

University of St Andrews Department of Film Studies
School President of Film Studies and Music
End of Semester Report 2017-2018
Semester One

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This semester has seen a huge amount of progress within both the Department of Film Studies, as well within the Music Centre. This document will outline the progress made during the first semester of the 2017-2018 academic year, as well the plans that the Department intends to undertake in the second semester.

SSCCs

We had our first SSCC (of three) of the year in Week 7, Thursday 2 November 2017. Please see *Appendix A* for the minutes of the meeting.

Elections

Election season seemed to run smoothly with a few technical issues arising along the way. There was a problem within the online nomination system where Honours students could not apply as an Honours Class Rep as the system split third and fourth years. However, within the department, all Honours modules are at 4000-level. Zach (DoEd) soon amended the system once reported. A few students also had problems self-nominating, but either Zach or I were able to manually upload the student's details. Although not every class rep position was filled during elections, the department does now have a full set of class reps for every cohort. No class reps took up the expansion packs.

Community

60 Hour Film Blitz

The Department's annual 60 Hour Film Blitz will be taking place from 9-15 March 2018. We have already elected an organizing committee consisting of the following positions:

- School President
- Festival Director
- Head of Press and Sponsorship
- Graphic Designer and Photographer
- Communications Officer
- Equipment Officer and Photographer

This is the first time that a Blitz committee has been formed so early in the academic year, and we are hoping to start improving upon the publicity of the festival from the start of semester 2. So far, we have created a new logo for the festival, and mapped out a publicity-social media strategy that will be implemented at the start of semester 2 with the intent of creating a series of timeline posters for print and social media, as well as using the University's Instagram Takeover platform closer to the time of the festival. We have been notified that most of the Film Studies lecturers will be away at a conference in Toronto over the course of the Blitz, but the organizing committee is well ahead of schedule and we do not anticipate any problems leading up to the festival.

Mentoring Scheme

Last year, third year sub-honours student, Lyndsay Townsend applied for the position of

Film Studies Buddy/Mentor Scheme Co-ordinator. Her report of the scheme is as follows: -

I oversaw matching up the mentors and mentees, organising a meet-up event in The Byre Theatre, and sending emails throughout the summer break and first semester to check up with the applicants, offering assistance should anyone need it.

I found the process fun and easy – SUMAC was simple to use, and I enjoyed matching applicants with similar interests. I tried to match up mentors and mentees who had the most in common with each other, to maximise conversation topics upon first meeting, and hopefully this helped in most cases. We held a Buddy Scheme meet-up event in The Byre, but very few applicants turned up – it was the case where five applicants turned up, yet their own partner did not. We all ended up chatting together as a group, but in hindsight I would have maybe asked applicants to RSVP to the event, so we had an idea of who would be there. I had sent an email regarding the event at the beginning of the week, and that morning, but there was a significant lack of applicants turning up.

A second problem I ran into, was that one of my mentees (as I signed up to be a mentor myself), ended up choosing another university, and therefore I couldn't continue my role of a mentor with her and had to terminate the partnership. In future, I think it would be beneficial try and ensure all mentees have a secured place at St Andrews before they sign up, although I'm not sure how this could be done – but it would just make sure that no mentor has to terminate a partnership halfway through the summer break.

Overall, I did really enjoy co-ordinating the Film Studies Buddy Scheme, and met many new first year students and Honours students that I hadn't met before. I also thoroughly enjoyed taking on the responsibility of the scheme, and didn't find it too stressful or time-consuming at all.

Additionally, as the Department of Film Studies has one of the best-run Buddy Schemes at the University, all our material (handbook/CAPOD guide/training presentation etc) has been passed onto Zach to distribute to other schools and department who wish to set up a similar scheme.

Communication

The Department of Film Studies has a variety of Facebook Groups, which have been made uniform and easy to find by all students:

University of St Andrews First Year Film Studies:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/424858544372890/>

University of St Andrews Second Year Film Studies:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1505648819729351/>

University of St Andrews Honours Film Studies:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/837768929596487/>

University of St Andrews Department of Film Studies:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/standrewsfilmstudies/>

60 Hour Film Blitz Facebook Page:

@UStA60HourFilmBlitz

<https://www.facebook.com/UStA60HourFilmBlitz/>

Careers

The Department has gained a new Careers Link: Dr Philippa Lovatt, who is new to the University. During orientation, there was a meeting between myself, Dr Jennifer O'Meara (previous careers link), Dr Philippa Lovatt and Liz Batterman (Careers Centre) to discuss the plans for the upcoming year. So far, the department has only held one careers event: an internship panel, however, even though well publicized over email and Facebook, the event was poorly attended. In the future, as the department is fairly small, it would be better to join another school or department for a joint careers event to improve attendees and engagement.

Enhancement Theme Funding

The Department of Film Studies applied and was successfully granted a small sum of money with which we were able to hold a series of video-editing workshops. Dr Jennifer O'Meara, filled in the Enhancement Theme Funding application with the help of Dr Lucy Fife Donaldson (DoT) and myself at the end of Semester Two in the 2016-2017 academic year. Below is a short report of the first video editing workshop from Dr O'Meara: -

1-day video editing workshop: With the support of the University's Enhancement Theme initiative, the Department of Film Studies arranged a one-day workshop where students had the opportunity to gain practical experience of Adobe Premiere Pro editing software. Each student completed a short compilation exercise, as well as working on a personal project tied to their critical Film Studies research. Led by Dr O'Meara, the students also gained feedback on their outputs from Dr Donaldson. Participants spoke very positively about the practical and critical progress they made over the course of the day and the Department intends to arrange a second workshop, tied to the Film Blitz festival, in semester 2.

Visiting Days

We also have a new Visiting Day Officer within the department, Dr Paul Flaig. At the request of the DoT, Lucy Donaldson, I attended every Film Studies visiting day session. I found the sessions informative and well-presented and that by having both a student and lecturer present, we were able to answer all questions that prospective students, and their parents, had. I have since updated and redesigned the Film Studies Visiting Day PowerPoint presentation and will start work on redesigning the flyers that are handed out during the session.

Looking forward

Semester two is looking to be easy-going as we have progressed very far this semester in

terms of organising the 60 Hour Film Blitz and ensuring that Class Reps and lecturers are on top of the work that needs to be done regarding the remaining two SSCCs, the technicalities of the NSS survey and the Blitz.

Appendix A

SSCC, Thursday 2 November 2017

Present: Prof Michael Cowan (HoD), Dr Lucy Donaldson (DoT), Dr Paul Flaig, Dr Anuja Jain, Dr Jennifer O'Meara, Dr Leshu Torchin, Gaby Levey (President), Maeve Murphy (1st year rep), Chloe Cecil & Sophie Goodwin (2nd year reps), Lyndsay Townsend, Catherine Sweeney & Mina Radovic (Honours reps), Ana Maria Sapountzi (PGR rep), Sharon Nangle (Library)

Absent:

Minoli de Silva, Millie Delaney-Doust, Dr Philippa Lovatt, Dr Dennis Hanlon, Prof Dina Iordanova, Dr Tom Rice (research leave), Dr Elisabetta Girelli (research leave), PGT rep?

- Matters Arising

- The DoT noted that following raising Enhancement funding (University wide funding opportunity for events, projects, etc.) at the previous meeting, Dr O'Meara made a successful application for a video editing workshop initiative – details to follow.
- Our NSS results gave the department 100% overall satisfaction, and put us at the top in the country for Film Studies
- Field Trips. The DoT confirmed that following discussion of this last year it is on the Department's radar. In particular, we are following up plans to hold trips to the DCA. The dept. wants to continue this at different levels of the program. Film reps could offer suggestions and further feedback on this.

Action and Feedback from last semester – From SCC meetings and module questionnaires - 'you said we did'

- 1st and 2nd year Feedback:
 - The DoT is considering arranging exam paper sessions where students could gather feedback from faculty and discuss the exam
 - ACTION: to be held at the beginning of the semester
 - Students noted issues with attendance/sign in sheets
 - ACTION: Providing more sign in sheets in lectures
 - Positive feedback on diversity of films shown in modules/topics
 - ACTION: Ongoing concern within the department. Will continue to be addressed in teaching meetings
 - Following response to the Film Theory Journal assignment introduced in FM2002 last year, the department will revise this assessment taking on board the feedback from students, as well as the Module Convenor and External Examiner.
 - ACTION: Convenor of FM2002 to discuss assignment with DoT and previous convenor

- In response to feedback on screenings running late, the DoT reported that the dept. is avoiding double screenings, and continuing to work with timetabling to see if re-scheduling 1st and 2nd year screenings is possible.
 - Honours Feedback:
 - Following a suggestion from SSCC, all deadlines are now set to 5 PM (And at 1st & 2nd year, where possible)
 - Concerns regarding making sure there is a good range of assignments in modules (to avoid too much pressure on final essay). The DoT reported that honours modules will avoid making the final essay 50% of the grade (though that's not always possible in dividing up the work sensibly)
 - Discussion about assessed presentations. Still exploring different ways to include this into honours. The Department has put together a feedback sheet for presentations, which is to be used whenever presentations are assessed
 - PGT Feedback:
 - Positive comments regarding workshops that were run
 - DoT noted that students are always welcome to suggest sessions that would be particularly helpful.
- External Examiner Comments
 - The DoT noted that last year we began the practice of sharing comments from the External examiner (an academic from another institution who reviews samples of each module and comments on the systems of marking and feedback, as well as having input into module/programme design. The position tends to be for 5 years)
 - General Comments: practices are robust and reasonable; that student work is at the higher ends terrific; that assessment practices are frequently innovative and nicely varied; and that the engagement of faculty with close reading of student work and providing detailed feedback that pushed students to produce excellent work is exemplary.
 - Honours: The EE commented on Feedback (Something commented on in all modules – often remarking on convenor engagement, detailed comments & encouragement), the Innovative content of module, varied assessments and work encouraging thinking across media (war and cinema). The EE noted that students were encouraged to pursue own interests, and that requiring research proposals for research essays should be considered best practice.
 - FM2002: Great reading, the syllabus – very sharply delineated and articulated as a map of the course and of film theory: exemplary. The idea of theory journals to keep students working with the material and as a resource for the rest of their studies is a great one. Indeed, the short review pieces, the essay, and the exam all nicely require thinking across theory and varied texts.

- FM1002: Great practices in ensuring consistency in marking – including an essay workshop for markers – and the EE found the marking to be thorough and helpful. EE appreciated the varied assessment structure that got students thinking in interesting ways and using primary historical materials – posters, for example – and the work read was at its best engaged, thoughtful, and interesting.

- Library

- In response to issues of access, SN clarified that not all DVDs in the collection can be released due to certification issues (and rarity of some items), but they can be viewed in the library
- SN urged students to alert library staff of damaged DVDs
- Viewing spaces. Only two viewing spaces in library have limited privacy, so students raised the possibility of adjusting the viewing stations with heightened privacy and ports?
 - SN suggested that another potential solution in the future (following the redevelopment of the main library) would be group study rooms could be refitted with curtains and special desks with headphones ports
 - SN also reported that there are external disc drives available for students to borrow from the helpdesk
- Following contact from IT Services, the DoT asked reps whether there was demand among students for CD/DVD drives in computers in the library,
 - Reps confirmed there wasn't much demand.
- The PGR rep asked whether reference DVDs could be made available for 24 hours for PGR students (to maximize access to key texts).
- SN confirmed that there is a Blu-ray player available in the library

- Class Reports: Sub-honours

- 1st year Class Reps (Maeve and Millie)

Much of the feedback was positive regarding the structure of the module

- Weekly themes are well organized and interesting
- Handouts are helpful
- Tutorials are informative and sized well
- Students enjoy screenings

Areas for improvement:

- Schedule pace and coverage: feels rushed
- Desire for more lectures?
- Students want a greater focus on screenings in lectures
- Students want reference to more mainstream media
- Students want recorded lectures and access to lecture slides
- Attendance to screenings was a potential issue

- Last two elements of coursework were scheduled too close together
 - Students expressed interest in a newsletter sent out by class reps containing information about films featured in lectures from that week
 - Students expressed a desire for more detailed comments on revision journal
 - Students like the enthusiasm and dedication of the faculty
- Response to 1st year comments:
 - Because the revision journal is such a short assignment, less commentary should be expected but if students want more feedback they can go to faculty in person
 - Deadlines are fixed because of ILW, and the ILW task is designed to be a very short piece of work that shouldn't impact the essay that follows the week after
 - Student could lead independent work and screenings if they want to engage with modules more
 - Faculty would be happy to help establish more screenings
 - Reps will start a newsletter
 - All handouts and lecture slides are now available on MMS before lectures.
- 2nd year Class Reps (Chloe and Sophie)
 - general response was content
 - few critiques include comments regarding timing of screenings
 - desire for multiple screenings in a week to mitigate late night screening
 - lack of access to screenings online
 - students want a greater access to film screenings
 - certain slides had too much information on them. students felt they couldn't absorb all the information on slides
- Response to 2nd year comments:
 - Screening issue has been addressed but timetable issues prevent multiple screenings. In response to previous feedback the dept. has kept screenings limited to one film so that screenings don't end so late. As with 1st years, Student led screenings are encouraged
 - Lecturers have different styles when it comes to presenting material, but now that slides are available on MMS before the lecture, any issue with information should be eased.
- Honours Reports: Catherine and Lyndsay
 - FM4108:
 - Only positive feedback. In particular, students noted a great use of resources

- FM4208
 - Students liked explanation of historical context of films and mini lectures with handouts
 - Students would like more contextual analysis of cities and example of presentation write up
- FM4115
 - Students enjoy the range of screenings
 - Students enjoy the blog to see everyone's ideas outside the handbook
 - Range of readings is very helpful
- FM4102
 - The chance to study foreign theories and new ideas is very positive
 - Students expressed a desire for the chance to engage with more contemporary political cinema and experimental cinema. Also issues of access to range of materials regarding lesser known theories
 - Experimental cinema arises at the end of the course. Library makes as much available as possible, but when the course runs again we will bear these issues in mind
- FM4306
 - Students are enjoying unique assessment and range of topics
 - Students find direction for assessments a bit vague and desire greater detail in what is being asked
 - LT responded that students should feel free to ask questions. Students appreciated email with comments regarding assignments.
- FM4099
 - Nothing to report here, only specific case to case concerns which are being met by student/supervisor
- Student Projects
 - Students want opportunity to apply for funding for screenings or writing projects
- Response to Honours Feedback from Library
 - Library will buy relevant material that students ask for
 - Reps should disseminate this information that the library can buy books and films that students request
 - Students can reach out to Gaby for funding for projects
- PGR Feedback
 - Students would like more printing credits at the start of each semester
 - PG are unsatisfied with the PG room and would like to organize and update the space. Would like television to go on wall and proper pigeon holes and a meeting table in room.

- Response to PG Feedback
 - PG room has been discussed in meeting and everyone agreed that this would be a good idea.

ACTION: PGRs to be in contact with Department secretary to advertise a date by which Faculty should review materials in room in case they want to keep anything. Contact school IT officer (Mike) for functional equipment

- HoD responded that this the printing credits is a university wide policy, and pointed out that when copying texts, you can email yourself a PDFs
- Closing Remarks
 - Thank you to the reps for presenting feedback in such a constructive fashion, and to everyone for coming! ☺