

Abstracts:**Teaching Political philosophy (and politics) in strange times***Dr Doug Bamford, Oxford University*

As a teacher of adults, I begin each course with a new cohort who have decided to join without any compulsion or requirement and ask why they signed up. Various reasons are given within each group. However, in recent terms one theme during the introductions has been a feeling that the political realm has changed in an unsettling way. Teaching of political philosophy usually focuses on issues like authority, democracy, liberty and justice. Within much of the literature there is an assumption of individualism and equality of value. However, if nationalist populism has indeed been on the rise, then this proceeds with the rejection of these fundamental values. What are the implications for teaching practice? To what extent should we adjust curricula to reflect this? Do students of politics need to understand different theories and processes compared to those they used to in previous decades? Mark Reiff has argued that political philosophers should turn their focus to understanding fascism and has attempted to reconstruct fascism on an analytic basis. Is it enough for teachers of politics make themselves aware of the different thought processes of fascists and populists in order to understand current debates? Or should it be studied by the students themselves?

Developing inclusive communication: peer facilitation of group work on controversial political issues*Dr Andrew Schaap and Dr Karen Scott, University of Exeter*

Political discussions in society are becoming more polarised and analysis of complex issues is too often reductive (Flensner and Von der Lippe, 2019; Iverson, 2018; McAvoy and Hess 2013). In addition, recent analysis finds a growing ideological divide in western societies among young women and men such that 'Gen Z is two generations, not one' (Burn-Murdoch 2024:np). A key factor that exacerbates division is exposure to filter bubbles on social media (Evans 2024). Developed four years ago, our first-year core module *POC1033 Political Communication* requires students to work intensively on group projects about controversial political issues. This helps them to develop inclusive communication and critical analysis skills of active listening, self-reflection and 'speaking-to-think' (Ivory 2021). This year, to help address persistent EDI issues in groupwork dynamics, we employed ten second year peer facilitators. Their aims were to model inclusive communication, notice group dynamics and help students participate, normalise disagreements as part of group work, and encourage ongoing reflection (Maxwell et al., 2023). We gained ethical approval to research the process through before and after student surveys, individual interviews and focus groups, and accessing first year reflective reports. We present preliminary findings from this study.

Assessment Mitigation Procedures, Relational Pedagogy, and Relational Equality*Dr John Wilesmith, University College London*

This paper focuses on a practice undertaken by certain academics in politics departments – ‘departmental tutors’ – that has wide, but neglected, implications for the quality of pedagogical relations: assessment mitigation based on extenuating circumstances. It provides an interpretation of the proper aims of this practice by considering how it secures valuable relational goods articulated by educational theorists who promote relational pedagogy and political theorists who promote relational equality. It then considers a possible dilemma: procedures that permit departmental tutors discretion in how they make assessment mitigation decisions serve some relational goods while undermining others. This dilemma is developed by comparing the author’s current work on assessment mitigation as part of their department’s tutorial team with a previous role administering Jobseekers’ Allowance (JSA). The latter practice has been criticised by relational egalitarian political theorists for employing conditionality tests that, while serving an egalitarian conception of fairness, can express a form of disrespect that undermines broader relational egalitarian aims. The paper argues that a comparable, though distinct, dilemma arises from the use of conditionality tests within assessment mitigation practices; however, its force can be blunted if departmental tutors employ team-based, discretionary mitigation practices – as opposed to the individualistic, non-discretionary administration typical of JSA.

Thinking through images in global politics: an arts-based approach to peace and security*Moises Vieira, PhD candidate, University of Manchester*

This intervention presents my reflections on the use of an arts-based task as an instrument of formative assessment. In addition to raising students’ awareness of the political significance of artwork, the activity looked to assess student’s understanding of relevant concepts and theories by explaining what their chosen artwork tells us about peace and security in global politics. In doing so, my approach reflects the view that students’ engagement with artwork helps them demonstrate knowledge of theoretical frameworks and effectively elaborate on the content of reading materials. Based on students’ feedback in a group discussion following the activity, I suggest that prompting reflection on module content through a range of art forms diversifies assessment methods and makes them more inclusive; students learn – and demonstrate their learning – through a range of ways, and one single approach to assessment does work for all students. Furthermore, this intervention demonstrates how the activity increased students’ motivation as well as engagement with relevant analytical tools and theories impacting on their learning development. By drawing attention to the use of creative methods in the classroom, this paper calls for a reconfiguration of arts-based activities as a means of formative assessment as well as an inclusive teaching practice that shows respect for students’ autonomy in the learning process.

Reflective assessment as a tool for enhancing student engagement

Dr Carl Gibson, University of Nottingham

This paper explores the potential of reflective assessments to boost student engagement and belonging in the security studies classroom. By focusing on data generated across three years in a final-year module on 'Responding to Violent Extremism' (POLI3118) at the University of Nottingham, I argue that there are several distinct benefits to using such reflective assessments. By looking specifically at 'Think Alouds' – an unstructured pre-recorded presentation on the first 3 weeks of the module's material, which prioritizes students' reflection on their learning process and their position as learners, rather than an assessment of their substantive knowledge – I explore the experience of students in engaging with such alternative forms of assessment, as well as reflecting on my own experience as a convenor and instructor, alongside data from student evaluations and a literature review on reflective assessments more broadly. As well as teasing out the benefits from this type of learning/teaching activity, I aim to explore the areas to be mindful of when using such activities as a form of assessment specifically; I argue that using Think Alouds as an assessment tool requires some consideration for effective implementation but that this confers specific benefits to learning outcomes.

Beyond AI-Proofing: A Framework for Assessment Resilience in Political Studies Education

Dr Patrick Theiner, Politics and International Relations, University of Edinburgh

This paper addresses how generative AI challenges assessment integrity in Political Studies education. Rather than relying on ineffective "AI detection" technologies, we propose a framework for creating assessments that both resist inappropriate AI use and enhance authentic learning outcomes through constructive alignment principles. Our contribution introduces a multidimensional taxonomy of assessment vulnerability, analyzing how time constraints, analytical complexity, evidence types, reflective components, developmental processes, and contemporaneity interact to determine risk levels. By systematically examining cases across undergraduate and postgraduate Political Studies curricula, we demonstrate that both vulnerability and the most promising adjustments vary across sub-fields: international relations benefits from contemporary event analysis, political theory from ethical reasoning tasks, and research methods from primary data collection requirements, for example. We provide evidence-based strategies at three intervention levels: inherently AI-resistant formats (oral examinations, observed practical exercises, invigilated assessments); technical modifications to existing assessments (scaffolded tasks, in-class integration, multi-stage submissions); and substantive assessment redesigns emphasizing higher-order cognition. Our findings indicate that addressing AI challenges can simultaneously strengthen alignment with disciplinary learning outcomes while better preparing students for authentic political analysis. We conclude with sustainable assessment redesign recommendations that acknowledge institutional constraints, workload implications, and the evolving nature of AI capabilities.

Ungrading in a graded world

Professor Cathy Elliott, University College London, and Dr Chris Holmes, Kings College London

Ungrading is defined by Jesse Stommel as a set of practices that ‘rais[e] an eyebrow’ at grading rather than just ‘not grading as such’ (2021). Ungrading therefore always takes place in a graded world and its purpose is to pose critical questions. However, our investments in grading are deeply ingrained and emotional. Within a university that is shaped by financialisation, anxiety is produced and sustained by multiple pressures on students and staff including competition for high marks and the perceived privileged access to the job market that they confer (Haiven and Komporez-Athanasidou, 2022). This emotional investment in high marks is often difficult to shift and an ungrading approach can create tensions, fears and anxiety, requiring significant affective labour (Hardt, 1999) on the part of the teacher to support students to raise that quizzical eyebrow. As two teachers who take a negotiated and relational marking approach to ungrading (see Blum 2020), we draw on data from our own modules to reflect in this paper on the work needed to do ungrading in an anxiously graded world. We argue that this work is necessary, and can be joyful, but should not be underestimated. We conclude with some thoughts about how to go about the affective labour of ungrading in a graded world.

Universities as Contested Sites of Democratic Citizenship- The Role of Educators as Agents of Democratic Praxis in the UK Classroom

Dr Amandine Hostein, University of Sheffield

Academic teaching staff are increasingly coming into collision with forces of reactionary politics with academia struggling to find its place within an increasingly Post-Truth society, from far-right disinformation to generative AI with these challenges increasingly shaping our professional lives as educators. In the midst of growing economic precarity, from short-term volatile employment contracts to ever-expanding responsibilities, HE teaching staff are facing burnout, increasingly having to find new ways to adapt to this commodification, often with top-down superficial solutions geared towards digital learning and bureaucratization of students’ mental health and wellbeing needs. With these countervailing transformations considered, the vocational and normative essence of HE as a formative space for personal democratic and moral citizenship is neglected under the weight of these conditions. This is regrettable as Educators are themselves agents of *productive democratic praxis* which is crucial when preparing the students as they find their way into the world. As such, based on my own pedagogical experience in IR, environmental politics and Dewey’s pragmatism, this paper argues that educators’ own *democratic communicative praxis* can nurture an education that enacts cosmopolitan values by creating continuous processes of reconstructive and collaborative learning to render visible students’ self-evaluative possibilities and recognition of selfhood as part of a wider political community geared towards cosmopolitan citizenship. In doing so, this paper seeks to contribute conceptually to research on HE as spaces for democratic citizenship by accentuating the agentic value-laden *relational praxis* of educators as key drivers for cosmopolitan citizenship.

Does portability work in IR simulations?: Teaching critical theories with a modified Game of Thrones simulation

Dr Seckin Baris Gulmez, KIMEP University

This study aims to find out whether and if so, how portable simulations enhance student learning in IR classrooms. Portability refers to the ability of a simulation to be used for multiple topics or classes with little or no modification (Kollars and Rosen 2016: 204). The extant scholarly literature is replete with studies either offering portable simulations (Kollars and Rosen 2016; Brown 2018; Schoettmer 2023) or discussing how their simulations can become portable through some modification to fit for other topics (Druliolle 2017; Wehlan and Reinke 2023; Gulmez 2025 forthcoming). However, there is yet no scholarly study on how portability works and how it contributes to student learning. This study aims to remedy these evident gaps in the IR pedagogy literature by modifying an extant simulation for covering different topics in the same course. Accordingly, the article will discuss how it modifies an existing simulation, a.k.a. the Game of Thrones Simulation, already in use in the author's undergraduate IR theory course. Originally used for teaching mainstream IR theories, the author modified the simulation and applied the new version two times in the same class to help students learn critical theories (postcolonialism, feminism and green theory) during Spring and Summer 2025. The study will offer a comprehensive account of this modification and its application backed by student surveys and assessments to evidence the impact of portability in IR simulations on course development and student learning.

Utopia, dystopia, or somewhere in between: Creative writing exercises in the environmental politics classroom

Dr Jeremy Moulton, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of York

There is much in the teaching and learning on political science courses that is centred on real-world, qualifiable and quantifiable phenomena. However, the field of environmental politics can ask students to delve into a world of "what ifs": what will our lives be like if we don't stop environmental degradation? What changes to our societies will we experience if we do take the steps to halt environmental harm? This can be an abstract and alien experience for those that otherwise focus on concrete experiences and practice in their learning and analysis on political science courses. This talk therefore addresses the benefits of using an alternative approach to teaching and learning on environmental politics courses by employing creative writing exercises to promote student imagination and engagement with key themes in environmental politics. The talk will reflect on my own experience utilising this interdisciplinary method in both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

First generation students: a more inclusive or humble approach to teaching?

Dr Mette Wiggen, POLIS, University of Leeds

This paper explores challenges and obstacles to learning faced by students who enter universities through widening participation, contextual offer- and foundation programmes. The obstacles are multifaceted for these students. Barriers are often interlinked including

poverty, misunderstood and undervalued cultural capital and a higher-than-average number of students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) and disabilities. The paper argues that if increased pathways to access university for these groups are to be successful, they must include more creative and more diverse and inclusive teaching and support. Improving these students' experience and building confidence needs to take their lived material experience into account. Many live in poor quality housing and are involved in grassroot organisations that tries to improve their communities. At university this intake often finds themselves as objects to be studied rather than valuable citizens with agency and their own ideas that are shaped by their lived experience.

Expanding the boundaries of scholarship and why it matters for leading and teaching well

Professor Rose Gann, Nottingham Trent University

In his now famous text *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the Professoriate*, Boyer (1990) provided an expansive understanding of scholarship. Yet recent literature and practice, especially in the Global North, has focused exclusively on one aspect of Boyer's original conceptualisation – the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning or SOTL. Within the UK, alternative conceptualisations of scholarship have evolved around the concept of Pedagogic Research – often referred to as PedR. Using data from a research project on how academic staff understand and practice scholarship at a large modern university, as well as drawing upon recent theoretical debates, this paper argues for a theoretically and spatially expanded conceptualisation of scholarship. Such an approach, it is argued, is not only about developing a better student experience and teaching well, it also about improving Higher Education for all staff and students, and even potentially offers an approach through which broader societal issues might be addressed. The paper explores the relationship between this expanded understanding of scholarship and leadership – and leading well – and draws upon Martinovic et al's. (2022) conceptualisation of generous scholarship, to make a claim for scholarship to be engaged with as an approach or a way of being/behaving within Higher Education, rather than as a discrete or narrowly defined area of study or focus. The paper concludes by exploring the ramifications of this for scholarship and teaching in politics and international relations.

Teaching policy skills through a 'policy reform' module

Dr JP Salter and Dr Andy Scott, University College London

We report on a recently-launched module which operates as an alternative to the dissertation students complete at the end of their MSc Public Policy degree. Bridging the gap between academic study and real-world policy work, this module requires students to develop a policy proposal supported by a strong evidence base, a political strategy for implementation and advocacy materials such as speeches and opinion pieces – thus bringing together various other elements of the MSc programme. At departmental level, the module's success has been recognised through its planned expansion to the MSc in International Public Policy; it has also received an Education Award from the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences. Our overall aim with this paper is to offer insights to those thinking about employability, and considering integrating the teaching of policy skills into

postgraduate politics degrees. We therefore discuss our pedagogical approach behind the content of the module, and explain how we delivered it through a set of lectures, workshops and milestones. We explain the design and implementation of the innovative assessments, and outline adjustments we have made to the module between its first two years of existence.

Integrating the teaching of the philosophy of social science into UG research design modules

Dr JP Salter and Dr Andy Scott, University College London

Students on UG politics degrees often take a suite of research methods modules, and end their degree with a compulsory dissertation. In this paper, I make a plea for the teaching of the philosophy of social science (PoSS) to be given a more central place in bridging between these two, drawing on my experience convening the research design module accompanying the dissertation process. Our students are well-trained in the application of various quantitative and qualitative research methods through the modules they take over the course of their degrees. However, they are relatively less well versed in the business of research design, and often find themselves grappling with questions of validity, or reliability, of positionality, in ways which belie a weak understanding of the PoSS underpinning the paradigm they are working in: what 'knowledge' means, how methods can be deployed to generate knowledge or uncover meaning, and so on. I therefore offer, first, a defence of the teaching of PoSS to undergraduate students, and then an account of how it can be done so as not to overwhelm students in opening stages of their dissertations.

Teaching African Politics with Art

Dr Lyn Johnstone, Royal Holloway University of London

This paper discusses my attempts to engage students studying my third-year elective module: Politics and Government of Africa, with art, in order to elicit their understanding of key theoretical concepts and engage their interests in politics and activism beyond the traditional political and independence figures. In recent years, artists from the African continent have moved to the forefront of contemporary art across the globe examining colonial legacies, alongside decolonial work, that challenges western knowledge systems. The work of artists such as Cheri Samba, Yinka Shonibare, Zanele Muholi, and Norman Oswald Dennis, for example, does many of these things. I discuss here, the ways in which incorporating key pieces from these artists has enriched my teaching tools, unleashed the learning process, and - through the addition of a creative assessment that incorporates art and politics - has created a knowledge community amongst students who rarely get the chance to see and discuss each other's work.

Role Play: A Fun Effective Strategy for Teaching International Relations

Dr. Marzieh Kouhi Esfahani, Assistant Professor in Politics and International Relations of the Middle East, University of Durham

In this paper, I argue—drawing on my experience teaching a range of undergraduate and postgraduate modules—that role play is one of the most effective and well-received teaching strategies for enhancing student learning. I present three case studies from distinct modules where role play was employed to explore and discuss various concepts and theories. Supported by evidence of student satisfaction and positive feedback from Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs), the paper demonstrates how this strategy has significantly contributed to improving students’ understanding and overall learning experience.

Bastardly Active Learning

Dr Terry Hathaway, University of York

Contemporary politics is full of some real bastards who are out for their own interests and who, in seeking their own interests, will do terrible violent and manipulative things; beyond the obvious examples of sitting heads of state, there are fossil fuel companies delaying climate action, the news media’s selective partisan outrage, the existence of Andrew Tate, etc. If we are to teach about contemporary politics, then, we need to get students to engage with bastards and with bastardly methods. Reflecting this context, this paper is about designing active learning exercises that place students in the role of bastards, or, alternatively, contain an evil twist, or have a corrupting mechanism within them that distorts students’ original goals. The point of such exercises is to allow students to recognise the commonality of bastardly tactics (including tactics that they recognise from their own lives), resistance against such tactics, and also the ease of such bastardly ways of acting – the ease of becoming a bastard. This paper also reflects on the broader benefits, and possible downsides, of putting a little bit of evil into the classroom.

Teaching/learning/being well: practising care in and outside the classroom

Dr Moe Suzuki, Fellow in Interdisciplinary Social Science, London School of Economics and Political Science

This paper reflects on my experience of teaching first-year undergraduate students on the compulsory interdisciplinary course, LSE100, at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In particular, I reflect on the acute and embodied realisation of an obvious fact - that staff wellbeing, student wellbeing, my ability to teach well, and students’ ability to learn well, are all connected. While the discussion around ‘teaching well’ focuses on students (and I am by no means dismissing this) I would like to dedicate this talk to discuss, with other teachers, how our wellbeing is intimately connected to students’ wellbeing. If students are not well, they are not able to learn well. If teachers are not well, we cannot teach or support our students well. I draw on my experience of supporting students over the past two years, as well as my collaborative work on staff wellbeing, to link the discussion on student *and*

staff wellbeing to conversations around care, and what it means to create a caring learning, teaching, and working environment.

Queer(ing) Ecopedagogy: Our Walk in the Forest

Dr Emma Foster and Dr Julie Gilson, Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham.

In April 2022 we took 14 individuals enrolled on our module, Environmental and Climate Politics, to a forest in the West Midlands. We sought to interrogate the proposition ‘you can take the students out of the classroom, but can you take the classroom out of the students’ and, in very simple terms, that was a key objective of our fieldtrip exercise. In the spirit of Sara Ahmed’s Queer Phenomenology, our pedagogical experiment sought to shift our learners’ embodied experiences by placing them out of context, away from those repeated and stylised interactions with the usual objects and spaces associated with Politics and International Relations learning, to a context and space less familiar and deliberately disorienting. Moreover, through our fieldtrip we were keen to queer how we do environmental (politics) education by challenging the norms of teaching in our discipline and actively troubling the discipline’s very boundaries (something commonly thought of as crucial to tackling environmental issues). This paper reflects on that initial fieldtrip and how the exercise has developed over the last three years. We discuss the extent to which we were successful in our aims and how this has informed the design (and redesign) of how we assess students on the module. The paper considers the blurring and permeability of the roles and responsibilities of ‘student’, ‘lecturer’, ‘guide’ and ‘forest’ in this context, and the implications that holds for teaching environment-related content as part of a Politics and IR curriculum.

Youth, Politics and Higher Education: Pathways to Civic Empowerment in the UK

Professor James Sloam, Royal Holloway University of London Today’s young people have been affected by successive waves of crisis, from the Great Recession to the Climate Crisis, to the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis – that have shaped their political values and political priorities (Sloam/Henn 2019; Sloam/O’Loughlin 2021). It has also led to a surge in youth engagement in social movements: from Climate Strikes, to Black Lives Matter, to campaigns against university tuition fees or for stricter gun controls (Pickard 2018; Fisher/Nasrin 2021; Della Volpe 2022). This paper begins by investigating how the changing values and priorities of Generation Z have influenced their priorities for the social role of higher education (McCormack et al. 2015; Bennion/Laughlin 2018). Here, it draws upon results from a representative survey 16–18-year-olds and university students in the UK. Then, it examines how placements in politics can engage with student priorities, such as mental health, climate change and racial discrimination, while at the same time enhancing students’ learning experiences and their sense of agency regarding civic and political participation. The paper also provides empirical evidence of how placements can address structural inequalities in participation by developing initiatives that foster engagement

amongst traditionally marginalised groups. The findings, thus, illuminate potential pathways to civic empowerment.

A feminist reimagination of the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum

Laura Coryton, PhD candidate, Royal Holloway University of London

Currently, research shows Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) provision is poor across the UK. Large gaps in provision have led to important topics being neglected. Students frequently deem RSE to be ‘too little, too late, and too biological’. Consequently, only 6% of young people leave school feeling confident about navigating the reality of sex and relationships.

In this paper, Laura will use feminist legal theory to argue that RSE is a product of a sexist legal system, and consequently, it perpetrates and deepens gender inequalities. This is the root cause of its inefficiency today. She will then focus on reimaging the RSE curriculum using a feminist philosophical and pedagogical framework. She will explore what RSE could look like if modernised and intentionally created as a tool to strengthen gender equality.

'Who are we? An exploration of 'T-only' staff in the UK'

*Professor Helen Williams, Faculty APVC, Education & Student Experience (Social Sciences)
Professor of Political Science Education, University of Nottingham*

Unlearning and relearning: A lecturer's reflection on diversifying the Global Politics curriculum

Dr Margherita de Candia, Lecturer in Political Science Education, King's College London

This case study reflection explores my efforts to diversify the curriculum of an introductory Global Politics module. Since inheriting a conventional syllabus in 2019, I have worked to include non-Western perspectives and topics, particularly in a unit on (liberal) democracy. Drawing on self-reflection, student feedback, and a lecture co-creation project, I discuss the challenges of curriculum diversification, especially how teaching remains shaped by the lecturer's knowledge and educational background and unconscious biases. Based on my experience, I argue that one cannot ‘improvise’ diversification - it requires time to fill knowledge gaps, assess sources, integrate them meaningfully, and maintain transparency with students about the ongoing and iterative nature of this process.

Feedback Literacy as Skills development

Dr Chris Featherstone, University of Nottingham

This paper draws on my experience running a “feedback literacy” activity with my own supervisees and students, supporting colleagues to adopt similar practice, and rolling this out department-wide. The activity includes several steps, including: (1) Students gathering all assessment feedback into a single document, (2) students analysing this for key themes, (3) Discussing this with the student, (4) Students presenting their thoughts on how to “action” these themes of feedback, (5) Reflecting on this after the next assessments. This activity focuses not only on developing student feedback literacy, but on the skills aspect of reflecting on feedback and interpreting this in conjunction with other feedback. In the paper, I will explain the activity, reflect on my experience of using it, and how we implemented this activity at the departmental level.

From Classroom to Crisis Room: Active Learning Through Crisis Response Simulations in International Relations

Dr Noga Glucksam, Associate Professor of IR, RAUL

This article explores the role of crisis response simulations (CRS) in equipping students in International Relations (IR) and related disciplines to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing, crisis-driven world. We discuss the merits of dynamic, multi-stakeholder and open-ended simulations in the context of postgraduate IR pedagogy, emphasising the benefits of academic-practitioner partnership and the design and implementation of the simulation. The CRS can simulate important elements of practical experiences through the use of structured escalated complexity, real-time injections and structured reflection. Through two case studies, the article demonstrates how a multi-layered and complex simulation approach can foster critical skills such as decision-making, collaboration, and strategic communication. Concluding with recommendations and tools, it offers a practical framework for educators to better prepare students for professional challenges.

A sense of purpose? Teaching qualitative research methods through substantive content.

Dr Ellen Watts, University of Nottingham

Methods modules can feel disconnected from the rest of a degree. We can ‘sell’ the employability of research skills, but how can we make them relevant and useful in the moment? One option is to integrate methods training into substantive modules across levels. Another is ‘dressing up’ methods modules *as* substantive. I will reflect on the opportunities and challenges of taking the latter approach to teach qualitative research methods to Undergraduates. Most pedagogic research has focused on teaching *quantitative* methods, and my own module is an adaptation of a model designed to teach quantitative skills alongside substantive content. I will discuss why qualitative methods have proven harder to ‘package’. In spite of this, student feedback for the module suggests there are benefits. Engagement compares well with non-methods modules, and students are satisfied with the clarity and purpose of complex research-oriented assessments. A disconnect remains however between what students learn on the module, and their desire to explore the topics covered beyond the classroom. More broadly, I will ask us to consider how we can

make methods training most valuable to students with a range of interests and post-graduation plans.

Supporting Students Through No Evidence Extensions: Evidence from a Pilot

Dr Adam Lindsay, Assistant Professor in Political Theory, SPIR, University of Nottingham

Since 2020, there has been a considerable increase in extension requests from students experiencing extenuating circumstances. This paper has two aims: first, to conceive of extenuating circumstances procedures through the framework of luck egalitarianism; and second, to employ this framework in order to reconsider the practice of requiring evidence for extension requests, building on a pilot that allowed students access to unevidenced extensions in a limited number of cases. It is argued that while evidence is often a necessary verification tool for extenuating circumstances, evidence-based extenuating circumstances procedures grant differential access and support to different demographics, further embedding preexisting patterns of advantage and disadvantage, with the consequence of embedding attainment gaps. Removal of evidential requirements in a limited range of cases takes some important steps to correcting for unequal access to extenuating circumstance procedures among minoritised groups. Nevertheless, this must be considered against heightened workload implications for academic staff and the potential for incentivising strategic use of extension requests.

Out of step: a critical approach to socially-oriented education, the 'symbiotic' academic environment, ownership & resilience

Dr Nikolaos Gkotsis-Papaioannou, University of Surrey

This paper proposes a critical approach that refocuses the T&L process towards socially oriented learning, emphasising ownership and resilience as long-term skills for students whilst underlining the importance of staff-student community-building as a pedagogical endeavour. Taking a cooperative 'punk' pedagogical lens, interesting insights can be found when further considering the integration of student-staff communities into a symbiotic academic environment, and its benefits in forging confidence and resilience whilst applying a 'pedagogy of care'.

The underpinning theoretical foundation for this examination rests on two levels. At the base, it consists of a blended focus on socially-oriented education with an emphasis on essential/meaningful learning and approaching social fluidity from a critical perspective that challenges the power dynamics inbuilt within the HE system. My approach is further refined into a combined practice of punk pedagogies and pedagogy of care. More specifically, punk's emancipatory power as a pedagogical pillar stresses personal responsibility instead of relying upon the dominant ideology of teacher as transmitter thereby transforming the pedagogical space into one that is empowering but also adaptive to crises. Drawing examples from two student-owned initiatives that I introduced as Senior Personal Tutor and my modules on politics of crisis and negotiations, I will be sharing my experience from practice across the aforementioned pedagogical lines.

The Road to the White House: Design and Implement a Course about US Presidential Campaigns that Includes an Early Primary State Campaign Internship and Political Study Tour

Dr Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan, Ph.D., University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Twenty years ago, I designed a course called “The Road to the White House,” about the history and politics of U.S. presidential campaigns, including an intensive internship in New Hampshire for the first-in-the-nation primary. Since then, I have taught the class every four years, traveling to New Hampshire in 2004, 2008, 2016, 2020 and to the first-in-the-nation/first-in-the-south primary in South Carolina in 2024.

This is designed as a 6-credit course: 3 credits for the seminar about presidential campaigns and elections (including topics such as the history of the presidential nominating process, the national conventions, voter turnout, campaign finance, third party and independent candidates, the electoral college) and 3 credits for the presidential campaign internship in an early primary state.

During this presentation, I will discuss course design and logistics (for the early state primary travel, political study tour, internship placements). I will share course documents (such as the Syllabi and key assignments) and include multimedia presentation (including sharing the books published about the RTWH courses as well as clips from course videos). And I will reflect on the challenges (and adaptations to those challenges over the last 6 presidential election cycles) and the learning opportunities related to incorporating an early state campaign internship into a course about presidential campaigns.

Data from the anonymous Pre/Post Student Surveys, the university-administered end-of-course student evaluations, and a qualitative review of students’ internship reflection papers from the six presidential campaign election cycles/courses will be analyzed to evaluate the impact of the incorporation of a campaign internship on the students’ development of civic learning competencies.

(I also include campaign internships as course requirement in *Practical Politics: The Campaign Process* and in *American National Government*, so I can also speak more broadly about integrating campaign internships into the political science curriculum.)

Embedding AI literacy in the Political Science Curriculum: Improving Skills and Reducing Academic Misconduct

Dr Sebastian Koehler, Lecturer in Comparative Politics, Queen Mary University of London

AI literacy is an increasing concern for political science education. In this paper, I develop an approach to embed AI literacy skills in the Political Science Curriculum at scale. The initiative has two goals: Train students how to use generative AI tools safely and prevent Academic misconduct caused by inappropriate uses of (generative) AI tools. I build on the frameworks developed by Zhou and Schofield (2024) and the UNESCO framework for Human-Centred AI literacy discuss how to include AI literacy training into a large first year undergraduate

module (300+ students) in Political Science. This requires concepts for three interconnected issues: Developing appropriate classroom activities, which take into account the specific AI literacy goals, training Graduate Teaching Assistants to ensure their AI literacy, and lastly an evaluation strategy. I will discuss those ideas in the context of the module POL105 Political Analysis at Queen Mary University of London and give examples of how scaling AI literacy as part of the curriculum can be implemented in practice.

Critical Reflection as a Mode of Assessment in Politics

Dr Adam Fusco, Department of Politics, University of York

This paper examines when and how Critical Reflections should be used as an assessment type in Political Studies. It draws upon experience of trialing this assessment type in a year three UG module 'Constitutional and Territorial Ideologies in Britain and Ireland'. The paper examines whether Critical Reflections should be used as a stand-alone or supplementary assessment type, and which academic skills it best trains and develops. Speaking to the theme of teaching argumentation in Politics, the paper discusses the value of this assessment type to train and develop this skill and how, in particular, it helps unmask students' normative assumptions.

Seeking Coherence in Politics and IR Education

Dr James Strong, Deputy Head of School (Education), School of Politics and International Relations, Queen Mary University of London

This paper discusses the challenges involved in trying to make Politics and IR degree programmes coherent. There are good pedagogical reasons for promoting programme coherence; students engage better at module level when they see the big picture, and learn more overall when they can build on their experiences over time. Our fields, however, are not well-suited to this kind of coherence. They are comprised of multiple sub-fields, often with incompatible ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies. Learning has traditionally been non-linear and non-cumulative, at least in terms of subject knowledge and conceptual understanding. Creating coherence therefore requires careful thought, cross-field collaboration, co-creation with students, and attention to different stages and dimensions of the learning journey. This paper discusses and reflects upon efforts to do this in one large school of politics and international relations, in the hope of supporting others facing similar challenges.

Teaching Holocaust in the Archives in the Age of AI

Shu Wan, PhD candidate, University at Buffalo

This essay explores how to teach the history of the Holocaust within the context of human rights education to Gen Z students. It consists of three sections and begins with an overview of the design and deployment of a class visit to the archives for Holocaust and human rights education. When teaching an undergraduate course about modern world history, I

endeavored to educate students about the connection between the Holocaust and the place they lived. Collaborating with the archivists and librarians at the home institution, the University at Buffalo, I arranged an exhibition regarding the Jewish Buffalonian community's efforts to salvage their peers in WWII Europe. Then, the essay's second section turns to students' responses. After visiting the college archives, they were required to post their reflection on a Padlet page, which featured their awareness of the closeness of the grand narrative of the Holocaust to their everyday lives. The last section of this essay discusses the implications of this outside classroom activity for human rights education in the age of Gen AI. The non-digitized primary source preserved in archives constitutes the blind spot of the promising LLM technology. Students could better understand human rights issues by physically touching the documents and recording past human experiences.

Roundtable:

Championing Pedagogical Scholarship: The ASPIRE Network for Politics and International Relations

Chair: Madeleine Le Bourdon, University of Leeds

Panel: Jeremy Moulton, University of York; Jillian Terry, London School of Economics; Hillary Briffa, Kings College London; Chris Featherstone, University of York.

In 2024, nine Politics, International Relations and Development colleagues from four UK institutions came together to found the Academic Scholarship in Politics and International Relations Education (ASPIRE) Network for academics on teaching-track career paths in our discipline. ASPIRE seeks to represent and advocate for staff on this career trajectory, influencing academic institutions and policy makers to help shape how the teaching-track path functions, how staff can progress within these roles, and how these positions can be used to innovate in high-quality research and teaching in politics and international relations. Launching formally in June 2025 the network aims to empower members to navigate their career paths more effectively, while also fostering the development of research in teaching and learning. In solidarity with members at different career stages across multiple UK institutions, the network will provide guidance to academic leaders seeking to support and champion the Teaching and Scholarship trajectory in their institutions.

In a period of perpetual political uncertainty and as calls grow to reshape the study of politics, ASPIRE therefore takes up the charge to equip the next generation of educators with the tools and vision to meet future challenges head-on. We believe that by prioritising pedagogical scholarship and diverse perspectives, ASPIRE can contribute to a more adaptable and inclusive future for Politics and International Studies, one that engages critically with the changing political landscape, and which prepares students to do the same. This roundtable will present ASPIRE's mission to BISA members, sharing how the network fosters a platform for mentorship, best practice sharing, and policy advocacy that connects theory to urgent, real-world applications.

"Decolonising" an Introduction to International Relations

Dr Antara Datta, Dr Ibrahim Halawi, Dr Will Jones, Dr Daniela Lai, Royal Holloway University of London

This paper looks at our attempts to decolonise and diversify an introductory International Relations module at Royal Holloway. In carrying out this exercise we began with two broad goals: the first was to truly ‘internationalise’ the way we approached IR in a first-year module, so that students were not simply learning about foreign policy in Europe and North America. The second goal was to privilege storytelling and narrative over a broadly theoretical approach to the discipline. This was based on our belief that first year students could only grapple with theoretical approaches once they were more familiar with the ‘story’ of global history. In this paper, we first discuss our approach to the question of ‘decolonising’ the IR curriculum and the pedagogical reasons for introducing this change. Second, we outline the practical steps we took to change this module along with the difficulties we encountered along the way, focusing in particular on the idea of bringing history and narrative back into International Relations. The third and final part of the paper deals with how the new ‘decolonised’ syllabus translated into actual teaching in the classroom, along with our revised assessments and feedback strategies.

Teaching ‘development’: Reflecting on despair and positionality

Dr Ivica Petrikova, Royal Holloway University of London

This presentation addresses the challenges of teaching international development to undergraduate students in a way that is both analytically rigorous and emotionally sustainable. Drawing on my experience of designing and teaching a second-year undergraduate module—*The Politics of International Development*—I focus on two interlinked pedagogical tensions: (1) navigating the personal and political positionalities of both students and myself in the discussion of deeply unequal global realities, and (2) striking a balance between presenting the severity of current development challenges (including climate breakdown, deepening inequalities, and increasing global disorder) and falling into hopelessness. I discuss some practical strategies that I have tried in the classroom—including encouraging reflexivity in assessments, sequencing difficult content, and using examples of locally embedded solutions—to encourage students to engage with the topics taught critically without disengaging emotionally. The presentation further reflects on the issue of teaching development from a position of relative privilege and the risks of reproducing hierarchies in my teaching. I do not offer any clear solutions but hope that my presentation will encourage a discussion with the audience that can help inform the way I – and others – teach ‘development’.

Experiential Learning in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Critical Reflection from Politics and International Relations Education

Dr Gulay Icoz, Middlesex University London

This paper offers a critical reflection on the adoption of experiential learning within UK higher education, with a specific focus on Politics and International Relations programmes. While the integration of experiential methods—particularly field trips—has gained

momentum, their pedagogical potential remains under-explored and inconsistently applied. Drawing on my own practice, including the design and delivery of a recent field trip, I examine how Kolb's experiential learning cycle—comprising concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation—can serve as a more intentional framework for structuring such activities.

The paper argues that in the context of rapid technological advancement and the growing influence of artificial intelligence in education, experiential learning must be critically re-evaluated. Rather than treating field-based learning as supplementary, I propose a more integrated and reflective approach that aligns with both disciplinary goals and the evolving needs of students. Through this lens, I explore how experiential learning can be adapted to remain relevant, inclusive, and transformative in an increasingly digital academic landscape.

Capitalising on Sudden Relevance for Teaching

Professor Stuart McAnulla, University of Leeds

Relating discussion of academic concepts to current global issues is widely recognised as a very effective teaching tool. Equally, curricula designs can sometimes constrain the extent to which politics academics can capitalise on using current events as teaching opportunities. This can be particularly unfortunate when aspects of political systems which are normally considered to be relatively dry, formal or obscure by students suddenly become concerns of central importance in contemporary politics. Relatedly, political theories which can sometimes appear to have little real-world significance to undergraduates can quickly become part of wider public discussion as society seeks to make sense of global crises. This paper reflects on experiences of using such events to engage students on UG Politics and International Relations programme at the University of Leeds, with a focus on several dilemmas including i) combining coverage of divisive/controversial issues with the need for an inclusive approach; ii) harnessing student interest in newsworthy topics without mimicking a 'clickbait' media culture and iii) using extra-curricula events on current events to compliment rather than overshadow regular classroom teaching.