presented a detailed summary of the results to the meeting. Various points were discussed, including:

Demand for an undergraduate Africa course: Dr Lewis currently teaches an Empire course; if more staff are recruited in the future there would be capacity to offer both. Students who are interested in this area should continue to signal their wish for an Africa course.

Students enquired about the possibility of introducing participation as a summatively assessed component in courses. Dr Keenan replied that it would be difficult to address complaints of unfairness or impartiality made against assessment of this nature, and that the assessment process must be seen to be unquestionably fair. By the same token, it would be virtually impossible for external examiners to judge any participation component; external moderation is a key part of the fairness and equity of the assessment process.

HY300: students would find it helpful if the course started earlier in the Lent term of the second year or even in Michaelmas term. Carrying out all of the preliminary background reading in order to conceive an original topic situated in their chosen field can be demanding in Lent term alongside essay deadlines, and in the Easter vacation alongside exam revision. Starting the course earlier would allow students more time.

3. First year reps: feedback

First year students had found the study skills sessions run by the department at the beginning of the year to be particularly helpful, and enquired whether any more were held over the rest of year. Mr Betts advised that the Teaching and Learning Centre offer sessions of this nature throughout the year, and that details could be circulated so that students are aware of them.

Students would also find revision lectures for each course, covering the specific exam techniques relevant for that subject, to be helpful. While the exam feedback meetings with academic advisers are useful, they cannot always provide specifics, e.g. how to improve from a grade of 69 to 71.

4. Second year reps: feedback

Students of HY226 are clear on the structure of the course after Dr Jones' advisory circular. There remains some anxiety over the exam however due to the number of topics on the course.

BSc IR and History students are finding the degree challenging but are happy.

5. Third year reps: feedback

Contact details of the Ceremonies team will be circulated to students so that those who experience problems booking Presentation tickets will be aware whom to get in touch with.

Students would like to keep the same academic adviser for all three years of the degree. This is also the department's intention which is put in practice as much as possible, but on occasion staff taking sabbatical or leaving to take up other posts necessitate a change of adviser for some students.

6. General Course

The General Course result is partially based on a participation grade given by the class teacher so students should check the teacher's requirements for matters such as word limit and referencing of coursework.

7. Election of New Chair for 2013/14

Emma Forth (BA History) was elected as Chair for 2013/14 by the student members of the committee.

8. Any Other Business

The meeting heard that the Library refit is currently proceeding ahead of schedule, which was welcomed. Further additional space would be appreciated during the exams period, but the restrictions on external users at this time will be helpful.