Welcome from the Head of Department

Autumn term was particularly busy for PIR. Among the student achievements in the news last term was the work of PIR winners of the inaugural Global Leadership Programme (GLP), which was on display at an exhibition event and awards ceremony hosted by the Principal on 29 November in the Picture Gallery. The GLP is an initiative which aims to promote global citizenship and personal development, to enhance employability by developing team work and leadership skills, and to build student competence in responding successfully to cultural difference through the tools of experiential learning and reflection. The programme was launched this year with 20 students from 13 departments. Five PIR students in their final year won places on the programme: Brian Clarke, Joanna Leigh, Valeria Nikonova, Hannah Stanton, and Emily Williams. The exhibition and awards ceremony showcased a set of fascinating case studies and reflections which students developed based on a fact-finding trip to Berlin earlier this year. Congratulations, and well done, Brian, Joanna, Valeria, Hannah, and Emily!

Staff were busy throughout the term completing plans for two new PIR research centres.

PIR’s new Centre in International Public Policy (CIPP) has been created to provide a research-intensive institutional base for programmes in international politics and a platform for their further development, notably with regard to more applied and practice-oriented elements in teaching. Linked to CIPP, is our new MSc in International Public Policy, which is designed as a pathway to employment in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors for those concerned with policy issues that are transnational in nature. PIR’s new Centre for the Study of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East will serve as a hub for research and teaching on development and on the politics of Africa, South Asia, China, and the Middle East. The flagship program of this new Centre is a new MSc Politics of Development. In addition to these programmes, in 2017/18 we will also be rolling out the MSc Campaigns, Elections, and Democracy. This programme, which revamps and replaces an existing programme (EPOP), is designed to equip students with theoretical and empirical tools to understand electoral behaviour and devise effective campaigns to influence it. These developments, along with our great new members of staff, and other stories highlighted in this Newsletter, are testimony to an active, engaged, vibrant and growing research community. Watch this space – there’s more to come!

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter; and for regular updates on what’s on in the Department please remember to follow us on Twitter and Facebook and look out for updates on the website.
voices. The play touches on dramatic aspects of the Battle of Mogadishu, the reason why he became an orphan and began his journey across the African Horn. From childhood to adulthood he experiences losses and fear, yet in each of these scenes there is a shining light of hope coming through. Despite being forced to cope with the worst problems of today's society - such as crime, human trafficking, migration, poverty and xenophobia - his persona remains integral and faithful for a good future.

Asad's adventurous and tragic journey represents the moment in which epic narrative and contemporary African politics merge.

New Student Journal: the Despatch Box

Last term saw the launch of PIRsoc's hotly anticipated and long-overdue Journal ran by and publishing the work of students. Named 'The Despatch Box' to represent that this journal is a place for anyone of any political disposition and mind to present their ideas fairly and on the same level as everyone else.

Our Board of Writers, led tremendously by Kelli Jones, Editor in Chief, have been working incredibly hard, having worked on producing two intriguing and thought provoking articles each week since the Journal's launch. Our special series on the US Presidential Election culminated with a live feed on the night.

Postgraduate Workshop: the Challenges of Fieldwork in Africa

There were fifteen excellent presentations given around these themes from postgraduate scholars from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, the U.K., Germany, France, Spain, and Russia. Papers were given emotional aspects of working with grandfathers taking care of AIDS orphaned grandchildren; the challenges of being an outsider attempting to infiltrate the 'joking culture' of Senegal, and the emotional and physical strain of being a researcher alone in the field.

Keynote speakers at the workshop were Dr Julia Gallagher, from Royal Holloway's PIR department, who shared her own experiences of conducting research in Zimbabwe and South Africa and the messiness of the research process, and Dr Rebekka Friedman from King's College London, who described her experiences of carrying out research in post-conflict zones.

Since the workshop, Lyn has been collaborating with a number of presenters in order to put together an edited volume of work to disseminate experience and advice beyond the workshop to current and future generations of postgraduate researchers who are planning to conduct Africa-based research. The workshop has also generated a Facebook group - Researching Africa Networking Group – to connect and offer advice to new researchers who are out in the field. Anyone interested in joining this group should contact lyn.johnstone@rhul.ac.uk.

PIR Staff at Student Graduation, Winter 2016
Student Events

Our term kicked off with a fantastic Freshers’ ‘Fortnight of events, ranging from our Welcome BBQ (or more picnic), to our Pub Golf and Pub Quiz. We look forwards to those we welcomed into the society making big ground over the next three years.

This year we’ve put on more events (we believe) than our last three years combined. We have had fantastic guest speakers ranging from the always discussion stimulating Israeli Deputy Ambassador to Yannick Oho Bambe, esteemed documentarist. We were very proud to host this term’s Formal Hall dinner with special guests, Andrew Stephenson MP, alumnus of Royal Holloway; Principal Paul Layzell; and SU Vice President Pippa Gentry. We have also thoroughly enjoyed hosting several inter-society debates over the course of the term, and look forwards to making ‘The Great Debate’ a regular fixture in the Holloway calendar.

We’ve also had a fantastic social term, with events ranging from our now famous Pizza and Politics film evenings, which we will continuing for as long as our budget allows. We’ve had two exciting Pub Quizzes this term and look forwards to continuing this tradition into the new year. We made a big presence at the SU’s Come In Your Soc’s evening where we dazzled the dance floor as emojis.

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In February we will host Phillip Hammond MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, as well as hopefully taking a cohort of PIR Members to Brussels to visit the EU, NATO, and other key establishments based there. At some point we will also be getting a special tour of the Foreign Commonwealth Office, Parliament, followed by drinks in Westminster. We are looking forwards to more interesting and fun inter-society events, as well as our annual ‘Live Below The Line’ campaign where the committee, and any society members interested, attempt to live below the poverty line to fundraise for charity.

We’re also enthralled to launch the Annual Emily Davison Memorial Lecture, with this year’s special key-note speaker Baroness Catherine Ashton, arguably our university’s most celebrated alumna and a fantastic embodiment of the values and legacy of Holloway and the suffragette movement. In all, we’re incredibly excited at what promises to be a fantastic series of events, socials, and trips, and we hope you all are excited too!

To keep up-to-date with the society’s exciting events, like our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/RHULPIRSociety/
Giacomo Benedetto awarded Jean Monnet Chair for work on the EU budget

Giacomo’s recent research has analysed competition between the European Council and Parliament over the EU’s budget. He has also looked at the prospect of reform in EU expenditure away from agriculture and regional spending towards collective benefits in the fields of research and development, digital networks, and energy security. The Jean Monnet Chair will allow Giacomo to focus on those expenditure reforms, as well as changes to the sources of revenue for the EU’s budget.

In the light of the UK’s decision to leave the EU, Giacomo’s research will also consider how British exit from the European Union will affect the budget both inside the United Kingdom and with respect to the rest of the European Union. This research will allow for new teaching at Royal Holloway on the history of the European integration since 1950 and on the challenges for the European Union’s budget.

On 6 December, Giacomo gave the Jean Monnet Inaugural Lecture, entitled £350 million per week and why Europe needs a budget. Further initiatives include one-day workshops for civil servants and practitioners on the EU budget and one-day training courses for A level teachers on how the European Union, as well as an academic conference on the future of the EU budget and its revenue.

On 14 December, Giacomo gave evidence to the House of Lords EU Financial Affairs Sub-Committee for its report on Brexit and the EU budget. On 25 January, he will give evidence to the Budgets Committee of the European Parliament on how the EU budget has developed and changed in the last ten years.

I was invited to Afro-Middle East Centre’s annual international conference, entitled ‘(Re)assessing the Islamic State group and its futures’, which took place in Pretoria, South Africa. The two-day conference, on August 23 and 24, brought together prominent scholars and journalists who have studied or investigated the group, along with a keynote contribution from South Africa’s Minister of State Security, David Mahlobo. The papers presented at this conference provided rare insight into the internal workings and structures of the Islamic State. Over 20 speakers laid out their fieldwork and research into ISIS recruitment strategies, ideology, jurisprudence, taxation system, bread subsidisation, power struggle, and more. Not being an expert on IS myself, I presented a paper which examines the emergence of IS in the regional context, at times of revolution and counterevolution.

But South Africa had more than a conference to offer. The history of the country, best reflected in its Apartheid Museum, is enriching and enlightening. As a Middle Eastern academic, I was fascinated by the valuable historical lessons that South Africa holds for my region. For instance, Nelson Mandela was a leader with exceptional wisdom, and many war-torn countries, particularly in the Middle East, would benefit greatly from learning about his leadership. I came out with the impression that Mandela devised a liberation discourse not only for blacks (the oppressed), but also for the oppressor. He understood that the liberation of the black people from their oppressors has to come with the liberation of the oppressors from their fears. In that sense, the final objective of the liberation movement was never the annihilation or extermination of the white Afrikaans, despite the systematic and seemingly irrevocable dehumanisation against the black people. Instead, it the liberation discourse was a democratising discourse, calling for a country ‘of many races’ where all citizens are equal. This was said even when massacres were still taking place. And thus Mandela always warned against turning violence into an end in itself. Violence was a way to bring the white government of South Africa to the negotiating table as equals. He condemned White supremacy, and warned from negating it win the for Black supremacy. He even acknowledged the cause of the Afrikaans, and this forced them to reciprocate his acknowledgement.

Scholars and students interested not only in anti-colonial and anti-Apartheid history, but also in the history of humankind (the ‘cradle of humankind’, based on evolution, is found in South Africa) should visit South Africa. At the risk of sounding like a tourism advert paid for by the government, I’ll conclude by highlighting the stark inequality that is still very evident in South Africa, despite the emergence of a notable black middle class.
Student milestones and awards

Best Dissertation: Inna Krasimirova Yordanova

Driver Prize (Highest Course Mark): Rupinder Gill, Sarah Villeneuve, and Megan Karlshoej-Pedersen

Best Overall Performance (Year 1): Valeria Testori

Best Overall Performance (Year 2): Omar Abdul Latif

A particular congratulations to Omar, who was also awarded the Faculty Prize.

Congratulations also to the PIR PhDs awarded their doctorates in 2016:

Billur Aslan, Leadership in the Digital Age: the impact of repertoires on the use of Media Technologies during the 2011 Syrian and Egyptian Protests

James Dennis, 'It's better to light a candle than to fantasize about a sun': Social Media, Political Participation, and Slacktivism in Britain

Alistair Brisbourne, Between a 'global' Mediterranean and Europe's Neighbourhood: transnational cultural networks and the development of cultural relations across Europe and the Mediterranean since the emergence of the Anna Lindh Foundation.

Muhammad Reza Kalantari, Power of Association: Shiite Quietism and Activism in the Middle East

Principal Paul Layzell, and Dr. Rabab Sadr, the Chairperson of the Imam Sadr Foundation, attending the formal signing of the agreement establishing CIWAS

The Centre for Islamic and West Asian Studies (CIWAS) has just opened for business with its first intake of Masters by Research Students and a schedule of events and activities.

CIWAS is the product of an exciting new collaboration between Royal Holloway and the Imam Sadr Foundation (ISF) and affiliated donors in Lebanon and Iran. While based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway, CIWAS provides an institutional base for RHUL scholars whose research relates in some way to Islamic and West Asian studies, including researchers in the departments of History, Music, Geography, Theatre, English, and Economics, and in the School of Law and the School of Management.

Our mission is to foster an exchange of ideas and knowledge, among students and scholars from East and West and across disciplines, on Islam, Islamic societies, and West Asia. Its aim is to contribute to the conversation being carried on, in London, and around the world, on the future of West Asian societies by considering how Islam might contribute to the search for solutions to problems faced, both by contemporary West Asian societies, and by humanity, more broadly. Our website is about to go live, and we will send around an announcement when it does.

Centre for West Asian Studies launched

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The Department will be hosting this year’s Annual Emily Wilding Davison Memorial Lecture, an event which honours one of our most eminent alumna.

Emily joined Royal Holloway in 1892, when it was a pioneering women-only college. She went on to become a heroine of the suffragette movement and, in 1913, became the only member of that movement to lose her life as a direct result of its campaign for women’s votes.

This year we will remember the contribution that Emily Davison made to the lives of British women with the help of another celebrated alumna: Baroness Catherine Ashton. Baroness Ashton has had an extraordinary career in politics. She has served in numerous high-profile posts, including Leader of the House of Lords, European Union trade commissioner, and as Europe’s first ever High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security of the EU. Embodying as she does the legacy of the College and of the suffragette movement, we are excited that she has accepted our invitation to deliver the Annual Emily Davison Memorial Lecture, and that she will be speaking to us about her experiences and her efforts to champion women in politics on 8 March, which is International Women’s Day.

Please look out for further announcements of this exciting event. We look forward to seeing you there!

Refugees and Befriending Project, by Licia Cianetti

For the past five years I’ve been volunteering for the British Red Cross Refugees and Befriending (RnB) project, a weekly youth club for unaccompanied young refugees and asylum seekers. Four “RnB groups” meet once a week in London (Islington, Hammersmith, Croydon, and Lewisham) and participate in activities facilitated by volunteers. RnB is part of the BRC Refugee Services, which supports refugees and asylum seekers with international family tracing, casework support, drop-in and destitution support, family reunion travel assistance, and anti-trafficking work. RnB is an entry point for young people to access those services, as well as getting involved in all sorts of activities. We do art, drama, sports, music, we go for field trips, and run info and discussion sessions on issues that are important to young people and young refugees in particular.

Our young people help run the sessions, they make friends and are always great at welcoming new members to the group, and some of them have become volunteers and youth leaders within the project. Some of our young people formed the “Everyday People” music ensemble, in collaboration with Music Action International, which won the 2016 Guardian Charity Awards. They performed at the Festival of Love at the Southbank Centre and will be performing again in 2017 (dates and locations TBC). Last year, they also ran part of the Refugee Week programme at the British Museum. For many young people RnB is a springboard to get involved in all sorts of activities outside the project. They go on to join other organisations (like Saad who’s part of the Centrepoint parliament and in that capacity met with Prince Williams), they get involved in political activism (here the speeches by Saad on Oromo resistance and Bayan on migrant solidarity at the Labour Party conference), they talk to the media, and do lots of other great things that would take too long to list.

If you want to know more about how you can support this project just get in contact with me.

Licia Cianetti – Licia.Cianetti@rhul.ac.uk
Our new PhD students (in their own words)

Kuziwakwashe Zigomo holds a B.A. from Monash University South Africa and a M.Int.St. in Peace and Conflict Resolution from the University of Queensland, Australia. Her research area is on the conceptualisations of statehood in Zimbabwe.

Gill Griffiths-Jones, first year PhD candidate looking at how domestic-level factors, such as public opinion, might impact the proliferation of armed drones. Full time student, full time mother of three, who plays golf, watches rugby and drinks wine in her spare time...

Rahel Podobsky-Stucki. Following my BA I continued to do a M.Sc. at Royal Holloway. After working for a Swiss NGO dealing with disaster and risk management, I spent some time in the corporate sector, before deciding to pursue a PhD exploring how people negotiate their emotions on social media after terrorist attacks.

Stephanie Kutschmann re-joined the Department following her Erasmus Exchange of 2014/15 to work with Akil Awan and Michelle Bentley. Her project focuses on the perception of US foreign at home during the Arab Uprisings and aims to investigate the implications on the Muslim community.

Aditi Krishna is from India and has a B.A. (Hons) from Jesus & Mary College, University of Delhi, and an M.A. from South Asian University, New Delhi. Her PhD research here aims to analyse and explore the issues of identity-politics, notions of nationhood and nationalism, and the issue of ownership in the context of Indian classical music, in the period that followed 1991 economic liberalisation and globalisation in India.

Staff Profile: Nathan Widder

I moved to London from Washington DC in 1992 to pursue an MSc at LSE, and then remained for a PhD at the University of Essex, which I completed in 1999. I think of my travel towards an academic career as something like being on a small boat being carried along a current; had I wanted to, I could have steered a different course, but I enjoyed the teaching I did at several London institutions during my PhD, and liked the idea of a career pursuing intellectual projects, so I allowed the drift to take me in that direction. Late in the day, I came to appreciate how difficult it is to get an academic job, and how – like many others who didn’t fully think through this career path – I didn’t actually have a Plan B in case things didn’t work out. At one point I found myself outside of academia and working for a Labour MP in Wimbledon, wondering whether I could stomach the world of politics as an alternative career. But as it turned out, the good people at Exeter University saw fit to offer me my first permanent lectureship in early 2001, removing me from the first crisis one faces in academic life (namely, the anxiety about never getting a permanent job) and eventually bringing me to the second (namely, the anxiety about never getting another one).

I joined Royal Holloway 2006 as a Senior Lecturer and as part of an expansion that grew PIR from 10 to 15 permanent staff. Later I was Head of Department from 2009 to 2013, and oversaw our further expansion from 17 to 22 academic staff, the incorporation of what was then another four staff members who comprised the Philosophy team, and our inexorable progression down the Founder’s West corridor. It has been a wonderful experience to play such a role in these developments. We have become a larger and even more intellectually diverse department, but have remained a friendly and open place to pursue teaching and research. Our staff have great camaraderie, and we have a wonderful international mix of students and extremely active student societies.

My teaching and research focusses on questions concerning identity, difference, power, meaning, and time, and the way these bear on questions of ethical and political pluralism and the constitution of human subjectivity. I have pursued these through engagements with contemporary European philosophy but also with the history of political thought and philosophy from the ancients onwards. These are, of course, complex issues, but they are intimately connected to basic issues of how we experience and live in the world, and because of this they can be taught and learned in ways that are much more accessible than people often think. First year students are often intimidated by theory courses such as PR1520 Classic and Contemporary Readings, but more often than not by the time they graduate they will see them as the best and most engaging courses they took in their entire degree. This is a particularly rewarding aspect of my teaching.
Workshop: ‘Beyond Borders and Boundaries in Political Communication Research’

The New Political Communication Unit hosted a half-day workshop on 12 October 2016 as part of a series of regional events funded by the Media, Communication, and Cultural Studies Association’s (MeCCSA) Postgraduate Network. Presenters and participants discussed and debated the methodological challenges faced by researchers in the growing field of political communication with the overarching theme of ‘Boundaries and Borders’ in mind.

The first half of the workshop comprised a masterclass with presentations from PIR alumni Gordon Cameron, Press Officer and Senior Researcher at the Greater London Authority, and Dr Jinghan Zeng, Lecturer in International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London. The contrast between Mr Cameron’s experience as a practitioner and Dr Zeng’s academic experiences provided the foundation for a lively and engaging discussion. Mr Cameron shared that as part of his responsibilities, it is necessary for him to react quickly to policy changes. This includes distilling detailed research results into short, robust sentences for press releases on a daily basis, which he finds one of his biggest challenges. Using his current research project as an example, Dr Zeng revealed Chinese censorship laws mean that conducting research on public administration can be tricky. In fact, most government information is usually revealed over dinner and drinks, rather than official channels.

The second half of the workshop consisted of presentations from current PhD candidates in the New Political Communication Unit: Declan McDowell-Naylor; Ellen Watts; and Amber Macintyre. Declan shared the challenges he faces during his ethnographic fieldwork, where he explores how issues of democracy and citizenship arise in the design and development of the ‘Internet of Things’. Ellen discussed the challenges of studying online communities in an ethical fashion, in relation to a developing case study of ‘Our Shared Shelf’, a feminist book club and discussion forum founded by actor and UN Women Ambassador Emma Watson. Amber explored the unspoken contract the organisation forms with their members and how this impacts their use of data. This included questions on how individuals in the charitable organisation she is studying views the agency of their audience, perceive their role as experts, and the reliance on the authority of big data. By Nikki Soo

New staff at PIR

Ivica Petrikova joins us as a lecturer in International Relations. Her research revolves mainly around development issues such as aid effectiveness, food security, inequality and social capital, and movements for agrarian change.

Will Jones is another incoming lecturer in International Relations. His main interests are in refugee studies and African politics. He is also involved in redesigning refugee

Andreas Goldthau joins us as Professor of International Relations. His academic interests focus on energy security and global governance issues related to oil and gas.

Ursula Hackett is our new Lecturer in Politics. Her research focuses on American Political Development (APD), public policy, federalism, education, and religion and politics.

Licia Cianetti joins us as a teaching fellow in Politics. Her research deals with minority politics, democratic representation, quality of democracy, inequality, and European post-communist politics.

Ellen Watts presenting at NewPolCom’s workshop in October gives us the chance to make more of the work we already do and to offer exciting new programmes for our students.'

Details about the Centre and the events planned for the rest of the year can be found at www.aame.london