



# News & views

## Teaching awards special

June 2008

BY JANET HARTLEY, PRO-DIRECTOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING

It is a great pleasure and honour to introduce the winners of teaching prizes this year.

Teaching has been high on the School's agenda this year. A Teaching Task Force was established last October and its recommendations – some forty of them – have recently been approved by the Academic Board. Those recommendations include measures for increasing contact between students and permanent staff, encouraging innovations in teaching, and rewarding excellent teaching. But the Teaching Task Force also noted, and commended, many examples of good teaching practice in departments.

This Teaching special demonstrates that many of our teachers are

committed to making sure our students have a first-rate intellectual experience during their time at the School. Prize winners include teachers at all levels of experience – from graduate teaching assistants (many of whom are also busy completing their PhDs) 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. They represent a whole range of subject areas taught in the School, from history to operational research, and a range of courses from first year undergraduate courses to specialised Masters' courses.

All 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 outstanding teachers share their ideas and sources of inspiration for their teaching – we hope that they will inspire others.



## LSE Teaching Excellence Award winners

BY LIZ BARNETT, DIRECTOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTRE

The LSE Teaching Excellence Award has been run for the second time this year.

The award is managed by the Students' Union, who invite students to nominate those teachers who have inspired their learning most in the past year. Each nomination has to be supported by a minimum of seven students, and each of those students is asked to give examples of how the individual has: stimulated their interest and enthusiasm; increased their ability to be independent; critical learners; organised the

course materials effectively; provided useful feedback; demonstrated their command of the subject and developing thinking in the field of study and responded appropriately to the diversity of students in their courses.

This year, there were 25 nominations from 15 departments/groups, from undergraduate and Masters courses as well as courses



offered by staff in the Language Centre, and the Teaching and Learning Centre. These nominations describe LSE teaching at its best – hugely stimulating, well prepared, relevant to students' lives and realities, and offered in ways that engage, promote interaction, ensure everyone is included, and above all, promote real learning.

Our congratulations go to all the nominees, and particularly to the final five selected for the award.

MAHA AZIZ

Maha Aziz is a class teacher in the Department of Government and teaches Introduction to Political Science. First year undergraduates from the BSc Government, Government and Economics, and BSc Social Policy nominated her for the LSE/SU Teaching Excellence Award.



Her students describe her in the following ways: 'extremely enthusiastic', 'she has made the subject feel important and attached to reality', 'outstanding knowledge of empirical examples', 'she sends summaries of the class, with links to current affairs articles... which stimulates me to read beyond what's required', 'organised and soothing... wonderful support in a stressful period.' Her feedback 'is unparalleled for depth and usefulness', 'encourages rewrites of essays... very diplomatically and encouragingly', 'makes us critically analyse', 'pushed me to analyse, not just amass information, and fully back up arguments with empirical evidence and argument from the literature', 'detailed and helpful feedback', 'LSEFY feedback on quality of class presentations so encouraging, I have more drive to work hard for her classes', 'LSEFY comments are comprehensive and motivating', 'enormous feedback'.

inspired me', 'demonstrated professionalism, sense of humour and ability to keep audience attention at the highest possible level', 'makes you think more profoundly about everyday phenomena', 'rare ability to hold attention and promote curiosity', 'he has changed the way I think', 'he introduced himself with a role play... immediately getting everyone's attention and interest', 'very interesting and right-to-the-point handouts', 'gives interesting and real examples', 'very well structured we always knew where we were and where we were going', 'gives examples that the layman can understand and then a more mathematically oriented one for the more technical students', 'assignments encourage you to think and challenge each other's perceptions'.

MARKUS WAGNER

Markus Wagner is a class teacher in the Government Department teaching Politics and Institutions of Europe. Second year undergraduates from the BSc Government nominated him for the LSE/SU Teaching Excellence Award.



His students describe him thus: 'amazing range of knowledge and genuine interest', 'frames debates in real world examples', 'each class becomes a breeding ground for new ideas', 'sends us links to the most relevant and best readings', 'produces fantastic worksheets', 'organises activities and discussion topics... rather than simply relying on presentations. This improves our understanding', 'a good progressive structure to classes [and] allows everyone to be included', 'always produces excellent class handouts... and corrects broken links in the main reading list', 'each student has

assigned essay feedback meetings. This, in addition to extensive written feedback, has helped me hugely', 'a perfect combination of friendliness and education – I learn more in his classes than any other', 'great teacher, great chap', 'an example to be followed', 'the best teacher I've had at LSE by a long way.'

ALWYN YOUNG

Alwyn Young is professor of Economics and lectures on the School's largest course – Economics B. First year undergraduates from BSc Economics, BSc Government and Economics, BSc Accounting and Finance, BSc Philosophy and Economics, BSc Actuarial Science nominated him for the LSE/SU Teaching Excellence Award.



His students describe him in the following ways: 'charismatic', 'enthusiastic and teaches brilliantly', 'contagious enthusiasm', 'you really get the impression he loves what he does', 'by using newspapers [he] explains how what we are studying can be applied to reality', 'discusses issues happening all over the world relating to the diversity of the students', 'lecture notes and quizzes are designed to enable you to think critically and independently', 'provides incomplete diagrams [that] we could only fill in during his lectures', 'problem sets really test our understanding', 'posted games on WebCT to spark people's interest... even set a novel as one of the textbooks... made learning fun!', 'doesn't spoon feed us... have to understand in order to do the questions', 'challenging and stimulating... students are encouraged to actively apply theories to real life scenarios'.

DIANE FREY



Diane Frey teaches in the Employment Relations and Organisational Behaviour Group of the Department of Management. Students from the MSc in International Employment Relations and Human Resource Management nominated her for the LSE/SU Teaching Excellence Award.

Her students describe her in the following ways: 'Seminars with Diane are an adventure', 'sooo enthusiastic about ER that you have no

other choice than to be as well!', 'contagious energy and enthusiasm', 'Interactive and engaging', 'pushes your abilities by challenging', 'she is able to connect theoretical subjects with illustrative examples', 'always informs us about new developments', 'changes the format regularly', 'combines an exciting teaching approach with a very relaxed study atmosphere – the perfect mix', 'She made me step back and reconsider my usually quite strong opinions', 'thorough and fair feedback', 'able to relate to diverse needs', 'creates atmosphere of fairness', 'the best seminar teacher I have had so far in all three universities where I studied', 'the most spontaneous, energetic and terrific teacher I've ever had across three countries and 22 years of being educated!'

DAVID LANE

David Lane is a Reader in the Managerial Economics and Strategy and Operational Research Groups of the Department of Management and teaches the System Dynamics Modelling course OR431. Students from the MSc Operational Research and MSc Decision Science nominated him for the LSE/SU Teaching Excellence Award. His students describe him in the following ways: 'his enthusiasm and passion for the subject



## General Teaching Prize winners

**Alex Leveringhaus**

Carolyn Pedwell

**Chris Constantinou**

Diane Frey

**Felix Weinhardt**

Foad Dizadji-Bahmani

**Gwyneth James**

Isadora Maletic

**James Abdey**

Janine Duvier

**Jasmine Gani**

Jerome Batout

**Kathrin Dombrowski**

Kelly Basile

**Maha Aziz**

**Government**

Gender Institute

**Accounting**

EROB

**Geography & Environment**

Philosophy

**Language Centre**

Law

**Statistics**

EROB

**International Relations**

Finance

**International Relations**

EROB

**Government**

Mathias Benzer

**Mehita Iqani**

Meena Kotecha

**Miguel Anton**

Nayat Horozoglu

**Nial Brennan**

Ramon Pacheco Pardo

**Robert Francis**

Sabine Junckers

**Sean Fox**

Stuart Andrews

**Tine Van Criekeing**

Tony Bal

**Ulrike Theuerkauf**

Sociology

**Media and Communications**

Statistics

**Finance**

Management

**Media and Communications**

Government

**Geography & Environment**

Language Centre

**Destin**

Law

**International Relations**

Finance

**Government**



# Major Review Teaching Prize winners

This year, nine members of staff were awarded teaching prizes at the same time as going through the School's Major Review Process. Major Review prizes consider individual performance from start of contract to Major Review. Cases are considered for evidence

of quality of teaching, based on feedback from students and colleagues, teaching innovation, and development in teaching (of and by the individual). This year, nine prizes were awarded. Our congratulations to the prize winners.

## CATHERINE ALLERTON

Catherine studied at Cambridge as an undergraduate, completed her PhD in Anthropology at LSE in 2001, had three years as a postdoc at Oxford, where she also did tutorial teaching, and returned to a full-time post at LSE in 2003. She was aware that several of her colleagues before her had won MR Teaching Prizes, and she was keen to put the effort in to join them.



Catherine loves teaching and is a naturally enthusiastic teacher – able to turn what many students think of as ‘dull’ aspects of their course into something exciting and stimulating. One recent innovation was an assessment that challenged students to identify novel examples of kinship arrangements in the media/internet, and connecting these with the theory of the course. This proved the perfect opportunity to encourage them to research and share ideas. Catherine also acknowledges how her teaching helps her own research and writing, by making her more attentive to making writing accessible to non-specialists.

Catherine's suggestions for new colleagues include not cramming too much into lectures, being aware of the resources around you, and making full use of the feedback you get from your students. One resource she has found helpful is the Royal Literary Fellow based in TLC – to whom she sent tutees with writing problems who significantly improved their style.

## DEREK HOOK



Derek joined the Institute of Social Psychology in 2003, following several years of study and teaching at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. He thought there would be similarities with the students in that there would be a great diversity. Yet he's found LSE much more diverse, more global.

Derek joined a department which emphasises the importance of teaching and saw the prize as a useful benchmark against which to assess his own success. He describes the challenge of keeping teaching fresh, constantly bringing in new angles, and exploring different ways of getting students to gel and learn as a group. He puts effort into thinking through how to keep the momentum going through a course, as well as paying attention to the detail. Basics like structuring, and building in short breaks make a big difference. ‘Suspension techniques’, which stop students from considering a debate as ‘closed’ or ‘solved’, are important. Nonetheless, it is also important to acknowledge that many students yearn for this closure. It is important to spend time at the start of the year helping students see how to customise their experience, make the course their own and take combinations of courses that work for them.

Last year, Derek organised a workshop with others teaching in his field from outside the School. New staff can really benefit from learning from others. Look at feedback from students and be ready to change. Be aware that what seems to work well one year may not the next, so sometimes it is also necessary to let go of previous strategies.

## DAVID KERSHAW

David originally studied at Warwick, did his LLM and doctorate at Harvard and then went into corporate law practice for some years before returning as a lecturer to Warwick, joining LSE's Law Department in 2006.



David describes academia as ‘the greatest job in the world.’ Whilst David was unaware of the MR teaching prize before this award, he got the strong feeling that his department expected high quality teaching, and has been impressed with the professionalism of colleagues.

Students respond well to David's Socratic style of teaching, to the energy he injects and his ability to contextualise topics and make them relevant to their lives and careers. Not a great fan of the didactic lecture, David notes that dialogue (even in groups of 50) increases student engagement and energy levels. He has high expectations of his students, and is impressed at the quality of both undergraduates and postgraduates at LSE, and their ability to challenge and make him think in other ways.

David strongly recommends the department's use of team teaching as a great way to induct new colleagues. He enjoys seeing others in action, their ways of teaching and their approach to the subject, not to mention having another person to help stimulate dialogue in the seminar room.

## NICO KRISCH

Nico completed his PhD in Germany, undertook postdoctoral work at NYU and a research fellowship at Oxford before joining the Department of Law at LSE in 2006.



The teaching prize came as a real surprise to him, but he gains tremendous satisfaction from his work with students, particularly the challenges they can pose. They often ask fundamental questions, challenge assumptions and get you to change your own perspective. Teaching is intense, and pressurised. Nico describes his teaching as interactive, aiming for openness and questioning woven into a more systematic form. He structures sessions a lot around readings. Training sessions both in the US and at LSE encouraged him to experiment with his teaching and he would encourage new colleagues to explore the diversity of teaching in the School and learn from how others do it.

## ANDREW LANG



Andrew joined LSE in 2006, from PhD and postdoctoral studies at Cambridge and a brief earlier career in corporate law in Australia.

Andrew was very pleased and surprised to receive the award. He is full of enthusiasm for his subject, which rubs off on the students. He also gains a lot from the students – he likes being challenged and loves the diversity of the LSE student

body. He experiments with his teaching, and in the past year has started to introduce podcasts and videos as discussion starters, thinned down his use of powerpoint and freed up his delivery. His office hours are always popular and busy – the sign of someone open to students and appreciated by them. For new starters, he notes that on the whole, you need to find your own way, but he particularly recommends giving thought to working as part of a teaching team, ensuring that communications work well with both students and colleagues.

## SHANI ORGAD

Shani completed her MSc at LSE in 1999, her PhD in 2003, and joined the staff of the Department of Media and Communications. She is particularly aware of the challenge that LSE emphasis on critical thinking can pose for students new to UK higher education.



Shani gets considerable pleasure from seeing ‘the sparkle’ in students’ eyes when they are fully engaged – when it is not about ‘getting the grade’ but ‘when you feel you have touched them’. She enjoys the connection and the adrenaline rush of teaching.

Shani is deliberately provocative in her teaching, addressing assumptions students often take for granted. Her sessions include surprise, and make unexpected links. She builds on student feedback, runs focus groups to garner their ideas for teaching, and also actively seeks ideas from colleagues and TLC. Shani is fostering much stronger links between her teaching and research, running a new course which relates closely to a book she will publish.

Shani offers the following advice to new colleagues: ‘Use what you bring to the table AND what your students come with – have a participatory approach. Initially, teaching LSE students can feel a bit intimidating, but working with the students reduces the (mutual) anxiety and makes space for learning in all directions.’

## KRISTINA SPOHR READMAN



Kristina joined the International History Department in 2004, a department she felt placed a strong emphasis on high quality teaching.

Her greatest enjoyment comes from teaching third year undergraduates her special subject course, seeing this as a last opportunity to enthuse them and capture their interest for the long term.

Students respond to her great enthusiasm – she makes history exciting and come alive, not least through occasional role plays. She puts time into her students, encouraging them to make good use of one-to-one opportunities for feedback on their essays and presentations, and feels the reward of subsequently seeing someone produce excellent work. She constantly renews her teaching, exposing her students always to latest research findings.

Kristina has made full use of the support available to new teachers at LSE, and would encourage new colleagues to do the same. Visit the different services, benefit from the expertise and help available. Talk to others, ask colleagues to observe you, see how others do it. She says: ‘There is lots to be gained from seeing some great ‘performers’ amongst one's academic colleagues!’

## DANIEL STURM

Daniel first came to LSE as a General Course student, then as an MSc student in 1994/5, completed his PhD here in 2001, and returned in 2006 to teach on the new Master in Public Administration (MPA) programmes.



Last year (his first year of teaching on the MPA), Daniel was one of the first people to receive a LSE Teaching Excellence Award on the basis of student nomination. His excellence as a teacher was also spotted early on during his days as a PhD student, when he won the Teaching Prize for Economics Teaching Assistants in 1997.

Daniel enjoys making teaching interactive, and has the ability to pitch complex quantitative ideas in ways that enable students from a wide range of backgrounds to learn from him. He encourages the mathematically able to see how to apply their ideas, and focuses very much on an empirical, problem-driven approach. But he also enables those with fewer technical skills to be able to read applied papers, understand whether the underlying assumptions are valid, and whether the results make sense, rather than expecting them to do the technical derivations themselves.

Daniel recommends that new colleagues listen to students and observe them. They give constant signals as to where they get lost. Make your explanations clear – put it in a nutshell. Daniel has also benefited from seeing great teaching stars at work, and puts as the most notable the late Morris Perlman and Charlie Bean (former LSE professor of economics and now executive director and chief economist at the Bank of England).

## WILL VENTERS

Will joined the Department of Information Systems (now Information Systems and Innovation Group) in 2001 whilst finishing his PhD from the University of Salford, and moved up through the ranks of research officer, teaching fellow and then lecturer.



Will sees teaching as a central part of his job that provides a high degree of satisfaction, and can be a great stimulus for research – he's recently developed a major research project based on an idea first explored with an MSc student. He has enjoyed innovating in his teaching, and runs a ‘boot camp’ with students – an intensive two week group based case study where students experience the pressures of systems development in the ‘real world’.

He particularly enjoys the buzz of teaching big, challenging courses to high-fee students, who he sees as driven, bright and exciting to teach. He has established a student peer-review journal and introduced new ideas into the ISIG PhD programme. Will is also Warden of Carr Saunders Hall of residence which has deepened his insight into the pressures and stresses students face.

## Dates for your diary

**TLC will be running the new academic induction programme between Tuesday 9 September and Tuesday 16 September 2008. Two session that established staff may also be interested in attending are Wednesday 10 September: Facing the Media, and Tuesday 16 September: Supervising PhD Students.**

**The start of year meeting for Departmental Tutors will take place on Monday 13 October.**

**Compulsory training for PhD students who teach will run from 26 September, with a variety of dates through to early October.**

**Departments interested in arranging teaching observations for new teachers are welcome to contact TLC to book appointments. Teaching observation normally involves a brief preliminary meeting between the teacher and a member of TLC staff, observation of a class/lecture/seminar, and a debrief which takes around half an hour.**

**Anyone interested in attending these sessions should contact the Teaching and Learning Centre, email: [tlc@lse.ac.uk](mailto:tlc@lse.ac.uk) You can also call in to Tower 1 6th Floor (U600) or tel ext 6624.**