University of Kent

theGradPost

Dissertations

Fascination of Plants Day

Dear Paris

A newsletter created by postgraduates for postgraduates
There is an exceptionally sporty, summery feel to this issue of the GradPost, most befitting for the Olympic celebrations and events up and down the country. Brenda-Kamal Atuona writes about a fascinating study on investigating the changing social perspectives towards the Paralympics and how they affect narratives and representation of Paralympic athletes in the media. Sticking with a theme, Sarah Coakley discusses the merits of higher intensity training for athletes. Turning to ethnobotany, Susanne Masters reflects on her display for ‘Fascination of Plants day’ which is on at The Goods Shed and aims to raise awareness of food sourcing, social aspects of plant science and human/plant interaction. Melissa Tortorella muses on cultural difference, comparing US and UK universities and writes a fabulous letter to Paris detailing her experiences as a student there.

As always we have had many fantastic contributions, and I am sorry to say that this is my last issue as editor: it is with regret that I must leave the GradPost and move on to pastures new. I hope you enjoy it.

Kind regards

Kasia Ladds
Co-Editor

The Centre for Sports Studies is a fast-growing department based at the University’s Medway campus. Directed by Professor Louis Passfield, it aims to be one of Britain’s premier academic sports departments. It offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

The Centre for Sports Studies admitted its first PhD student in 2009, and has grown continuously since then. Current research topics are numerous and offer students an opportunity to investigate many areas in sports research, including sport sciences, sport therapy, sport sociology and coaching.

This issue’s Focus on research is from three sport studies postgraduates, Benjamin Pageaux, Sarah Coakley and Brenda-Kamal Atuona, to coincide with the London 2012 Summer Olympics. These students outline their areas of research and demonstrate the diversity of perspectives on contemporary issues in sport and sporting practices.

Focus on research

High-Intensity Training (HIT) for maximum benefits

Athletes are constantly seeking better training strategies to get the most out of their workouts to enhance performance. However, the traditional method of long duration endurance exercise is no longer deemed to be the most effective means of achieving optimal results.

According to scientists the same, if not superior, results can be obtained in less time with brief spurts of high intensity exercise, often referred to as high-intensity interval training (HIT). These findings have had a significant impact on the way athletes train today with research suggesting that it is the intensity, rather than the volume, that determines the training response.

HIT involves repeated sessions of relatively brief intermittent exercise, often performed with an all-out effort. A study involving participants completing 15sec and 30sec all-out efforts daily on a bike demonstrated a remarkable 10% improvement in fitness level in just two weeks (Rodas, 2000). This was determined by an increase in the volume of oxygen used while exercising, commonly referred to as an increase in maximal aerobic capacity (or VO2max).

VO2max is a measure of the maximum amount of oxygen an individual can use in the body during exercise and can be measured in a sports science laboratory by completing an incremental exercise test to exhaustion. The more oxygen you can use during strenuous exercise, the more energy you can produce and the better you perform. As a result, many athletes strive to improve their VO2max with training.

Scientific research has examined the effects of different training programmes on changes in VO2max, with numerous studies demonstrating large increases in VO2max in response to training. A study undertaken in the 1970’s showed that high-intensity training, 40mins a day, 6 days a week for a period of 10 weeks was sufficient to achieve rapid improvements in fitness levels (with up to a 44% increase in VO2max) in sedentary and recreationally active individuals (Hickson, 1977).

Scientific evidence supporting the use of HIT has led to more and more athletes incorporating this type of regime into their training programmes. However, how do we explain why some athletes do not demonstrate an improvement or change in VO2max following this type of training? It is important to note that most research studies to date have focused on the average responses from a large cohort when reporting improvements in fitness and, as a result, individual responses to HIT vary. Scientific research has examined the effects of different training programmes on changes in VO2max, with numerous studies demonstrating large increases in VO2max in response to training. A study undertaken in the 1970’s showed that high-intensity training, 40mins a day, 6 days a week for a period of 10 weeks was sufficient to achieve rapid improvements in fitness levels (with up to a 44% increase in VO2max) in sedentary and recreationally active individuals (Hickson, 1977).

A novel finding of this study was that some participants were able to reach fitness levels associated with elite athletes in a short space of time. This provides us with greater insight into the capabilities of previously untrained or moderately active individuals. No longer can it be assumed that sedentary or recreationally active individuals need to spend years training to increase their fitness levels to that of highly-trained athletes.

Scientific evidence supporting the use of HIT has led to more and more athletes incorporating this type of regime into their training programmes. However, how do we explain why some athletes do not demonstrate an improvement or change in VO2max following this type of training? It is important to note that most research studies to date have focused on the average responses from a large cohort when reporting improvements in fitness and, as a result, individual responses to HIT have for the most part been largely ignored. Individual variability in response to training has received a lot of attention in recent years and is a research area that the Centre for Sports Studies aims look at in more detail in future studies.

Sarah Coakley
PhD Sport and Exercise Science and Sports Therapy

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**What happens when I am running or cycling? The exercise physiology...**

Our society shows an increasing interest in endurance sports (which last from several minutes to several hours at a relative constant intensity), and the Centre for Sports Studies reflects this in its research topics on endurance sports and performance, such as long-distance cycling or running. The research aims to develop a better understanding of the body’s responses to exercise and focus on training to obtain increased efficiency in these responses.

All movement requires muscle contraction. Our muscles work like motors, ie muscle is the only organ able to transform biochemical energy into mechanical energy during muscular contraction. Our muscles (the body’s motor) transform the adenosine triphosphate (ATP, the fuel of the motor) to liberate energy and induce movement. Endurance sports, such as running or cycling, require energy consumption 15 to 25 times greater than when we are sitting on a sofa watching a movie. The ATP stored in our muscle cells is present in a very limited quantity, requiring our bodies to continuously synthesise ATP. To synthesise this ‘muscle fuel’ our body can use three main metabolisms: lactic or alactic anaerobic (both without use of oxygen) and aerobic (with use of oxygen). Endurance performance requires mainly aerobic metabolism and several adaptations will occur in different systems (organisation of different organs working in collaboration) to ensure oxygen output to the muscle. Let’s see how these different adaptations work:

**The nervous system**

The nervous system is comprised of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral sensory and motor nerves. This system governs all the body’s functions and ensures collaboration of all the systems. Our nervous system is constantly processing feedback from our environment (external feedback) or body (internal feedback) to adapt its responses. Among several adaptations in the nervous system, the main adaptation could be defined as an increase in brain activity to increase the respiration, heart rate (cardiac output and blood flow) or the command to the muscle.

**The cardio-respiratory system**

This system consists of the heart, lungs and blood vessels. These organs work in collaboration to ensure the correct oxygen output and blood flow to the working muscle. As we discovered, an adequate oxygen input to the working muscles is required to ensure the production of ATP. The nervous system increases its activity by integrating all external and internal feedback and, as a consequence, the activity of the cardio-respiratory system will increase correspondingly. The heart will immediately begin to beat faster, to pump more blood to the muscles (around 150 beats per minute or more, at rest around 60-80 beats per minute). Whereas the average heart pumps about five litres of blood per minute at rest, the amount during exercise may increase to 20 litres per minute (up to 40 litres for professional endurance athletes!). The lungs consequently begin to breathe faster and more deeply, supplying the body with more oxygen. Together with these increases in cardiac output and respiratory capacity, adaptations with blood vessels occur, increasing the blood flow to the muscles and ensuring an optimal oxygen input to the muscle.

All these different adaptations occur every time we run or cycle and allow the body to cope with exercise. Athletes increase the efficiency of these different systems by continuous training in order to enhance their performance. For example, aerobic training causes a decrease in resting heart rate, changes muscle architecture (muscles become stronger and/or more enduring) and increases lung capacities. All these training adaptations are linked to the intensity of training. This intensity is a key topic in recent sports research on improving training efficiency. Moreover, it’s not only cardio-respiratory and muscular parameters that are vital to physical performance. Recent scientific researches have highlighted the crucial role of the brain in physical performance, particularly during endurance events.

**Benjamin Pageaux**  
PhD Sport and Exercise Science and Sports Therapy

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**Attitudes towards disabled athletes**

The media plays a key role in shaping attitudes towards disabled people.

Criticism has centred on how there has been significantly less media coverage of the Paralympic Games than the Olympic Games and how this effectively extends the inequalities faced by women and ethnic minorities in society.

Disabled athletes have voiced concerns about negative portrayals. Danielle Peers, former Canadian International wheelchair basketball team member and academic author of *DisEmpowering Paralympic Histories*, speaks about conflicting depictions of the ‘Paralympian’, which she identifies within her own experiences of media representation. Earle Connor, double gold medal-winning Canadian Paralympic sprinter, also voices his concerns about the cliché of disabled athletes as human interest, rather than sports, stories. Britain’s Sarah Storey, a seven-time Paralympic gold medal-winning cyclist, calls for the public to appreciate the ‘grit’ of Paralympic athletes and not ‘patronise’ them.

London 2012 has been hailed as the year the Paralympic movement comes of age. The biggest Paralympics ever staged, the organisers predict it will be the best. With over one million tickets sold, evidence suggests that the British public is ready to embrace this event. Following huge success at the Beijing Games, Tim Hollingsworth (CEO of the British Paralympic Association) says a successful home Games is not just about maintaining our Paralympics in the UK can step out of the shadow of the Olympic Games. Our time is now. Another aim is to use the power of the Paralympics to secure a positive shift in attitudes to disability in the UK.

While previous academic research has focused extensively on media representations of Paralympic athletes, there has been a distinct lack of discussion surrounding the process of production of printed media text and, furthermore, the ways in which attitudes can be improved. The purpose of my study is to go beyond the exploration of representations of disabled athletes in the media and focus on the position of the journalist and the process of content production.

The study adopts a social psychological perspective to consider the ways in which altering attitudes towards disabled athletes affects the ways in which narratives about...
An Educational Experience

Just as the old adage warns us, it is unwise to assume. When I decided to do a Master's degree at Kent, having completed my undergrad degree in the States, I assumed the system would be almost identical. In reality, the organisation is largely different.

Called 'college' rather than 'university' in the US, a typical Bachelor's degree is done in four years rather than three. Instead of identifying themselves as 'first-year' or 'second-year', students use the terms 'freshman', 'sophomore', 'junior' and 'senior' to denote the progress in their degree. While a high school senior is expected to declare a major (their particular field of study) while applying to college, a student can remain undecided until the end of their sophomore year. Even so, most students change their major at least once – and many up to three times. Generally there is a mad dash for 'major change' forms at the end of the first semester of freshman year.

The biggest difference, however, is within the degree requirements. Students are expected to be well rounded and are obligated to take a certain number of maths, science, social science, English, and arts classes in the first two years, in addition to their core degree classes. There is freedom within this system, though, which is how, instead of taking a more standard science like biology or chemistry, I fulfilled my science prerequisites with nutrition and astronomy – and picked up a couple of arts credits in a Steel Drum Band. This method is a double-edged sword though: taking more non-major related classes means that less time is devoted to core degree classes. It seems that if American students are well rounded, British students have a much more comprehensive knowledge of their chosen subject.

The social side of college life appears to be quite similar with clubs (British 'societies') and sports teams, although American colleges do differ in that they have fraternities and sororities (not like on TV) and an extremely rabid following of college sports like basketball and football (just like on TV).

The one blinding similarity that will never change, though, is the college drinking culture. Although as the legal drinking age in the States is 21 (students usually hit this birthday during the third year of college), campuses are technically dry. It was a surprise to come to Kent and see bars and clubs on campus. If you want to go out for the night at an American college, the options are automatically off-campus. Usually, though, there is a large group of restaurants and bars right on the periphery of large campuses ready to welcome students after long days of classes. (Yes, Beer Pong is real. And so are the infamous red Solo party cups.) And this, I believe, is a fitting way to end a comparison of two university cultures. Cheers.

Melissa Tortorella
MA in French and Comparative Literature

Dear Paris

Since moving here in January I have been asked an innumerable amount of times by friends at home, “What’s it like to live in Paris? Is it amazing? Is it magical?”

You are a great city, Paris. I’m not going to lie. I like your idiot-proof colour-coded metro system, the fact that you can easily walk from one area to another, and that there is always something to do: concerts, museums, parks, you name it. But a city is a city. And visiting on holiday is very different from setting up a life. Of course, Paris is a magical city to visit, it’s beautiful and exciting. And on holiday you have no responsibilities except eating, drinking and sightseeing as much as possible. Everyone can attest to this phenomenon – when you are relaxed, the whole world seems brighter. And anyone who has lived in a popular tourist city before can vouch for this one as well; acclimatisation. Take the Louvre, for instance, it’s a former palace that spans several city blocks. At first glance, it’s awe-inspiring. But passing something every day, even as beautiful as the Louvre, tends to make it fade into the background. When it’s raining and you’re late, you don’t notice its architecture. When you’re busy chatting on the phone, you don’t marvel at it’s square footage. It’s only when you see others exclaiming over it that you remember, Oh yeah, this is actually pretty cool.

There is good and bad about you, Paris. I really don’t understand why everything is closed on Sundays. Even the shops, really? What if it were a friend’s birthday and I had forgotten to buy cake or candles? (Bigger oversights have been made.) Or what if I had a sudden craving for sweets and wanted to pop over and buy some? I call that very inhospitable. And I would have liked some warning about the sudden influx of tourists that start to flood the streets in April. I tried to go to a cashpoint the other day and there was a very large tour group standing conveniently in front of the one-foot radius hole-in-the-wall that would supply me with the means to buy groceries. I can’t begrudge them for taking pictures (I can hardly claim long-term residence here), but little annoyances such as these add up.

At first I was a bit put off by the division of Paris into 20 arrondissements (and in the shape of a snail? Come on, Paris, you’re only feeding us with more joke fodder), but I soon realised the affinity you feel for your area. Each arrondissement has its own specific ambiance – not to mention the attachments you form to your personal discoveries. There are probably 100 people that go in and out of my favourite boulangerie each day, but to me, it’s my boulangerie. I stubbornly continue to believe that the small park tucked behind a row of buildings is my own study place and the crowded surprisingly well-lit bar down the street that serves free garlic chips belongs solely to my friends and me – and perhaps the other locals, if we’re feeling generous. And then this feeling of ownership spreads to the rest of the city and the many amenities it has to offer.

So maybe that’s your secret, Paris. This is how you appear so magical. You make everyone, from visitors to inhabitants, feel like you belong to them alone. You sly dog.

Much love,
Melissa Tortorella
MA in French and Comparative Literature
Fascination of Plants Day

I heard about ‘Fascination of Plants Day’ through Twitter. Tweeting as Ethnobotanica, http://twitter.com/#!/ethnobotanica, I spotted that a lot of the Ethnobotany people I follow, from professors and staff at botanical gardens to garden bloggers, were interested in the idea and making plans to join in.

The European Plant Science Organisation launched Fascination of Plants Day to raise interest in plants and awareness of the importance of plant science for agriculture, horticulture, forestry and environmental conservation. Issues addressed by plant science include food and nutrition, plant breeding, climate change mitigation, renewable resources and sustainable production. Plant science is not restricted to laboratories; plant science is all around us and forms a critical part of social and environmental landscapes.

An international day for plant science was a great opportunity to connect with people to increase awareness of what plant science is. I did the MSc in Ethnobotany last year and am now working on a PhD and am often asked “What is ethnobotany?” I have set up an ethnobotany website on the topic www.plantspeople.com but, in short, ethnobotany is about the interactions between plants and people and is an aspect of plant science.

I got in touch with The Goods Shed, a local farmers’ market that has some shared interests in the topic and is also a handy location for putting on a display that can be easily seen by people outside of the University. They were happy to host an exhibition on local food products and issues around food choices. Contributions of photos and text came from current and former Ethnobotany students. The Graduate School provided funding for printing the display. Staff at the campus print shop helped to work out technical aspects and Professor Roy Ellen and Dr Dave Roberts helped by proofreading the text.

I also arranged a guided botanical walk in our local orchid hotspot – my PhD is on orchids. Jennie Hogg helped with this by setting up a webpage for it and Dr Dave Roberts also helped out by coming on the walk and sharing some of his knowledge.

Organising the display was time consuming. But in the process I have learnt a lot about producing displays – from co-ordinating contributors and linking up with local businesses to the practical side of getting a display hanging.

In terms of assessing whether the display has had the desired impact I can report that people who helped me put up the display (a friend from the School of Conservation and a builder who lent me a drill) said that they would have to try nettle tea with lemon to see it turn pink and that the topic of food sovereignty was interesting. A stallholder at The Goods Shed was excited to see which boards they would be looking at from their stall. People shopping while we were still putting up the display walked round to read all the boards and started speculating on what hop shoots, a Kent speciality, taste like. So the display started to raise awareness of plant science and what goes on in the Ethnobotany department even as it was going up.

Susanne Masters
PhD in Ethnobiology

Postgraduate Research Festival

This year’s Postgraduate Research Festival will take place on Tuesday 19 June in Woolf College.

This event offers all taught and research postgraduates an opportunity to showcase their research. Kent postgrads are invited to design and exhibit a poster on their area of specialism. Not only is this a great opportunity for your work to reach a wider audience, the best poster in each faculty will be awarded with a shiny new Kindle. This event, jointly organised by the Graduate Student Association and KU and funded by the Graduate School, features information stands and academic talks, which address themes such as publishing and writing.

The event kicks off at 2pm with student presentations from 4pm. Do get involved!

Look out for posters across campus, and if you have any queries contact graddean@kent.ac.uk. To sign up for a poster presentation, please complete the online registration form https://unionkent.wufoo.com/forms/postgraduate-research-festival-2012-signup-form[1].
Interview: Carrie Morrow

Carrie Morrow is an MA student studying Creative Writing at the School of English. Her love of Jane Austen has inspired her to work on a modern adaptation of an Austen classic with a fascinating twist.

Tell us about your current project and what you are hoping to achieve with it.
I’m trying to create a current adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*. The best way I can explain it is to compare it to *Bridget Jones’s Diary* – when I originally thought of the project I wanted to write a screenplay but it was also important to me to create the story as a novel first, and so I have plans to turn it into a screenplay and hopefully see it made into a film. Exciting!

How has your previous literary study helped to influence your current project?
I previously took a research MA in Literary Theory specifically in Jane Austen, and I studied the theory behind adaptation comparing the original text of *Pride and Prejudice* to the screenplay of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. It gave me a good theoretical base on which to ground my ideas; it is a great feeling to be interested in a topic and then start to research it and discover the terminology to be able to effectively discuss and express your ideas. Entering a whole new world of theoretical ideas was scary but translation theory hugely applied to my work with adaptations and I realised that the theory hadn’t gone as far as I wanted to take it. I read a lot about adaptations and translation, so it gave me ground to talk about the differences between versions of a story and of how contemporary audiences sometimes need an understanding of the language and context of a text to fully understand it. There is a real language barrier when it comes to 19th-Century texts. We have our own terminology now, and they had their own then; although we can grasp the concept of a dowry, we can’t understand the significance of it within the society they lived in because we do not have that experience. Anne Elliot’s situation and the meaning of it still applies to us today, but we can’t necessarily access it – I want to give a modern audience the tools to do so.

Of course you have looked to Austen for inspiration with the plot of your project: do you think she has also influenced your writing style?
Her narrative voice is something that I really enjoy reading – it’s very specific, and yet ambiguous as to who the narrator really is: sometimes it feels like there is someone else in the room with their own opinion. In *Pride and Prejudice* it is debated whether or not the voice belongs to Elizabeth Bennett, and yet the voice is sometimes so critical of Elizabeth that it seems this cannot be the case.

Regardless of who it belongs to, it is very self-aware, and I feel like I instinctively take on that voice in my own writing. I enjoy reading it and I enjoy writing it.

Which of Austen’s characters in particular do you feel a strong affinity with or identify with the most?
It was originally Elizabeth Bennett. I think a lot of people can relate to the way she approaches things, reconciling her own ideas with those of her mother, and feeling the pressure to find a man and settle. However, I now relate most to Anne Elliot, which is primarily why I wanted to write her story. *Persuasion* is highly overlooked as a novel; it was her last, so in my eyes the most mature. People disregard it because it lacks action, and it is more character driven than plot driven. I very much relate to the way in which she forms relationships with others, and I must admit I look to her for answers – I’d still like to figure out how she works it out in the end!

How do you think your cultural background and experience influences your work for this project, if at all?
The reason I chose to come to England for my MA was because of what British literature does for me. I was running into a lot of roadblocks and I realised that the theory hadn’t gone as far as I wanted to take it. I read a lot about adaptations and translation, so it gave me ground to talk about the differences between versions of a story and of how contemporary audiences sometimes need an understanding of the language and context of a text to fully understand it. There is a real language barrier when it comes to 19th-Century texts. We have our own terminology now, and they had their own then; although we can grasp the concept of a dowry, we can’t understand the significance of it within the society they lived in because we do not have that experience. Anne Elliot’s situation and the meaning of it still applies to us today, but we can’t necessarily access it – I want to give a modern audience the tools to do so.

What do you believe are the most important points to consider when writing an adaptation?
I think it’s very important to make sure that the context is translated. For Anne Elliot to be unmarried at 27 is unheard of for someone of her period, whereas now it is perfectly acceptable. So I made sure to emphasise other flaws in my own character to account for her lack of male attention. I was also able to cheat a little bit when it came to translating the financial situation of the Elliot family. Her father has money troubles which I was able to rely on the US economy to account for, and my character has a good job and then loses it. Some contextual areas translated easily; others required a little more skill, but as long as they were essential to the novel it was important to get that across.

If you could give one tip for anyone interested in starting to write, what would it be?
If it interests you, pursue it. I would have probably found Literary Theory really boring if I didn’t have a personal interest in it. Make sure you have a personal relationship with your subject. Be able to live with it, love it, want to marry it. You should be able to wake up to it every day and see that face and be happy with your decision – if you roll over and look at it and say, ‘Oh God, that was a mistake, last night shouldn’t have happened’. Biochemistry, how did I get into that?” you’re in trouble.

Kasia Ladds
MA Creative writing
Reporting Britain: With Andrew Grice – ‘British press at an all time-low’

Here is a comparison worth remembering. The relationship between a journalist and a politician is like that of a dog and a lamp-post. Who is the dog and who is the lamp-post?

I will only say that the dog sniffs around at the post, sometimes urinates there and leaves. Andrew Grice, Political Editor at The Independent, kicked off an interesting discussion on the symbiotic relationship between this ‘odd couple’ serving up this bit of information when he recently spoke to international postgraduate students studying in the United Kingdom.

Grice, a straight talker who avoids eye contact when he is at his most candid, did actually expand on his comparison, saying the journalist may be seen as the dog; now the rest is self-explanatory. Having played the watchdog role for several decades now, he assesses the current state of the UK media and its relationship with political elites, saying: ‘Newsmen are players on the political stage and no longer spectators.’ He also believes the British press has overreached, and abused its power in the process. The result, a press that has little respect for politicians and political elites who are changing how they engage with journalists. It is a game, Grice reasoned, translating to acting in the public interest or serving up this bit of information when he is at his most candid, did actually expand on his comparison, saying the journalist may be seen as the dog; now the rest is self-explanatory. Having played the watchdog role for several decades now, he assesses the current state of the UK media and its relationship with political elites, saying: ‘Newsmen are players on the political stage and no longer spectators.’ He also believes the British press has overreached, and abused its power in the process. The result, a press that has little respect for politicians and political elites who are changing how they engage with journalists. It is a game, Grice reasoned, which is getting faster and more interesting.

‘Politicians deserve a little more respect than they are getting from newspapers,’ Grice said, stating: ‘One needs to consider whether this translates to acting in the public interest or undermining it.’ He recalled how the relationship between the British press and newsrooms changed radically when Rupert Murdoch’s newspapers came out in support of the Labour Party in 1997. He personally feels the relationship got too close for comfort. Grice is old school and even without asking you sense that he is the type of journalist who does not low the Party line; he would criticise Labour today, Conservatives tomorrow and Liberals next week. Grice frowns about the current state of the British press saying it is at the lowest levels today, largely because of the phone-hacking scandals, which rocked Murdoch’s media empire and forced the closure of the News of the World newspaper last July. In the wake of the scandals, the Leveson Inquiry into Press Standards was initiated and is currently ongoing. For Grice, the damage was not confined to Murdoch’s media corporations; the British press was also injured. According to him, even more serious were the disclosures regarding close relationships between journalists and law-enforcement officials.

But all is not lost. Grice is of the opinion that while there is need for a tougher regulating body in the media industry, the media remains a force for ‘public good’, stressing that it is important for the free press to remain free. Though he was critical of how the News of the World approached news, Grice also praised the newspaper for breaking important stories during its long run. The press is important to societies and to political parties he observed, noting that, though tainted, the British media has and continues to play a critical role in defining public interest. Grice defines public interest as: “That which the public need to know, deserve to know and on occasions, politicians do not want them to know”. Before wrapping up his talk, Grice expressed concern at the Euro-sceptic view of some sections of the British press, saying the perspectives are running ahead of public opinion.

Andrew Grice spoke on May 10, 2012 at an event organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the new Chevening Scholarships Secretariat. The talk was the first in an initial series of events, under the theme of ‘The United Kingdom and You’, which has been arranged for the next few months, with planned seminars in London, Nottingham and Edinburgh.

Iana Seales
MA International Conflict Analysis

Postgraduate Experience Award Winner: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Social Movements

The recent waves of protests across the globe – from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement – call for new ways of understanding these phenomena. What theories help explain mobilisation at the individual and societal level? How can we assess the social, economic and legal factors animating social movement campaigns and events? Answering these, and many other questions pertaining to social protest, requires a broad interdisciplinary approach that takes advantage of strengths in each academic field. This is exactly what our conference aims to do.

Thanks to the award granted to us by The Graduate School (as well as support from the School of Psychology, the ESRC South East DTC Advanced Training, the Conflict Analysis Research Centre in the School of Politics and International Relations and the Centre of the Study of Social and Political Movements) we are hosting an interdisciplinary conference on 13-14 October, 2012, at the University of Kent. The Theory, Action and Impact of Social Protest conference promises to be a special event with keynote speakers Professor Christopher Rootes (SSPSSR – University of Kent), one of the leading environmental social movement scholars in the world and Director of the Centre for the Study of Social and Political Movements, and Professor Dominic Abrams (School of Psychology – University of Kent) Director of the Centre for the Study of Group Processes and world renowned social psychologist.

If you wish to submit an abstract, please contact Eugene Nulman (e.nulman@kent.ac.uk) and visit our website (taispconference.wordpress.com). We welcome papers from a wide range of disciplines and topics.

Eugene Nulman
MPhil Sociology
Dissertations

Aware that many students will be embarking on all important dissertations this summer, the GradPost decided to include a mini guide to starting one and a dissertation topics feature to encourage people to contact the GradPost with their own dissertation stories. If you have a dissertation story or topic you would like to share, please contact grad-editors@kent.ac.uk.

Wacky and wonderful Dissertation topics!

**Sport**
- 'The effect of cravings on participation levels in surfing' Luke Carroll, 2010
- ‘Soulriding’ and the spirituality of snowboarding’ Dr Neil Elliot, 2011

**Theology**

**Sociology**
- ‘Chickens prefer beautiful humans’ S Ghirlanda, L Jansson, M Enquist, 2002

**Cultural Anthropology**
- ‘Klingon as Linguistic Capital: A Sociologic Study of Nineteen Advanced Klingonists’ Jena Wahlgren, 2004

**Psychology**
- ‘Tickling and laughter: two genetic studies’ Professor Clarence Leuba, 1933
- ‘Tickling and laughter: two genetic studies’ Professor Clarence Leuba, 1933

**Zoology**
- ‘‘Soulriding’ and the spirituality of snowboarding’ Dr Neil Elliot, 2011
- ‘Chickens prefer beautiful humans’ S Ghirlanda, L Jansson, M Enquist, 2002

**Emma Wilkins**
MA English and American Literature

The GradPost editors would like to feature photo comic strips in future issues. If you are interested please contact us at the above address. The photo comic strip on this page is by Pamela Head, MA Eighteenth-Century Studies.