

Teaching awards special

October 2007

BY LIZ BARNETT, DIRECTOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTRE

Congratulations to the six Major Review Teaching Prize winners.

Three themes ring out from the interviews I undertook: first, that teaching is about loving your subject and passing that enthusiasm on to your students; second, that respect for students is vital, acknowledging what they can bring to the process and recognising their needs; and third, that teaching and research should work off and benefit each other. Several of the prize winners have noted the inspiration their teaching has brought to their research. Many students come to LSE with significant experience while many others may not have much experience but are academically gifted. Both can spark ideas for research, challenge existing assumptions, and point to gaps and issues worth exploring in greater depth.

Congratulations also to the considerable number of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) who have been awarded departmental class teaching prizes, and to those who have successfully completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education.

This special follows an earlier issue which celebrated the winners of the new LSE Teaching Excellence Awards where staff are nominated by students for their excellence in teaching. Congratulations again to Rita Astuti (Anthropology), Daniel Sturm (Government/MPA), Gabriele Binsberg (Government/IR), Michel Palazuelos Martinez (Economics) and Clare Hemmings (Gender) and congratulations again to Clare Hemmings for her National Teaching Fellowship Award.



BY JANET HARTLEY, PRO-DIRECTOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Many congratulations to the Major Review Teaching Prize winners! We have many inspirational and dedicated teachers at the School and we are proud of their achievements.

As in previous years, it is significant that our prize winners come from several departments, have very different areas of expertise and teach in different ways. Nevertheless, they all share the conviction that teaching can be interesting and exciting, for teachers as much as for students, and see a strong connection between research and teaching which can genuinely feed off each other.

We like to think that we offer a distinctive 'student experience' at LSE to a uniquely talented and diverse student body, and the way in which teachers and students interact in classes and lectures is a vital part of this experience.

These prize winners have recently passed major review but the new scheme inaugurated last year – the LSE Teaching Excellence Awards – also recognised the achievements of teachers at any stage of their career. This has been acknowledged as a great success and will operate again this year.

The short statements below by prize winners demonstrate their enthusiasm and talent for teaching and we hope will inspire and encourage other colleagues.



Major Review Teaching Prizes

DR MATHIAS KOENIG ARCHIBUGI, GOVERNMENT/INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Mathias joined LSE in 2000. He completed his PhD in Florence and spent three years as a researcher at LSE before being offered a lectureship. He is heavily involved in running the MSc in Global Politics.

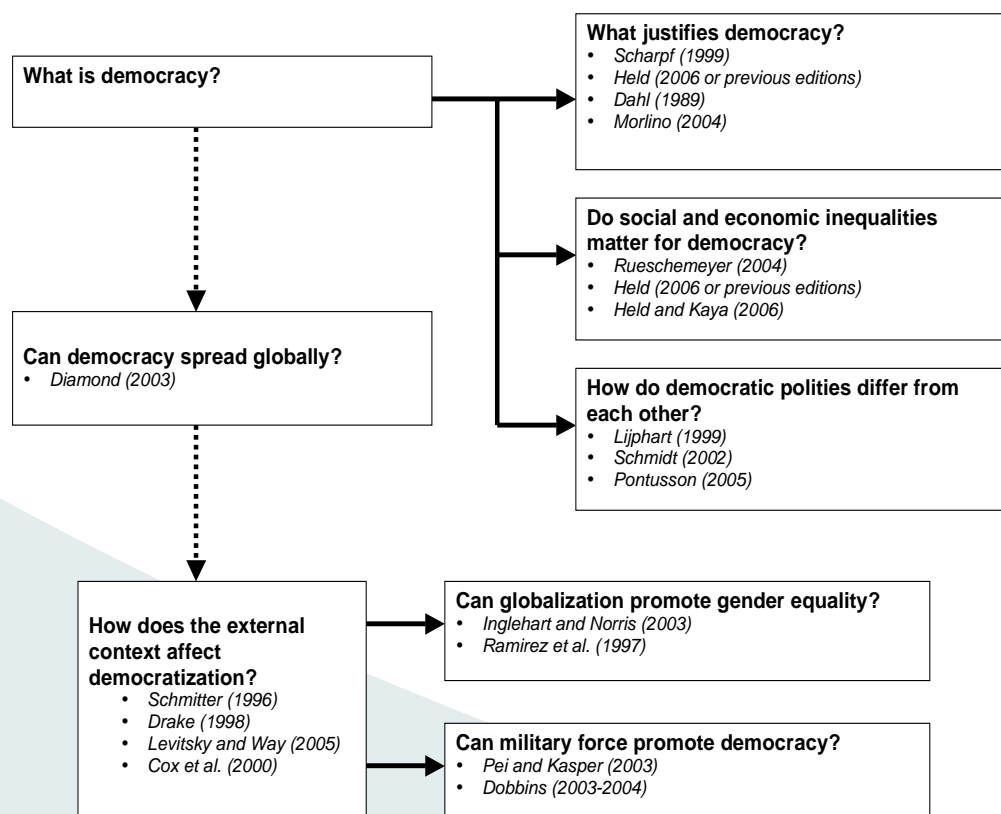
Mathias is an enthusiastic teacher who enjoys the challenge offered by many students who have practical work experience. He focuses on encouraging team work and is very aware of the need to ensure that all students from different cultural backgrounds are fully involved.

He makes good use of WebCT and takes a very structured approach to presenting readings to students, offering them weekly roadmaps to their readings.

Mathias sees strong connections between his teaching and research. In a course he teaches, almost half of the lectures consist of presentations by external practitioners followed by Q&A with students. This forced him to rethink some of his own ideas about how practitioners can influence change in international negotiations. There is a virtuous circle between teaching and research – LSE students are never content with simple explanations – they push you to think and move forward.

Mathias would encourage new colleagues to make good use of the induction and courses available – he found the opportunity to see himself on video particularly helpful. At the same time, he recommends that colleagues put time into students outside class. This openness to students may at times conflict with other pressures, but is very worthwhile.

AN EXAMPLE OF MATHIAS' ROADMAP



DR MATTHEW ENGELKE, ANTHROPOLOGY



Matthew joined LSE in 2002 shortly after completing his PhD on Zimbabwean religious movements at the University of Virginia. He describes himself as an 'old fashioned teacher' – no powerpoint, and WebCT for readings only. This approach ties in with his research which is very much focused on the power of the spoken word. He wants to ensure that the art of speaking well survives, and that students also learn to listen.

Matthew works at encouraging student interaction in sessions – and observes that this is something lecturers need to work at. No group is the same. An approach that works well with one group may not with another, even with many of the same students in it.

Matthew sees a number of connections between his teaching and research. On the human rights course he teaches, he has gained considerably from the input from students who have had practical experience in the field. He is now looking to extend this connection between teaching and research, designing a new course on anthropology and media to reflect his current interests.

Matthew suggests that new colleagues need to challenge their students – pitch high and make them think. Engage with the ideas you are thinking about as a researcher and let the students know that you find your subject exciting. Also, engage with students in different ways. Encourage them to use tutorials. Think of other strategies to connect. For example Matthew participated in a pub quiz organised by his department, with teams comprising staff and students. This built good relationships between staff and students and the department is now planning to hold one annually.

DR CAROLINE HOWARTH, INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY



Caroline has been working at LSE since 2001 and studied here for her PhD, following a first degree at Cambridge and research posts at Stirling and Nottingham Trent universities. Her first experience of teaching was in South Africa, where she was very much inspired by her colleagues who were endlessly creative and passionate about the political value of education, despite no formal teacher training and almost no resources.

She invests time and effort in her teaching and keeps the student perspective clearly in focus. She thoroughly enjoys teaching social psychology saying that it is easy to engage students and find applications of social psychological theory which are real and relevant to their lives. Her focus is on community, identity and prejudice, and she is able to apply many of the concepts from the subject into her teaching, at the same time as making it applicable to the social and professional lives of her students.

She recommends that new staff take advantage of the training on offer through TLC, and also to talk to colleagues, and if possible, team-teach alongside colleagues. It is important to share your interest in your discipline with students, not to get overwhelmed by the teaching, and to get support.

DR JOANNA LEWIS, INTERNATIONAL HISTORY



Joanna came to LSE in 2004 from Cambridge, where she had also done her PhD. For her, teaching is about communicating something she is passionate about. She is determined that people are not misinformed about Africa – she is fascinated about its past and how this impacts on the present. She encourages students to engage in debate and critique the arguments of historians, and is excited by the growth in British Empire Studies. Also, as the first generation in her family to go to university, she would hope very much to be a role model not just for younger women but more generally for students from backgrounds under-represented in academia.

Part of her success, she believes, comes simply from the fact that the subjects she deals with are naturally compelling and exciting: violence in Africa, colonial rule, imperialism and race. The students engage easily and her own enthusiasm is constantly replenished by theirs, and the way they take up new topics and fill in research gaps through their own work.

Joanne suggests to new colleagues to remember that 'less is more' – don't try to do too much. She makes good use of visuals, anecdotes and jokes to enrich her lectures. She also recommends finding out which colleagues have a good reputation for teaching, and to then ask to see them in action and talk with them. She keeps in mind what she felt as a learner – and remembers the importance of the personal touch and good feedback. Student writing is very important – staff need to show students that their work is valued, and to help build their confidence in thinking and writing creatively.

DR CLAIRE MOON, SOCIOLOGY



Claire joined the Human Rights programme in Sociology in 2004, following a PhD in politics at Bristol and a post teaching international relations at Kent. For her, teaching is the important glue that brings colleagues in the department together, and through that, inspires their research. It is a vital activity that must be valued.

Claire says she loves teaching. She enjoys the immediacy of translating difficult ideas and getting people to engage with those ideas in new and critical ways. Many of her students come with practical experience. She finds it exciting to combine their experience with her academic thinking and finds it particularly rewarding to see students grasp new perspectives on an issue. What she brings to her teaching is enthusiasm and engagement with the material.

On one recent course, she encouraged students to identify news stories relevant to the topic each week and post them to the group in order to generate discussion. The students did this with great enthusiasm – for the full year, despite the course being a half unit.

Claire’s background, a first degree in literature, an MSc in IR, a PhD in politics and now working in a sociology department, also enables her to relate to the different disciplinary backgrounds of her students. She is very aware of the differences in the disciplinary languages and enables students to find and use their different voices. For her, there is a very strong relationship between teaching and research. She feeds pieces of her research into the teaching, leading to discussion and reflection that often throw up new ideas. Students will also bring in cases and primary sources of which she was unaware and which, in turn, impact on her research. At the same time, this gives the students a feel for their own expertise. It is not a hierarchical relationship – students have much to contribute to the programmes.

Postgraduate Certificate of Higher Education (PG Cert)

This certificate is a national teaching qualification for new teaching staff. It is a requirement for new lecturers at most UK universities and the course is in its second year at LSE, where it is offered for free and is mostly taken by new faculty and PhD students with teaching responsibilities. This summer, 15 candidates successfully passed the full certificate and 11 completed the associate level standard.

Feedback on the second year of the course has been positive with 100 per cent of respondents recommending the programme for those seeking a career in UK academia. Key benefits identified are enjoying and improving candidates’ teaching.

SOME COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS:

‘I have developed greater confidence in my teaching and improved those aspects where I felt I was weak. I also feel more able to spontaneously react to a variety of situations based on the discussions we have had during the workshops.’

‘It is great training when you start teaching, especially when course directors just leave you to your own devices. And for the second year, it reminds you to keep reflecting on your teaching and finding ways to improve it. It also looks great on a CV.’

‘It very clearly enhanced my teaching and lecturing capabilities. It raised my confidence in the classroom, as well as my understanding of teaching and assessment, and how I can change these.’

‘The workshops in particular have been effective as I have gained numerous tips and advice on how to improve as an effective class teacher.’

‘The practical advice given was very useful. Moreover, the events organised in the context of the PG Cert gave an opportunity to talk to other graduate teaching assistants, exchange ideas and experiences and thereby put one’s own teaching (and also research) even more into perspective.’

‘The PG Cert was a huge asset to me when it came to applying for a teaching post. I included a written module in the work I submitted to the selection panel and was asked in the interview about my experience/benefits of the PG Cert. I was very enthusiastic. They seemed impressed. I got the job.’

‘Taking the certificate has benefited me in two ways. Firstly, the certificate has promoted a process of reflection regarding my own teaching. Secondly, I do not have to undergo further teacher training in my new position.’

THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE TWO YEAR COURSE WAS ALSO HIGHLIGHTED:

‘The flexibility of the certificate was one of the main factors in my decision to participate. Initially, I thought pursuing the programme in parallel with my research would be challenging, but the absence of compulsory elements has allowed me to tailor the certificate to fit in with my other commitments. The required time commitment has been manageable, helped by allocating inter-term breaks to produce the assignments. The few deadlines that exist are sufficiently well-spaced to avoid overload.’

PEOPLE WHO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE PG CERT PROGRAMME THIS YEAR

FULL CERTIFICATE		ASSOCIATE LEVEL	
Aseel Al-Ramahi	Law	James Abdey	Statistics
Dr Annika Bolten	International Relations	Ely Aharonson	Government
Dr Antoine Bousquet	International Relations	Kofi Boateng	Information Systems
Zsusanna Chappell	Government	Dr Tanya Burchardt	Social Policy
Dr Nicola Countouris	Law department	Parissa Dashtipour	Social Psychology
(now at Reading Univeristy)		Dr Simon Gosling	Geography
Dr Simon Curtis	International Relations	Federico Iannacci	Information Systems
Dr Tanya Harmer	International History	Seong-Hoon Kim	Accounting
Dr John Heathershaw	International Relations	Sarah McLaughlin	Government
Rune Henriksen	Government	Ulriche Theuerkauf	Government
Dr Aiobheann Kilfeather	Geography	Markus Wagner	Government
(now at Durham University)			
Dr Robert Kissack	International Relations		
Marjo Koivisto	International Relations		
Simona Manea	International Relations		
Dr Kai Spiekermann	Government		
Dr Victor Teo	International Relations		
Dr Andreas Warntjen	Government		

Claire suggests to new colleagues that it is important not to have a fixed formula for teaching. Be ready to change and try new things. Her own experience was influenced by early experiences in adult education, teaching music and English, and having a brilliant and inspiring MSc tutor. She recommends talking to others – sharing ideas on teaching and keeping on experimenting.

DR AMOL SASSANE, MATHEMATICS



Amol joined the School in 2004, following undergraduate studies in Bombay, a PhD in the Netherlands and postdoctoral work in the US.

He enjoys teaching and feels that students appreciate the clarity and organisation of his lecture notes. In mathematics, the textbooks are often not geared to particular student needs. Teaching mathematics to economists requires some translation and this is what he offers through his notes and lectures.

He is also accessible and will give students time and input, individually and in small groups, outside the lectures. LSE students are bright and demanding – it is important to take teaching them seriously.

Amol sees some important connections between teaching and research. As a mathematician, he finds it helpful to keep reviewing the basics, and to be forced into clear thinking and clear explanation. Teaching can also provide a welcome break from struggling with a challenging mathematical problem. He suggests that new colleagues should not underestimate teaching – take it seriously, spend time on it, and work hard on good organisation.

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) prize winners

Each year, academic departments, in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Centre, award class teacher prizes. These are based on the student feedback surveys, other forms of student feedback within departments and feedback from other staff in the department.

Graduate teaching assistants have also been nominated for and won a couple of the LSE Teaching Excellence Awards – worth £2,000.

TEACHING PRIZES AWARDED IN JUNE THIS YEAR

James Abdey, Statistics	Maria Koumenta, Industrial Relations
Peter Allen, Mathematics	Neil Lee, Geography and Environment
Fernando Aragon, Economics	Young Lee, Statistics
Lisa Aronsson, International Relations	Iain William Long, Economics
Tony Bal, Finance	Bethania Mendes, Industrial Relations
Abdel Halim Benzine, Language Centre	Christophe Millart, Language Centre
Rebecca Chamberlain-Creanga, Anthropology	Silvia Posocco, Gender Institute
Alejandro E Chehtman, Law	Raminder Ruprai, Mathematics
Isabel Crowhurst, Sociology	Maral Shamloo, Economics
Farimah Daftary, Methodology Institute	Stefanie Sieber, Economics
Girish Daswani, Geography and Environment	Michael Skey, Media and Communications
Ali Dezyanian, Accounting	Jill Stuart, International Relations
Nathan Foley-Fisher, Economics	Jonathan Tammam, MESG
Diane Frey, Industrial Relations	Jang Thia, Economics
Anna Giuffria, Language Centre	Ty Turley, Economics
Martin Gonzalez, International History	Aashish Velkar, Economic History
Kerry Hickson, Economic History	Athina Vlachantoni, Social Policy
David Hood, Law	Horen Voskeritisian, Industrial Relations
Jeremy Howick, Philosophy	Sadie Wearing, Gender Institute
Marjo Koivisto, International Relations	Tamy Zupan, Language Centre
Ioannis Kouletsis, Mathematics	

National Teaching Fellowship Scheme

The NTFS is an annual national award, supported by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and managed by the Higher Education Academy.



To date, LSE has nominated six members of staff for National Teaching Fellowships, and two of these, **Nick Byrne** (right) in 2001 and **Clare Hemmings** (left) in 2007 have been successful.



The fellowships are worth £10,000 to be used by the award holder at their discretion for personal development in learning and teaching. The nomination process involves the individual in putting forward their case against the award criteria:

- ☐ Promoting student learning
- ☐ Supporting the development of teaching amongst colleagues (within and, ideally, beyond your institution)
- ☐ Developing your own expertise as a teacher.

Teaching Fellows have the opportunity to bid for project funding worth up to £200,000 over three years. This funding is again directed at teaching, and is primarily aimed at spreading good practice.

The call for nominations usually comes around January each year. The School can put forward up to three nominations and we have an internal process for selecting nominees, should there be more than three people interested in applying.

Anyone wishing to know more about the scheme is encouraged to contact Liz Barnett, ext 6623, email: l.barnett@lse.ac.uk to discuss ideas in the first instance.