

# UNIVERSITY OF KENT

## Module Specification

- 1 The title of the module**  
Studying Politics and International Relations: Skills and Methods (PO308)
- 2 The School which will be responsible for management of the module**  
Politics and International Relations
- 3 The Start Date of the Module**  
September 2007 in the new version
- 4 The number of students expected to take the module**  
Approximately 200-250
- 5 Modules to be withdrawn on the introduction of this proposed module and consultation with other relevant Schools and Faculties regarding the withdrawal**  
PO308 is an established module within the School of Politics and IR. We seek approval for a revised method of assessment.
- 6 The level of the module (eg Certificate [C], Intermediate [I], Honours [H] or Postgraduate [M])**  
C (FHEQ Level: 4)
- 7 The number of credits which the module represents**  
15 credits
- 8 Which term(s) the module is to be taught in (or other teaching pattern)**  
Autumn
- 9 Prerequisite and co-requisite modules**  
None
- 10 The programmes of study to which the module contributes**  
PO308 is a required Stage 1 module for all our single and joint honours programmes (with the exception of L2L1 PPEE). The module is open to students from other school/faculties.
- 11 The intended subject specific learning outcomes and, as appropriate, their relationship to programme learning outcomes**  
The new module teaches fundamental key skills required for the completion of a degree programme involving politics, international relations or contemporary European studies. On successful completion of the module, students will
  - SLO1: be aware of the need to be methodical and systematic in their studies, and to be critical in their use of the work done by other political and social scientists
  - SLO2: be familiar with the learning resources in politics, international relations and European Studies at UKC
  - SLO3: be able to draw on a wide range of sources and to refer to these sources in accordance with standard referencing systems (e.g. Chicago Manual of Style, Harvard in-text citation etc).
  - SLO4: be familiar with the various assessment methods employed within the School, including essay writing, oral presentations and exams
  - SLO5: be familiar with foundational problems in the philosophy of social science as they pertain to the study of politics and international relations.
  - SLO6: be familiar with various foundational approaches to the study of politics and international relations including positivism and interpretative approaches
  - SLO7: be able to appreciate the importance of epistemological concerns in the study of politics

These specific learning outcomes contribute to achieving the learning outcomes of our undergraduate programmes by demonstrating knowledge of the following:

- key concepts, theories and methods used in the study of politics and international relations and their application to the analysis of political ideas, institutions, practices and issues in the global arena
- the political dynamics of interaction between people, events, ideas and institutions
- the contestable nature of many concepts and different approaches to the study of Politics and International Relations
- the normative and positive foundations of political ideas
- the nature and significance of politics as a global activity
- different interpretations of world political events and issues.

## 12 The intended generic learning outcomes and, as appropriate, their relationship to programme learning outcomes

In addition to these specific outcomes, the module also promotes the generic learning outcomes of the School's undergraduate programmes listed below as GLO1-GLO9. Students who successfully complete their undergraduate programme in the School will be able to:

- GLO1: engage critically with political phenomena, including the vocabulary, concepts, theories and methods of political debate
- GLO2: examine and evaluate different interpretations of political issues, events and solutions to problems
- GLO3: describe, evaluate and apply different approaches involved in collecting, analysing and presenting political information
- GLO4: develop reasoned arguments, synthesis relevant information and exercise critical judgement
- GLO5: reflect on and manage their own learning and seek to make use of constructive feedback from peers and staff to enhance their performance and personal skills
- GLO6: communicate ideas effectively and fluently, both orally and in writing
- GLO7: use information and communication technology for bibliographical searches, data acquisition, data analysis and presentation
- GLO8: work independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organisation and time-management
- GLO9: collaborate with others and contribute effectively to the achievement of common goals

### Key Skills

According to the Report of the Working Part on Key Skills of the University of Kent (August 1999), "'Key Skills' is the most recent description of those generic skills identified as important in equipping graduate with the competencies required by employers. Key Skills are thus an important part of the government's current education, including Higher Education, agenda". The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority defined six Key Skills:

- Communication
- Application of Number
- Information Technology
- Improving One's Own Learning and Performance
- Working with Others
- Problem Solving

The School of Politics and International Relations joined the University's Key Skills Project in 2001/2. As part of Phase I of the Key Skills Project, the School has reviewed its existing practices in the promotion of key skills and developed a Key Skills Matrix. In order to ensure that all students, including joint honours students, are trained in a number of important key skills (see below), the School introduced PO308 as a required module for all students taking degrees with the School. In particular PO308 promotes the following Key Skills:

- KS1: Communication (organise information clearly and coherently, respond to written sources, present information orally, adapt style for different audiences, use images as communication tool)
- KS2: Information Technology (produce written documents, undertake online research)
- KS3: Working with Others (define and review work of others, work co-operatively on group tasks, understand how groups function, review effectiveness of a group, resolve conflict)
- KS4: Improving One's Own Learning and Performance (explore personal strength and weaknesses, set personal development targets, review working environment, develop specialist learning skills, review completed work)
- KS5: Problem Solving (identify and define problems, explore optimal and alternative solutions, decide upon course of action, review success)

### 13 **A synopsis of the curriculum**

PO308 is divided into two parts. The first part of PO308 aims to teach and develop some of the important subject-specific and transferable skills needed in order to be able to successfully complete the programmes taught in the School of Politics and International Relations. In particular, the module aims to develop students' ability to critically read and interpret texts, to write essays, to prepare effectively for the various assessment methods used in the School (essays, oral presentations, exams), to work in groups and to use these skills in order to improve their own learning. The second half of this module provides a basic introduction to some of the key theoretical and methodological issues involved in the study of politics. These issues include, for example, the relationship between science and 'values', questions of observation and interpretation, the relationship between language and reality, the problem of complexity and the interaction between agency and structures.

### 14 **Indicative Reading List**

- Stella Cottrell, *The Study Skills Handbook*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2003)  
Stuart Stein, *Politics on the Web: A Student Guide*, (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2003)  
Zina O'Leary, *The Essential Guide to Doing Research*, (London: Sage, 2004),  
Chris Hart, *Doing a Literature Search: A Comprehensive Guide for the Social Sciences*, (London: Sage, 2001)  
Michael Harvey, *The Nuts & Bolts of College Writing*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003)  
Peter Redman, *Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide*, (London: Sage, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2001)  
Bryan Greetham, *How to Write Better Essays*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)  
John Peck and Martin Coyle, *The Student's Guide to Writing: Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999)  
Patsy McCarthy and Caroline Hatcher, *Presentation Skills: The Essential Guide for Students*, (Sage, 2002)  
David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2002)  
John Hughes and Wes Sharrock, *The Philosophy of Social Research*, (Harlow: Pearson Education, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1997)  
Martin Hollis, *The philosophy of social science: an introduction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)  
M. Mitchel Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Sciences at the Edge of Order and Chaos*, (London: Penguin, 1994)  
L. Douglas Kiel, E. Elliott (eds.), *Chaos Theory in the Social Sciences: Foundations and Applications*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996)

### 15 **Learning and Teaching Methods, including the nature and number of contact hours and the total study hours which will be expected of students, and how these relate to achievement of the intended learning outcomes**

#### Lectures

Schedule: 12 contact hours; one lecture per week for 12 weeks covering the topics/methods/skills discussed in each week.

Learning outcomes: SLO1- SLO6, GLO1-GLO3, KS1, KS4-KS5

Achievement of learning outcomes: Lectures are the forum through which the central concepts, methods and skills covered in the module are introduced through the oral and visual presentation of lecture material. The lectures will synthetically introduce the issues dealt with in the literature, together with their related concepts and theories. The lectures will draw extensively on examples of 'good and bad practice' in both political science scholarship and student work.

#### Seminars

Schedule: 12 contact hours, one seminar per week for 11 weeks. Seminars will be based on discussions of the topics introduced in the lectures. For the first part of the course (skills) seminars will offer (a) discussions based on the reading of set texts for particular weeks, (b) workshops in which students are trained to use and apply the study skills presented in the lectures. These workshops will include group work. For the second part (methods), seminars will continue to be based on the reading of set texts for particular weeks but will then focus on the application of the concepts and approaches introduced in the lectures to concrete examples in political science.

Learning outcomes: SLO1-SLO6, GLO1-GLO9, KS1, KS3-KS5

Achievement of learning outcomes: During seminars, students will (a) reflect on and critically evaluate the material and arguments presented in the lectures and in the seminar readings, and (b) apply the newly learned skills in tasks assigned by the seminar leader(s). The seminars will include exercises, presentations, discussions, and group work.

Independent study

Schedule: 126 hours. During this period students are expected to prepare for, and revise the topics dealt with in the lectures and seminars by reading recommended general texts in addition to the stipulated text for each seminar session. Additionally, students will be required to work on their assignments, which include (see below) a group project, a book review and an essay.

Learning outcomes: SLO1-SLO6, GLO1-GLO8, KS1-KS5

Achievement of learning outcomes: these outcomes will be achieved through students' own reading, research and preparation of presentations, group projects and essays.

**16 Assessment methods and how these relate to testing achievement of the intended learning outcomes**

Formative assessment of the seminar presentations and written assignments will be given throughout the module in the form of oral and written feedback. Summative assessment of the module will be based on the following:

Type of Assessment	Task	Learning Outcomes assessed	Contribution to final mark (%)
Group Project	Students will have to compose an annotated bibliography on a particular topic. They will be able to choose the topic from a list of approved topics.	Especially SLO1, SLO2, GLO1-GLO9, especially GLO7-GLO9, KS1-KS3	40%
Essay	Students have to write an essay (2500 words max.) answering one question related to the topics dealt with in the lectures and seminars. Students choose their topics from a list of approved topics.	SLO1- SLO7, especially SLO4-SLO6, GLO1-GLO9, KS1-KS5	60%

**17 Implications for learning resources, including staff, library, IT and space**

- a. Staff: No additional resources required
- b. Library: No additional resources required
- c. IT: No additional resources required
- d. Space: No additional resources required

**18 A statement confirming that, as far as can be reasonably anticipated, the curriculum, learning and teaching methods and forms of assessment do not present any non-justifiable disadvantage to students with disabilities**

As far as can be reasonably anticipated, the curriculum, learning and teaching methods and forms of assessment do not present any non-justifiable disadvantage to students with disabilities. Power point presentations are provided for each lecture and are made available through the course folder for easy reading.

**Statement by the Director of Learning and Teaching:** "I confirm I have been consulted on the above module proposal and have given advice on the correct procedures and required content of module proposals"

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Director of Learning and Teaching

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Date

**Statement by the Head of School:** "I confirm that the School has approved the introduction of the module and will be responsible for its resourcing"

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Head of School

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Date