Welcome to the first edition of the School of Social and Political Sciences Magazine. The aim of the magazine is to give you an insight into the life and workings of one of the most successful academic groups in the world for research and teaching in the social sciences. This was only very recently recognised in the global rankings produced by the prestigious US News and world report which ranked Sydney number one for the social sciences in the Australasia region. This was closely followed by the QS rankings which placed both political science and sociology, our two largest departments, in the top 30 globally and in the top five for the Asia-Pacific region. This is an extraordinary testimony to the very talented staff and students of the school, which to recall was only created in 2008. Since that time we have doubled our academic staff numbers, and been able to welcome on board exceptionally distinguished and talented colleagues. We have also welcomed into the school cognate disciplines and centres previously located elsewhere, such as the Centre for International Security Studies led by Prof. James Der Derian and the Graduate School of Government led by A/Prof Gaby Ramia. The School is also home to a rich variety of networks, research groups and other kinds of initiatives bringing together scholars from various parts of the School and beyond. I very much hope that this magazine will give you a useful insight into what they have been doing and what we collectively as a School have been doing. Enjoy!

Please send your feedback to: nena.strafovksa@sydney.edu.au

Professor Simon Tormey
Head of School
SSPS REVIEW is a quarterly publication. The articles published reflect the opinions of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the publishers and editorial team.

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*Co-presented by the Sydney Environment Institute and the Laureate Research Program in International History*

“If, indeed, globalization and global warming are born of overlapping processes, the question is, how do we bring them together in our understanding of the world?” - Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty, University of Chicago

In this conversation, University of Sydney Professors Glenda Sluga and David Schlosberg take up the themes of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s work to ask: what value does history have in tackling and understanding the political, social, cultural, and economic challenges posed by climate change? Can we reconcile the imperatives of capitalism and the objectives of tackling climate change?


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*Co-presented by the Department of Arabic Language and Cultures, School of Languages and Cultures, and the Religion State and Society Network in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney.*

The rise of radical Islam organisations such as Al Shabab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria has led many scholars to adopt a very simplistic approach through linking it to al-Qaeda. However, there is a dire need to have a different narrative about the root causes of intellectual and religious extremism in Africa and the Arab World.

Professor Hassan will discuss the developments that might have triggered the emergence of violent Islamist groups such as Boko Haram during the last decade, and the driving factors behind the escalation of violence and extremism.


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*Hosted by the Department of Political Economy, featuring Professor Erik Olin Wright from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.*

The annual E.L. ‘Ted’ Wheelwright Memorial Lecture is held to commemorate the pioneering role that Ted Wheelwright played in developing studies in Political Economy in Australia. Ted Wheelwright, who died of bronchial pneumonia in August 2007, was one of the great contributors to Australian political economy. He was a significant figure in Australian labour history too, working in tandem with Ken Buckley, who died in 2006. Ken and he wrote two volumes of Australian history from a labour perspective and edited five volumes of Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism.


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*Co-presented by the Sydney Democracy Network and the Consulate of the Czech Republic in Sydney.*

We’re living through a second machine age revolution featuring the application of artificial intelligence and digital robots to ever-widening spheres of daily life. Many innovations are astonishing: their ingenuity and boldness are triggering utopian hopes for life on Earth and dystopian fears of a future in which human freedom and equality are swallowed up by intelligent design.

A panel of distinguished speakers from Australia and the Czech Republic, including robotics experts, social scientists, and scientific journalists will assess the contours of the unfinished revolution and consider what it tells us about power, politics and the human condition in these early years of the 21st century.

What’s your current position and what do you enjoy the most about your role?

Priya Shaw

What do you do at the University?
My role is the School Admin Officer which incorporates areas such as the Executive Assistant to the Head of School, HR, WHS and management of space...the final frontier. I like my role as I have a general oversight of what is happening across the School and I am enjoying working in SSPS as I think the people are pretty nice. I’m generally a pretty organized person so this type of role suits me very well.

What were you doing before working at the University of Sydney?
Before I was at uSyd I lived in Broken Hill and worked in admin for a mining supply company who supplied heavy drilling machinery to the local mines. I did not like having to wear steel capped boots to work every day.

What are you currently watching?
Orange is the New Black...not sure how I’m feeling about it yet.

What are you currently reading?
No, I grew up in Former Yugoslavia which has some of the best Communist architecture you’ll ever see!

What’s your current position and what do you enjoy the most about your role?
I am the Research Support Officer at the School of Social and Political Sciences. The best part of my job is being given the opportunity to read the wonderful ideas our Academics write up grant applications for and publish. To be a small part of that process and to be inspired, every day, by the amazing theories and projects they work on.

What were you doing before working at the University of Sydney?
After five years in the corporate sector I decided to take a career break and spent 6 months travelling around South America and working on my Masters at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

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What are you currently watching?
The Mountains of California by John Muir and The Irish War by Tony Geraghty, which is one of the most balanced accounts I’ve ever read of the conflict between the English and the IRA.

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What’s your current position and what do you enjoy the most about your role?
I am the School’s Communications and Events Officer. I get to do everything from digital content production, event planning, web design to guest list. I love kickstarting our social media strategy. Every day is a new adventure.

What were you doing before working at the University of Sydney?
I worked in the music industry, dealing with record labels and online content providers such as YouTube and News Ltd, while completing a Master of Media Practice at uSyd. I still write music reviews and articles for The Brag and The AU Review in my spare time.

Have you always lived in Sydney?
I live in China before coming to Sydney in July 2012.

What are you currently watching?
I used to love watching the Big Bang Theory but there’s no update recently. Sometimes I watch popular movies like Avengers and Big Hero 6.

What are you currently reading?
The best Communist architecture you’ll ever see!

What’s your current position and what do you enjoy the most about your role?
I am the Administrative Assistant and work closely with Nena in the area of Communications and Events. I like this role because it really improves my ability of multi-tasking and handling competing demands. Also I have acquired some software skills such as Photoshop and InDesign. Most importantly, I love working with my colleagues.

What were you doing before working at the University of Sydney?
I studied at the Business School in The University of Sydney, and graduated in 2014.

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2015 NEW STAFF

Tess Aungles

What’s your current position and what do you enjoy the most about your role?
I am an Administration Assistant with specialisation in Teaching and Curriculum matters. I enjoy the different perspective it gives me on University life as compared to being a student.

What were you doing before working at the University of Sydney?
I was a Sport Science intern with the New South Wales Institute of Sport. As part of that, I got to work with Olympic and Paralympic athletes across a range of biomechanics, physiology and performance analysis projects.

Have you always lived in Sydney?
No. I was born in the Hunter Region and lived on the Central Coast until I was 5.

Where can we find you on the weekend?
You can find me on a futsal court. I play for East Coast Heat in the national F-League.

What are you currently watching?
Fox Sports, ESPN, Eurosport.

Nathan Clissold

What’s your current position and what do you enjoy the most about your role?
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Have you always lived in Sydney?
No. I lived in Canberra until I was 16, then I came to Boarding School in Sydney, and have been in Sydney ever since. I still enjoy going home to Canberra to visit... occasionally.

What’s your favourite sport?
Usually on the weekend I will be out running or playing soccer for the University team.

What are you currently watching?
Unfortunately, I have to admit I’m hooked on Masterchef.

Alessandro Nai

What’s your current position?
I am a Project Manager and Research Associate at the Electoral Integrity Project. I am thrilled to join the EIP, which investigates the causes and consequences of electoral integrity (or the lack thereof) in elections across the world. I have the chance to join a wonderful team, which carries out fantastic research and provided me with the most warm welcome.

What were you involved with before the University of Sydney?
I worked over the past years as Lecturer at the Department of Political Science and International Relations (University of Geneva, Switzerland), where I taught classes on political behaviour and quantitative methods. I had a really good time in Geneva, where I also did my PhD, but I felt that I needed new challenges.

What are you reading at the moment?
I’m a voracious reader, and at the moment I’m torn between Stephen King’s new book (Finders Keepers) and John Birmingham’s “unauthorised” biography of Sydney (Leviathan).
On Saturday 6 June 2015, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, the China Democracy Forum (Sydney) and the Sydney Democracy Network (SDN) hosted a day-long forum at the University on The Umbrella Movement: Hong Kong and the Future of China.

With opening remarks by Professor Simon Tormey, Head of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University, speakers included Professor Chan Kin Man, Alex Chow, Lester Shum, Edward Chin, Professor Hu Yuan-Hui, Stephenie Andal, David Chien and Dr Chrisann Palm.

Academics and student activists spoke directly from their on-the-ground experience in the central business district and Mong Kok as they examined the dynamics that triggered the emergence of the citizens' initiative commonly known as Occupy Central and the Umbrella Movement.

During 2014, Occupy Central and the Umbrella Movement seriously disrupted business-as-usual in Hong Kong. In support of such principles as social justice and free and fair elections, the dramatic occupation of various districts of the city generated widespread local public debate and captured the attention of the world’s media.

In mainland China, by contrast, the citizens’ uprising was greeted with heavy censorship, hostile reporting and political intransigence. After nearly 3 months of resistance, the Hong Kong occupations ended in a peaceful stalemate, but with no working agreement between citizens, their local government and Beijing.

The discussion during the day centred on the social impact, political tactics and achievements of the Umbrella Movement and the ways in which these came about with the leadership of a younger generation of students acting in a digital environment.

The forum generated strong interest from local students and the Chinese and Hong Kong community in Sydney and was attended by an audience of more than 100.

The forum concluded with an extended question and answer session looking to the future for the Umbrella Movement and considering whether it can overcome the setbacks it has suffered to play a vital role in shaping not just the future of Hong Kong but political dynamics in mainland China as well.

To see video highlights of the day please visit: http://sydneydemocracynetwork.org/forum-the-umbrella-movement-hong-kong-and-the-future-of-china/

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SDN Encounter | A Surprisingly Short History of the ‘Right to Know’

The Sydney Democracy Network (SDN) was delighted to host Professor Michael Schudson of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism on a visit to the University of Sydney on 12 and 13 March this year. During his time at the University, Michael Schudson delivered a public lecture on the US Freedom of Information Act and the ‘right to know’. Professor Schudson was also guest of honour at the inaugural SDN Encounter where he responded to presentations and questions on his work spanning the publication of Discovering the News (1978); Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion (1984); Watergate in American Memory (1992); The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life (1998), and Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press (2008).

Michael Schudson is Professor of Journalism in the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Sociology. For his pioneering contributions to such fields as the history and future of American news media, advertising, citizenship and popular culture, Michael Schudson has received many honours, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and a MacArthur Foundation ‘genius’ award. In 2014, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Groningen.

Why Do Elections Fail and What Can We Do About It?

The Electoral Integrity Project investigates the ‘integrity’ of elections across the globe and circumstances that lead to corruption.

Written by Lisa Fennis

Many elections are flawed or even fail. In ‘electoral autocracies’ façades of party competition hide major violations of human rights. In some countries even minor electoral irregularities or voter coercion have triggered instability, riots, and deadly violence. Many elections face problems such as limits on equal ballot access for opposition parties, pro-government media bias, maladministration in electoral registration, and vote-rigging at the count.

It is easy to dismiss these issues as far-flung events that happen in states such as Russia, Nigeria or Egypt. Yet flaws occur in practically every election, including in democratic regimes. For example, the regulation of money in politics and election campaigns, political broadcasting, and online voting generate new challenges in the United States, Britain and Australia. These problems do not only occur on Election Day. Electoral laws and district boundaries are manipulated years before people head to the polls, campaigns are marred with malpractices, and the aftermath of polling day is not risk-free either.

The Electoral Integrity Project

As almost every country around the globe now holds elections, the ‘integrity’ of these processes has generated growing concern and increasing scrutiny. Reflecting these developments, the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP) studies three main questions:

- When do elections meet international standards of electoral integrity?
- What can be done to mitigate these problems?
- What happens when elections fail to do so?

The five-year research project, starting mid-2012, is an independent study directed by Professor Pippa Norris, with a research team based at the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. The team includes Dr Alessandro Nai (Project Manager), Dr Ferran Martinez i Coma (PEI Program Manager), Max Grömping (Research Assistant and PhD student), Dr Andrea Abel van Es (Research Assistant), Lisa Fennis (Project Coordinator), as well as visiting fellows and affiliated staff (such as Anika Gauja, Ben Goldsmith, and Rodney Smith). The Project has been generously funded by the Australian Research Council, International IDEA, and at Harvard University.

Using an expert survey to compare elections

How do we know why elections fail and what can we do about it? Regional electoral observer missions provide in-depth assessments of many contests, but it is difficult to compare reports consistently across countries worldwide, and groups often produce divergent assessments. It is important to establish reliable and robust evidence.

One of the project’s key programs is the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (PEI) expert survey, launched on 1 July 2012. PEI collects evaluations of presidential and legislative elections worldwide, provided by independent elections experts. It gathers information for 49 indicators, clustered to evaluate eleven stages in the electoral cycle, generating an overall summary Perception of Electoral Integrity (PEI) 100-point index. PEI provides a comprehensive, systematic and consistent way to monitor and compare the quality of elections worldwide. In February of every year ‘The Year in Elections’ report is released. This year’s report covers 127 elections in 107 countries from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2014. The dataset is freely accessible at www.electoralintegrity.com, and it currently covers almost two-thirds (62%) of all independent nation-states worldwide.

The verdict for 2014 is critical of elections in Egypt, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Bahrain and Syria, whilst by contrast several states in Central Europe and the Baltics (Slovenia and Lithuania) and Latin America (Costa Rica and Uruguay) ranked exceptionally high.

Not surprisingly, Sweden and New Zealand were amongst the top performers, whilst the United States scored worst amongst any long-established democracy. Australia ranked 24th out of 127 countries.

The use and abuse of money in politics

Over the last few years, experts have consistently concluded that the worst problems often arose during election campaigns. One of the most crucial issues is the lack of equitable access to political finance. In fact, problems of money in politics are in the headlines every day somewhere around the world. Money is essential for electoral politics. Yet its use and abuse often produce government scandals associated with bribes, undue influence, and illicit donations, lack of a level playing field in party war-chests, or, in the worst cases, rentier states governed by kleptocracy and corruption.

As the issue of the effective regulation is rising to the top of the agenda for the international community and domestic reformers, EIP currently collaborates with the Sunlight Foundation and Global Integrity to generate research, analysis and global norms that civic organizations, elected officials, regulators and the media can use to build more effective political financing regulations in any country. A new executive...
Board of distinguished scholars and practitioners, and through a series of international workshops and conferences, the project works closely with many professional associations and international agencies, including the Australian, American and International Political Studies Associations (AusPSA, APSA and IPSA respectively), International IDEA, the Carter Center, Democracy International, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Organization of American States, the OSCE/ODIHR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), the Hans Seidel Foundation, and the World Values Survey. The project also brings together scholars and practitioners working on issues of electoral integrity worldwide, in order to share knowledge and stimulate new research. Since the project’s launch, it has organised six international workshops on electoral integrity (a seventh will follow later this year), often in partnership with AusPSA, APSA, and IPSA. Members of the research team have presented papers and shared expertise at countless conferences and roundtables, and International IDEA and EIP have teamed up twice for an international graduate student essay competition. Closer to home, the project invites scholars to present new research at the EIP research seminar series, and welcomes a number of young visiting scholars and senior visiting fellows to the Sydney project offices each semester. The project has produced many publications. Beyond two annual reports and the datasets, the list includes six peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and four edited volumes (with Oxford University Press and Routledge): Advancing Electoral Integrity, Contentious Election – From Ballots to Barricades, and Checkbook Elections – Political Finance in Comparative Perspective (forthcoming). Pippa Norris is also publishing a trilogy of single-authored books with Cambridge University Press of which Why Electoral Integrity Matters appeared in 2014, Why Elections Fail will appear in 2015, and Strengthening Elections is under development. More details about the Electoral Integrity Project are available on the project’s website: www.electoralintegrityproject.org
Going Digital: Conducting Research in Cyberspace

The growing challenge of working with Big Data in an increasingly digital world

Written by Aim Sinpeng

The virtual world of cyberspace has come to define the reality for so many of us as we increasingly live and work online. We now study, stay in touch with our families and go shopping at a click of a button. Indeed, since 2000, the number of Internet users rose by 750 fold, bringing the Internet penetration rate worldwide to 40%. Internet expansion is likely to grow exponentially in many parts of the developing world, shifting the center of cyberspace towards the global south. This unprecedented digital transformation of our world has the greatest impact in places that are least prepared for it – villages in Kenya where Internet cafés opened up despite electricity shortage and in rural India where students used tablet PCs in schools that lacked indoor plumbing or paved roads.

Having spent the early half of my life without the web or PC, the impact of this “digital revolution” was deeply personal. In the early 2000s, when I moved to the United States to pursue an undergraduate degree, I gained my first access to the Internet when I opened an ICQ account (remember this?) as a way to keep in touch with my friends back home. Unfortunately my family didn’t have Internet access so I still spent the next 5 years inside an obscure phone booth calling them with phone cards until they eventually got their first dial-up modem. Connecting to the Internet was a nail-bitingly slow activity with a 50/50 chance of success. But the boundary between the “virtual life” and the “real life” back then was very clear: you ceased all other activities just to connect to the web (and no one in your household could use a phone) and you returned to reality after you got disconnected (often involuntarily). Today, you answer your email on your smartphone, while simultaneously ordering take-away online with your favorite Netflix drama streaming in the background. The cyber and physical realms have converged.

My curiosity over the impact of this digital transformation on the lives of people in the developing world has informed my own research. I am fascinated by the “blurring” of the real and the virtual public spheres and the prospect of this “collision” for social and political change. I say collision because any revolution invites resistance and the speed and scale of this transformation inevitably causes some degree of societal friction and dissonance. In particular, I am interested in how might digital technologies encourage greater political participation in places that traditionally dissuade it. Can open Internet operate in closed regimes? More to the point, can increasing Internet access open up regimes? Can social media help fuel protests that eventually topple dictatorship?

To answer some of these important questions, I began my own transition towards “big data” research. As a largely qualitative researcher, the idea of dealing with very large and complex data sets was immediately overwhelming. Because “big data” is such a buzz word (see graph below), it’s easy to get tempted and jump to it before careful consideration. I’ve made a number of mistakes in my initial stage of transition and would like to share some of my lessons here.
Aim Sinpeng’s research interests centre on the relationships between digital media, political participation and political regimes in Southeast Asia. Her previous publications examine popular movements against democracy in democratizing states, particularly in Thailand. Aim has served as the Expert Contributor for Varieties of Democracy, which measures degrees and types of democracy, and is currently a Research Associate of the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto. She is also a regular commentator on Thai politics for the CBC, BBC, Al Jazeera, Channel News Asia, Washington Post, CCTV, and the Globe and Mail.

For researchers contemplating the idea of engaging with big data or Internet research generally, the starting point should be with what you know. Can you transfer your existing skills to analyzing big data? One should not jump to the conclusion that learning how to “code” is a pre-requisite to doing big data research. A more important question is: can you answer new research questions with the toolbox you already have? Big data research will likely require researchers to go into new terrains, be it new methods, new data sets, new approaches or new sites of inquiry. But it does not automatically mean you have to start from scratch. A careful research design is crucial to transitioning towards working with digital data. My first publication on Internet research, State Repression in Cyberspace: the Case of Thailand, was a qualitative comparative study examining when, how and why the Thai state exercised cyber controls.

"I am fascinated by the ‘blurring’ of the real and the virtual public spheres and the prospect of this ‘collision’ for social and political change"

Based on an analysis of blocked web pages and cyber laws and regulations, I found that Thai governments with a high digital coercive capacity, regardless of regime type, are more likely to exercise cyber repression. The fact that I eased my transition to Internet research by looking at "small data" – blocked web pages and Internet statistics – made the whole experience far less intimidating than it would have otherwise been.

Trials and errors
Because big data research encompasses constantly evolving methodological tools and spans across multiple research inquiries, there is yet no central depository of how to go about doing it. The problem of “how to start” is especially challenging for the less technically inclined researchers. Be ready to make lots of trials and errors. Talk to as many people as you can, who do big data research, about what you have tried and its results. There is no shame of sharing failures. The first time I tried to process some Facebook data through Netvizz – a Facebook API - my computer actually crashed. It also crashed several times after. I brought my problem to an online forum and found that the data I tried to process was too large and that I would either need a super computer or reduce my sampling size. The University of Sydney now has a High-Performance Computer (HPC) to help researchers deal with large volume of data.

Collaborate
It’s important to find ways to collaborate with other Internet scholars who are interested in similar research. Collaboration facilitates sharing of information, knowledge and resources. It can also be your shortcuts to finding out about the latest software or methods. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney in fact has the Everyday Social Media research group (ESM), led by Drs. Fiona Martin, Gerard Goggin and Ariadne Vromen, which brings together researchers from across the university who share interests in social media research. The ESM is a wonderful example of a collaborative community that supports advances in research and funding of its members, but it also engages with outside scholars and the public at large through the conferences it organizes.

This post is based on a talk given at the Information Futures: Digital Humanities Research at Fisher Library on June 3, 2015.
An important aspect of the University’s development over the next five years is likely to be changes in our teaching practices and the shape of your curriculum. Anyone who’s been teaching the last decade or so will be aware of the ever-present concern with improvements in teaching, partly in long-overdue recognition that it’s students who pay our way, partly to provide a little bit of a counter to the focus on research when it comes to status and prestige.

As Dr Gaynor Macdonald has remarked, the orientation to ‘perpetual improvement’ makes it impossible to recognize when we are, in fact, doing quite well already, so all the concerns with teaching excellence need to be approached with caution, but we’re probably all agreed that delivering the same lectures year-in, year-out, is a thing of the past. If nothing else, the changed character of students in the demand-driven system in itself demands different pedagogic strategies from us, there is now so much we can no longer assume.

Added to this is the ‘crisis of attention’ characterizing contemporary consciousness that Matthew Crawford has so usefully analysed in his The World beyond Your Head. Students now live in a cognitive universe, in an ‘age of distraction’, in which we are only one player in the battle for their attention, a battle that we very often lose, judging by what’s on their computer screens in lectures. We all pursue our own strategies in managing our teaching within our workloads generally, but the pressures and demands are now so complex, constant and ever-changing that it will be useful for all of us across the School to exchange notes and experiences, to talk through what does and doesn’t work, what is and is not possible, and perhaps to come to a shared position on how we should react to the various proposals that are coming, and will no doubt continue to come, from further up the food chain. Such an exchange of experiences is, I believe, one of the more important things we should be doing in the current climate in particular, but also as a normal aspect of Faculty culture more broadly.

This is the background to the School Teaching Day on Friday 24 July, and I thought I should spell out some of the core themes and concerns that we could be engaging with on that day. For me the first topics that come to mind are: first year teaching, blended or eLearning, assessment, student engagement, and the question of disciplinarity.

First year
There are a number of characteristics of teaching practice and administration that are peculiar to first year classes – the size of the enrolment, the need to work with a large, ever-changing team of tutors with varying degrees of experience, the number of students suffering from anxiety and depression, the number who find it difficult to read a unit outline or instructions on Blackboard, the fact that students are in a transition from one style of learning to another, the need to provide extensive ‘scaffolding’ for both students and tutors, and so on. There is also the question of whether and how first year teaching genuinely works as a foundation for the senior units in our majors. It would be useful to discuss the various ways in which these aspects of first-year teaching have been managed across the School.

Blended, eLearning, flipped learning
We’re being encouraged to incorporate different technologies into our teaching practices, but before we get too excited about ideas like ‘flipping the classroom’, it is important to have a clear sense of what the purpose of such developments could and should be, so that any changes are driven by pedagogic concerns, rather than merely doing new things for the sake of it. Lynne Chester and I both have university grants to experiment with a re-working of how we teach our respective first-year courses, so we can use an outline and discussion of those two projects as a springboard for an examination of how these kinds of developments are unfolding in different parts of the School.

Assessment
If we’re changing how we teach, it follows that we might also need to consider how we assess, and if we ought to be using assessment to develop different types of skills better-suited to the world...
students currently inhabit. There’s no doubt that many of us have been enormously creative in thinking of interesting and stimulating assessment forms, so it would be good to get a picture of the range of possibilities, exchanging ideas and tips about what works and what doesn’t.

**Student engagement**

We’re being told that teaching excellence and improved student engagement is what everyone wants, but perhaps the picture of students’ orientation to the world, and especially to us, is more complex than that. It’s hard to overlook that fact that only 9% of students responded to the recent survey, so the issue becomes what the other 91% think. The corollary of teaching excellence is learning excellence, ‘improved engagement’ also means ‘more work’ for students, and it’s not at all clear that students are unanimously enthusiastic about either. It’s common knowledge among university teachers that it’s often difficult to persuade students to engage with a task that isn’t ‘worth’ something, or constitutes a gateway to something else that does have value of some sort. As one of my students wrote, ‘I’ve never been to any lectures and I’ve been fine!’ Perhaps it’s the triumph of neo-liberal rationality. Arriving at a sensible understanding of what it really means to pursue improved student engagement might be enhanced by discussing the different ways the issue has played itself out across the School.

**Disciplinarity**

The DVCE’s discussion paper is clearly emphasising the value of interdisciplinarity, but quite apart from what one might think of the merits of those arguments, it may be worth taking a look ourselves at the ways in which our majors relate to each other. Many students graduate with a double, sometimes a triple major, but how those majors are combined, and how they relate to each other is a relatively haphazard affair. If there’s interest in this, we could also set aside some time to talk about how we see the strengths of the separate majors relating to each other, and whether it would be worth making the relationship between them more systematic.

This School Day is intended to be only the first of a regular, annual event, and subsequent versions could take a different form, perhaps including ‘how to’ sessions developing practical skills. It is just the beginning of what should be a continuing ‘conversation’ that’s primarily about pooling our experiences and knowledge in ways that we will hopefully find both useful and interesting.

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**Teaching Day**

SSPS is holding a School wide Teaching Day on 24 July 2015.

The Teaching Day will focus on a number of topics aimed at providing important information and stimulating discussion:

- The DVCE’s Education’s discussion paper – what are the implications for us?
- Managing workload – teaching time versus research time
- 1st year teaching – what’s distinctive about it, how does it relate to senior unit teaching?
- Blended learning – what’s the point, how does it work, why should we bother?
- Assessment – should we be changing how we assess, and how?
- Student engagement – what does it actually mean, what do students really want, and does that relate to what we think they ought to be learning?

To rsvp contact Grace Zhang: grace.zhang@sydney.edu.au

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**Fellowships**

**Emerging Market Societies – Focus on Greater China**

Salvatore Babones’ (Department of Sociology & Social Policy) current research project is built on his past success in modelling Chinese growth rates to extend the evolving approach to the comparative study of regions within China and the greater China region. His focus in the Taiwan Fellowship is on the links connecting Taiwan to the rest of greater China. A first paper resulting from this work has just been published in the Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs under the title ‘Will Taipei Be the Next Hong Kong? Democratic Institutions and Taipei’s Future as a Global City.’

**Jake Lynch Fellowship at Cardiff University**

CPACS’ Director, Associate Professor Jake Lynch, has won a visiting Fellowship at Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Communication (JOMEC), worth $10,000. Associate Professor Lynch will work with colleagues including Professor Stuart Allan, with whom he has already collaborated on several publications, on shared interests within Journalism Studies, focusing on humanitarian, peace and conflict issues. He will take up the Fellowship from mid-November 2015 to late January 2016.

JOMEC was ranked 2nd in the UK in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework by the Communication, Cultural and Media Studies assessment panel.

**Pakistan journalist-turned-researcher at CPACS**

Dr Shabbir Hussain, an experienced journalist and documentary producer who is now an Assistant Professor at Riphah University, Pakistan, has spent several months at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies as a post-doctoral Visiting Scholar.

Dr Hussain worked with Associate Professor Jake Lynch on a paper titled: ‘Analyzing Peace Journalism: A Critical Pragmatic Perspective’. A shortened version of their joint article is to be offered for publication in the influential Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics.

Dr Hussain presented his research to a 20-strong audience, with good representation from CPACS, the Department of Media and Communication and the newly formed University of Sydney South Asia Research Network, at a seminar in the RC Mills Building on June 1st, chaired by Jake Lynch.

**Jean Monnet Fellowship**

James Reilly (Department of Government & International Relations) will be based at the European University Institute in Italy from September 2015 through June 2016, as a Jean Monnet Fellow with the EU’s Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

James’ research project will examine China’s economic statecraft toward Europe. Covering China’s strategy, tactics, limitations, and political impact, this project will examine two sets of questions: First, how does China engage in economic statecraft in Europe? Can the central Chinese government effectively coordinate among Chinese commercial actors abroad, particularly state-owned banks and enterprises? Secondly, when does it work? When is Beijing most effective in deploying economic resources to advance its strategic objectives in Europe? Conversely, when do Chinese actions exacerbate European anxieties and undermine Beijing’s strategic objectives?  

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**Endeavour Postgraduate Scholarship Award**

Emma Leck, PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology & Social Policy, was successful with a 2015 Endeavour Postgraduate Scholarship Award, valued at up to $69,500 in support of overseas fieldwork. Emma’s PhD looks at the Social Economy and worker cooperatives in the cultural industries, Catalonia-Spain. She will be in Barcelona for the latter part of 2015.

**Honourable Mention**

Mike Michael’s (Chair of Sociology & Social Policy) co-written paper ‘Energy Babble: Mixing Environmentally-Oriented Internet Content to Engage Community Groups’, has been selected to receive a Best of Computer-Human Interaction Honourable Mention Award.
Associate Professor Charlotte Epstein

I’m working on a book on the international politics of surveillance, that is both heavily theoretical on the one hand, and takes as its case study the spread and increasing normalisation of biometric technologies.

Q. What attracted you to the WZB?

Given its past, Germany, and Berlin in particular, has an acute sensitivity to the dangers of surveillance. Germany (with Brazil) was at the forefront of the first ever UN resolutions on privacy, and behind the creation of the newly created position of UN Privacy Commissioner; and the German courts have been at the forefront of upholding European privacy rights against the encroachments by US companies + governments. The WZB is one of the leading social science centres.

I am also hoping to get a better sense of where the discipline of International Relations is at in Germany. Being also a research associate at the CERI/Science Po in Paris, this will give me another comparative vantage point into how IR is done in Europe.

Q. What do you hope to get out of your time there?

I am more of political theorist background, so I am particularly keen to learn some skills in a political economy environment.

Dr Dinesh Wadiwel

My project “Live Exports Issue in the Context of Globalised Production and Labour Circuits” focuses on the live animal export trade, exploring the political dynamics of these changes through a focus on labour within globalised animal based food industries, and the intersection of labour rights with animal welfare outcomes. In both the EU and the Asia Pacific there has been union and community concern in relation to the development of supply chains in “live export”, particularly with respect to the welfare outcomes of animals during transport and at destination, and the potential implications on local labour in terms of the deterioration of employment opportunities.

Q. What attracted you to the WZB?

The WZB has a rich research culture! My fellowship would be based with the Globalization, Work and Production project group, which is a component of the Society and Economic Dynamics research area at WZB. I am really looking forward to working with the Group, and hopefully complimenting existing work that is happening there. I am more of political theorist by background, so I am particularly keen to learn some skills in a political economy environment.

Q. What do you hope to get out of your time there?

The specific areas of research that drew me to the WZB are the ones that deal with political legitimacy, the effects of cross-border institutions, democratisation, and civil society. The weight of the WZB in the German context is also quite significant, because the partnership efforts of the WZB with other various institutes, such as the Freie Universität, have focused on the process of transformations, transitions and democratisation in Arab Spring states, with the heaviest focus given to Egypt.

Amro Ali

In light of the 2011 Arab uprisings and the Egyptian Revolution; my thesis “Alexandria Reconceived: The emergence of political public spaces between 2000 and 2014” seeks to address the question of why Alexandria, Egypt’s second largest city, is important in our understanding of the political process of creating and sustaining public space. The research examines how activists and civil society workers keep the revolutionary trajectory going in the face of a counter-revolution and an authoritarian crackdown.

Q. What attracted you to the WZB?

The WZB would provide 60 journal articles based on my research at the WZB. I would also be able to refine the theoretical component of my thesis to understand Alexandria’s political public spaces, characterised by protests and uprisings, that emerged largely as a consequence of the Egyptian state positioning Alexandria on the front-lines of neoliberalism.

Q. What do you hope to get out of your time there?

The first layer of analysis is conducted through the observation of publicly available web data produced on fora, commenting sections and social media channels of an Italian political and party organisation: the Five Star Movement. The second layer involves interviewing online participants and key party figures who played a role in the online discussion. I apply network and statistical analysis to navigate the large datasets of digital traces left behind by online participants and qualitative methods to read the content of selected interactions and interview a sample of participants.

Francesco Bailo

My research project “Mapping online deliberation through network analysis” aims to provide empirical evidence to the current scholarly debate on the evolution of political participation and deliberation by characterising new forms of political organisations; motivations behind online political participation; qualities and outcomes of online deliberation.

Q. What attracted you to the WZB?

The most fascinating aspect in researching within the WZB is given by the exposure to multiple interdisciplinary research streams and methods, which I perceive as essential to frame and conceptualise multifaceted phenomena such as the emerging experiences of Internet-mediated political participation and deliberation.
New Grants

Global Campus of Regional Master’s Programs in Human Rights and Democratisation
The ‘Global Campus Research Project’ is an annual activity of the Global Campus of Human Rights and Democratisation, a network of regional Masters programs partially funded by the European Commission. The University of Sydney is the lead partner via its teaching program, the Master of Human Rights and Democratisation (MHRD). Together the programs cover 6 continents and encompass a network of over 100 universities committed to strengthening human rights scholarship and education.

The project is broadly exploring the nexus between foreign debt and/or economic crises and human rights. The final research product will be composed of articles focusing on a regional perspective related to the topic.

The Asia Pacific’s contribution is led by Elisabeth Valiente-Riedl from SSPS. It seeks to contest state ownership and centralized control, financial innovation and internationalization is reshaping intermediation, and potentially generating instability and new central bank policy responses.

Financial innovation and central banking in China: a money view
The Institute for New Economic Thinking has awarded $106,176 to a new project led by a team comprised of researchers Michael Beggs, Luke Deer, Chris Jefferis, and Yu Yuxin, from the Department of Political Economy in University of Sydney and the School of Economics and Finance at Shanghai International Studies University. The project will develop a ‘money view’ analysis of the recent evolution of China’s financial system. Research will focus on how the move away from state ownership and centralized control, financial innovation and internationalization is reshaping intermediation, and potentially generating instability and new central bank policy responses.

Collaborative Governance in Cities Under Austerity
Dr Madeleine Pill in GIR is co-investigator in a major research project funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council. The project, which started in April and runs until September 2017, is an eight-city international comparative study of Collaborative Governance under Austerity. Madeleine’s case study city is Baltimore in the US, other cities are Athens, Barcelona, Dublin, Leicester, Melbourne, Montreal and Nantes. The research seeks to understand whether, and if so how, collaboration among public officials, citizens, business leaders and other actors contributes to the governance of austerity, defined as a sustained agenda for reducing public spending.

Biobank Networks, Medical Research and the Challenge of Globalisation
Research in medicine and public health relies on large-scale biobanks that store data and samples from donors. Over the past decade, international networks of biobanks have been established in order to maximise their utility and sustainability. While biobank networks offer considerable scientific promise, the globalization of research raises numerous and difficult technical, governance, legal and ethical challenges. Unless these challenges are addressed, they may undermine donor communities’ commitment to biobanks in Australia, and limit the benefits that may accrue from these networks.

Using a variety of research methods an interdisciplinary team from the University, including Professor Catherine Waldby, will inform and develop ethically rigorous and culturally sensitive strategies to ensure that local donors and biobanks contribute to, and benefit from, international biobank networks.

Industrial Policies in the Era of Globalisation and Financialisation
A workshop funded by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. This 2-day workshop will bring new knowledge to debates, and establish directions for future research, about national industrial policies in an era of structural change strongly shaped by the processes of financialisation and the globalisation of production. Academics from nine Australian universities and multiple disciplines, policymakers, independent researchers and trade unions will identify the challenges for governments to implement national industrial policies to influence an industry’s output and employment, to improve the performance of firms and thus national economic growth.

Living Safe Together – Empowering At-Risk Youth in Western Sydney
Lily Rahim is the successful recipient of the Government’s ‘Living Safe Together’ grant for her application titled ‘Empowering At-Risk Youth in Western Sydney’. The grant is awarded to community-based organisations across Australia, to help develop necessary skills to work with vulnerable individuals and to establish outreach programs designed to engage the spectrum of at-risk youth from Western Sydney, in order to divert them away from ideologies of hatred and violence.

Project Q: Peace and Security in a Quantum Age
The Carnegie Corporation of New York has announced a major grant of US$400,000 for a new quantum project by the Centre for International Security Studies. The goal of ‘Project Q’ is to consider the possibility, significance and global impact of quantum innovations. The two-year grant will help CISS to organize a series of ‘Q’ symposia and workshops that will reach across disciplines. A dedicated website, collection of essays and documentary film will also be produced to inform the public and provoke a policy debate on the implications of quantum innovation for peace and security.
SSPS Prize Ceremony

On Thursday 28th May, 2015 the School of Social and Political Sciences held a Prizes Ceremony to honour undergraduate and postgraduate students who have achieved exceptional results in the areas of Government and International Relations, Sociology and Social Policy, Anthropology, Graduate School of Government, Peace and Conflict Studies, and Political Economy.

A special thank you to all of our donors, especially Annie Corlett whose donations support seven prizes within the Department of Government and International Relations.
Best & Brightest Showcase

The Department of Government and International Relations held its fifth annual showcase for IV Honours research, Best and Brightest, at Parliament House on Macquarie Street on 26 May 2015.

Hosted by the Honourable Mr. Don Harwin, President of the Legislative Council, and Chaired by Mr. Alister Henskens, Member for Kuring-Gai, both of whom are Honours graduates in Government from Sydney, this year’s student panel consisted of:

Human Rights and Politics: Valuing Dinner Time Conversations

Abigail Taylor on Hannah Arendt and the lived experience of being a refugee in Australian offshore detention

Written by Abigail Taylor

Dinner table conversations at home were always peppered with discussions on politics of some shape or form, and our opinions on the latest environmental, economic or human rights issues were encouraged and frequently debated. It seemed quite fitting then, that my honours research project in Government and International Relations, being primarily theoretical, would draw heavily on the work of political theorist Hannah Arendt. Arendt eloquently argued that what made human existence meaningful was the possibility of expressing one’s thoughts and opinions, and having these recognised and acknowledged in the presence of others.

Given that for the first time in the post-World War 2 era, the number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people worldwide had recently exceeded 50 million people, I felt compelled to better understand the relationship between human rights, “outsiders” and sovereign states, such as Australia. I decided upon the case study of Australian offshore detention centres as a way into the theoretical framework of prominent scholars, such as Arendt and several others. I explored relationships of power and the concrete workings of these centres, as well as embodied detainee resistance action in the face of feelings of powerlessness. Political theories offered some great insights into establishing the structural problems of deterritorialised refugees, but I soon realised they were less helpful in offering solutions to the political, legal and moral dilemmas they faced.

Probing detainee acts of resistance would then require a completely new research perspective. Rather than seeking to interpret a potential suspension of human rights for detainees under the current immigration policy solely through the application of theory, my research went into a completely new direction: that of incorporating a first-person analysis. That is, the lived experience of being a refugee, in other words, an understanding of the intentions and meanings that the asylum seeker, him or herself, assigned to acts of embodied resistance.

Interestingly, Hannah Arendt also drew upon her own experience of statelessness during WW2 to describe the most profound meaning of losing of one’s human rights - in her eyes, it equates with the loss of a place in the world in which one’s opinions and actions count for something. It’s something that Arendt likened with belonging to a political community. In thinking back to our many family debates once again, I feel a much deeper appreciation of the meaning of “being” and “thinking” all things political.

Abigail Taylor is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Government and International Relations, supervised by Professor John Keane at the Sydney Democracy Network, and is the recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award. Abigail was recently awarded the University Medal, The Helen Nelson Prize for Best IVth Year Honours Thesis, and the Michael W Jackson Prize for Study in Government.
In the process of searching for employment, as in life, we all know it’s ‘who you know’, right? Your personal connections, which social scientists call social networks, seem to be just as important or more important than the systems and services which governments put in place to help unemployed people find work. It’s almost as if one could be quite talented, can show evidence of being hard working, efficient and effective in previous jobs, and be trained and educated – but all of that is only worth so much. It’s certainly not everything. If people don’t have ‘connections’, can they find their ideal job? More importantly, for those looking for work who don’t already have a job, and especially those who are long-term unemployed, what can be done to help in the search process?

A new collaborative study, led by Associate Professor Gaby Ramia of the Graduate School of Government in the School of Social and Political Sciences, seeks to find answers to what factors relating to unemployed people’s networks help most in locating suitable work. The study, with co-investigators Professor Greg Marston of QUT and Dr Roger Patulny of the University of Wollongong, is funded by the Australian Research Council under its Linkage Projects scheme. Job Futures, an umbrella organisation representing Australia’s non-profit employment service providers, is the co-funder and is contributing the research skills of its staff and facilitating access for in-depth interviews with long-term unemployed people and service providers in several organisations within its network based in New South Wales and Queensland.

The research team are interested in measuring and assessing the impact of unemployed people’s networks, principally through access to national statistical databases and qualitative fieldwork with job-seekers who have been unemployed for more than a year. But beyond social networks, the personal connections among family, friends and acquaintances, they seek to find out how the formal or ‘policy and service networks’ can help the unemployed to find suitable employment (and not just short-term, often precarious work). They’re asking whether personal, informal networks can interact with the formal networks of service organisations that job-seekers deal with in order to receive job-search payments from government – officially called Newstart Allowance. If so, how? What’s the nature of the relationship between the formal and informal networks? And perhaps most importantly, how do networks of both kinds influence the general wellbeing of the unemployed?

In addition to questions on job search, job placement and wellbeing, the team seeks to use the findings of the research to inform the re-design of employment services. In this sense the research connects very well with the objectives of the ARC Linkage scheme – using scholarly research to produce publications in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles and books, but also to affect real-world outcomes. Essentially the team will contribute to knowledge on social and policy networks, but also to make recommendations to the federal Government and employment service providers on how services can better harness knowledge on unemployed people’s social networks to provide more personalised services. More personalisation can mean placement in longer-term, more secure employment which fits better with the skills and aspirations of those looking for work.

With the focus being on long-term unemployed, the recommendations also stand to have a positive effect on the unemployed’s sense of wellbeing – in the social science jargon, their ‘subjective wellbeing’. Rather than using the more conventional wellbeing concept, which is defined ‘objectively’ by researchers through the quantitative indicators, the team is asking unemployed people to reflect on and explicate their own wellbeing. The long-term unemployed can be empowered by being asked to speak their own ‘truth’ to those in positions of relative power who provide services and job-search income to them.

Your personal connections seem to be just as important or more important than the systems and services which governments put in place to help unemployed people find work.
Select Publications

Semester 1, 2015 saw the School continue to publish a wide range of books, book chapters, and journal articles. A selection from each department is featured in this section, taken from a total of 176 publications.

GOVERNMENT & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Professor Simon Tormey

Professor Pippa Norris

Dr Megan Mackenzie

Dr Anna Boucher

Dr Ryan Griffiths

Dr Martijn Konings

Dr Bill Dunn

Dr Michael Beggs

Dr Martijn Konings

Dr Greg Martin

SOCIETY & SOCIAL POLICY

Associate Prof. Melinda Cooper

Associate Prof. Salvatore Babones

Dr Greg Martin

Associate Prof. Fran Collyer

Associate Prof. Fran Collyer

Gareth Bryant
ANTHROPOLOGY

Dr Ryan Schram

Dr Ase Ottosson

Dr Ryan Schram

Dr Luis Angosto Ferrández

Associate Prof. Jake Lynch

Dr Adam Kamradt-Scott

Centre for International Security Studies

Dr Adam Kamradt-Scott

Dr Frank Smith

Dr Jake Lynch

CENTRE FOR PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES

Prof. James Der Derian