

May 2012

## A special feature celebrating the winners of LSE's 2012 teaching prizes



It is a great pleasure and an honour to introduce the winners of LSE's teaching prizes this year. They demonstrate the commitment made by teachers at all levels to making sure our students have a first-rate intellectual experience during their time at the School.

Prize winners include graduate teaching assistants and young lecturers who have passed their major review this year to established and senior staff. Some have

been nominated by their own students, others have been awarded prizes on the basis of their teaching scores and departmental support. The teaching covers a range of subject areas taught in the School, and a range of courses from first year undergraduate courses to specialised Masters' courses.

This is the fifth (and final) year in which I have chaired the group which looks at nominations for prizes at major review. I can say frankly that we have always been impressed with the quality of the submissions, but this year was particularly strong and demonstrated a real commitment to innovation and simply to delivering first-rate teaching across a whole range of courses and levels. I am acutely aware that there are many other pressures on young lecturers at this point in their career, so this commitment is particularly commendable. The quality of teaching by some of our graduate teaching assistants is also outstanding – and we have to remember that most of the GTAs are also working hard to complete their PhDs. And we have some excellent teachers of all ages among more senior staff!

The prize winners featured here use very different methods in their teaching but what they share is that they are all outstanding teachers and we are rightly proud of them and congratulate them. In the articles below, some of these teachers share their ideas and sources of inspiration for their teaching – we hope that they will inspire others.

**Janet Hartley**

Pro-Director, Teaching and Learning

## Major review awards

**Lucia Garcia-Lorenzo**

Lucia Garcia-Lorenzo is a lecturer in the Institute of Social Psychology (ISP) and directs the MSc in Organisational and Social Psychology. Her PhD at LSE, on cultural change in organisations, followed postgraduate studies at the Universidad del Pais Vasco in Spain.

It is perhaps not surprising, given Lucia's interest in group dynamics and teams, that what she finds most enjoyable about teaching is engaging



with her students. "I learn with them and from them," she says. Her aim in lectures is to generate a "blame-free space" where students feel able to ask questions, talk to each other and contest what they hear. The resulting conversations are often highly rewarding: students are typically drawn from many different countries and often have direct work experience, so they have plenty of interesting contributions to make and can also act as helpful sounding boards for Lucia's own research – a useful way, she finds, of negotiating that often tricky dividing line between teaching and research.

Lucia has noticed a growing emphasis at LSE on the importance of good teaching to support the learning experience, and an increasing awareness that a student's time at LSE is just one part of a life-long learning journey. It is partly in response to this that her department has established an ISP Alumni and Students network, which seeks to create mentoring-style relationships and make the most of the important links between study and vocational application.

Asked what advice she would give to new teaching colleagues, and remembering her first few anxiety-inducing lectures, Lucia says, "Relax... it's fun. Students are very generous. And they don't bite!"

**Grégoire Webber**

When asked what he finds most enjoyable about teaching, Grégoire Webber answers, "The challenge of getting the students to understand why questions are posed and why they're often still not answered."

A lecturer in the Department of Law since 2009, Grégoire came to LSE via McGill and Oxford universities and a stint in the Privy Council Office of the Canadian Civil Service. He teaches on what he describes as "Where's the law?" courses – a first year course in Public Law and a third year one in Jurisprudence – that students tend to find hard initially but often end up enjoying. "The Jurisprudence course especially gives the students an insight into why the field of study is 'set up' as it is, which engages them with the discipline in a meaningful way."

Grégoire's approach to teaching is based on several key ideas: an understanding that there is no one right way of teaching all the time (he learned this during his first year here, when he attended every Jurisprudence lecture taught by colleagues), an appreciation of traditional methods such as encouraging close readings of texts (he is affectionately described by a professorial colleague as "the youngest old fogey I know") and what might be called "quiet innovation", such as getting his Jurisprudence students in their first class to write on a record card their answer to the question "What is law?" and then revisiting those answers a term later and sharing what they have learned.

He believes that students at LSE expect and need to be challenged. "If you set the bar high enough, most students will strive to reach it... they're not here just to go through the motions. A law degree from LSE means something."



## Elliott Green



Elliott Green came to LSE from Princeton in 1999 to do postgraduate study in the European Institute. He has been teaching here since 2005 and is the convener of the Department of International Development's MSc Poverty course.

A trained musician and performer, Elliott is fortunate in never having suffered from teaching nerves! He prepares for lectures in the same way he would for performances, considering the pace and flow of content, making sure his audience is engaged and creating space for

responses. But he likes to think of his lectures as "interactive performances": questions to students are built in half-way through and at the end, and a variety of stimuli are used to illustrate ideas – a clip from *The Life of Brian* to make a point about colonialism, or photographs of people queuing up to vote in Afghanistan, Egypt and Kenya to discuss the relationship between poverty and democracy. In addition, he actively introduces his course readings during lectures in such a way that students are helped to understand how they should read and what they should be striving to get out of their readings.

Elliott is optimistic about the teaching culture at LSE. "I think people really do care," he says. "And interestingly, the ones who care most about their research are often the best teachers." His own research – currently on the political consequences of urbanisation in Africa – is something he enjoys teaching about simply because it's the material he knows best. If the students respond enthusiastically he reviews course topics and considers making changes to reflect new areas of interest.

Positive feedback from students is the thing that gives Elliott most pride in his teaching: "When you hear your course described as 'the best I've ever taken', that really makes all the work worthwhile."

## Kirsten Ainley



Coming to LSE in 2001 to do a Masters degree, Kirsten Ainley intended to stay only one year. But the academic bug bit and, following her PhD here, she now teaches two International Relations MSc courses and co-supervises the International Theory Workshop for research students.

Kirsten worked in marketing for the Hurst Corporation and Unilever before coming to LSE and believes her corporate experience is highly beneficial to her teaching, not only for the practical aspects of time and task

management but also because of the broad understanding she has of how and why theories are applied in the "real world". Her students are given opportunities to develop similar insights: every year she takes a group of MSc students to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to attend hearings and see the Court in action, and she regularly brings external speakers such as the defence lawyer for ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor into classes. Similarly, on the International Theory Workshop course, students are exposed to collaborations with other institutions and organisations, and there is an annual colloquium organised with Aberystwyth University – an opportunity for the best research students from both institutions to present their work and build their professional networks.

The importance of teaching at LSE has definitely grown over the last decade, Kirsten believes. She considers herself fortunate to be part of a department whose staff have received several teaching prizes in recent years and which encourages excellence and innovation. It enables her to be the sort of teacher she wants to be: "I try and create an argumentative atmosphere in classes... but argumentative in a positive way," she says. "The students are encouraged to contest ideas, not each other, and to speak and float ideas without fear."

## Carsten Gerner-Beuerle



Carsten Gerner-Beuerle joined LSE's Department of Law in 2009, having come to the UK initially under the German Academic Exchange Service Lectureship Programme to teach at Kings College London after his studies in Berlin.

Carsten enjoys the way his teaching develops across any one year, thanks to the diverse student body at LSE: "You always encounter something new. The lectures can be the same, but the reactions are never the same because the students' perspectives are so different. I always learn something from them."

He is fortunate too in working in a department whose senior staff place considerable emphasis on good teaching. Feedback is something that has been under discussion in recent years, with teachers encouraged to think through the right balance between detailed written responses to students' work and verbal interaction during office hours and other meetings, and dissertation support for MSc students has also received considerable attention. For Carsten, whose aim is to be an approachable teacher and one who generates an informal, unthreatening atmosphere in classes, this is a supportive and encouraging culture in which to work.

His own research – much of it into comparative law – is something he can integrate quite easily into his teaching, especially to postgraduate students: "They have a variety of legal backgrounds themselves, which makes it an ideal environment for learning from each other and strengthening my research."

Above all, he recommends treating students with respect. Asked for one piece of advice he would give to new teaching colleagues, he says, "Take the students seriously. They appreciate it."

## Kate Meagher



Kate Meagher's arrival at the Department of International Development in 2008 followed studies at Toronto, Sussex and Oxford, and teaching experience in Botswana, Toronto, Nigeria and Oxford, at secondary school, university and adult ESL levels.

Her approach to teaching is essentially one of encouraging critical skills: "I try to generate an atmosphere of inquiry... to get the students to challenge not just the materials they're encountering but also their own beliefs and assumptions." To achieve this, Kate gives careful consideration to the way she herself communicates, constantly trying out new, interesting and vibrant ways of engaging her students. On a departmental "methods" course, for instance, students working in small groups were asked to take photographs in response to a research question and to explain their photographic answer; they were then asked to discuss the outcome and select only two photographs as their group submission. Each group's work was subsequently uploaded to Moodle and formed part of a "Photovoice" lecture that Kate delivered.

"LSE is good at prodding people to be innovative about their teaching," Kate says, though she has also encountered some mixed messages about the importance of teaching and is concerned that the coming REF exercise may frustrate the development of "good teaching" even further. "Universities thrive when they let all flowers bloom," she believes. Certainly as far as her own research is concerned, she is always looking for ways in which it can benefit her teaching and vice versa: "The wide-angle teaching required on my courses at LSE compared with the fine grain of my research sometimes makes it difficult to combine the two, but I'm finding more and more ways of connecting them as time goes on."

## Svetozar Rajak

Having completed his first degree in Belgrade, Svetozar Rajak had to wait over a decade to fulfil his plan of coming to LSE to pursue postgraduate studies. "The collapse of Yugoslavia and the ensuing wars forced me to put the well-being of my family first. I was the only one who, in the difficult circumstances, could provide for them." And so it was that 2004 became the year that Svetozar acquired his PhD in the Department of International History and 2007 the year that he became a lecturer in the same department.



Sometimes people talk of a "tension" between teaching and research, but for Svetozar this is a positive thing. "Very often, it is thanks to the students that I am able to discard irrelevant offshoots in my research and add clarity to my interpretations and arguments." He manages this by promoting a research-based approach to learning among the students themselves, and by creating a challenging and inspirational atmosphere in classes, both of which in turn give the students the confidence to express opinions and challenge ideas. He is delighted when ex-students tell him that some of his classes have changed them and made them more eager to learn.

LSE has done much in recent years to return teaching to its rightful place, Svetozar believes – a place that no top intellectual institution can afford to miss: "We have to continue promoting research, but without good teaching we will lose our competitiveness and global appeal." It's not necessarily an easy thing to achieve but one that reaps benefits for everyone: "Teaching is and should be demanding. It requires the best in each of us."

## Erik Baurdoux

Erik Baurdoux joined LSE's Department of Statistics as a lecturer in 2007, having gained his PhD in Mathematics from Utrecht University.

He is passionate about engaging students and building their confidence: "I try to convince them that there is no such thing as a stupid question." And he finds it very rewarding when the "long view" he encourages of the mastery of the subject pays off: "Some students come back to me in their third year saying that, even though they found my [second year] course difficult at first, pieces started falling into place by the end and in their final year they are able to reap the benefits of it." He has posted comments like this on Moodle, so that students know it is quite normal to feel lost at first.



Erik is delighted that teaching at LSE is taken so seriously. As the department's GTA co-ordinator he has a special interest in their development: "It is great to see the training that is being offered to our teaching assistants as they play such an important role." He is also an enthusiastic user of new technology for teaching: already a big fan of Moodle's Q&A forum and quiz tools, he is currently an active participant in the Moodle 2 pilot, and this summer term will be testing out a lecture capture system called Vivio which records anything written on a whiteboard so that students can watch it at their own pace on the Echo system.

Asked about what advice he would give to new teaching colleagues, Erik says, "Think about the time when you were a student and what it was that made certain lectures interesting and enjoyable. And never be afraid to experiment."

## Teaching excellence awards

**Every year the LSE Students' Union invites students to nominate the teachers who have most inspired them. The quality and breadth of this year's applications – over 60 teachers were nominated by their students – means that the five winners are to be especially commended.**

### Savita Bailur, Information Systems

Savita uses new media and real life examples to illustrate technology's influence on society. She actively seeks out student feedback and changes course content and design through the year to make it suit the learning needs of the students she teaches.

"She is friendly and relaxed with students, so people do not hesitate asking for help when needed. We feel respect for her because that is how she always treats us."

"She knows how to involve everyone in the class – she actively makes sure that everyone gets an opportunity to speak, and no-one is left behind"

### Alex Voorhoeve, Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method

An outstanding teacher who inspires and excites students. Students feel challenged, stretched and truly engaged when he teaches.

"Alex's teaching forced me to challenge views that I have taken for granted thus pushing me to think critically, and to get out of my comfort zone."

"Alex's moral philosophy classes taught us to think from the heart: decisions are important to make, but more important than that is to place people, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of public policies, at the centre of such policymaking processes."

"No exaggeration when I say that Alex is a great teacher!"

### Marco Pinfari, Government and International Relations

With a glowing nomination, Marco's time and energy for teaching go beyond the seminar – offering extensive feedback on submitted work, and actively prompting students to read additional materials relevant to their learning style and interests.

"Marco has been the best seminar teacher I have ever had."

"Teachers like him are exactly the ones we were looking for when choosing to study at LSE."

"He has the skill to really engage us in the seminar's topic – prompting us to think about how the issues are relevant within wider society."

### Stefano Cascino, Accounting

From the very first lecture of the year, Stefano instilled a belief in students that his passion was to see students understand the topics and to make their learning real to what is happening in society.

"Dr Cascino has an exceptional ability to engage with the class, pose students with questions to test and strengthen their understanding, and get so much out of any class."

"Dr Cascino engages with the class and continually questions students, like an interviewer. And all this happens in a single one hour class. It's incredibly exciting!"

### Helen Addison, Government

A popular and passionate teacher, students love spending time in her classes and feel that the learning process is shared. Her preparation for each class make her students want to learn more, and inspires interests beyond the course content.

"Her ability to include everyone in a class makes you feel like you are being taught in a one-on-one environment, which is a real breath of fresh air."

"The way she highlights the limitations and strengths of what we do goes beyond what professors teach us in the lectures."

"She displayed a genuine sincerity to want to help her students and to enrich their learning process."

## Departmental class teacher awards

**These awards recognise the special contribution made by graduate teaching assistants, teaching fellows and guest 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 2012 winners, from the departments who have nominated so far, are:

**Ali Dezyanian**, Accounting  
**Silvia Jordan**, Accounting  
**Insa Koch**, Anthropology  
**Nicolas Martin**, Anthropology  
**Andrew Sanchez**, Anthropology  
**Peter Sims**, Economic History  
**Magda Zurkowska**, Economics  
**Jonathan de Quidt**, Economics  
**Abhimanyu Gupta**, Economics  
**Tim Oliver**, Finance  
**Cristina Scherrer**, Finance  
**Hatty Oliver**, Gender Institute  
**Maria Carvalho**, Geography and Environment  
**Feyzi Akkoyunlu**, Government  
**Kate Alexander**, Government  
**Mogens Hobolth**, Government  
**Tim Vlandas**, Government  
**Young Cho**, International Development  
**Bryan Gibson**, International History (Martin Abel Gonzalez Prize: 1<sup>st</sup> place)  
**Daniel Falkiner**, International Relations  
**Roberto Orsi**, International Relations  
**Luca Tardelli**, International Relations  
**Rafael Peñas Cruz**, Language Centre  
**Panos Kapotas**, Law  
**Sanjivi Krishnan**, Law  
**Desmond Fitzgerald**, LSE100  
**Henry Radice**, LSE100  
**Jessica Templeton**, LSE100  
**Kyle Ingram**, Management (EROB)  
**Savita Bailur**, Management (ISIG)  
**Dimitrios Karamanis**, Management (MSG)  
**Ahmad Abu-Khazneh**, Mathematics  
**Ioannis Kouletsis**, Mathematics  
**Georgios Zouros**, Mathematics  
**Sarah Broughton-Micova**, Media and Communications  
**Monica Gerber**, Methodology Institute  
**Christopher Blunt**, Philosophy  
**Christopher Tennant**, Social Psychology  
**Jesse Potter**, Sociology  
**Mai Hafez**, Statistics

**These graduate teaching assistants have been commended as runners-up for the Departmental class teacher awards:**

Economics

**John Barrdear**  
**Thomas Carr**  
**Igor Cesarec**  
**Katarzyna Grabowska**  
**Fadi Hassan**  
**Felix Koenig**  
**Alexander Lembcke**  
**Luis Martinez**  
**Revi Panidha**  
**Mazhar Waseem**

Geography and Environment

**Daniel Kilburn**  
**Thomas Smith**

International History

**Christopher Brennan** (Martin Abel Gonzalez Prize: joint 2<sup>nd</sup> place)  
**Daniel Strieff** (Martin Abel Gonzalez Prize: joint 2<sup>nd</sup> place)

LSE100

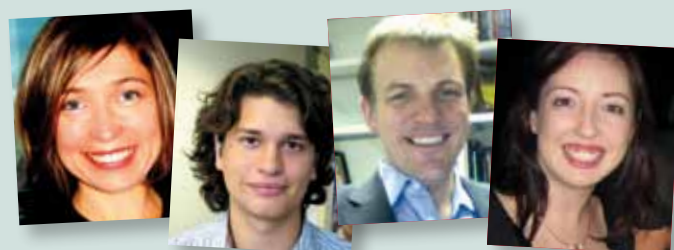
**Vlad Glăveanu**  
**Victoria Redclift**

Sociology

**Daiana Beitler**  
**Kristina Fuentes**  
**Peter Manning**

## External prize for LSE teachers

Congratulations to Oriana Bandiera, Michael Best, Greg Fischer and Tara Mitchell who, as the "EC307 Development Economics team", received a commendation for the Economics Network's 2011 Outstanding Teaching Award. The award is given in recognition of "exemplary teaching practice that encourages understanding of and inspires interest in economics".



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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