

STUDENT NEWSWIRE



Department of
Politics and
International
Relations

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DPIR Welcomes You



Dear Students,

Happy New Year (if a bit belated) and welcome back to Hilary Term.

I hope all goes well with your studies. If it doesn't, then I hope you know where to go to get advice. If you don't, then let me know. And I am always available to meet with you if you feel the need.

I write this just before our department is to undergo its five-year review by the Social Sciences Division – our second such, since we were founded only in 2000. My sense is that we are doing pretty well but I will be interested to know, especially from the external assessors, how we can do better. We are also conducting a major review of our graduate programmes just now and you may have had questionnaires about your experience of the department and how we can improve teaching, supervision, training and other aspects of our work. I hope you will return your views which will be of real value to us.

Best wishes,

Stephen

Stephen Whitefield, Head of Department

A Blake Ewing



I am a second year DPhil student in political theory at Oriel College and the new Graduate Editor of *Politics in Spires*. In this new role I focus on increasing content on the site and expanding readership and awareness within and outside the Oxford and Cambridge communities. Going forward, I envision the blog as a knowledge clearing house that highlights recent academic output and gives students, academics and alumni the opportunity to link their work and expertise with current events and trends.

Politics in Spires is a new venture with room for lots of innovation. In

comparison to other institutions like think tanks and research centres, the academy spends little investment and time distributing its knowledge output to wider audiences and through new media platforms. *Politics in Spires* gives Oxford and Cambridge academics and students the opportunity to experiment with blogging and social media to reach new readers and increase awareness of their own work.

Instead of delivering papers to a room of thirty people (or less) we can have our ideas read by hundreds and even thousands, with links to our own websites and longer research papers. Like academia.edu, this website can serve as a crucial element of our online business cards. In time, I envision having blogger profile pages with links to a CV, working papers and conference updates.

In addition to my editorial role, I am working with the Department of Politics and International Relations to prepare a case study based on *Politics in Spires* for an upcoming report commissioned by The Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Joint

[Profiles: Politics in Spires blog Student Representatives](#)

Information Systems Committee (JISC), focusing on ways to increase access to Open Education Resources (OER). At the moment I hope we can gain lessons learned in three key areas – incentivising contributions, managing quality and streamlining blog management practices between two universities.

When not focused on the blog, my main academic interests centre around the intersection between ideas and politics and exploring how historical events shape and change how we construct political ideologies. I am a graduate member of Oxford's Centre for Political Ideologies and also co-run a politics and international relations seminar series at Oxford's Rothermere American Institute. Before coming to Oxford I worked in Washington as a journalist, writing mainly for *The Economist*, and also as a writer/researcher at the World Bank. I hold a MSc at The London School of Economics and a BA from Colorado College.

[Politics in Spires Graduate Editor](#)

Cailin Crockett

Cailin has been a Graduate Ambassador for *Politics in Spires* since March 2011. As a Graduate Ambassador, she enjoys contributing opinion pieces relating her perspectives on American politics, reporting on the wealth of knowledge being produced and shared throughout the university, and interviewing Oxford faculty members about their research endeavours. She is grateful for the opportunity to be a part of *Politics in Spires*, and views the the blog as an important forum for scholars to engage with the community and present their expertise on current affairs.

In her second year of the Political

Theory MPhil, Cailin is currently working on research for her Master's thesis: a critical analysis of microfinance programmes for women, evaluating the extent to which women's economic empowerment through microcredit challenges the structural injustice of global capitalism. When she is not in the Philosophy library working on her thesis, or in the Politics Department writing for the blog, Cailin can be found practicing football with her college team, or at the Oxfam House, where she is a volunteer researcher for the Women's Economic Livelihoods division.

Prior to arriving in Oxford, Cailin completed her Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Spanish and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where she graduated Summa



Cum Laude, with highest departmental honours. Upon completing her MPhil, Cailin will serve as a Presidential Management Fellow in Washington, D.C., working for the United States government.

[Politics in Spires Graduate Ambassador](#)



Blog Focus Group

You are warmly invited to attend a focus group to discuss the Politics in Spires blog at 10 – 11am on Friday 24th February (in the DPIR, room tbc), to be hosted by Blake Ewing, Politics in Spires Graduate Editor, and Kate Candy, Blog Administrator.

You may be aware that the DPIR has just secured funding from HEA/ JISC to complete a case study titled 'The Politics in Spires blog', examining 'Open Education Resources (OER) and student as producers'. The award will be transferred on completion of a case study of up to 7,000 words by the end of April 2012. This focus group will meet to look at how two academic institutions can be innovative in managing quality and boosting content from students. The case study will cover the themes of Quality Control, Reward and Recognition, Cross-institutional Cooperation, and Open Learning, and we hope that the meeting will look at these issues from a student perspective.

Your thoughts and input will be very welcome!

Coffee, tea and cake/biscuits will be available.

Please respond to kate.candy@politics.ox.ac.uk

We hope to see you there!

Kate Candy
Blake Ewing

Maria Repnikova

A Rhodes and a Wai Seng Senior Scholar, Maria Repnikova is a third-year DPhil student in Politics, based at St Antony's College. Her research focuses on contemporary comparative politics and the media in China and Russia. Maria has spent extensive time in both countries – several months in Russia, and a total of two years in China. She is constantly in touch with journalists and academics in both countries.

Prior to coming to Oxford for her MPhil and then DPhil in Politics, Maria attended the Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, and then spent a year in China as a Fulbright Scholar, researching Chinese migration to Russia.

In addition to pursuing academic research, she has had some experience in journalism and communications, including a fellowship from the Overseas Press Club at Reuters TV, where she produced a number of feature stories. She has also held an internship position with the communications division of Google in both London and Moscow. Maria speaks fluent Russian, Chinese (Mandarin), and Spanish.

As a *Politics in Spires* graduate Ambassador, Maria hopes to help develop this blog into a dynamic platform for scholarly exchange in Oxford, Cambridge, and beyond. She plans to engage more contributions to the blog from students and academics. She has also conducted and published interviews with prominent academics, and hopes to post other useful information for the community of Politics and International Relations. Working with the DPIR administration,



her other ambition is to profile all the DPhil students affiliated to the DPIR and feature their research projects to foster a tighter student community and more mentoring relationships between academics and students. The blog can provide an opportunity for students to publish their views and exchange opinions in less formal, but still intellectually stimulating, fashion.

Maria believes that an active on-line community would greatly benefit the DPIR and allow for unprecedented opportunities of exchanging opinions on important issues, as well inciting research collaboration. The blog can also bring the Politics departments at Oxford and Cambridge closer. And lastly, *Politics in Spires* can lead to more collaboration with departments at other universities around the world, which is essential for students and scholars of this quickly evolving and expanding field.

Politics in Spires Blog Ambassador

Politics in Spires welcomes new student Ambassadors – if you are interested please contact oxbridge.blog@gmail.com

Kate Brooks

An ESRC funded scholar, Kate Brooks is a new face in Oxford, beginning her first year of the MPhil in International Relations based at Wadham college. She plans to focus her research within the field of feminist thought in international relations and conflict studies, particularly within the region of the Middle East and is hoping to undertake a thesis upon the effect of the conscription of women into the Israeli Defence Force on the nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Prior to commencing her MPhil at Oxford, Kate undertook her bachelors in Politics and International Relations at the University of Bath, after which she spent time working as a researcher and teaching fellow in the University of Kassala in Eastern Sudan, where she was also involved with local organisations aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of female genital mutilation. Kate later worked as a parliamentary assistant for the Labour Party in the European Parliament, focussing upon the

Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality. It is within her role at the European Parliament that Kate gained experience in media relations and journalism, contributing to one of the top ten Labour blogs.

Kate also rows for Wadham college, is involved with competitive debating at the Oxford Union, and is highly engaged with the feminist movement both in Oxford and internationally. Kate has a wide experience of working abroad having worked in Paris, China, Brussels and Sudan and speaks French while studying Russian, Mandarin and Arabic.

As a *Politics in Spires* Graduate Ambassador, Kate seeks above all to foster a pluralistic approach within the blog and to encourage a diverse range of academics and students to contribute in the hope of maintaining both lively and enlightening debate. She believes that joint university projects such as *Politics in Spires* ensure that the academic communities of Oxford



and Cambridge continue to engage with debate and ideas emerging outside of their own scholarly circles. It also allows students to be exposed to a wider range of views and ideas than they might otherwise be. Above all, Kate hopes to contribute to a project she believes enables the DPIR to become a fully integrated, dynamic, pluralistic and inspiring academic community.

[Politics in Spires Blog Ambassador](#)

Politics in Spires prize for the best student blog (Nov – Jan)

Politics in Spires is pleased to announce that the prize for the best blog published from November 2011-January 2012 will be awarded to the joint authors of 'How are election preparations unfolding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)? Hope or failure? Two perspectives'—Hubertus Juergenliemk, PhD student at POLIS, University of Cambridge and a Visiting Doctoral student at the University of Oxford during the academic year 2011-12, and Lindsay Scorgie, PhD student at POLIS, University of Cambridge. Please read their blog [here](#).

Scot Peterson, of the Oxford Politics in Spires Editorial Committee says, 'The blog was really interesting, original and thought-provoking. It was well argued and incorporated material from students' field work for their degrees. This is exactly what we are looking for – congratulations!'

Congratulations also to Amber Murrey and to Erwin Kippenberg, who received honourable mentions for the following posts:

- 'Connections between the Hydrocarbon Scramble and US Troop Deployment in Uganda?'—Amber Murrey, DPhil student in Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. Please read the full text [here](#).
- 'Many Trails to Freedom: Islamic Democracy is not an Oxymoron'—Erwin Knippenberg, MSc in Economics for Development in the Department of International Development (QEH), University of Oxford. Please read the full text [here](#).

The Editorial Committee was pleased that two undergraduate students, Tim Wigmore ([How the ICC can help Kenya](#)) and Abrar Nurani ([What Obama didn't say about Iraq](#)) have contributed to *Politics in Spires* and hopes that more undergraduates will be encouraged to do so.

The next round of the blog prize will run from February – April 2012: please see full details at <http://politicsinspires.org/oxford-student-competition/>. Please send blogs to Oxbridge.blog@gmail.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Patrycja Stys: Graduate Student Profile



My name is Patrycja Stys and I'm a doctoral candidate affiliated with the Department of Politics and International Relations and Nuffield College. I completed my MPhil in Comparative Government at St Antony's College, where I began working on post-conflict state and social reconstruction, concentrating on the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and former combatants in Rwanda. My current research remains firmly wedded to this concept, but extends the geographical focus to Africa's western Rift Valley. Provisionally entitled 'The Politics of Staying and Going: Resisting Repatriation in Africa's Great Lakes Region', my thesis explores issues of nationalism, ethnicity and citizenship in exile, social networks and political activism of refugee communities across state borders, and the practicalities of mending broken nation-states through the return of expatriated populations.

This project is based on thirteen

months of fieldwork conducted in 2009 and 2011, across three refugee settlements in Uganda, three refugee camps in Rwanda, two refugee transit centres in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), countless villages in western Rwanda, eastern DRC and Uganda, and the districts of Kigali and Kampala, home to urban refugees. The research consisted of focus groups and semi-structured in-depth interviews with refugees and repatriates. Additionally, it encompassed elite interviews with pertinent government and NGO officials, and consultations with local and foreign academics and practitioners.

Most importantly, this study is about the people who trusted me with their stories, with their hopes and their dreams, their uncertainties concerning the present and the future, and their traumatic recollections of the past. It is about their fate as they struggle between staying or going, and the realities and ramifications of this choice. The goal of this work,

as ambitious as it is simple, is to further the understanding that while repatriation is the "best solution" to what the international community sees as "the refugee problem", at times, it is neither possible nor desirable. The point is to inform policy-makers and policies made, so that if these individuals decide to return, the decision is truly voluntary, and can be taken with the realistic hopes of finding and recreating home.

I've recently returned from nine months of fieldwork, living and working and learning. I am exhausted. This type of research involves living in refugee settlements, and hiking between 12 and 21 kilometers a day. It is certainly not typical in terms of our Department's focus, but without its ardent support, I could have never accomplished it. Quite frankly, I would not have even thought I was capable of it. For that, I will never cease being grateful.

[Image: Western Rwanda](#)

Kimberley Adams



Congratulations to Kimberley Adams on her appointment as new Undergraduate Studies Officer

I would like to announce my appointment as the new Undergraduate Studies Officer. Since graduating in 2008 with a degree in Medical Genetics I worked as a Research Assistant in the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine. Following my three years there I decided that I wanted to change the area I worked in and move away from science. That

is when I applied for and successfully gained the position here as Politics Undergraduate Studies Officer, a job in which I look forward to working as part of the courses team and dealing with the undergraduate courses administration.

Kimberley Adams
kimberley.adams@politics.ox.ac.uk



Wendy Wilkin

Congratulations to Wendy Wilkin on her appointment as PPE Administrator

Wendy says, "I very much look forward to building on my predecessor, Liz Griffith's, good work in developing and maintaining efficient PPE administrative processes, building productive relationships with colleagues and students and encouraging high quality applicants to study PPE at Oxford from the widest range of participants".

Wendy Wilkin can be contacted at wendy.wilkin@economics.ox.ac.uk.

Oxford is celebrating the centenary of its first academic appointment in Politics

"Political Science and Institution Building: Oxford in Comparative Perspective"

The Lee Lecture in Political Science and Government given by Robert E. Goodin, FBA Professor of Government, University of Essex Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Australian National University

The Examination Schools, High Street, at 5:00 pm, Tuesday, 6 March 2012

Oxford is celebrating the centenary of its first academic appointment in Politics. Political science has much to teach about the nature of institution building, what conditions facilitate it and what inhibit it. Turning those lessons on the discipline itself, this lecture explores what guidance political science has to provide concerning what is involved in institutionalizing a discipline within a university, in general. It will draw attention to particular features of Oxford that makes doing so harder there than elsewhere, and to particular features of Politics that makes it harder with respect to that subject than others.

All welcome.

The lecture is the ninth in a series funded by a generous benefaction from Dr S.T. Lee, who has funded lectures in humanities all over the world – 'the sun never sets on S.T. Lee's projects'

All Souls College Oxford, OX1 4AL

Spotlight on events

A reminder of the weekly events mailing list:

Subscribers to this list are circulated weekly in term time with a list of events for the following week. Please contact James Baldwin, james.baldwin@politics.ox.ac.uk to subscribe. Please note that we only send one email circular per week, which duplicates the information on the [DPIR website](#).

Please note it is not DPIR policy to circulate events to staff or students by email due to the volume of events taking place. The DPIR's research centres or programmes have mailing lists which are used to publicise centre / programme events. To subscribe to a list, please contact the administrator for the centre / programme: details on the individual websites.

Undergraduate events and announcements mailing list

There is also an undergraduate events and announcements mailing list for PPE and History & Politics students. Join by emailing Kimberley Adams, kimberley.adams@politics.ox.ac.uk

"Interesting Talks Oxford"

The Facebook page "Interesting Talks Oxford" has been recommended as helpful in discovering events across the University:

<https://www.facebook.com/oxfordtalks?sk=wall>

There is also a group for this:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/interestingtalksoxford/>

Interpretive Analysis Network

In Trinity Term 2012, DPIR will launch the Interpretive Analysis Network. The IAN will act as a forum for discussion, mentoring and expertise gathering for graduate students and academics in DPIR using research methods that engage with the interpretive analysis of text, such as transcripts of extended interviews and focus group discussions.

Students from International Relations, Comparative Politics, Political Theory and European Politics regularly use interpretive methods to gather and process data for their theses. Such methods commonly involve elite interviewing, extended interviews, focus groups and, less frequently, qualitative surveying. Apart from short introductory courses offered in the MPhil programmes, there is no ongoing guidance for students employing this particular range of data gathering or the analytic methods for interpreting this data. Many, but not all, graduate students will have the opportunity to follow the Department's short courses, but it is only once students are in the field or analysing material that they truly grapple with the challenges of this mode of research. At that point they need contact with others with experience and the practical expertise of 'having done it'.

In this spirit, the IAN will act as a repository of knowledge and experience, as well as a forum for mentoring DPIR researchers at all levels of experience. It is open to graduate, post-doctoral and academic members of the Department and will complement university-wide or division-level methods training with a more targeted set of resources for politics students.

Researchers will primarily access the IAN through an online forum hosted on Weblearn. This site will contain a library of resources exploring theoretical, methodological and ethical aspects of data gathering and analysis, insights from researchers' practical experience, a discussion forum, FAQ section and event announcements. From time to time, the IAN will arrange lectures and workshops.

The IAN will be formally launched early in Trinity Term 2012. The launch will include a lecture introducing the Department's key experts in interpretive research methods and a demonstration on how to use the Weblearn site. More details to follow shortly.

If you are interested in getting involved with the IAN in its establishment phase, contributing resources for inclusion on the Weblearn site or have any questions regarding the network, please get in contact with Angela Cummine or Liz Frazer.

Angela.cummine@new.ox.ac.uk

Doctoral Candidate in Politics

Elizabeth.Frazer@new.ox.ac.uk

Lecturer in Politics

Student photographers

The Department is in touch with several volunteer student photographers, who have kindly offered to give their time to increase our stock of images for use on the website and in publications. We have requested the following:

- Photo-diaries: images representing a week in the life of a student (undergraduate and graduate)
- Images of groups of students at work in libraries
- Lectures and seminars etc.
- College and Oxford shots

We hope to put together an exhibition at the end of Hilary Term: watch this space!

CPI Conference: 'The Politics of Interpretation & The Interpretation of Politics'



From left to right: Professor Michael Freeden (Oxford), Jens Olesen (Oxford), Professor Jean Grondin (Montréal), Dr Carsten Dutt (Heidelberg), Professor Dieter Teichert (Konstanz/Lucerne)

In September 2011, the CPI drew the academic year to a close with one of the largest conferences since its inception in 2002. The international conference brought together over fifty established and younger scholars from Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The conference was devoted to one of the most important intellectual paradigms of humanities and social sciences scholarship—the interpretation of texts. Even though theories about law and literature, philosophy and political thought, history and theology all rely on textual interpretation, approaches to textual interpretation are seldom subjected to critical scrutiny across disciplinary divides. Moreover, there has virtually been no interdisciplinary exchange about the question of whether these approaches are ideologically sustained, and if so, what consequences this has for our understanding of texts. The two-day international conference on 'The Politics of Interpretation & The Interpretation of Politics', organized by Jens Olesen, sought to redress these imbalances.

In six panels structured around 'Hermeneutics', 'Contextualist Approaches', 'Feminist Interpretations', 'Deconstruction', 'Philosophy, Law & Interpretation', 'Strauss and Esoteric Reading', as well as one panel devoted to graduate students and early

career researchers, experts in their respective approaches engaged in lively discussions which benefited from the diversity of perspectives of the speakers and participants. Issues such as the role of intentions in the interpretation of texts, the question of how much, if any, contextual information is required for their understanding, and whether ideologically charged approaches induce interpreters to systematically ignore some aspects of texts, whilst emphasizing others, were among the questions raised and discussed.

Interdisciplinary fluidity and transnational perspectives on the politics of textual interpretation constituted one of the conference's major strengths. Most of its papers spoke across the disciplines rather than to field-specific internal dialogues, thus demonstrating the pertinence of cross-disciplinary collaboration.

In light of the enthusiastic reception and the high quality of the conference, audio recordings of its presentations have been published on the Department's [website](#). More information about the publication of the conference's proceedings will be released on the CPI website in due course.

Jens Olesen, DPhil Student in Politics

Announcements

[IMPORTANT! DPIP Student Survey for MPhils and DPhils](#)

If you are a 2nd-year Politics MPhil student or a Politics DPhil student, you should have received an e-mail from David Miller inviting you to participate in a departmental survey regarding your programme. Please complete this survey! It will be used to review the MPhil and DPhil programmes, and you will get the chance to share your opinion on your programme thus far. As an added incentive, completing the survey will enter you into a draw to win one of several £20 Amazon gift cards! Your opinions are extremely important to us, so please look for the survey in your inbox. Reminders will be sent out over the next few days. Thank you for your participation!

[Faculty Recruitment - research presentations](#)

The Department is recruiting this term to a number of faculty positions including the Alastair Buchan Chair in International Relations and University Lectureships in Comparative European Politics and Government (including the Politics of the European Union) and Comparative Government and Politics (including the UK). Shortlisted candidates are invited to give presentations on their research to the Department's staff and students – details will be circulated by email, so do please consider coming along.

[Buddy scheme for Department DPhil Student Visitors](#)

A number of DPhil students from across the globe visit the DPIP for periods of a term to one-year under the DPIP's Visitor Programme. This year we have had student visitors from Australia, China, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland. We are looking for a small number of DPIP DPhil students who would be willing to act as a 'buddy' for future student visitors to help them settle into the Department and Oxford. To participate in this scheme or to learn more please contact Jason Hussain (jason.hussain@politics.ox.ac.uk).

New graduate admissions e-brochure



The graduate admissions e-brochure is now [online](#). Janice French and Kate Candy would like to thank all of you who contributed to the project: we hope that you enjoy the finished product. The brochure will be refreshed for the 2013 graduate admissions deadline - we will be in touch with you in good time to request updates to information.

Thank you for reading this issue of this newsletter - we hope you enjoyed it!

If you have announcements, notices or suggestions for editorial pieces for Trinity Term's issue of *Student Newswire*, please contact Kate Candy, kate.candy@politics.ox.ac.uk. Kate also welcomes your feedback about this issue of *Student Newswire*.

Copy deadline: Friday 11 May 2012