

Campbell talks Campbell

The writer and broadcaster Alastair Campbell spent more than four hours in the department talking to students, staff and our local community on Monday, as he delivered the Peter Campbell Memorial Lecture, named in honour of the first Head of Politics and International Relations at the University of Reading.



Invited to speak as part of our 'Political Voices' strand, Campbell, a key architect of New Labour and best known for his time as Director of Communications for prime Minister Tony Blair, was relaxed, open, passionate and funny as he opined on the current state of politics with students in a departmental Q&A before the main lecture. His stance on

leaving the EU is well known, and he was exceedingly forthcoming in making the case for the folly of Brexit – despite some robust opposition in the room from pro-leave students. Neither a fan of Corbyn, or, particularly the “hostage in Number 10” that he sees Theresa May to be, he suggested that Jeremy Corbyn should be further ahead in the polls, and that neither of the current ‘big two’ leaders may be in place by the time the next election comes round.



Alastair Campbell's main lecture – Changing the Lens on Mental Health –



introduced by the Vice Chancellor, Sir David Bell, focused on the need to treat mental health issues in the same way that we treat physical health. Talking at length about his own break down and the challenges faced by everyone in

today's fast-paced society, from elite sportspeople and politicians, to young people just getting to grips with adulthood, he talked about his work with Time to Listen and on the slow progress we're making as a society in removing the stigma of mental illness.

The Q&A that followed moved from mental health issues through Brexit, the state of the Labour Party, the relative lack of talent on the global political stage, Zimbabwe, Trump and back to mental health. Following the formalities of the lecture theatre, Alastair continued to chat to political allies and foes alike



as he signed books and posed for selfies outside the Van Emden Lecture Theatre.



Following on from Jess Phillips' visit the previous week, Alastair kept the bar raised high for Politics and IR's Political Voices Events - and has already created expectation as to which political figures we'll see at Reading in 2018.

You can read Alastair Campbell's full Peter Campbell Memorial Lecture speech, and some brief thoughts on his visit to Reading, at <http://www.alastaircampbell.org/blog/2017/11/21/changing-the-lens-on-mental-health-and-detecting-yet-more-opposition-to-brexit/>

We are donating £275 at the request of Alastair in lieu of an Honorarium to [Maytree](#), which is a charity that supports suicidal crisis.

Mark Shanahan, organiser, Political Voices

Photographs courtesy of James Garn, Part 3 History and Politics student