School of Modern Languages – Comparative Literature
Semester 1 Report
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Hi, all:

This report contains a summary of my activities from Semester 1 of the 2020/2021 academic year. As I stated in my campaign, I have aimed to encourage engagement in students to improve the CL community, which I have strived for with the help of my class reps and staff. This has been made significantly more difficult due to the distance demanded by Covid-19, so all events have been run virtually.

Freshers Week

I attended the 'Welcome to the School of Comparative Literature' at the Virtual Academic Fayre to support the Degree Convener in her introduction, making myself known to the students and answering questions. I also did this by popping into the sub-honours lectures in Week 1 to introduce myself, as well as saying hello in various freshers' English group chats to make them aware of CL as a module option and encourage inscription.

Class Representative Elections

As one of my first jobs as Convener, I publicised CR elections over email, Facebook, and Teams and encouraged students to get more involved with the school. We were able to fill the positions for all undergraduate positions, but CL is a small department so we only have one student representing each year. Two of my class reps filled the expansion pack roles that were spread over the School of ModLang collectively, serving as Minutes and Disability reps.

Voting turnout was lower than I would have liked, and next time I would try to push voting more persistently.

After their election, I met with the class reps and set up a group chat for us to stay in frequent touch. The class reps are proactive about their duties and are very enthusiastic in helping me advertise and reach out to students. They keep me well-informed of any issues or feedback they are hearing from their year, and I look forward to working with them more in Semester 2.

SSCC

This semester I held one SSCC over Teams in October with four staff members and four class reps in attendance. The latter presented the feedback collected from surveys which was received well, and there was good communication to work towards improving issues in CL modules. The overall feedback was that students enjoy the content and delivery, and many issues raised were in regards to accessibility of texts and overlapping deadlines, which were resolved efficiently.

Survey response was decent, although I would ideally like to push students to leave more feedback, as it can be difficult to report overall feedback for a module when only a couple people respond to the surveys. My Minutes rep wrote up the SSCC report and I disseminated this information into action points using a Sway format, which was a new initiative being tested within SoML.

Weekly Duties

I attended Educom meetings every week, and attended the School of ModLang meetings every two weeks. Attendance to both keeps me updated on the status of recent events and relevant topics, such as changing school policies, particularly in regards to modifications made due to the restrictions of Covid-19.

Alongside answering regular emails from students, I send a weekly email in which I pass on information from the SoML, the careers centre, and CL events.

Careers

In Semester 1, I sent out a couple surveys gauging interest in content and preferred weeks for careers events. I discussed potential career events with the Degree Convener and the Careers Adviser in preparation for Semester 2. Because the School of Comp Lit is still quite new, the process for brainstorming careers events is greatly focused on showing students what career opportunities are available to them from studying CL. One idea that generated interest was bringing in CL alumni to speak to students in a 'Where are they now?' style panel.

Community Building

Due to everything being online this semester, all of our CL community building has largely been through social media. There was an existing CL Facebook group that I have taken to posting in more frequently, although it is a public group for anyone in St Andrews interested in CL and not student-specific.

One of my reps has created and runs an Instagram account for the School of Comp Lit, @sta_complit, which posts about CL and other related literature events. She has also created a collaborative Spotify reading playlist which is available through Instagram as well.

In response to the study space issue, my class reps and I have hosted a handful of virtual study sessions over Team for CL students to do work with other people in CL modules to better mimic the experience of studying in a library or cafe around other people. Attendance has been low, so we will aim to publicise it more heavily next semester.

In October, I sent out a CL buddy scheme, as inter-year relationships are important to build especially in trying to encourage more students to take CL in honours. The scheme matched about 40 students together, from first years to postgrad students.

<u>Looking Forward</u>

In Semester 1, I had polled interest in starting a Comparative Literature Society as well as a Comparative Literature journal, as some of the first graduates of St Andrews' CL programme had created a literary journal in the past. However, I felt that starting a new society, especially an academic one, would be much more difficult given the current distanced circumstances and may not be worth the hassle this year. I felt similarly about the Comparative Literature journal, which was that it might not be worth creating a new project that would ask students to take on additional work when the current circumstances for university are already quite taxing. Instead, this semester I will aim to draft a society constitution and journal proposal to build a base for starting them next year. My hope is that the society and journal have a better chance of actually getting started if they have a jumping off point already installed.

In Semester 2, I am looking to put on careers events where possible and continue establishing more of a community for CL students through social media and events.