Editorial

Welcome to the autumn edition of the GradPost. I hope everyone has had a good summer break and is returning refreshed and revitalised. In this edition we are introduced to a number of conferences at Kent. Katerina Flint-Nicol previews Doris Day at the Gulbenkian, Pippa Gregory describes the recent bootcamp for historians and Pauline McGonagle talks about the English conference, Transactions.

New students at Kent will find useful information with regards to postgraduate experiences. Alex Murray discusses what it means to be a postgraduate at Kent, while Vid Calovski introduces the Kent Graduate Student Association. After the last edition’s introduction to the Paris campus, we follow Kathryn Simpson to Brussels for the Global Europe Workshop. News is brought to you from the Graduate School with reviews of the PG Research Festival and Global Skills Award Programme.

It is with regret that I must say my farewells to you all now – at least in my student capacity – and hand the reigns of Editor to a worthy successor. I hope you have all enjoyed these issues of the GradPost over the last couple of years, and that you continue to contribute using the normal channels (E: gradpost@kent.ac.uk or using Twitter/Facebook).

Chris Costa
PhD Biomedical Imaging

Welcome

The Year of the Postgrad as Priority 2013-2014

When reading about university, you could be forgiven for thinking that it was just about being 18-21-year-olds and finding your feet. Prospectuses full of smiling undergrads and listings of 32-week tenancies, I’m sure it can feel like the postgraduate is the forgotten child in the higher education picture at times. As it is, however, postgraduates make up 15.5% of the student population at Kent and play a significant role in the life of the University.

The world appears to be waking up to the importance of the postgraduate arena and to the needs and problems that you, as a student body, negotiate. As the lead officer on postgraduate issues over the last year, I’ve tried to assist in highlighting issues of social and study space, Master’s funding and students who teach. We’ve secured interim wins over the next year; however, I believe that we have the chance for much more.

I’m calling the academic year of 2013/14 the Year of the Postgraduate because, I think, for better or for worse, there is a great deal to play for. No longer can postgraduate education sit in the background of national debates or even within our campuses. The recent shift in National Scholarship Programme funding away from undergraduates, represents a symbolic gesture from the government and it certainly won’t be the last time this year that funding sits on the agenda. University executives are also smartening up to the fact that the students who teach are essential to a number of their Key Information Sets and that in the new environment of competition the Postgraduate Education Surveys can be powerful when students consider where to further develop within their discipline.

The position that I hold is not, however, about simply exploiting the new ‘students as consumers’ rhetoric to our advantage. This is about the fact that students who tangibly benefit society and research are not supported as they ought to be. Whether this is because of the lack of a stable loan system for Master’s students, training and resources for students who teach, or facilities for the student body – there are numbers of areas within which the postgraduate community is let down. We need to get our institutions, politicians, union representatives and the general public behind this.

Here at Kent small wins have been found within the campaign for social and study space, but the aim is for a full graduate student centre to be secured. Within Kent Union we will be launching a survey soon on the experiences of postgrad students, but with a specific look on those who teach. Looking more nationally, we will be continuing to lobby politicians on areas of funding and support to help shape the debate.

Higher education at the moment is undergoing constant change, and it was only a matter of time before postgraduate education was reached. My prediction is that it will be given a priority this year in terms of review. My aim is for us at Kent to play a part in that, at all levels, to ensure that the year is remembered for the wins struck by students and their unions, rather than irrepairable damage served. I hope that many of you will get involved and help us to make this year one for the postgraduates.

Alex Murray
Kent Union Vice-President Education
Get Involved

From the Kent Graduate Student Association (KGSA)

Hello, my name is Vid Čalovski and I am the current Vice-President of the Kent Graduate Student Association (KGSA). The KGSA is elected each year to represent postgraduate students here at the University of Kent. We represent students at both University as well as Kent Union meetings; we campaign for improved provision for postgraduates as well as organise events, such as Welcome Week each September.

Over the course of the past year, the KGSA has been very active and we aim to continue this into the new academic year. Having campaigned and raised awareness of the issues that postgraduates face with regard to social and study space at the University, we have managed to help ensure that postgraduate students have greater access to more study space. We were awarded the Kent Union Award for Best Campaign for this and our launch event ‘How many postgraduates can you fit into a common room?’ There will be continued provision of pool tables and table tennis in Woolf Foyer in the new academic year, which we hope will take place at least three nights a week (and will be open to those who do not live on campus too)! In addition, we aim to have film nights throughout the year, including some aimed at those postgraduates who have young children. Towards the end of the first term we will hold events to help mark both Halloween (31 October) and Bonfire night (5 November).

Last, but by no means least, for those who may be interested in sport, there is both a football team (for men and women) and a basketball team which represent Woolf in the Inter College team s will be available during Welcome Week.

For those new students who would like to be involved in the KGSA, elections are held in October for the new committee as well as president. If you are interested in finding out more about specific roles, please email either the KGSA directly (kgsa@kent.ac.uk) or Claire Powell, the current president (cp337@kent.ac.uk). If anyone would like to know more about Welcome Week events, feel free to contact me at vc92@kent.ac.uk. Alternatively, for those who are more inclined to social media, find us at our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/kentgsa) or twitter (@KentGSAA).

We look forward to meeting new students in September!

Vid Čalovski
Vice-President KGSA
MA International Social Policy

Global Europe Centre

Brussels Workshop – June 2013

Following the launch of the Global Europe Centre on 9 May at the Canterbury campus, and with the support of the Graduate School, postgraduate students have organised a series of Global Europe Workshops. The aim of these is to promote inter-site relations between postgraduate students in Canterbury and Brussels in order to foster an interdisciplinary European postgraduate research community at the University of Kent, the UK’s European university.

The first Global Europe Workshop took place on 27 June at the Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS-Kent Brussels). With such close proximity to EU institutions, think-tanks and lobby groups, the inaugural Global Europe Workshop had a practical and policy-making approach to academic research. Morning panels covered topics such as the ‘Practicalities of academic research in Brussels’ which discussed the complexities of conducting interviews. There were tips on how to make ‘The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly’ work for you and EU Foreign Policy after the Arab Spring, which heralded a very lively and timely discussion on the EU’s involvement in North Africa and the Middle East.

Lunch provided a welcome refuel for active, eager and enthusiastic minds and enabled participants to return replenished for afternoon discussions. This included lobbying as a part of EU policy-making, which highlighted that it is much more than influencing policy with 85% of lobbying dealing with managing policy and 15% of lobbying influencing policy. The final session on EU funding opportunities/research grants provided invaluable knowledge about securing funding for future research from various EU institutions and funding bodies.

Many thanks to those who participated in the workshop; in particular to Professor Richard Whitman and Professor Elena Korosteleva from the School of Politics & International Relations, Dr Tom Casier from the Brussels School of International Studies at the University of Kent, Hugues Mingarelli, European External Action Service Managing Director Southern Neighbourhood and Middle East, Dr Mohamed Sameh, EuroArab Forum, Dr Rosa Balfour, Head of Europe in the World Programme, Dr Domenico Rossetti di Valdalbergo, Director General, Research and Innovation, European Commission, Luciano Di Forzo, Head of Sector, Jean Monnet Programme, Education Audiovisual and Cultural Exchange Agency, European Commission and Dr Karolina Pomorska, Marie Curie fellow at Cambridge University.

The second Global Europe Workshop will take place on Friday 1 November at the University of Kent, Canterbury. If you are interested in receiving further details about this workshop, please contact Kathryn Simpson: ks429@kent.ac.uk

Kathryn Simpson
PhD Candidate Politics and Government
Transactions

A conference to crossover, connect, commingle and create!

When Victoria Bennett, Claire Hurley and I were asked to get together to create the 2013 postgraduate conference in December 2012 it looked like a formidable task. The title, which started as a scribbled diagram on the back of an envelope on a moving bus between Dover and Canterbury, and heavily influenced by a Tabish Khair book that I had been reading at the time, led to some exciting and fascinating ideas.

After a call for papers, catering and room bookings via Tom in the English office, web page creation with Gemma’s help, notices, emails, nagging reminders, and regular meetings and a booklet, with Eleni’s assistance, May crept up on us and the sun actually came out on Thursday 16.

The Conference opened with a panel which examined autobiographical writing in transcultural spaces, including Adhaf Soueif and Naguib Mahfouz’s Cairo and intertextuality and memoir in Azar Nafissi’s Tehran. Cross-cultural exchanges and communication, through reflection on the collapsing of the local and global, through echoes of the past in the present and the relevance to political movements were all presented and explored.

The keynote speech followed by Professor Abdulrazak Gurnah on the Significance of the Local which raised interesting questions of cosmopolitan consciousness and the perspectives and discourses of globalisation. If ‘writing engages us beyond what we know’ then the truths told still raise questions of universal critical standards – all relevant to postcolonial studies today.

The new scholarship on the work of Barbara Guest, interrogation of her social alignments and convincing arguments on her omission from New York School Anthologies was discussed in panel two. The panel examined the avant-garde poetry tradition. It included papers on TS Eliot’s broadening of the modernist ‘love poem’ by means of privileging tradition in constructing the inability of men and women to communicate, and the issue of interpretation of translations of Francois Villon’s work, making the case for Roderer’s subjective performativity as superior to that of Pound and Williams.

The panel on traversing boundaries investigated an eclectic range of genres; from the relevance of Derrida in Hilary Mantel’s tension of language and representation of the body, to his philosophy and how it communicates with conceptual art in Karen Green’s Tiny Stampede; from transactions between natural and supernatural worlds via the use of sea metaphors in the work of AS Byatt to the ‘commingling’ and exchange in the poetics of James Schuyler with a strong case for the potential of phenomenology in readings of the avant-garde.

The final panel which emphasised moments in history also had wide geographical and interdisciplinary relevance and closed the Conference within the true spirit of its vision. Papers looked at how inter-war westward migration in America was fertile for modernist literature, how it engaged with landscape and culture; how neuroscientist Rodrigo QuianQuiroga uses Cervantes’s Don Quixote as a literary figure to interrogate the brain/mind in terms of a quest for authenticity and translation; and finally presented as a performance itself – how and why Allen Ginsberg’s Albert Hall readings enact ideological transaction of political agency.

The Conference supper at the Veg Box Café in Canterbury was followed by a superb and entertaining range of readings of their own work by postgraduate students.

The evening ended with the launch of Splinter Magazine and spirited performances of many of the authors from within this first publication.

Professor Abdulrazak Gurnah (PhD director) commented that the organisers of the Conference: ‘did wonderfully well’. Vybarr Cregan-Reid (Director of Graduate Studies) said that the School of English is proud to have such engaging students with a broad range of research interests. It was a wonderfully interesting day.’

List of participants who presented papers:

Sophia Brown, Yasmin Radwan, Mahdi Shamsi, Claire Hurley, George Temple, Kat Peddie, Victoria Bennett, Julie Cook, Barbara Franchi, Matthew Carbery, Fred Francis, Romen-Reyes-Peschl and Juha Virtanen.

Those who read their work at the Creative Writing evening:

Kat Peddie, Charlotte Geater, Juha Virtanen and George Temple.

Pauline McGonagle
MA in Postcolonial Studies
AKA History Article Writing Bootcamp

Review of a two-week workshop

As the summer started and everyone else left for the holidays, 12 History students got together to take part in an article-writing workshop from the 17 to the 28 June. The ideas for it, led by Dr Don Leggett, originated from American workshops of a similar nature, although these were adapted to suit.

Funding was provided through the Centre for History of the Sciences (CHOTS), but it was open to all History students showing an interest. Students were asked: Do you have a PhD chapter that could be transformed into a journal article? A piece of research that you’ve been meaning to write up? A blockage in turning your work around for publication? These questions and more became the purpose of the workshop, to help progress into the realm of publishing, challenging students, and offering them insights into the world of publishing out there.

The course began with a rush of meeting and greeting, although many of us already knew each other, but it gave us a chance to share our working ideas and begin to develop and decide what we would write. Alongside this we began contemplating prospective journals to suit each individual on the course and the work we sought to write, making sure that we knew just how long a piece we were aiming to construct. The aim of the course was to give all participants the chance to completely write peer-reviewed journal articles of around 8,000 words, as well granting opportunities to get insights on the editing and reviewing processes from professionals. Disclaimers were put out at the start that it was a very intense course, and this held true throughout, yet at the same time the rewards made up for the time consumption and intensity.

Guest speakers were invited to offer some of their experience and expertise over the first two days, including members of university staff who are current and past journal editors. Then on the next day different staff members who are frequently asked to review articles as well as write and submit their own for review, also visited us. The insights from our guest speakers were invaluable in helping us to write the best articles we possibly could, as well as giving us a better idea of time frames within which we might usually work.

The average lead time between first submission of an article to a journal and the time when it is actually printed usually falls within two years, although some modern peer-reviewed online journals do seem to have a faster turnover. It was also made clear to us that sometimes delays were the result of any number of hold-ups and continual reviewers looking at work. Nonetheless this was not said to put us off, but rather as a warning. Our guest speakers offered us horror stories as well as success stories which served to put us properly in the picture, but along with their stories we were also given many tips on how to produce a good article and ways to placate reviewers and save time and potential worries.

The diversity of participants was huge, as we had History of Science students, members of Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) along with Modern historians. Participants also came from abroad, and had at some points been part of the University’s European campaigns. This diversity served our purposes, as we were all paired up twice from the first day. Once with a partner whose work fell into a reasonably similar area to our own; these were the specialist partners. Then secondly we were paired with another person whose work was most divergent to our own; our general partners.

Once the writing was underway, we aimed on average to write about 1,000 words a day, although the first few days were spent entirely on introductions, which were again revised by the end, and the last couple of days focused on conclusions. Each day we gave our own work to both of our partners, and read their work before discussing the content and changes that could be made. We were not locked away constantly in a room reading and writing, however, breaks were taken, and the focus was redirected to different aspects of the articles we were writing as they progressed.

Watching everyone as the workshop developed was interesting as those who came in full of confidence seemed by the third day to have lost it. Yet the continual review process, although it served to highlight our mistakes, also became a means of showing and justifying our better features (and may even be good viva preparation for many). Although the perfectionist in all of us suffered somewhat along the way, the final products were not only developing good articles, but also developing the confidence of every participant in justifying our work and sharing it with specialists as well as strangers.

For more details on the course this year, and to potentially wet the appetites of others for next year, take a look at the course story online at: http://storify.com/KentCHOTS/write-a-journal-article-chots-workshop#. This page offers commentary throughout the two weeks as well as comments tweeted in along the way. There are hopes for another course next year, and maybe other departments will take an interest in it as well. We can only hope!

Pippa Gregory
PhD Modern History Research
One of the positives of undertaking a PhD in film is that you always prick people’s curiosity into what you are researching. Some are truly mystified that you can even undertake a post-doctoral study of film, while others are genuinely interested in asking you about your project. I guess the beauty of film is that it’s a subject that everyone relates to and everyone can have an opinion on. We all go to the cinema, watch DVDs or maybe catch a movie on a wet and cold Sunday afternoon. We’ve all got a favourite film and a favourite actor or star.

But when friends outside the University and academic life asked me what my thesis was actually about, I was surprised by one of the responses. “So, you don’t just write about films then?” was a question that made me pause momentarily. My research is on contemporary British horror films. More precisely, it’s concerned with films labelled as Hoodie Horrors, such as Harry Brown and Eden Lake. And, although my thesis is concerned with theories of cinematic horror, genre theory and the history of British film, my research is also immersed in British politics, cultural and media studies as my project seeks to understand the cultural significance of the threat of the hoodie. That’s one of the reasons why studying film can be so interesting; the research can lead in many diverse directions covering other disciplines.

And that’s one of the best things about studying film at Kent – the interdisciplinary approach. The event taking place at The Gulbenkian this autumn term is a great example of the interdisciplinary approach put into practice.
The weekend of 27-29 September sees The Gulbenkian devote itself to all things Doris Day. Day, who turned 90 in 2012, was a major Hollywood star during the 1950s and 60s. She appeared in melodramas, musicals and romantic comedies and 40 years after her last film, is still known for being typecast as the 40-year-old virgin. She is famous for her films with Rock Hudson, Cary Grant and arguably her most iconic role is that of Calamity Jane (a film which is 60 years old this year). The weekend is the brainchild of Dr Tamar Jeffers-McDonald, a senior lecturer in Film at the University and self-confessed Doris Day obsessive. Jeffers-McDonald has previously written on costume and representations of virginity in film, as well as on romantic comedies. October sees the release of her book, Doris Day Confidential: Hollywood, Sex and Stardom, in which she challenges the accepted assumptions of Doris Day. The book closely explores Day’s characters and performances in both her film and TV work in order to locate how the virgin myth came about. The work also focuses on contemporary popular culture, from reviews, newspaper articles and fan magazines in order to chart Doris Day’s screen persona and the changing public perception of the star.

Of course the weekend is predominately about the films. There will be a chance to see Pillow Talk, undoubtedly one of Day’s most famous romcoms, also starring Rock Hudson. There is a lesser known gem, Midnight Lace, a modern Gothic tale in which Day’s character fears for her sanity when she begins to receive a string of threatening phone calls. Quite possibly the highlight of the weekend will be the whip-cracking, Sing-a-long-Calamity Jane! There will also be opportunities to acquaint yourselves better with Doris Day and her films, with accompanying introductions to the screenings led by Tamar and Dr John Mercer, of Birmingham City University. But the weekend is also an opportunity to understand how films act as cultural products. Dr Karen Jones, from our own School of History, specialises in the American West and will be talking about the real Calamity Jane and screening a revisionist western, while Professor Peter Stanfield from the Film department at Kent will talk about western clothing, but more specifically, denim.

So no, we don’t just write about films! But, find out for yourself by coming along to the Doris Day weekend, and be surprised by just how culturally significant a pair of jeans can be. Or just enjoy the fun of Sing-a-long-Calamity Jane!

For more information, contact: E: t.jeffers-mcdonald@kent.ac.uk
www.kent.ac.uk/gulbenkian/

Katerina Flint-Nicol
PhD Candidate Film Studies
Postgraduate Research Festival 2013

The Third Annual Postgraduate Research Festival took place in Woolf College on 18 June and was attended by postgraduate students from many disciplines and across all three Faculties.

The festival is an opportunity for all postgraduate students at Kent, both taught and research, to showcase their work to fellow students and academics. Students are given the chance to present a poster summarising their current research and a prize is awarded for the best poster in each Faculty.

The Research Festival also hosted a number of academic talks on career development, success in publishing and research grant applications. This year we were fortunate to hear from Professor Darren Griffin who gave an intriguing lecture entitled “Are our (genetic) male bits shrinking into oblivion?”; Dr Peter Klappa discussing the question “Universities – is there a future for us?”; and Phil Ward giving some excellent advice on “Getting Research Funding”. Students were also given an insight into academic life from the Career Planning and Development Panel. Led by Dr Fragkiskos Filipaikos, each member of the panel gave a short description of their career to date, what motivated them and how best to start a career in academia.

Following an afternoon of inspiring talks, it was finally time to hear from the students. This year proved to be extremely popular, with over 40 posters presented on the day. Congratulations to all those who displayed and presented their posters – they were all of a very high standard and the Q&A sessions provoked some stimulating discussions. The posters were considered by Dr Ruth Blakeley (Social Sciences Faculty Director of Graduate Studies), Dr Colin Johnson (Sciences Faculty Director of Graduate Studies) and Professor Paul Allain (Humanities Director of Research). The ‘judges’ found it difficult to reach their decisions and after much deliberation the poster awards were given to: Paula Lock from SECL (School of European Culture and Languages) for her poster “Roman Taverns and Inns”; Manual Jorge Marques from the School of Physical Sciences for his poster “Non-invasive imaging of human tissue with Optical Coherence Tomography” and Sarah Tetley from KBS (Kent Business School) for her poster “Gurnard and Chips Anyone ... Anyone!!”

The Festival came to a close with an award presentation to each of the poster winners by Professor Diane Houston, Dean of the Graduate School. Well done to the lucky winners who each received £100 of Blackwell’s gift vouchers. Proceedings were rounded up by a drinks reception and the chance to talk over the day’s events. It was agreed that a successful and enjoyable day was had by all.

Katie Watson
Graduate School

Postgraduate Experience Awards

Do you have a great idea for a postgraduate event at Kent? Apply for funding through the Postgraduate Experience Awards and your idea could become a reality.

• Applications for funding from postgraduate students (both taught and research) and postdoctoral researchers (up to two years) are invited for the Postgraduate Experience Awards 2013-2014
• Applications for up to £1,500 will be considered for funding to run events or projects which have an interdisciplinary and/or external focus that will enhance the postgraduate experience at Kent
• All events or projects must take place by the end of the 2013-14 academic year
• The application form and full details can be found on the Graduate School Website (www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/)
• The deadline for applications is Friday 29 November 2013

GradPost Editorial Team

Fancy yourself as a budding journalist? Want to contribute to the GradPost and gain some experience in writing for publications?

Then why not join the GradPost Team?

We are looking for students to join our GradPost editorial team from September 2013. If you are interested in joining the team or contributing to the new edition please contact Katie Watson in the Graduate School (gradpost@kent.ac.uk)