

May 2011

A special feature celebrating the winners of LSE's teaching prizes

There is much to celebrate about LSE's teaching this year: a greater focus on effective feedback, fresh ideas for Orientation, creative approaches to engaging undergraduates in research. All staff are to be congratulated for taking up these and other Teaching Task Force recommendations so enthusiastically.

There are several teachers whose work has been particularly impressive, however, and who are celebrated in this special feature. They are the winners of LSE's three annual teaching awards: Major Review Awards, Teaching Excellence Awards and Departmental Class Teacher Awards.

Major Review Awards

Major Review Awards are given to academic staff whose individual performance from the start of contract through to Major Review is judged to be outstanding. Quality of teaching, innovative approaches and development of teaching excellence are all considered in light of feedback from both students and colleagues. There are five Major Review Award winners this year.

Riccardo Crescenzi

Riccardo Crescenzi is a lecturer in the Department of Geography and Environment and directs the MSc in Local Economic Development. Having been a Masters student here himself, between undergraduate and PhD studies in Italy, he has a particular understanding of the demands of studying at LSE and living in the UK, and believes that working with such a diverse international student group really adds to his teaching and challenges his own ideas and arguments in the discipline.

Flexibility, Riccardo believes, is key to his teaching: having a plan for a session is useful, and the teacher needs to be in control, but knowing when and how much to go with the students'



questions about a topic ensures the session works for everyone. His Masters lectures include a 'question time' when students are invited in groups to formulate questions and a vote taken by the whole group on which ones to follow up, either in the rest of the session or at the start of the following lecture. He tries to draw connections between the questions and the main learning points of the lecture to ensure coherency across the double session and wherever possible links them to past exam questions too.

Aware of the strong connections between his own teaching and research, he is always keen not only to convey content, but also to develop ways of thinking within the discipline that students can take with them into their future careers.

Feedback is another important part of his teaching and one that is much appreciated by students. Effective feedback takes time, but the increased confidence that can result – in public speaking, for instance, or managing exams – is worth it, he says.

Riccardo sees his Major Review Award as a team achievement for the strong teaching ethos shared among colleagues in the department. But he is also personally delighted to receive it and says it will act as an incentive to continue developing professionally as a teacher and a researcher. 'An enthusiasm for your subject is absolutely vital,' he says about teaching, 'as is being open to both students' comments and colleagues' input. Ultimately, this will enable you to find your own style and define who you want to be as a teacher and researcher.'

Simon Dietz

Simon Dietz has a dual role as lecturer in the Department of Geography and Environment and Deputy Director of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change. Before coming to LSE in 2006 Simon worked at the UK Treasury as an economic adviser to the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.

Simon has a wide teaching portfolio, from lecturing on a LSE100 module to being course manager for a postgraduate course. He believes that a good level of interaction is key to his teaching – making use of, among other things, voting system handsets in his LSE100 teaching, lots of Q&A opportunities in his classes and what he describes as 'bad jokes' – but balances this with more traditional approaches to both materials and delivery.

When Simon first joined LSE he thought there would be no overlap between his research and his teaching but over the years this has changed, as evidenced by a new Masters course starting next year, Climate Change: Science, Economics and



Policy, which is a clear example of research led teaching. In his current Masters teaching Simon engages the students in the Stern Review process, so that week by week the students encounter the same experiences and face the same choices as the Review team did. The students often come to different conclusions, but they gain a much greater understanding of the debates and decision making involved, he says.

Simon notes that there has been an increased emphasis on teaching at all levels of the School since he joined. He has always held previous winners of Major Review Awards in high regard, as they illustrate the value placed by the School on the teaching side of academic life, and he was 'chuffed' to become one himself. Asked if he had any key advice about teaching, he says 'Enjoy it, look like you're enjoying it and the students will enjoy it too and learn with you.'

Anthea Roberts

Anthea Roberts joined LSE in 2008. She is a lecturer in the Department of Law, teaching Public International Law, International Dispute Resolution and Investment Treaty Law, and is one of the co-founders of LSE's Transnational Law Project.

A key aspect of Anthea's teaching is interactivity. She believes that getting students to speak up in their first or second class is crucial, and gives them the confidence to continue contributing throughout the term, so she builds in things like small-group breakout discussions, taking votes on controversial issues and simulating treaty negotiations from the start of her courses. These also help to create excitement about the subject, with students needing to challenge assumptions and defend their positions as a natural part of their learning.

Anthea also engages students with her own research and thinks this has a definite and beneficial impact on her teaching: 'I use my classes to try out controversial ideas and get students to react to them. This helps me to identify areas where people have different instincts and to probe what lies behind those instincts.' She sometimes even gives students a work-in-progress to critique, making it clear that she prefers it when students challenge her ideas rather than simply agree with them!



If she had one piece of advice for colleagues new to teaching, it would be to think about communication: 'I think that it is easy to spend too much time focusing on the content of what you are going to teach and not enough time focusing on how you are going to communicate those ideas in an interesting and interactive way. In particular, I would encourage colleagues to focus on ways to get students to critically approach the topic and to start asking questions and making arguments.'

Anthea is delighted and honoured to have won a Major Review Award, and believes that such awards are one way that universities can signal how important the educational role is for their academics. But she's also keen to continue improving her teaching, so, she says, 'I am looking forward to reading your interviews with the other prize winners to see if I can adopt any of their techniques in the future.'

Michela Verardo

Michela Verardo lectures in the Department of Finance as well as being a research associate of the Financial Markets Group and of the Paul Woolley Centre for the Study of Capital Market Dysfunctionality at LSE.



A key element of Michela's teaching is that her students analyse real data. Her teaching is empirically based and her intention is that all students, both undergraduates and Masters, become critical users of research through direct experience of conducting analyses with data similar to those they read about. So while students analyse smaller samples of data than the researchers whose work they are reading, they confront the same issues. This emphasis on 'learning by doing' not only encourages a critical perspective on research output, it also teaches analytical and information skills that students will find relevant for their future careers. Using real data, such as stock price trends, is also motivating, she says, as it is more interesting than abstract problem set scenarios.

On her Masters course, Michela uses 'Harvard style' combined lectures and seminars. Weekly contact hours are combined into a three-hour session which is then divided into two halves, each attended by around 40 students. The first covers student presentations of the previous week's tasks and discussion of the different results students achieved – a creative approach that means the discussion is not about getting a pre-determined 'right' answer, but rather deals with the consequences of incorporating different variables or techniques to produce an empirical output. The second half is a more formal lecture, but it builds on the themes of the discussion and sets up the analytical task for the coming week. This ordering of discussion before lecture seems to be very effective way of getting students to listen, Michela believes, essentially because the relevance and immediacy of the discussion offers an engaging context for the lecture input.

Invited to share some good advice about teaching, Michela says 'I have learned that it is important to give students both the means and the opportunity to be curious about a given topic and to explore it in a structured yet independent way. Their responses are usually enthusiastic and their findings invariably interesting.' She is delighted to be a Major Review Award winner.

Jonathan White

Jonathan White joined LSE's European Institute in September 2008 as Lecturer in European Politics. As well as teaching several Masters courses, he is currently Programme Director of the MSc European Studies: Ideas and Identities.

Jonathan's teaching approach is based on the two-hour lecture/seminar format. He spends the first half of the session leading the class with his own presentation, supported with PowerPoint slides which later go up on Moodle. Students are invited to intervene with comments and questions, and there is usually a significant degree of student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction, but there remains a clearly defined set of themes embedded in a pre-prepared structure. 'I keep the PowerPoint slides simple,'

Jonathan says. 'Their role is to maintain the structure of the session and to remind students later of the themes covered, not to convey detailed information, for which the set reading is ample.' The second half of the session is explicitly student led: in the early weeks of the course this involves sub-dividing the class into smaller groups for the discussion of key themes in the reading, followed by a larger discussion involving the class as a whole; in the later weeks there are student presentations based on targeted questions of the sort they might meet in an exam.

Overall, Jonathan finds that this format encourages a good mix of structure and open discussion, and student feedback suggests the approach is appreciated. The atmosphere tends to be informal but focused. 'I am a believer in avoiding situations where the student is a passive observer – hence my decision not to use the conventional lecture format. I also like students to see things from an instructor's perspective too where appropriate, so as to encourage a hands-on approach.'

Jonathan has been lucky enough to be able to concentrate his teaching in the areas of his research interests, he says, with the result that both his teaching and his research benefit and become more enjoyable. Winning a Major Review Award has only added to this: 'It's very nice, and something of a bonus, to be recognised for an activity I enjoy doing.'



Teaching Excellence Awards

Every year the LSE Students' Union invites students to nominate the teachers who have most inspired them. This year the Teaching Excellence Awards wanted to recognise members of staff who used teaching and learning to inspire students to think beyond the campus and to motivate students to take action within the wider world. The quality and breadth of applications – over 50 teachers were nominated, across 18 departments – means that the five winners are to be especially commended.

Dr Shakuntala Banaji, Media and Communications,

for being a teacher who uses her expertise, passion, knowledge and ability to motivate students to think about how life beyond LSE is relevant to the subject.

'For Shaku, teaching does not seem to be a job, but a way of life; she is not in it for prestige or to get published, but because she loves to teach.'

'She changed our worldviews ... She taught us to think about where we situate ourselves in society and how this affects what we may believe or take for granted and how we see other people.'

Eric Golson, Economic History,

for making teaching fun, engaging and exciting, and for inspiring so many students to be so passionate about what they are learning and its relevance to the world today.

'Eric's remarkable and unprecedented support is what truly makes him so deserving of this award. We all hope he wins.'

'I cannot stress how dedicated Eric is to teaching. From the brilliant class structure, the way he could lead and induce debate, to his consistent good humour, it was obvious that he enjoyed our lessons every bit as much as we did.'

Robert Knox, Law,

for illuminating his course, bringing classes to life and inspiring students to think about how they can take action on the issues they care about.

'His teaching is always engaged with wider issues in the local and global society, bringing in contemporary and political debates to the readings and general course content.'

'Rob's passion for activism within society shines through in his teaching and it inspires his students to use their studies to analyse the world around them and to take action against perceived injustices.'

Dr Martha Mundy, Anthropology,

for demonstrating the practical applications of her academic expertise and motivating students to do the same.

'I conducted my fieldwork in a rather challenging situation – a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon in the middle of political turmoil; I even went through a short siege during my time there – and, almost miraculously, Professor Mundy managed to make herself present, giving me, through email, much needed advice on what to do in such a situation.'

'She has been willing to devote considerable time to my intellectual development and has given me the space to formulate my own research project whilst directing my readings appropriately.'

Dr Taylor Sherman, International History,

for being a truly inspirational teacher who wants her students to think about the world differently and who uses feedback actively to change and improve her classes.

'She makes sure nobody in class discussions is left out, and draws in all points of view and ideas: her classes are literally like cabinet meetings.'

'Our class discussions have been by far the most animated and useful during my time at LSE.'

Departmental Class Teacher Awards

These awards recognise the special contribution made by Graduate Teaching Assistants and guests teachers to LSE's academic departments. The winners are nominated by the departments themselves as a result of exceptional feedback from students, lecturers and other department members.

The 2011 winners, from the departments who've nominated so far, are

Julia Morley, Accounting
Hakem Al Rustom, Anthropology
Tom Boylston, Anthropology
Eric Golson, Economic History
Michael Best, Economics
Malvina Marchese, Economics
Ana McDowall, Economics
James Clark, Finance
Daniel Kilburn, Geography and Environment
Derek Meyers, Geography and Environment
Katy Dineen, Government
Pietro Maffettone, Government
Reza Pankhurst, Government
Esha Senchaudhuri, Government
Chris Parkes, International History
Jasmine Gani, International Relations
Monika Kruesmann, International Relations
Vassilios Paipais, International Relations
Floris De Witte, Law
Panos Kapotas, Law
Robert Barnes, LSE100
Panos Kapotas, LSE100
Cécile Emery, Management (EROB)
Attila Marton, Management (ISIG)
Eleni Lioliou, Management (ISIG)
Anastasia Kouvela, Management (MSG)
Ahmad Abu-Khazneh, Mathematics
Neofytos Rodosthenous, Mathematics
Derek Wan, Mathematics
Sarah Broughton-Micova, Media and Communications
Ben Ferguson, Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method
Cora Peterson, Social Policy
Chris Tennant, Social Psychology
Victoria Redclift, Sociology
Patrick Fitzgerald, Sociology
Roxana Bratu, Statistics

The Department of Economics has also commended the teaching of the following, as runners-up for the Departmental Class Teacher Awards:

Can Mustafa Celiktemur
 Laura Derksen
 Shaik Aqil Esmail
 Jason Garred
 Abhimanyu Gupta
 Fadi Hassan
 Tara Mitchell
 Francesco Palazzo
 Andre Wirjo
 Maiting Zhuang

External prizes for LSE teachers

Congratulations to the following staff who have won external prizes for their teaching this year:

Tim Leunig and **Dudley Baines**, who jointly won the Economic History Society Teaching Prize, awarded to those judged to be making the most significant contribution to the teaching of economic and/or social history.



Fenella Cannell, who won the ASA/C-SAP National Award for Excellence in Teaching Anthropology for making a major contribution to the positive learning experience of students in the discipline.

If there are more prize-winners out there, please let us know (j.hindle@lse.ac.uk) so that we can mention you in future publications.

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