The Centennial
Best and Brightest
2017 Honours Program
The IVth Year Honours thesis is about 18,000 words based on original research and exposition by the student. It is examined at a professional standard. Students also complete units of study in the IVth year Honours. Many are enrolled in combined award courses.

Honours graduates from Government and International relations have gone on to careers as problem solvers in public service, international affairs, public policy and administration, consultancy, journalism and media, lobbying organisations – domestic and international, and more.

Recent graduates have been employed by Aristocrat Technologies, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australian Federal Police, Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority, Bearing Point, BT Financial Group, Citi-Group, Clayton Utz, Clubs NSW, Commonwealth Bank, Department of Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Housing NSW, Elektroskandia AB, Fox Communications, GHC entertainment, HarperCollins, Macquarie Group, NSW Parliament House, RailCorp, SBS Television, Westpac Banking, and World Vision.

Many graduates pursue a post-graduate degree shortly after graduation. Honours Graduates in Government comprise a long list of distinguished contributors to Australian society and its place in the region and the world. They contribute to all walks of life.

Previous panellists at Best and Brightest have been Rhodes Scholars, Menzies Fellows and have pursued higher degrees at Harvard University, Oxford University, Cambridge, Yale University, Queen Mary (London) University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Sydney. A former panellist is now a documentary filmmaker in London, a senior advisor to a cabinet minister, a portfolio manager at a major accounting firm, a policy advisor to the NSW Farmers’ Association, an ABC producer, and several are legal practitioners.
## IVth Year Honours Program

### Welcome and call to order

**The Panellists**

1. **Matilda Steward**  
   A Nation of Immigrants? The Ambivalence of Latinos in the United States

2. **Harry Maher**  
   Narratives of Austerity and the Construction of Consent: A Neo-Gramscian Analysis of Austerity Policies in the United Kingdom

**Interim Question Time** - first two speakers

3. **Eda Gunaydin**  
   Malleable Allies? An Applied Discourse Analysis of Foreign Policy, Kurdish Identity and Agency in Syria

4. **Umeya Chaudhuri**  
   Ma[s]king Education: A Securitising Discourse about the ‘Heroic Third World Girl’ Malala Yousafzai

5. **Alexandra Wright**  
   The Iran Nuclear Deal: A Power Play in Three Acts

**General Question Time** - all speakers

### Closing Remarks

### Reception in Lobby
Popular narratives surrounding immigration to the United States serve to characterise the country as a “nation of immigrants” and uphold its self-defined status as exceptional.

Despite their demographic significance and longstanding history of immigration, the Latino population within the United States is continually portrayed as foreign and consequently denied membership within the nation’s imagined community. In light of this unique paradox, I explore the factors that have given rise to this contemporary designation. Beginning the study with a discourse analysis of major national newspapers, I establish major themes that are used to characterise the Latino presence in the United States. I further illustrate how these themes are operationalised in order to justify discriminatory action in the realms of border enforcement and local-level public policy. In doing so, I seek to destabilise dominant representations of Latinos that restrict their incorporation within American society.

This analysis illustrates the productive power of discourse in sanctioning thought and action and underscores the relevance of discursive approaches in understanding national belonging.

― Supervisor: Dr David Smith
Harry Maher

Narratives of Austerity and the Construction of Consent: A Neo-Gramscian Analysis of Austerity Policies in the United Kingdom

The purpose of this research is to determine how austerity policies in the UK became, in Gramsci’s terminology, a ‘hegemonic’ project, attracting popular consent and widespread political support.

Firstly, I demonstrate that austerity policies advanced narrow corporate interests at the expense of the majority, and hence argue, within a neo-Gramscian framework, that the popular endorsement of austerity policies at the 2015 general election cannot be accounted for by material factors, and instead must be explained by ideational factors.

Consequently, I engage in a critical discourse analysis of the austerity narrative created by David Cameron and the Conservative Party from 2005 to 2015, documenting Cameron’s two key claims; firstly, that austerity policies were morally virtuous, and secondly, that austerity was an economic necessity. I argue that while the first claim was a partial success, and created a limited level of enthusiastic popular support for austerity, it was ultimately Cameron’s claim that there was no alternative that convinced the majority to begrudgingly consent to five more years of austerity policies at the 2015 general election.

– Supervisor: Professor Allan McConnell
Eda Gunaydin


This thesis asks how the Kurdish ethnic group has come to be viewed as the ‘best’ ally the US-fronted coalition has in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria.

Although Western leaders, analysts and media condemned the Syrian Kurds as terrorists and separatists in 2013, those same actors now praise the group as moderates and ‘good guys.’ I argue that such a reversal can only be understood as the product of a powerful policy discourse.

This thesis adopts a postcolonial approach to develop three contrasting discursive accounts of the Syrian Kurds. First, a Western discourse legitimises the foreign policy decision to ally with the Syrian Kurds by constituting the group as ‘Westerners in the Middle East.’ Second, by ‘shining’ the Turkish narrative about the Syrian Kurds onto the Western narrative, I destabilise this dominant discourse. Third, in examining the Syrian Kurds’ self-representation, this thesis is also a timely exploration of Kurdish agency. The Syrian Kurds were colonised, stateless ‘victims’ of the international system for a century. Now, in 2016, they edge toward implementing a self-determined political vision. However, we have not asked what this vision is, in the group’s own words.

Using previously un-translated texts and interviews, this thesis shows that Syrian Kurdish politicians and fighters challenge dominant narratives about their identity, and about statehood, democracy, secularism and women’s liberation.

− Supervisor: Associate Professor Charlotte Epstein
Education has increasingly become a salient political issue in international development, as international education aid has risen since 2012 and the United Nations (UN) Secretary General launched the ‘Global Education First Initiative’ the same year.

To explain this re-politicisation, this thesis examines the naturalisation of global education as a counter-terrorist strategy in international development, through the nascent securitising discourse of the ‘heroic third world girl’ – Malala Yousafzai. By using securitisation theory and a post-structural discourse analysis, this study critically explores power relations, identity and agency in international development, to determine who ‘speaks’ and to show the effect(s) of the discourse. In doing so, this thesis argues that western state actors ‘spoke’ the securitising dominant discourse to mask: first, the foreign policy myths about the terrorist threat and education, second, specific geostrategic drone strikes and, third, histories of intervention in Pakistan that contributed to creating the existential terrorist threat.

At the heart of all this is the individual subject, Malala, who is discursively constructed as a ‘western ally’ through the dominant discourse.

This study retrieves the subject’s dominated discourse, by looking at her written, spoken and visual ‘speech’ to show how she enacts agency and reclaims a different political identity for herself.

– Supervisor: Associate Professor Charlotte Epstein
On July 14, 2015, the P5+1 and Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, 2015), the climax and conclusion of two years of negotiations and almost a decade of wrangling over the Iranian nuclear program (Albright et al., 2016:1, Tarock, 2016:1408).

A critical examination of the negotiations and deal shows that the obligations imposed upon Iran are disproportionate compared to the conditional, incremental and reversible sanctions relief that the P5+1 have agreed to provide in return (Albright et al, 2015:17, Macaluso, 2015, Tarock, 2016:1413-14, Katzman et al. 2015:8). Utilising Lukes’ (2005) three dimensional framework of the power, this thesis seeks to explicate how the P5+1 states exercised power over Iran in the nuclear negotiations to secure their compliance to this deal (JCPOA, 2015). In doing so, it will extend the literature on the nuclear negotiations and non-proliferation by considering the power dynamics that exist and are perpetuated through such negotiations. It will also provide an original application of Lukes’ (2005) framework in the context of multilateral negotiations.

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Supervisor: Dr John Brookfield
The Department of Government and International Relations

The department of Government and International relations is a large and active group of students, teachers, and researchers covering all aspects of government and politics from the local to the national to the international.

Its work reflects current developments and activities in the ever-changing world of politics, but it offers in-depth perspectives that go to the enduring structures that determine the day-to-day reality of government, politics, and international relations. Politics is always local and it is never only local. That is the paradox that political science unpacks. Everything arises in a local context and everything has parallels, roots, and implications beyond the local in time or in space. Terrorism, human rights, globalization, voting and elections, environmentalism, immigration, defence, ethics, leadership, power, gender, the rise of China, these are only some of the specifics analysed in the department.

At the same time, the department does not lose sight of the fundamentals and so Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, Harriet Taylor, Ayn Rand, Hannah Arendt, and other enduring thinkers also play a part in teaching and research.

In 1910 the university first recognized political science and it has been offered continuously since then. When students join us today they are also joining the thousands of alumni who have majored or completed Honours in Government and International relations, or a post graduate degree in either a professional or research masters, or a Ph.D.

We prepare students for life, not just the first job!

Find out more

The Department has a small suite of prizes for outstanding students like those who presented tonight. These prizes do much to encourage students to do their best work, but, sadly, most are underfunded.

To discuss a financial contribution contact: Dr Michael Jackson, Emeritus Professor at michael.jackson@sydney.edu.au or on 0412 194 672
Retired Associate Professor Michael Hogan’s history of the Department of Government and International Relations is available from Connor Court Publishing – www.connorcourt.com

It includes profiles of many graduates and staff members, as well as an account of the evolution of the Department from the Twentieth Century to the Twenty-First. In addition, Hogan shows how the Department fostered the systematic study of government and politics in other Australian universities.

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