Many congratulations to our Politics and International Relations graduates, who processed together with Economics students on Wednesday 6th July 2016. As we weren’t restricted by the ‘no hats in the air’ debacle, we enjoyed celebrating, although William (centre) did have one hat land on his head… The departmental prizes awarded were as follows - The Peter Campbell Prize for Overall Excellence, with highest overall average, and the Peter Campbell Prize for Overall Excellence achieving a First Class Degree and the highest mark for a dissertation both going to William Brierty. The two Peter Campbell Prizes for Overall Excellence achieving a First Class Degree with an average over 70% to Abigail Ho and Richard Hydes. The Department Prizes for Outstanding Contribution to the Department awarded to Richard Hydes, Abigail Leete and Adam Neville, and the Daniel James Award going to Temitayo Ajayi.

(Left photo, l-r) Abigail Leete, Abigail Ho, William Brierty, Richard Hydes and Adam Neville. (Right photo, Temitayo Ajayi with Dr Jonathan Golub.)
PETER CAMPBELL MEMORIAL LECTURE
By Izabel Coleman-Wood

Matthew Parris spoke to an engaged crowd last month for the Peter Campbell Memorial Lecture: Some reflections on British politics. Parris started off with his ties to the university, he knew Peter Campbell well as the founding head of the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Reading, and spoke of him fondly. Parris is a renowned political writer and he injected his satire into the lecture with lines like: "As Dickens did not quite write - 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, Nigel Farage had resigned, Nigel Farage has un-resigned.'"

Parris spoke of the road to recent political events, the Scottish referendum, the US election and Brexit being the main themes. The clashing of the left and right and the merging of the two main political party ideologies was explored alongside the use of social media by the electorate and how that is changing today. We change our politics based on societal changes and therefore social media is ever more important, our views are reinforced by online algorithms showing us what we already think. Parris said that the chaos many have been predicting has arrived and therefore "this conservative finds much here to be conservative about".

He ended on the problem of racism in the rise of the populist right, the issue of migration in the election and referendums, online communities have allowed these people to realise that they are not alone and they have found their voice. Parris ended his lecture by saying we must block our ears to it and wait for the storm to blow over and he thought Peter Campbell would agree we should be patient. Most of the room raised their hands wanting to ask him their questions at the end and we didn't have time to get through them all although many did get to speak to him afterwards. Overall an insightful lecture which is still available online if you missed it.

Photo: Matthew Parris being interviewed by Holly Gibbs

THE FORUM FOR CLIMATE ENGINEERING ASSESSMENT

Professor Catriona McKinnon is in a group working with The Forum for Climate Engineering Assessment (American University) to produce a Report on the International Governance of Solar Radiation Climate Engineering for publication summer 2017. Solar Radiation Management is a climate engineering technique enabling the fast and relatively cheap cooling of the planet. It has great potential benefits in tackling climate change, but could also create enormous dangers. Professor McKinnon’s work on climate justice (especially for future people) will inform the Report, which has the following rubric:

1. To assess the existing SRM governance conversation
2. To identify key debates and open questions
3. To provide a fresh, authoritative analysis of governance pathways
4. To produce crisp, policy-relevant recommendations.

The Report aims to influence policy makers around the world as they form a position on Climate Engineering.

http://ceassessment.org/awg/

SECONDMENT

Dr Mark Shanahan took part in a Cambridge Union Society debate in the run-up to the US Election, proposing the motion: ‘This House has no confidence in the American electorate’. "It was a fantastic occasion," he reported. "But, despite our side delivering all the best speeches, democracy was saved, and the proposition was outvoted by 42per cent to 34 percent with the remainder abstaining. However, I would suggest that we proved our case when it came to the real election!"
PRIZES AND AWARDS

Professor Beatrice Heuser has been selected for a Chair of Excellence at the joint University of Paris I Sorbonne-CNRS EHNE project l’axe 5 « Guerres et traces de guerre » (Wars and Traces of War) for the autumn of 2017. Her research project has the title “What is war?” She will be holding a further conference on “Famous Battles and their Myths”, aiming at the publication of a further edited volume on the subject in French. Prof Heuser has also been invited to become a member of the advisory council of the French government’s think tank on Strategic Studies, IRSEM.

Dr Patrick Tomlin has been awarded the 2017 Berger Memorial Prize for his article, “Retributivists! The Harm Principle Is Not For You!”

Dr Tim Vlandas was awarded a 2020 Research Fellowship to investigate the electoral politics of the shift to monetarism in advanced economies.

Dr Tom Long’s book, Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence was named a Best Book of 2016 by Foreign Affairs.

PUBLICATIONS

Dr Tom Long has just published "In Colombia, it's peace that makes for odd bedfellows" in Latin America goes Global.

Dr Daphne Halikiopoulou has a new working paper for the LSE Hellenic Observatory, which is the first output from her National Bank of Greece/HO grant on the impact of the Golden Dawn on the Greek party system. This paper focuses on the impact of the Golden Dawn on the dynamics of domestic party competition by examining whether there has been a change in issue salience since the party’s dramatic rise. Our main goal is to examine the salience of topics in the Golden Dawn’s agenda from a comparative perspective vis-à-vis the other actors in the system, in order to identify whether attention on particular issues has shifted.

We examine programmatic and ideological materials produced by the Golden Dawn and its competitor parties, including election manifestos and public speeches. We analyse these documents through the employment of a comprehensive framework for coding policy agendas provided by the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP). We find no direct effect on the salience of the immigration issue. However, there is a rise of nationalism across the party system.

Dr Tim Vlandas has recently published a paper in the Journal of French Politics where he analyses Labour market developments and policy responses during and after the crisis in France.

Also recently published is his piece on the political effects of ageing on inflation in the Review of European Economic Policy. He argues that the elderly play a large role in determining countries’ monetary policies. Given the well-known inflation aversion among the elderly, the rise in their share of the population would seem to indicate that countries are likely to continue pursuing ultra-low inflation rates for the foreseeable future.

In September, Dr Vlandas and Dr Halikiopoulou (University of Reading) published a working paper with the European Trade Union Institute. They argue with extensive statistical analysis that the rise of far-right parties in Europe has less to do with the economic crisis and unemployment levels as such but more with specific labour market policies and institutions. They show that the deregulation of employment protection legislation and the reduction of employment benefits have in many countries intensified the support for these far-right parties.

Dr Mark Shanahan has a new book – Eisenhower at the Dawn of the Space Age.

WELCOME BACK TO THE NEW TERM

By Dr Mark Shanahan

We started the new term with a ‘Welcome Back’ meeting for Part 2 and Part 3 undergrads. It was great, though bitter-sweet, to start that meeting by presenting Futoon Al Mahruqi and Freddy Farias-Arias with our first-ever Matthew Cox Awards. Matt was a fine student who sadly died last year. His memory lives on through the generosity of his family who set up this award for students who make a positive difference to the life of the department - Futoon and Freddy are richly deserving recipients.
POLITICS DEPT. IN THE MEDIA

Dr Tom Long was quoted in the National Student and Yahoo news:

Dr Tom Long, a lecturer in politics and international relations at the University of Reading, sees the result in part as a continuing backlash against globalisation, and the desire to find an outsider to govern. He said: “Obama’s record has been very good in terms of the unemployment rate, but it’s only very recently that the US has started to see improvements in wages. Wages have stagnated for a long time, particularly the bottom half of the income distribution. So some of these sorts of blue collar workers who formerly maybe had good-paying industrial jobs have been dislocated.

“All of the early indications were that that group would go pretty heavily for Clinton, but might not turn out at the same rate that it turned out for Obama. And so part of that is probably a lack of real connection with Clinton – a lack of personal connection, and seeing her as part of the establishment and an establishment figure.”

Dr Long has also been interviewed by Deutsche Welle English TV, October 7, 2016, on Colombian President Santos’ Nobel Peace Prize, then by France24 on Thursday 24th November 2016 to talk about the new Colombia peace agreement, followed by Al Jazeera’s Inside Story. He discussed the recent referendum on Colombia’s peace accords. And something a little different… Dr Long reports “I was in the Truman Library doing research. I found a very funny letter that a guy in Argentina wrote Harry Truman about UFOs. I put it on Twitter on Wednesday 7th December afternoon. By Wednesday evening, Argentina’s second largest newspaper, La Nacion, wrote a story about it”.

In another interview with France24, Tom spoke about the Olympics in Rio.

In July 2016 Dr Jonathan Golub was interviewed by BBC World TV & ABC News TV (Australia) to discuss Theresa May’s potential relationship with the European Union and the appointment of Boris Johnson to the cabinet. Then in October was interviewed by CTN News TV (Canada) to discuss Brexit and Theresa May’s announcement about invoking Article 50, and by Voice of Islam Radio to discuss Brexit and the dynamics of British-EU negotiations. On 10 November, Dr Golub was interviewed on the Anne Diamond show on BBC Radio Berkshire. He discusses the election of Donald Trump and the similarities with Brexit. In both cases, angry and uneducated voters were conned into harming their own interests.

GO WEST!

By Dr Mark Shanahan

On December 7, 27 students met up well before dawn to head west to visit the Welsh Assembly as part of our Parliamentary Studies module.

Following a quick tour of the Richard Rogers-designed Senedd, UKIP Assembly Member and veteran ex-Tory Neil Hamilton gave us the first of our private audiences; first, an interesting story of his life (if a bit abridged), followed by some probing student questions.

As Part 3 student Chris Imms recalled: "We then had a talk by the Labour AM Jane Hutt (below) and a meeting with Kirsty Williams (below), the only Liberal Democrat in government. This provided us with another interesting and informative Q&A session. Overall, there were a good range of views from the various AMs. Finally, we watched a plenary session in the Senedd, Questions to the Finance Minister, followed by Questions to the Health Minister. Here we saw most obviously the divide between Westminster and Cardiff, in part due to the extreme locality of the Questions that, for me, made the accusation of the Welsh Assembly being a Quango that has got out of control all the more convincing."
ISRAELI DIPLOMAT VISIT

By Charlotte Crowley

Last Thursday, the University of Reading’s Politics and International Relations society had the pleasure of hosting Israeli Diplomat Yiftah Curiel lead a tactful yet thought provoking discussion titled ‘Can the Two-State Solution Work, or What is the Alternative?’ Mr Curiel’s extensive work as an Israeli diplomat has previously included his role as Deputy-Chief-of-Mission at Israel's embassy in Addis Ababa, and working for three years at the Strategic Affairs Division of the Ministry in Jerusalem, before being posted in London as Press Attache.

Curiel first spoke to us outlining some of Israel's most recent history, speaking of his recent experiences with his family when bombing began in Tel-Aviv, something he first heard again whilst with his young children and which now all those who live in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv are very much accustomed to. He explained how on a local level religious differences between families in his community is not an issue as such; it is the bombings, heard on a regular basis that reminds Israelis of the ongoing political turmoil in the region.

Continuing onwards, he then discussed the possibilities of differing solutions to the conflict. Curiel and the Israeli Embassy acknowledged the difficulty of a two-state solution, but laid out a framework under which he showed positivity for its success. He stated that both the Israeli’s and Palestinians had made unfeasible claims and each trying to justify their own claims was part of the problem. Curiel also raised the issue of Hamas, defining it as a terrorist organisation which should be not taken seriously by the Israeli government when it comes to peace talks. He said that the Israeli government could not negotiate with an entity that called for the complete removal of Israel as a state.

Proceeding onward, Society Treasurer Ed Jeffrey held a discussion with Yiftah before it was then opened to the rest of the room, where staff and students were able to offer questions and engage in discussion with certain issues.

Jonno Simons mentioned the right to return, Curiel’s response to which suggested many families do not want to return as they have been away for so long, referencing Mahmoud Abbas’s statement on visiting Israel as a tourist, and that the idea of the right of return clashes with the Balfour Declaration’s idea that Israel is a home for the Jewish people. On a challenging question by Leen Najjab, Curiel’s response to the role of youth in solving the conflict was a sceptical one, believing that the key concern is solving the issue of Hamas and crucially changing the thinking of Palestinians because of the “incitement” of the issue.

Overall, “it was a protracted struggle for RUPIRS to get the Israeli speaker onto campus,” commented Politics Lecturer, Dr Mark Shanahan. “But it was worth it. While Yiftah Curiel was the consummate diplomat throughout, using the words of conciliation to cover a steeliness of purpose, the quality of the questions from both Ed on stage, and from the audience, was high, and he was certainly put through his paces. I look forward to a mirror-event with a Palestinian speaker in the near future.” Matt Bedborough commented, “It was very informative, there was variety of topics raised and he didn’t shy away from hard questions.” RUPIRS President William Cole said “I would like to thank the Israeli Embassy and our guest speaker Yiftah for a very interesting an engaging talk. Our Treasurer Ed Jeffrey had a great discussion with the speaker on a range of topics, followed by some very meaningful and considered questions from the audience. All in all, a very good event.”

WAYS OF WAR NEWS
Dr Geoff Sloan

From January 2017 Miss Fiona Almond, Senior Research Manager at the Joint Information Activities Group in the MOD will be joining SPEIR as a Visiting Fellow. Working through HBS and other Departments affiliated to the Ways of War Centre she will be addressing the following research question: “What are the contemporary possibilities for tripartite relationships between higher education, commercial/consultancy, and defence with particular reference to developing operations in the information environment, understanding and influence?” Reading has attracted this Visiting Fellowship in the face of competition from Warwick, KCL and Exeter universities.

On the 8th November the Department of Modern Languages and the Ways of War Centre hosted the latest in the series of the World War One Public Lectures. The speaker was Professor John Horne MRIA and Director of the Centre for War Studies, Trinity College, Dublin. The subject of his talk was: “A Tale of Two Battles: Narrating Verdun and the Somme”. This event attracted support from a number of departments in the university.

KEEP IN TOUCH

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ROLE OF LABOUR PROVISIONS IN PTAS DEBATED

By Dr Damian Raess

Leading experts, practitioners and academics gathered for a one-day workshop in Geneva on 1st December 2016 to discuss the research results of the project entitled “A Social Clause through the Back Door: Labor Provisions in Preferential Trade Agreements”, coordinated by Dr Damian Raess. The event marked the end of the funded phase of the two-year project (2014-2016).

The workshop was attended by 25 people coming from the principal partner institutions, including the International Labor Organisation, the European Trade Union Institute/Confederation (ETUI/ETUC), the Swiss Trade Union Federation and the Graduate Institute, as well as from international organizations and civil society organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the European Free Trade Association and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. Kimberly Elliott, a Senior Economist at the Centre for Global Development, a Washington DC-based think-tank, with two decades of expertise on the topic of labour standards in trade agreements, provided leadoff remarks. The next speaker, Dora Sari, PhD candidate at the University of Geneva, introduced the new dataset on labour provisions in preferential trade agreements (LABPTA dataset) by Damian Raess and Dora Sari, which is one of the products of the collaborative project. Two sessions (“Do labour standards included in PTAs matter?” and “What are the origins of labor provisions in PTAs?”) with two paper presentations each followed (for details regarding the papers contact Dr Raess at d.raess@reading.ac.uk). A third panel focused on the views from the social partners, represented by Tom Jenkins from the ETUC and Dr Jan Atteslander from economiesuisse, before Dr Raess wrapped up the discussion in a final panel by summing up the findings and drawing policy implications and recommendations. As the UK government embarks on an ambitious trade agenda in the post-Brexit era, there are lessons to be learnt about what works and what doesn’t when it comes to designing sustainability provisions in trade agreements. One of the major achievements of the workshop has been to bring together people from different backgrounds and with different expertise, many of whom did not know each other, to take stock of and comment on the first systematic evidence on the causes and consequences of the inclusion of labour provisions in preferential trade agreements. The discussion of course lives on (and so does the more mundane task of revising the papers). The day finished happily with a conference dinner in a restaurant with a chalet-type dining room eating cheese fondue and raclette. Yummy!!!