

**MINUTES OF THE STAFF-STUDENT LIASON COMMITTEE
EUROPEAN HISTORY 1
2pm, 30 November 2011,
Room G.09, William Robertson Wing**

In Attendance:

Iain Lauchlan (Convenor); David Kaufman, Camilo Erlichman, Ariane Galy, Oliver Haag (tutors); Abena Ansah, Alexander Carn, Lucy Harding, Rajiv Shahani (students); Rosie Filipiak (Minutes Secretary)

Apologies:

Thomas Ahnert, Robert Anderson, Gianluca Raccagni, Julius Ruiz, Katherine Nicolai, Jasemin Hacıoglu, Ash Pollard.

1. Welcome

Dr Lauchlan thanked everyone for attending.

2. Student Feedback

Lectures

The students commented that the lectures could run very fast with a lot of information being given out and some students lost track whilst writing notes. Dr Lauchlan suggested that perhaps if lecturers paused occasionally to reiterate this might help.

It was also suggested by the students that more text could be given on the Powerpoint slides, with some citing courses which provide entire transcripts of lectures. IL commented that the students are meant to be able to take in information from an oral presentation, and that if all material is given in ppt slides then there is a concern that lecture attendance will drop and students' ability to take information in from spoken lectures will diminish. IL will ask lecturers to ensure their slides are labelled so that they can be easily identified, he will also ask they include slides to summarise the lecture perhaps using bullet points.

Staff commented that it is expected that students will do further reading to supplement lectures and that many have found the Merriman book particularly useful in this respect.

The students agreed that the pace of lectures and volume of information is a distinct step up from A-level and it is necessary to structure your learning. IL commented that it is the intention to stretch students and also teach them how to teach themselves, with the responsibility for their own education being on the students. He also acknowledged this is a transition period from school and that some areas of the subject will be unfamiliar.

Tutorials

The format of tutorials was discussed. The students felt that tutorials worked best with everyone involved in bringing up ideas and generating discussion, tutors noted that they regularly stepped in to facilitate this particularly in order to encourage weaker or less confident students.

When asked about student presentations in tutorials students were generally in favour of these although would not like these to be the sole format of tutorials. Tutors noted that individual presentations allow students to do their own work and analysis of a topic and students learn from their own classmates.

There was discussion as to whether group presentations would be an option. The students felt it would be difficult to co-ordinate meeting times within groups as students all have different timetables. There was also concern of the group element to this if one student did not participate or attend. It was clarified that if students did not attend for tutorials or give their individual presentations then this directly affected their tutorial mark, non attendance was recorded and action taken.

There was further debate over students contributing little within tutorials. Tutors and students felt that groupwork could encourage quiet students to contribute but agreed with the Course Organiser who commented that individual presentations definitely allowed these students the opportunity to contribute in a non-competitive fashion and thus enhance their tutorial contribution mark. Non-contributing students could be considered to fall into two categories, those who were quiet by nature and those quiet because they were disengaged, both students and tutors felt that to single out students within a tutorial and ask them a question would not be helpful.

Essays

The student reps asked about the possibility of a practice essay. IL replied that as EH1 does not contribute to the degree grading, EH1 coursework allows students to experiment with their approach to the essay and source commentary; the initial two years of their degree are considered a learning process. The student reps felt it would help if they knew what the initial piece of coursework should look like, although it was noted the tutors did provide considerable guidance on this.

Students were encouraged to follow up from the feedback and mark sheet they received by further discussing their work with their tutor. Tutors and lecturers all provide office hours and would like to see more students taking advantage of this opportunity to improve their work.

Other matters

Students asked about printed copies of the course handbook, and were informed that it was College and University best practise to provide this in electronic form, this ensures full accessibility for all students. It was noted that generic information had now been removed from the course handbook and was in the sub-Honours handbook instead.

IL asked students' opinion on the EH1 course being provided as two 20-credit courses, although he did note that the current 40-credit course format does mean students broaden their interests which is highly beneficial as they progress through their History degree. The student reps considered that the majority of students would still take both courses as they can see the development of the themes within it, but perhaps the split with assessment might be good, although IL did note that a Semester 1 course would not necessarily have a December exam.

3. Staff feedback

Hand-ins

The Course Secretary gave a list of examples of the poor state of student coursework received, with the majority of students having failed to follow the instructions regarding History submissions, the effect of which was to add an additional three days of administrative time in order to put these into an acceptable state to pass on to markers. Submission instructions had been emailed to the EH1 students, were available on WebCT and the student intranet also on the History UG noticeboard and the dropboxes themselves. IL commented that students needed to read and follow the instructions regarding hand-ins. For Semester 2 it was agreed that tutors would be asked to reinforce the hand-in instructions, with it being noted that penalties would, in future, be applied to incomplete submissions.

4. AOB

There was no further business to discuss and Dr Lauchlan ended the meeting by thanking everyone for their contribution to the meeting.