Pippa Norris awarded the 2014 IPSA Karl Deutsch Award

IPSA has announced that the winner of their 2014 Karl Deutsch Award is esteemed political scientist and PSA member Pippa Norris.

The purpose of the Karl Deutsch Award is to honour a prominent scholar engaged in the cross-disciplinary research of which Karl Deutsch was a master. The award is made on the recommendation of the IPSA Committee on Awards and is supported by the Karl Deutsch fund.

“I am immensely honored by the award”, said Pippa Norris, “Not least because Karl Deutsch was such a seminal figure in the profession and his body of work, especially ‘The Nerves of Government’ on political communication and his ideas on nation-building and nationalism, have always been a deep inspiration for my own research. I greatly look forward to catching up with my PSA friends and colleagues and celebrating the award at the IPSA World Congress in Montreal.”


PSA media briefings – the election season explained!

The PSA media briefings have fast become an annual fixture for the ‘who’s who’ of the political media; a statement backed up by the consistently high turnout, as well as the quality of the media personnel in attendance from both the print and broadcast worlds.

This year the PSA ran an unprecedented four media briefings, shedding light on the London borough elections; the local elections; and the European elections from both the UK and continental perspectives.

Professor Tony Travers took the London elections briefing on 23 April. The briefing led to an editorial in the Guardian entitled ‘London borough elections: Britain’s other other country’. On 29 April, PSA briefing regulars Professors John Curtice, Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher presented

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Graduate Network hosts drinks reception

The PSA Graduate Network was pleased to host a talk and drinks reception at Manchester’s Midland Hotel on the first day of the PSA annual conference. We were joined by Professor Peter John, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy

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their research on the local elections. The European elections from a UK perspective was the topic of discussion on 7 May. Professors Jane Green, Tim Bale and Dr Richard Whitaker were on hand to discuss the latest BES data, the threat to the Conservatives, and the impact of Ukip. Finally, on 13 May, Professors John Gaffney, Simon Green and Simon Hix led a discussion on the European elections from a continental perspective with case studies looking at Germany (Green) and France (Gaffney), as well as a look at “why Europe matters this time” (Hix).

As always, the video, PPT slides and additional information notes are all available to watch/download from the PSA website: www.psa.ac.uk/media/media-briefings.
Crewe and King win at Political Book Awards

Congratulations to PSA members Ivor Crewe (Oxford) and Anthony King (Essex) whose book The Blunders of Our Governments (Oneworld Publications) won the Practical Political Book of the Year category at this year’s Paddy Power Political Book Awards 2014. The award was presented by the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow.

Iain Dale, founder of the awards, said: “These awards celebrate the fantastic breadth of political writing in the UK today, and I hope that they will encourage more people to both read and write political literature.” For a full list of winners, visit the website at www.politicalbookawards.com.

Extending our reach

Helena Djurkovic, CEO, Political Studies Association

The professionalisation of the Association continues unabated. Staff appointments in 2012, a radical upgrade of the website and introduction of new membership and conference IT systems in 2013, and for 2014 - another staff appointment and relocation of the PSA’s head office to central London near Piccadilly Circus. Exciting times!

James Ludley joined the Association in April as Programme Development Officer, a new role conceived to support and implement initiatives that will help develop and enhance the PSA ‘Communities’ (PSA schools, specialist groups and the Graduate Network). James previously worked as a Constituency Organiser for David Laws MP in his constituency office in Yeovil and brings a substantial amount of institutional knowledge, networks and, indeed, enthusiasm to a role that has been designated a serious priority by the trustees. Much of James’ role will be to drive forward, co-ordinate and support new projects across the Association – something which the PSA has not had the capacity to do in the past. Alongside this, we hope the role will help foster and build relations with individuals and organisations outside of the Association. As we take on more staff we find we can work more effectively and find substantial operational savings, allowing us to deliver more to our members while keeping annual membership fee increases below inflation.

The relocation of the PSA head office to central London will result in an Association better placed to more actively engage with Whitehall, Westminster and the media on behalf of our members. Furthermore, we are also hoping that the increased office space will provide a new benefit to our members, many of whom are often in London for meetings and would benefit from a quiet place to work for a few hours.

Peter John addresses the Graduate Network

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Peter John addresses the Graduate Network at University College London. His lighthearted talk focused on the academic buzzword ‘impact’ and the various ways in which postgraduate students can achieve it. Professor Peter John also introduced two current projects. The first considers at policy agendas in the UK, and the second uses experiments to study civic participation in public policy. The event was extremely well attended and prompted lively discussion and debate.
Institute for Government celebrates 5 years

Jack Neenan and Andrew Massey

The Institute for Government (IfG), close friend to the Political Studies Association and the chosen venue of our media briefings and annual Heads of Department conference, celebrated its fifth year anniversary with an academic conference held at its picturesque office just off the Mall in central London.

Peter Riddell, Director of the IfG, opened the conference by looking back over the five year history of the Institute for Government. Peter noted how in the relatively short time the IfG has been around the organisation has grown remarkably quickly in depth and influence and has established itself as a key player in Whitehall: "The IfG has grown as an organisation, building its expertise and producing rigorous research on topics like civil service reform, accountability, policy making and public sector marketisation - and delivering real impact in those areas to directly help government become more effective."

Peter also spoke of how the IfG had made positive strides to bridge the gap between academic research and the day to day realities of Westminster and Whitehall, both by using rigour and evidence in projects and by working with the academic community.

PSA trustee Andrew Massey sat on a panel at the conference which considered ‘Reforming the Civil Service’.

Fellow panellists were:
- Chair: Peter Thomas, Senior Fellow, Institute for Government
- Dr Catherine Haddon, Senior Fellow, Institute for Government
- Jonathan Slater, Director General, Ministry of Defence

The guiding points for the session were: Civil Service reform has been a consistent theme over the past five years, but many of the themes that arise have a much longer gestation, including the role and politicisation of the Civil Service. Whoever wins in 2015 will need to continue efforts for civil service improvement. What practical lessons can we draw from the history of previous attempts to reform the Civil Service and from current experience to help the next government progress reforms already underway or consider new ones?

The general discussion afterwards centred on what kind of approach delivers lasting reform. But we also asked, what was the purpose of reform? Was it to deliver a new kind of civil service or new relationships to ministers? Were reforms meant to improve policy making or policy and service delivery or both? We looked at what worked in terms of delivering reform and also what reforms delivered improved decision making and service delivery.

We also asked what was meant by “success” in terms of reform and policy and service delivery? Is it a successful delivery in terms of achieving desired outcomes or simple outputs? The different stakeholders would have very different perspectives on this.

Other panels on the day included a session entitled ‘The Future of Public Services’ chaired by Dr Henry Kippin; ‘Politics After 2015’ chaired by Dr Patrick Diamond; and a plenary session on ‘Research into Practice’, which was led by Jill Rutter, Programme Director at the IfG.

Peter concluded the conference by thanking all the attendees, panel members and discussants for contributing to what he believed had been an interesting day that had succeeded in covering a huge range of fascinating themes, and repeated his aspiration that collaboration and engagement between the IfG and the academic world would continue to grow and support greater governmental effectiveness. He hoped there would be another opportunity for an academic conference much sooner than another five years.

‘Soft Power of Hard States’

On 29-30 May Politics sponsored a conference on the ‘Soft Power of Hard States’ at Newcastle University. The event investigated the ways in which non-democratic regimes engage with the idea of soft power. While China and Russia have been become particularly active in their attempts to transform their international images, comparisons between their soft power strategies and capacities have been surprisingly rare. The conference brought together leading experts in the soft power efforts of China and Russia and provided a long-awaited forum to explore such comparisons.

The speakers included Professor William Callahan (LSE), Professor Alexander Sergunin (St Petersburg State University), Dr Falk Hartig (University of Frankfurt), Dr Victoria Hudson (Aston University), Professor Gary Rawnsley (Aberystwyth University), Ms Yulia Kiseleva (King’s College London) and Dr Kingsley Edney (University of Leeds). Papers from the conference will be published in a special issue of Politics in 2015.

The conference was organised by Politics associate editors Dr Michael Barr and Dr Valentina Feklyunina, and was generously supported by Politics, the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology of Newcastle University, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Newcastle University and the BISA Working Group on Russian and Eurasian Security.
Goodbye from the 64th PSA Annual Conference

Angelia Wilson, Convenor, 2014 Conference

In mid-April, Manchester hosted the 64th PSA Annual International Conference with 500 delegates from over 80 countries. The ‘Rebels and Radicals’ theme inspired an amazing range of intellectual endeavours that reflected the City’s proud political history and the edges of contemporary debate. From fracking, to Greek politics, and elections to religion, the breadth of individual papers created a buzz of academic excitement. Even the weather seemed to offer us an apt political backdrop with an unusual Manchester Spring.

The Annual Leonard Schapiro Lecture saw Professor Ron Johnston offer an insightful commentary on gerrymandering and the intellectual rigour was maintained through to the closing plenary speaker, Professor Beverly Skeggs, who delivered a thorough historical analysis of “person value”, particularly focusing on identities of class, race and gender. Attention to gender was one of the underpinning conference themes with more panels on gender issues than ever before and, thanks to the journal Politics, a networking lunch for PSA Women & Politics specialist group. The Political Leadership specialist group held an impressive round table featuring BBC Diplomatic Correspondent Bridget Kendall and Professor Michael Moran discussing Professor Archie Brown’s new book The Myth of the Strong Leader. On the final day of the conference, thirty A/AS-level students from the Greater Manchester Area attended the panel sessions to coincide with a stream of panels on youth participation ending with ‘Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission’—which apparently kept the students talking all the way home.

The PSA Annual Dinner took place in the grand surroundings of the Great Hall in the Manchester Town Hall, not, as some might tell you, in Hogwarts. Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, challenged us with witty political trivia and a call to educate future political leaders. PSA Chair, Professor Charlie Jeffery, presented the PSA Academic Prizes—congratulations to all prize winners.

Various publishers contributed to the academic dialogue as well as event sponsorship. All of the key PSA journals offered a ‘Meet the Editors’ lunchtime session. SAGE and The Conversation sponsored an exhilarating session asking ‘Is the Power of the Political Journalist in Decline?’. The Journal of Local Government Studies, celebrating 25 years of publication, hosted a discussion regarding the ‘End of Local Politics’ and continued the celebrations by hosting the drinks reception before the Annual Dinner. A similar ‘thank you’ is offered to the British Journal of Politics & International Relations for their drinks reception and for constructing the roundtable on the ‘Post-Crisis Economic Governance’. With such a lubricated start to the final evening, we hope the ‘hangover cure’ presented to guests at the Annual Dinner eased the last day and journey home.

This annual event simply would not be possible without professional support of the PSA staff. The Manchester Team, speaking on behalf of all conference participants, offer our thanks to Louise Bates, Jack Neenan, James Ludley, Sandra McDonagh and Helena Djurkovic.
Read about how our first intern got on during her time in Parliament...

Libby McEnhill, University of Huddersfield

Undertaking an internship during my PhD was something that I had been considering for a while before I received details of the PSA’s new scheme, in conjunction with the Committee Office of the House of Commons. My research is on British politics, and, quite liking the idea of going to work in the Palace of Westminster every day, I decided to apply.

I started my placement in November 2013, and was initially placed with the Scottish Affairs Committee (SAC) for three months. It quickly became apparent that Scottish Affairs is an extremely busy committee: at one point during my placement there were six active inquiries, all placing significant demands on the Committee’s staff. As such, at the request of the Committee Clerks, my placement was extended and I worked for the Committee for a total of six months.

I was initially assigned to work on the Committee’s inquiry into Blacklisting in Employment. Later, as the stage of the inquiry that I was responsible for drew to a close, I worked on two further inquiries: the impact of the Bedroom Tax in Scotland, and the Referendum on Separation for Scotland (Pensions and Benefits). I contributed to a full range of Committee work across these three inquiries, from identifying appropriate witnesses and arranging evidence sessions, through researching and writing briefing notes for Committee Members, and finally analysing the evidence obtained and drafting Committee reports.

The SAC often prefers to publish short interim reports on some inquiries, and this worked well with the structure of the internship: I was able to take responsibility for discreet sections of on-going inquiries and complete these during the short time available. The Committee has now published two reports that I was responsible for working on, on Blacklisting and the Bedroom Tax.

In addition to working with the Committee, I attended a number of other activities in order to get a feel for how parliament works. I considered myself to have a good understanding of the British parliamentary system before I started my placement, but was still surprised by the range of work that goes on behind the scenes! A lot of these activities were guided by my own interests – such as attending debates and the meetings of other committees – and I appreciated the opportunity to pursue these during the early weeks of my placement. I was also really pleased that the Committee Clerks managed to obtain a ticket for me to attend Prime Minister’s Questions, as this was something that I had been keen to do for some time.

My experience working for the Committee was hugely valuable. I was able to apply the skills and knowledge that I have been developing through my PhD, while also gaining a fresh perspective on my own research. Equally important, my placement was really enjoyable and has contributed to broadening my ideas on the sort of work that I might like to do once my PhD is finished. I cannot recommend the programme enough, and wouldn’t hesitate to encourage others to apply in future.

Details of the next PSA/House of Commons Committee Office placement scheme will be announced soon.

The first Politics/International Relations undergraduate research conference

The first Politics/International Relations undergraduate research conference took place on 2 April at De Montfort University, Leicester. Sixteen students from nine different universities gave presentations based upon research they had undertaken as part of their degrees, mainly their dissertations. Topics ranged from an evaluation of the work of Bernard Stiegler through a study of the global regulation of conflict diamonds to an investigation of the Statecraft of the British Coalition Government. The students displayed an impressive command of their subject, especially in dealing with questions from the audience. Having spent a number of months researching an area, the general feeling was that they valued the opportunity to discuss their work and engage with students from other departments across the country. The students valued the opportunity to question their own conclusions, the diversity of subjects presented and most of all the opportunity to present their research findings in a friendly and supportive environment. Thanks must go to the PSA, the DMU teaching development fund and the Department of Politics and Public Policy for their support of the event, which allowed us to fund travel and accommodation. We hope to build on the success of the first conference by making it a regular event.

Colleagues from the PSA interested in finding out more or wanting to get their students involved should contact a member of the organising team: Alison Statham (astatham@dmu.ac.uk), Chris Goldsmith (cgoldsmith@dmu.ac.uk), Mette Wiggen (m.wiggen@leeds.ac.uk) and Simon Lightfoot (s.j.lightfoot@leeds.ac.uk).
An update on ‘Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission’

Andy Mycock, University of Huddersfield

As part of its on-going commitment to promoting political activism and democratic engagement, members of the PSA recently contributed to the publication Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission: Young People and Politics edited by Professor Jon Tonge (University of Liverpool) and Dr Andy Mycock (University of Huddersfield). Both of whom served on the independent Youth Citizenship Commission (2008/9) formed by the last Labour government together with Professor Phil Cowley (University of Nottingham) sought to build on the work of the Youth Citizenship Commission and other research by members of the PSA and further energise debates about young people and democratic participation. Contributors took part in a series of workshops funded by the PSA together with the Huddersfield, Liverpool, Royal Holloway and Southampton universities.

The volume includes short opinion pieces on a range of topics and offers policy proposals to encourage governments, political parties and youth stakeholder groups across the UK to adopt more dynamic approaches to encouraging young people to get involved in politics. We focused on key issues such as votes at 16, political participation of young women and BME groups, citizenship education in schools and universities, youth social media, and compulsory voting. Policy proposals included a referendum on votes at 16, compulsory electoral registration in schools, and the reform of political party membership to make it more youth-centric.

We are pleased to announce of a new campaign led by PSA’s Young People’s Politics specialist group to encourage the development of the civic role of universities as ‘sites of democracy’ (details are in the publication). The campaign includes a ‘Charter for Active Citizenship in Higher Education’ and the group will be encouraging vice-chancellors and heads of Politics departments in universities across the UK to sign up. The campaign will be officially launched at the inaugural workshop hosted by the Young People’s Politics group at the University of Lincoln on 5 September.

The volume was discussed at a special panel at the PSA’s annual conference in Manchester with Professors Jon Tonge and Gerry Stoker, Sam Johnson, a youth councillor from Manchester City Council, and Ian Wybron, a member of the Demos ‘Generation Citizen’ project. The volume will be officially launched at an event in Westminster in the autumn and other events are planned in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff. Chapters from the publication are also being hosted in an exciting series of on-line debates on the Democratic Audit blog site (www.democraticaudit.com), with leading politicians, academics, and youth organisations providing responses to policy proposals.

An electronic copy of the Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission: Young People and Politics volume can be downloaded from the PSA website. For further details of the Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission project and to request a hard copy of the volume, please contact Dr Andy Mycock (a.j.mycock@hud.ac.uk).
Pedagogy matters stateside too

Jacqui Briggs, outgoing PSA Vice-Chair

APSA’s 11th Teaching and Learning Politics Conference took place in the beautiful city of Philadelphia earlier this year, whose name comes from the Greek meaning ‘City of Brotherly Love’, has the delights of Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell Center and Old City Hall, and was also home to the US Supreme Court between 1791 and 1800.

For those interested in different ways of teaching and learning politics, the conference provides a supportive environment in which to share ideas and learn from colleagues. There is a clear link with the PSA UK’s Teaching and Learning Politics specialist group. The group’s John Craig, Steven Curtis, Alasdair Blair, et al. are now stalwarts of these conferences, giving and gaining a great deal from their participation in this international event. This is something that the PSA as a whole should seek to encourage in the future and to continue to foster even greater links between our two organisations.

The conference also provides a number of sharply-focused, interactive, workshops and plenary sessions. Topics covered this year included: a workshop on MOOCs, Internships: Best practice in the Discipline, Flip Your Class with Google Apps!, Publishing in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and the Top Ten Teaching Mistakes! The 2014 CQ Press Award for Innovative Teaching was also presented at the conference. The APSA Teaching and Learning Conference is small in relation to the annual APSA conference, having around 400 or so attendees. Even so, this is a reasonable size in comparison with many European conferences and is indicative of the sheer scale of the political science community in the United States. A joke amongst teaching and learning regulars is to refer to the main APSA conference as the ‘August’ conference given the fact that, for many attendees in Philadelphia, the T and L conference is their big annual event.

Members of the PSA and the organisation per se will gain through fostering greater links with the APSA teaching and learning community.

Welsh politics group husting poll shows Plaid Cymru and Labour are neck and neck

On the evening 7 May the Welsh Political Studies and Lecturers and Teachers Society (WPSLATS), sponsored by the PSA and IWA, held its south east Wales inaugural event at Coleg Gwent’s Cross Keys campus. It involved a European election hustings with three of the four existing Welsh MEPs and three other party representatives. The event was chaired by ITV Wales political correspondent Adrian Masters and organised by WPSLATS vice chair Government and Cross Keys Politics lecturer Rob Southall and his students. The AS and A2 Government and Politics students in attendance took a vote of the 84 people present through use of a secret ballot. The result was as follows:

**TOTAL VOTES - 54**

- **13%** Con – 7
- **7%** Green – 4
- **28%** Lab – 15
- **9%** Lib-dem – 5
- **28%** Plaid – 15
- **13%** UKIP – 7

Professor Russell Deacon, who chairs WPSLATS, said: “This was a very successful first event for us in Wales and a great chance for students and teachers of AS and A2 Government and Politics to get together and experience the real side of politics from the campaigning and organising side to the actual ballot”.

If you are in Wales and would like to know more about future WPSLATS events please email: russell.deacon@coleggwent.ac.uk
Introducing the new Politics team at Canterbury Christ Church University

The Politics and International Relations team at Canterbury Christ Church University has expanded and is launching new undergraduate programmes. Amelia Hadfield and Andre Barrinha joined the team in September 2013; Amelia’s research expertise is in energy security (in particular EU-Russia energy relations), Andre’s research expertise is in critical security studies and international relations theory. The new staff join a team with strengths in Marxist theory (David Bates), euroscepticism (John Fitzgibbon), EU environmental policy (Sarah Lieberman), political leadership (Mark Bennister), federalism in post-conflict societies (Soeren Keil) and integration of Romani communities (Laura Cashman). The team will be launching a new undergraduate programme in 2015 covering politics, international relations and European studies. The subject area also hosts a new journal, European Review of International Studies (ERIS). For more information see http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/social-applied-sciences/applied-social-sciences/Politics/Home.aspx

The team also blog at http://canterburypolitics.wordpress.com/

Experts on political oratory gather at Bath

The Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies at the University of Bath hosted a one-day conference, 4 April, on the subject of ‘Democratic Orators’. This was the first conference to evaluate the crucial role of oratory in the careers of key figures in the US Democratic Party, from JFK to Barack Obama. This conference, co-organised by David Moon (University of Bath) and Andrew Crines (University of Leeds), examined the political personas, rhetorical, and oratorical styles of twelve leading figures in US Democratic Party politics. The conference attracted contributions from a range of established scholars with interests in American politics, political communication, rhetoric and oratory, including Robert Lehrman (former chief speechwriter for Al Gore and Professor at American University), Andrew Taylor (University of Sheffield), Brendan Evans (University of Huddersfield), Jon Herbert (Keele University), Robert Busby (Liverpool Hope), John Roper (Swansea University), Mark Bennister (Canterbury C. Church) and Michelle Bentley (Royal Holloway).

The event followed previous conferences held on both Labour and Conservative Party orators held at the University of Huddersfield and the papers are currently being developed into chapters for a collection edited by the organisers. Moon and Crines have plans for a follow up event looking at Republican Orators, which is set to take place in 2015 through the auspices of the PSA Conservatism Group (psa-conservatism.org.uk).
Hull celebrates 25 years of parliamentary placements

The value of experience-based learning has become widely recognised in recent years, but its benefits to students were recognised in the Politics Department at Hull University more than a quarter of a century ago. The 2013-14 academic year marks the 25th anniversary of the Hull parliamentary placement scheme. This special anniversary was celebrated with two receptions; one at the House of Lords in November 2013 and the other at the University of Hull in March 2014.

The receptions, hosted by Professor of Government, Lord Norton of Louth, were attended by alumni, current students, members from the University and were joined by guests, including MPs and peers.

The placement scheme is distinctive not only for its longevity, but also for the fact that it incorporates a Westminster seminar programme and has had the same course director for the entirety of its existence.

Lord Norton has facilitated more than 200 student placements between Hull and Westminster since the first placements in 1988-89. Over the years, students have gained experience working with leading parliamentarians including: Cabinet ministers, members of the Shadow Cabinet, chairs of select committees and prominent backbenchers. The placements offer students the opportunity to take part in political research and parliamentary duties, to develop key skills, widen their subject knowledge and increase their employability.

"Since the first cohort of students headed for Westminster, many Hull graduates have followed that path. These placements are now very well established, rewarding for students and highly regarded at Westminster. This is a special anniversary and we hope that politics students will continue to choose the University of Hull for many years to come." Lord Norton of Louth

Hull graduates have gone on to prominent careers in politics in a range of posts from special advisers to Cabinet ministers, parliamentary and government affairs officers, to holding office in political parties. They are affectionately referred to as the ‘Hull Mafia’. Others have successful careers in a variety of roles including media, teaching and banking.

News from Cambridge

Seminar in POLIS by the German Finance Minister, Dr Wolfgang Schäuble

On the 27 March the German Finance Minister, Dr Wolfgang Schäuble, visited Cambridge to take part in an hour-long discussion with a range of students and staff from across the University interested in the evolving political economy of the European Union. The meeting was sponsored by POLIS, and chaired by Professor Christopher Hill. Dr Schäuble’s opening remarks were responded to by Lord Eatwell, the President of Queen’s College and a past front-bench economic spokesman for Labour in the House of Lords. The discussion which followed, including a number of questions from the floor, dealt with, inter alia, the role of the Euro, relations between the Eurozone and the rest of the EU, the human rights implications of current austerity policies, and the role of the German Constitutional Court.

Prof John Loughlin elected Fellow

Professor John Loughlin, a Fellow of St Edmund’s College and Director of the Von Hugel Institute, has been elected a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales. Professor Loughlin held the Chair of European Politics at Cardiff University for fifteen years and was elected an Honorary Fellow there in 2010 when he moved to Cambridge. The University of Cambridge Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, the Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Professor Martin Daunton and St Edmund’s Honorary Fellow, Professor Sir Martin Evans, are all Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales.
Oxford’s new quantitative methods centre

As data become increasingly available, the need for graduates who are able to make sense of them increases too. The private sector, civil service, non-governmental organisations, media, polling institutes, and many others demand graduates with statistical knowledge. As The New York Times put it recently: ‘For Today’s Graduate, Just One Word: Statistics’.

This year sees the launch of the Oxford Q Step Centre (OQC) which will be geared to meeting this need. Oxford is one of 15 universities to be selected nationally to host Q-Step, the £19.5 million programme designed to promote a step-change in quantitative social science training. The funding was awarded by a partnership comprised of the Nuffield Foundation, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The programme will mean the creation of four new full-time teaching posts in Oxford’s Department of Sociology and Department of Politics and International Relations as from July 2014. It will enable undergraduates across the social sciences to have access to enhanced training in quantitative methods, through lectures and data-labs. New options in quantitative training will also be made available to undergraduates taking the PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics) or the BA History and Politics course. Hands-on data labs will become a core element of the new teaching programme, allowing undergraduates the opportunity to work with datasets within the context of their disciplines.

The skills training provided through Oxford’s Q-Step training will be shared widely, with the University of Oxford hosting summer schools about quantitative methods for undergraduates from other UK universities. Oxford academics will also develop open access online teaching materials about quantitative methods for wider audiences. Expertise and resources will be shared across the higher education sector through an accompanying support programme, which will also forge links with schools and employers. Students who go on work placements to develop their quantitative methods will be able to apply for bursaries through the programme.

Sport and Politics group

Andy Burnham MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Health, was the keynote speaker at the Sport and Politics group’s 8th annual conference. This was hosted by Liverpool John Moores University, 21-22 February, on the overarching theme of ‘Sport and the Politics of Exclusion’.

During his keynote address, Burnham outlined the importance of sport policy in shaping a modern health agenda. He reflected on how a modern NHS would need to take preventative strategies in dealing with future health problems. He used the conference to outline new policy ideas and his aim to get “50 per cent of the population involved in regular sports activity by 2025.” However, he warned that without national Government “prioritising spending on sports and physical activity”, and making the provision of accessible public facilities a statutory requirement, many local authorities would continue to sell off playing fields and sports clubs.

Delegates from as far afield as Los Angeles, Moscow and Melbourne, attended the two day conference, which was organised by LJMU’s Peter Millward, John Hayton, and Ian Beattie. Day one of the conference saw parallel sessions on Football and Community Development in South Africa, Politics of Exclusion in 21st century Serbian football, Women and Sport Participation, Sport Youth Culture and Public Space. On day two, delegates heard from keynote speaker Professor Maurice Roche, who talked about ‘Mega-events, Globalisation and Development: BRICS and Major Sport Events in the Contemporary Period’. The talk built and extended upon his seminal book Mega Events and Modernity (2000, Routledge).

Conference organiser Peter Millward commented:

“The event was a tremendous success. We have received positive comments about the quality of papers and the collegial atmosphere and we’re delighted so many early career researchers presented.”

Plans are now underway for the 9th annual conference, to be hosted by Durham University in spring 2015.
Britishness specialist group publishes Northern Ireland ‘culture wars’ symposium report

The PSA Britishness specialist group has published a report following the success of the Northern Ireland ‘culture wars’ symposium held in Belfast in November 2013. The report is co-authored by a team comprising colleagues from both the University of Huddersfield and the University of Ulster, and contains a number of policy recommendations based upon the deliberations of the symposium. The report has been widely distributed to both policy-makers and civil society groups in the region.

Chief among the recommendations is the suggestion that the Northern Ireland Executive devise an immediate strategy to address the needs of the region’s most deprived communities independent of on-going attempts to implement a community relations policy. This should focus on young people, particularly improving socio-economic opportunities and the provision of safe spaces for the youth to express their opinions, aspirations and grievances.

The report also recommends that policy makers take measures to ensure equality of citizenship and legal protections for various minority groups within Northern Ireland, as well as addressing the question of a racial equality strategy as a matter of urgency.

The report can be accessed via the University of Huddersfield repository here: http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/19896/.

The Britishness Group always welcomes new members. For more information, please contact Andrew Mycock a.j.mycock@hud.ac.uk or Shaun McDaid.

New specialist group on young people’s politics is formed

Dr Yee Wah Foo, Lincoln University

Dr Jacqui Briggs and Dr Ben Kisby (along with Dr James Sloam from Royal Holloway, University of London and Emily Rainsford from the University of Southampton) established a new PSA specialist group on ‘Young People’s Politics’ in 2013. The group is concerned with examining young people’s politics in the context of austerity and the rise and proliferation of protest politics in Britain and across the Western world. In particular, the group addresses three main questions: (1) ‘what does “politics” mean to young people?’; (2) ‘how and why do young people choose to participate in democracy?’; and (3) ‘how can “Generation Y” (those born in the late 1980s and early 1990s) be encouraged to participate more widely (and deeply) in various forms of civic and political engagement?’

The group organised several panels for the 2014 PSA annual conference in Manchester and is also planning to hold a specialist group conference in Lincoln on Friday, 5 September, 2014.

Visit the group’s page on the PSA website for further details: https://www.psa.ac.uk/psa-communities/specialist-groups/young-peoples-politics
Briefing the UN on the next global development framework

The United Nations has just over a year to agree a new global development framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals. But how should this framework be designed to maximise ambition and chance of success, given the diverse and unequal world it must address?

In April, Dr Graham Long (Newcastle University) was invited to New York, to address 30 Permanent Representatives to the United Nations at a ‘breakfast briefing’ on this question of ‘universality and differentiation’ in the post-2015 development framework. Dr Long’s presentation was followed by an hour of discussion with attending representatives, which included the co-chairs of the UN Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The wide-ranging discussion covered theoretical questions of rights and responsibilities, and the pragmatic challenges of implementing the new SDGs and ensuring their accountability. The event was organised and chaired by the Colombian Mission to the United Nations and facilitated by Child Fund Alliance. Dr Long’s presentation reflected his briefing paper ‘Universality: moving the debate forward’, prepared for the Beyond2015 civil society global campaign group, and co-authored with Tanya Cox (Plan International). The paper addresses the challenge of adopting ambitious global goals whilst differentiating fairly for diverse and unequal country contexts. Response to the event was very positive, and a follow-up event is currently planned for this summer.

The negotiations over the content and form of the new Sustainable Development Goals are at a critical stage, and Dr. Long’s current research on key issues facing the UN Working Group - the idea of ‘Common but Differentiated Responsibilities’, the accountability framework that will accompany the new framework, and country commitments on ‘means of implementation’ - will continue to inform intergovernmental and civil society discussions over the coming months. Dr. Long can be contacted at graham.long@ncl.ac.uk
The Digital Democracy Commission: Towards a 21st Century Parliament

Cristina Leston-Bandeira, University of Hull

The Speaker of the House of Commons set a Commission on Digital Democracy early this year, following his speech to the Hansard Society last November about working towards a 21st century Parliament. I’ve had the privilege to act as one of its Commissioners, drawing from my research on parliamentary and digital public engagement.

The Digital Democracy Commission (DDC) has been set up to explore how we can reconcile the traditional concepts and institutions of representative democracy with the transformations created by the past twenty years’ technological revolution. It aims to consult, report and make recommendations on how digital tools can help parliamentary democracy in the UK become more effective. It is structured around five themes: legislation, scrutiny, representation, engagement and dialogue. The Commission is unique in its composition and methodology, allowing for a very open approach.

The DDC is composed of eight Commissioners, representing a wide range of types of organisations, with me being the only academic. Amongst other, Commissioners include actor and filmmaker Femi Oyeniran. The composition of the Commission reflects the wish to consult a much wider group of people than the usual suspects, being open to everyone who wants to participate. The DDC has calls for evidence on each of its five main themes, but it also promotes events to encourage discussion and development of ideas. Besides helping to frame the collation of evidence and contribute to the final report, my role includes the organisation of specific events.

Drawing from my comparative research, I’ve played a specific role in establishing connections with other parliaments and identifying good practice elsewhere. I’ve facilitated the submission of oral evidence from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies about the well-established eDemocracia platform, which enables citizens to make suggestions to legislation under discussion in parliament. This type of evidence gives a particularly useful insight.

I have also coordinated an online national forum between Politics undergraduates, with representatives from eight universities (Cardiff, De Monfort, Hull, Leeds, Nottingham, Strathclyde, Surrey and Ulster). The forum was student-led and aimed to identify key problem areas, and possible solutions, from the student’s perspective, on each of the DDC’s five themes. It has resulted in five reports drafted by these students and follow-up workshops. This has proved an effective way of collating evidence from a specific audience. I’m currently also helping towards the planning of joint events with the PSA.

My role in the DDC has been therefore dual: to contribute with my research know-how but also to explore links specifically with universities. All of the evidence collated will be considered for the final report, which is due early in 2015 to coincide with the celebrations of the Magna Carta and the 750 birthday of Parliament.

Details about the above can be found on the DDC’s webpage: http://www.parliament.uk/business/commons/the-speaker/speakers-commission-on-digital-democracy/
Migration and its impact on the UK and Germany was the theme of an expert policy workshop organised by Professor Simon Green and Dr Christin Hess of the Aston Centre for Europe (ACE) on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The workshop was held in the British Embassy in Berlin on 20-21 February 2014.

Marking the event, German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière and the Home Secretary Theresa May also held their first bilateral consultations since last autumn’s German federal elections. The workshop brought together 30 high-level experts from politics, civil service, think tanks and academia in both countries to focus on and compare British-German perspectives on migration and growth, recruitment of skilled migrants and the challenges of integration. In his address to 80 invited guests at a reception at the British Embassy to mark the workshop, Federal Minister de Maizière praised the role of the Aston Centre for Europe in initiating the discussions: “I consider it to be very worthwhile to engage in a bilateral exchange on a topic that is very much on the mind of the people in our two countries… These talks are an expression of longstanding and excellent German-British cooperation, and I would like to thank Professor Green for his initiative and the British Embassy for their support.”

Professor Simon Green, Co-director of the Aston Centre for Europe, said: “We were delighted to convene this meeting of British and German migration experts, and especially that two cabinet ministers took the opportunity to open it. Translating research agendas into practical policy discussions are very much at the heart of what the Aston Centre for Europe does.”

ACE, based at Aston University, acts as a ‘hub’ for a range of Europe and European Union-related research projects and teaching activities at Aston University. Building on Aston’s long-standing reputation in the study of Europe, ACE has since 2009 become a major centre for research in European politics and society and ensured the real-world applicability of that research through practitioner engagement.

China and nuclear responsibility in the global nuclear order

Dr Nicola Horsburgh of the Department of Politics & International Relations at the University of Oxford has been given a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship to examine what it means to be a responsible nuclear armed state in global nuclear politics, with a focus on China. The project contributes to a limited academic field of research on nuclear responsibility – and thus revives long dormant discussions of nuclear ethics – as well as policy debates that have gained momentum in the late 2000s over fears related to nuclear security.

Overall, the project has three main objectives: Determine what it means to be a responsible nuclear armed state by developing a typology of responsible nuclear behaviour; examining how a nuclear armed state, in particular China, can demonstrate it is a responsible nuclear actor; understand why responsibility matters, and who has the authority in the global nuclear order to confer the label and status of responsibility.

China has been selected because its nuclear behaviour has been portrayed unfavourably in the past. Existing literature tends to focus on narrow aspects of Chinese nuclear behaviour: suspected misdemeanours in its non-proliferation record relating to Pakistan, the uncertain direction of military spending and modernisation, or enduring opaqueness in policy. The BA research goes beyond these issues to examine China’s behaviour more broadly, in terms of Chinese efforts regarding nuclear security and safety, as well as reactions to important global and regional nuclear developments in the late 1990s and 2000s: from the South Asian nuclear tests in 1998 to on-going North Korean nuclear activities.

Assessing how China has responded to these challenges offers insight into how far it may be considered a responsible nuclear state.
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The number of articles downloaded for each journal continues to grow year on year, and in a digital environment articles have been put together in new ways to reach new audiences. Each of the journals has created Virtual Issues in recent years. The Politics editors published a Virtual Issue on Teaching and Learning in 2013 and the most popular article from that issue was Democratising the Learning Process: the Use of Twitter in the Teaching of Politics and IR by Alasdair Blair, which was downloaded almost 2,000 times. Articles on Margaret Thatcher’s legacy from the BJPIR archive proved popular on social media in 2013, including ‘Mother’s Boy’: David Cameron and Margaret Thatcher by Stephen Evans. Political Studies has now published two fully online-only issues – a themed collection on Parties and Elections in 2013, and an issue in April this year entitled Democracy, Deliberation and Dissent. All the papers published in these issues are subject to exactly the same high calibre of refereeing as any other Political Studies article, however, the format allows the editors to pull together thematically related papers and publish them more quickly, and with free access for 12 months.

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Not everything Wiley do is online of course – print still has a place, and events at conferences still provide a great opportunity for potential authors and readers to meet the editors and publishers and discover more about the highly regarded PSA portfolio of journals. A ‘Meet the Editors’ session at the recent PSA conference in Manchester was well attended, and we are currently planning the PSA Reception that will be held during the APSA conference in Washington, DC this September. We look forward to seeing some of you there!