UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Politics and International Studies

HUMAN, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

TRIPOS POLITICS

PART II EXAMINERS' REPORTS
2019-2020

REPORT FROM THE SENIOR EXAMINER

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This year I served as Senior Examiner for the Politics Exam Board for the third year out of four. As usual, the Board administered the Politics and International Relations and Politics and Sociology tracks within the HSPS Tripos at Parts IIA and IIB.

When the Paper-Setting Meeting was held on the morning of Friday 6 March it still appeared as if we were heading towards a relatively normal Examining season. One consequence of the ongoing industrial dispute was the resignation in February of one of our External Examiners, Dr Julia Stapleton, but apart from that it was business as usual. Things were very rapidly turned upside-down, however, by the coronavirus crisis which engulfed Cambridge at the end of Lent Term and prevented Easter Term from going ahead in anything like the usual way, leading to the Examining operation being comprehensively rethought over the Easter Vacation. This was chiefly the work of Glen Rangwala in his role as POLIS Director of Undergraduate Education, with a significant contribution also being made by Peter Sloman, overseeing the History and Politics degree (which was being Examined at Part II for the first time, with its own Exam Board, but with a considerable contribution from the various members of the Politics Exam Board), and welcome cooperation from our sister disciplines in, especially, Social Anthropology, Sociology, and History.

For the HSPS Part IIB Exams, four main principles were adopted. First, the examinations were to be taken remotely as 'open book' exams, with candidates asked to work for three hours within a five hour 'window'. Second, in light of this, the POL9 examination was dropped, since the new exam format meant that the unseen gobbets could be easily Googled, and HSPS candidates not taking POL9 were in turn required to drop one of their four papers, with the classing criteria then revised to take account of the new Examining scheme involving only three elements. Third, the 'safety net' meant that the Exam Board would not class candidates with a lower class mark than they had received at Part IIA. Fourth, candidates would be given the option to take their exams in a 'second sitting', when the University reopened (now fixed as mid-September). For the Part IIA Exams, it was decided that all students would be allowed to proceed to the following year of study, whether or not they took their end-of-year assessments, and that any student who did choose to sit them—again, remotely and in the 'open book' format—would not be classed by the Exam Board.

There were other changes, at both Part IIA and Part IIB, to do with word counts, the deadlines for submitted work, and the regime around extensions, and all the draft Tripos papers were scrutinised to make sure they were suitable for the new format (and some minor changes were made), but these were the most significant ones.

The Exam Board was also conscious of the potential difficulty of getting all the scripts marked in a timely fashion during a global pandemic. Deputy Examiners were therefore appointed for each paper—usually the designated Assessor—and the overall marking burden was reduced by having the Part IIA exam scripts only single-marked (though the submitted work for POL5 and POL6 was double-marked in the usual way, partly because so much of it had been submitted and marked before the crisis blew up and partly because this is the work on which the Board provides feedback to candidates, and so a second pair of eyes was thought to be especially helpful). Happily, as it turned out the various markers remained healthy throughout the Examining period, and so none of the Deputy Examiners in the end were called on to act.

All in all, the new arrangements proved to be remarkably successful. There were no serious difficulties with the use of Moodle throughout the Examining process, no scripts that raised serious anxieties about plagiarism or other kinds of cheating, and markers frequently commented on how pleasant it was to mark an overwhelmingly-typed batch of scripts. It was also convenient dealing with everything online, and not having to swap piles of scripts with fellow-markers and keep piles of exam scripts in good order in the Alison Richard Building. The general view was that the quality of the work remained high, with the strongest scripts truly outstanding. The enduringly controversial decision was to require candidates to only work for three hours on writing their exam scripts; a number of students compared this unfavourably with alternative options, such as allowing full use of the five-hour ‘window’ or a twenty-four hour exam, as was used by some other Departments and Faculties. It nevertheless remains the view of the architects of the new system that it preserved the main elements of the old order, as far as this was possible to do so, and that allowing longer for candidates to work on their scripts may have introduced inequities of its own, as well as creating other practical difficulties.

One unintended but welcome consequence of the new arrangements is that they made it much easier to function with only one External Examiner in post, since with only the Part IIB students being classed, and with only three papers being Examined, the volume of material that needed to be submitted for the scrutiny of the External Examiner in order to make a confident adjudication as to which side of the class borderline marginal candidates fell was greatly reduced. Professor Nic Cheeseman (Birmingham) was in his third and final year in post, and he performed heroically well. Not only was he able to deal efficiently with all the material I asked him to consider, he also extended his usual range to include scripts from papers he had not dealt with before, such as POL18 (Gender and Politics) or POL11 (History of Political Thought since 1890 and Political Philosophy), and his judgments were confident and authoritative throughout. We have been fantastically well served by Professor Cheeseman, and he will be a very hard act to follow.

If our External Examiner and most of the Politics Examiners were familiar with our processes—though Giovanni Mantilla was new as POL3 Examiner—administrative support was provided by Rosalie Vanderpant and Alice Jondorf who were both in their roles for the first time, and they both did splendidly well, providing me with reliable support throughout

the key Examining period, dealing with the Moodle side of things, and in particular keeping all the marksheets accurate and up to date. I am very grateful to both of them.

In terms of the logistics, the exam papers were spread over the first three weeks in June, and concentrated in the first two weeks. The deadline for reporting marks for all but the last two papers was noon on Thursday 18 June, which allowed us to set things up so that the External Examiner was able to do the bulk of what he had to do on Tuesday 23 June ahead of the Final Examiners' Meeting on the afternoon of Thursday 25 June. The technology all held up throughout, both the use of Moodle for the submission and distribution of exam scripts and the various spreadsheets that were used for recording the marks for the various papers.

To summarise the overall results. At Part IIB Politics and International Relations, this year's marks produced three Starred Firsts, twenty five Firsts, fifty three Upper Seconds, two Lower Seconds, and one Third. The safety net was then applied, producing a final distribution of three Starred Firsts (4%), thirty six Firsts (43%), forty two Upper Seconds (50%), and two Lower Seconds (2%). At Part IIB Politics and Sociology, there were fifteen Firsts (75%) and five Upper Seconds (25%), and the safety net made no difference.

Preliminary analysis of the Part IIB results indicates that the usual gender effects were reversed this year. We usually see slightly higher marks for men than for women, with a gender effect particularly conspicuous in the marking of dissertations. This year it was the other way around, with women doing slightly better overall, and strikingly better when it came to dissertation marks. The Exam Board will continue to monitor the statistics it generates, but this disparity is obviously preferable to its opposite.

It is not yet clear exactly how next year's exams will be administered. But I am confident that the Politics Exam Board will be in good hands, with Jeremy Green returning as its chair.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

Examiner: Prof. Nic Cheeseman (University of Birmingham)

This is my third and final year as an External Examiner so I should start by saying that I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It has been constructive, well managed and collegial and I have appreciated the insights that it has given me into the way that politics is taught at the University of Cambridge. As noted in previous reports, the theoretically rigorous, deeply engaged and highly committed scholarship being produced by the students taking these courses is extremely impressive and suggests that the teaching on offer is thorough, thought provoking and inspiring – which is to say, just as it should be.

The coronavirus pandemic meant that 2020 was inevitably a very different experience to previous years. The key changes to the process were that there was a narrower focus on final exams and hence less material to review, exam scripts were in almost all cases typed rather than hand-written, and the meeting and feedback on scripts and essays was conducted virtually. There were also broader changes to the examination arrangements, most notably that students were given a "safety net" so they could not be adversely impacted by taking exams during the pandemic. Taken together, these measures represented an innovative and thoughtful response to a major disruption to standard practice – a response of which the University can be proud. I was particularly struck that approach that was developed

effectively enabled all students to do their best, while removing the fear that they could be negatively adversely impacted by a global health crisis beyond their control.

Moreover, some elements of this new approach worked particularly well and could be maintained in future years. Holding meetings online reduces travel time and also seemed to aid efficiency. Having typed exam scripts reduced the time it took to read papers considerably, and also removed the risk of misinterpreting the answers of students whose handwriting is hard to read. It seems to me that maintaining some of these innovations would lead to more efficient and more accurate examination processes going forward.

Given the number of changes that were introduce in such a short time, the whole exam team deserve great credit for the clarity of their communication and the quality of their organization. Despite the background conditions being by far the most challenging of my three years as external examiner, the process in 2020 was in many ways the smoothest. For that, Senior Examiner Christopher Brooke, Chief Clerk Rosalie Vanderpant and all of the others involved deserve great credit.

Despite the many distractions facing students, the quality of the scripts and essays remained impressively high. As in previous years, reading to determine the allocation of prizes was a real privilege and many of the pieces I reviewed were close to publishable standard. As I have said in the past, the insights and contributions contained in this work demonstrate the high quality of both students and teaching, and the opportunity for individuals to develop into first class researchers during their time at Cambridge.

The assessment process was rigorous and overall I felt that there was an improvement in the consistency of comments provided by markers to explain their decisions. This made the process of reviewing marks, and of arbitrating in cases where the original assessors did not fully agree, considerably more straightforward. I hope this can be maintained for future external examiners.

As in the past, the standards applied by markers were consistent and appropriate. I felt that assessors were a little more likely than in previous years to reward the best work by pushing marks into the high 70s and 80s – and to punish poor work by going into the 50s – but more of this can be done to stretch the cohort and avoid bunching. The strength of the material is such that marks between 75 and 85 are often warranted, but not always given.

Finally, it was very heartening to see further discussion at the Examiners' meeting of disparities in average marks between different papers, and consideration of the performance of female and male students. As was noted in previous reports, consistently tracking and evaluating this data is important, both to ensure that the examination system remains fair and equitable, and because it provides valuable insights into the wider teaching environment.

Given the above comments, I feel confident the examination process is robust and fair and that the right systems are in place to ensure that it remains so. It only remains for me to thank those at the University of Cambridge for making me feel so welcome – it has been a pleasure.

INTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

POL3: International Organisation
Examiner: Dr Giovanni Mantilla

Fifty-eight students took the POL3 exam requiring 2 answers to be written in response to 13 possible question choices. This resulted in 24 Firsts, 23 2:1s, 8 2:2s, and 3 Fails. The average mark was 67 and the standard deviation 9.2.

This was an exceptional examination year which prevents meaningful comparison to previous or future years. Exam-sitting was made optional, and in our analysis this is likely to have produced a selection bias toward positive results (47 out of 58 students did well or very well/excellent). Less well prepared students were probably less likely to take the exam, whereas those who were most engaged, up-to-date and well-prepared were probably more likely to opt in. This may well explain why the average mark (67%) was rather high, in addition to the POL3 exam design (two essays rather than three) which gives students more time to write more thoughtful, better-structured essays. It is crucial to remember that the large number of students who opted out of the exam may well have substantially changed the average and the distribution of results had they sat the exam.

Another possible reason for the upwards skew is that open book exams can spread the field, making well prepared students do better than they would have in a standard closed book exam and less well prepared ones do worse, except, as noted, the latter were also probably more likely to opt out.

Fortunately, the open book format did not have the effect of leading many students to rely on summary rather than argument. There were also no discernible problems of plagiarism. With very few exceptions, students taking the exam understood that they should take a clear stand in relation to the question being asked.

Responses to questions were unevenly distributed. Whether the question was more explicitly theoretical or explicitly empirical however did not seem to matter in terms of results: both types of questions elicited very good as well weaker answers.

There were around 5 really outstanding exams in the 79-81 range that not only made clear, consistent, compelling and sophisticated arguments and showed a deep understanding of diverse readings, they also were able to combine a range of theoretical and empirical points to make original critiques of or links between the readings.

A group of 70-76 again had clear, consistent and compelling arguments that showed deep understanding of a reasonably wide range of readings, and they made original and/or sophisticated use of theories, concepts and evidence in their answers.

Among those in the 60s, those towards the top of the range made clear and consistent arguments that made good use of a reasonable range of readings. Some faults included perhaps an odd mishandled or misinterpreted reading, a slightly narrow analytical focus, and/or some flaws in the organisation and structure of the answer. The lower 2:1s tended to have more of a combination of these faults.

Those in the 50-59 range summarised most of the readings they dealt with correctly and had some discernible argument, but tended to have problems sustaining the argument, had long unstructured sections, drew on a very narrow range of readings, or had reasonably serious misunderstandings of the readings.

The very few below 50 did not have an argument that lasted for more than a couple of paragraphs, failed to structure the answer, drew upon very few readings or simply offered a pastiche of snippets from the readings often unrelated to the question asked.

POL4: Comparative Politics
Examiner: Dr Christopher Bickerton

The POL4 exam was conducted this year under the exceptional circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, the exam was taken virtually by students, in the form of an open book exam with answers typed on computer and submitted via an online platform. Students were not obliged to take the exam though they were encouraged to do so. 80 students in total took the exam. The exam set was the same as in previous years, with an opening section covering topics from the general lectures of Lent Term 2020, and the remaining sections made up of two questions for each module offered to students and taken in Michaelmas Term 2019. Students were asked to answer one question from the general section and one question from the two module sections. Each student answered 3 questions in total. Marking was different this year than in previous years. There was no double blind marking, with the exception of one student who was a Part 2B student. Scripts were divided up between markers.

The distribution of marks was as follows: 27 students were awarded a First class mark; 38 students were awarded a 2.1. mark; 13 students were awarded a 2.2. mark; and there were two Fails. The average mark for POL4 this year was 65.

The spread of marks for Section A was as follows: 24 for Q. 1, 8 for Q. 2, 7 for Q. 3, 10 for Q. 4, 10 for Q. 5, 4 for Q. 6, 16 for Q. 7, 0 for Q. 8, 1 for Q. 9.

For the module questions, 40 students answered Q. 10 and 9 students answered Q. 11, 11 students answered Q. 12 and 6 students answered Q. 13, 6 students answered Q. 14 and 21 students answered Q. 15, 5 students answered Q. 16 and 6 students answered Q. 17, 16 students answered Q. 18 and 8 students answered Q. 19, 6 students answered Q. 20 and 11 students answered Q. 21, 8 students answered Q. 22 and 7 answered Q. 23.

The quality of scripts was maintained in comparison with past years. There was not a marked effect of an open book exam, with weak scripts weak in the same ways, and similarly with the stronger scripts.

As ever with POL4, the answers with the highest marks were those that combined a careful and sophisticated treatment of individual concepts with a detailed empirical exposition of their arguments. By this, it is meant a precise use of data, including names and dates for relevant cases, the reconstruction of historical cases, the details of relevant electoral results, the use of other sorts of data (electoral turnouts, creation/demise of political parties, party membership figures etc.). Whilst POL4 requires a degree of conceptual sophistication and awareness, it is not primarily a theoretical paper. Rather, it requires the development of arguments through the deployment of empirical material. Examples are therefore essential in

order to achieve higher marks in POL4 and a complete absence of empirical material will lead to systematically lower marks. Lower marks were thus given to those scripts that did not cite any particular examples or did so in superficial and cursory ways. Scripts that were conceptually confused, or assumed the meaning of key concepts rather than providing clear definitions, were also marked down.

POL5: Conceptual Issues in Politics and International Relations
Examiner: Prof. Brendan Simms

This year 72 students took this paper on Conceptual Issues in Politics and International Relations. Candidates are given the chance to investigate topics in more detail and more subtly than can be achieved in regular supervisions. Some off the answers succeeded very well, showing real engagement with the literature, while also demonstrating originality of thought. Most of the essays showed a good understanding of the topic, but as was the case last year the majority were perhaps a little too respectful of established authors and hesitant to venture their own opinions. If a question had both a historical and a contemporary angle, candidates tended to concentrate too much on one to the detriment of the other. Perhaps inevitably, certain topics tended to bring out personal and not always substantiated views more than others.

POL6: Statistics and Methods in Politics and International Relations
Examiner: Dr Pieter van Houten

The number of students doing the assessments for this paper was affected by the COVID situation. While there were 18 students who did the paper this year (5 HSPS Part IIA, 7 HSPS Part IIB, and 6 History & Politics IB), in the end 14 students submitted the coursework element (a report of maximally 5000 words on a data analysis project) and 12 students took the two-hour online exam.

The results for the assessments were good. The average mark for the coursework element was 68.0, with 4 candidates receiving a First-class mark and 10 candidates receiving a 2.1 mark (one of which was a mark of 69). For the exam, the average mark was 66.9, with 3 candidates receiving a First-class mark and 9 candidates a 2.1 mark (one of which was 69). Only the 6 Part IIB candidates who completed both assessment elements received an official overall mark for the paper this year (with each element contributing 50% of the overall mark) – 3 candidates received a First class mark for the paper and the other 3 candidates received a 2.1 mark (one of which was a 69). Unlike in previous years, there were no 2.2 marks (or lower) in either part of the assessment, but this may have been partly the result of ‘self-selection’ of candidates who decided to do the assessment in this year’s unusual circumstances.

For the coursework, candidates had to choose a topic from a provided list. The choices of topics were more clustered than last year: six candidates undertook a project on Sustainable Development Goals, six candidates investigated voting behaviour in British elections, and two candidates chose to do a project on public attitudes to globalisation. (None of the reports focused on the conflict or corruption topics.) As last year, the examiners were impressed with the quality of the analyses and reports. All the reports showed an ability to formulate a research question and design a specific quantitative analysis to address it. The presentation and discussion of the results were generally competent and, particularly in the best reports, interesting and innovative. The reports that received the highest marks presented convincing accounts of the reason for and the interpretations of the results of the analysis. Reports that

received marks in the 2.1 range displayed some of the weaknesses that were pointed out in last year's examiners report too: lack of some clarity in the presentation of results and hypotheses (e.g. by including two separate factors in the same hypothesis), too much attention dedicated to preliminary aspects of the analysis (such as lengthy discussion of descriptive statistics or the explanation of very basic statistical issues and principles), insufficient attention to the substantive interpretation of results (which, in some case, could have been improved by linking the analysis and reports more to existing literature), and some lack of coherence between different parts of the report. However, it is worth emphasising again that the overall quality of reports was impressive and encouraging.

The quality of the exams was also high. All candidates showed a solid understanding of the basic statistical principles and models covered in the paper and provided sensible answers to most of the questions. The best scripts were particularly strong on formulating interpretations of the results and careful in discussing the implications of results for hypotheses and arguments (for example, indicating clearly what it means to have low p-values and the implications for the rejection of null hypotheses and the support for – but not necessarily confirmation of – alternative hypotheses). The better scripts also provided more convincing answers to the broader questions about the presented results (Qs. 1.3 and 1.6), and/or presented more plausible answers to the questions that were probably less expected and predictable (Qs. 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10). Some of the specific weaknesses in the scripts that received a 2.1 mark were a lack of justification for the hypotheses in answers to question 1.4, limited substantive interpretations in answers to question 1.5, some mistakes in how to assess the 'maximum effects' of a variable when dealing with odds ratios in answers to question 1.7, and a lack of attention to the other regression assumptions in answers to question 1.8 (in order to better justify why one of the assumptions was picked for the answer). (Note that the 2.1 scripts typically only exhibited some, and not all, of these weaknesses.) Not surprisingly, candidates found question 1.10 challenging, with only some comprehending the basic interpretation of an 'interaction effect'.

POL7: The History of Political Thought to c. 1700
Examiner: Miss Sylvana Tomaselli

24 candidates sat this paper. In Section A, the most popular question this year was on Plato (13 answers), followed by those on Machiavelli (12), More (7), Aristotle (7), Hobbes (2), Locke (1) and Aquinas (1), and none on Augustine. In Section B, the most popular question was 'What threatened the stability of democratic government in the differing opinions of its advocates and detractors?' (11), followed by 'How widely were the political ideals of the Florentine republic shared by humanist writers on politics?'(8), 'Did virtue remain the central concept in Roman political thinking despite the mutation of Rome's constitutional form ?'(4), 'Was the early modern law of nations anything more than a charter for European imperial expansion?' (3), 'In what ways did political writers of the British revolutions counter the royalist claim that kingly power came directly from God?', 'Why was Grotius so exceptional among early modern theorists of sovereignty in holding that sovereign power could be divided?', and 'What was the 'reason' in 'reason of state?' each received 1 answer. Several of the candidates chose to answer two questions in Section B.

A few points emerge that reiterate reports of previous years. The first is that while some candidates clearly mastered a wide array of subjects, some were more narrowly focused on the Ancients, and while these included excellent and clearly distinct answers, some came close to repeating the same material. The second is that some scripts seemed oblivious of the

fact that they needed to be legible. The third is that, in some cases, there was a lack of critical engagement with the question and/or inattentiveness as to its precise nature. This was evident, for instance, in some of the answers to the question on More ('To what extent should we regard Thomas More's *Utopia* as exposing the perils of hereditary monarchy?') in which monarchy and aristocracy were amalgamated into one, their hereditary aspect left unexamined, every social ill deemed, by More, to be attributable to hereditary monarchy, and the government of Utopia itself left bereft of scrutiny.

The quality of the scripts was high over-all and truly impressive in some cases. Most were well-written and structured, and the best provided a flowing well-supported argument for the answer they put forward. Some demonstrated not only a close reading of the set texts, but a genuine understanding of the issues these texts were tackling as well as of the context relevant to achieve this level of comprehension. A few were also able to provide a succinct account of the scholarly debate pertinent to the question under discussion. At the other end of the spectrum were answers that began with a potted biographical or historical account followed by a vague summary of the political thought of the author or school in question. These did not focus on the precise question addressed or left out one aspect of it. Some answers to the question on Plato's *Republic*, for example, spoke of the theory of forms, the three classes, and/or the allegory of the cave amongst other parts of that work, but did not explain what it identified as the 'requirements' of human psychology or how that related to Plato's political 'recommendations'. The city of pigs, for instance, was left unmentioned in several of the answers in which it was most needed. Some answer to the question on *Utopia* gave a very good account of Utopia's actual governance, others none. Some outlined what might be taken as 'the expression of a democratic ideal', others took it as self-evident.

Analyses of the arguments about what threatened ancient democratic government were mostly nuanced and some displayed extensive reading and genuine reflection on the views held about rhetoric, demagoguery, and political leadership. One or two of the answers on humanist writers showed unusual level of erudition and originality.

In sum, those who had read the set texts with attention to the shape and detail of the arguments within them, and the language (s) and images used by their authors, as well as demonstrated awareness of the conceptual issues involved and of the debates within the scholarship did best as always. The few, who had read only one of the set texts (e.g. *The Prince*), or who had a very superficial understanding of a set text (e.g. *Utopia*), or who did not explore the full implications of the questions, rehashing their weekly essays or regurgitating their lecture notes, did least well.

What is needed is clear evidence of textual knowledge to be sure, but of the *relevant* and *specific* parts of the text(s). This requires knowledge of the text(s) in the first place, but that should be taken to mean an *understanding* of what they seek to achieve and how they do so, not mere restatement of what it was that the author wrote. This may very well require some biographical knowledge or knowledge of the intellectual and historical contexts in which the author(s) under consideration wrote, but such a knowledge needs to be selective, woven into the answer where appropriate, and only presented if specifically *relevant* to the issue at hand.

This said, this truly was a very good year for POL 7, one that reflected the very high intellectual standard of the lectures and supervisions provided.

POL8: The History of Political Thought from 1700-1890

Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins

A total of thirty-seven candidates sat the paper this year, a marked drop occasioned by the novel exam arrangements introduced in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This exam was classed as a formative assessment and was conducted remotely on an 'open-book' basis. In light of restricted digital access to some of the set texts, it was agreed with the chair of examiners that candidates would not be unduly penalised for failure to make use of material thus affected. It was further agreed, with the support of relevant exam boards in the History Faculty, that certain exam questions would be revised where lack of access to specific texts would materially compromise candidates' ability to answer. Two questions were amended on this basis in advance of the date of the exam.

The standard of answers was broadly in line with previous years. Nine candidates received marks of 70 or above; twenty-four candidates received marks in the range 60-69; one candidate in the range 50-59; two in the range 40-49; and one below 40. The median mark was 66; the mean was 65.2. There were 63 answers on Section A topics; 48 answers on Section B topics. No instances of plagiarism were identified. As ever, some clustering was in evidence, but despite the fact that fewer candidates sat the paper, there was still a pleasing spread of topics covered. The most popular topics were Rousseau (14 answers) and Gender (13), followed by Nationalism (11) and Wollstonecraft (10). Other popular topics included Empire (8), Burke (7), Mill (6), and Luxury and Commercial Society (6). Montesquieu, Smith, Kant, Marx, and the French Revolution each attracted 5 answers. The question on Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany was answered by 3 candidates, and 2 candidates answered on Hegel. The questions on Hume, Bentham, Constant, Socialism before 1848, and Social Science each received 1 answer. No candidate chose to tackle the questions on Tocqueville, Natural Law, and, most unusually, the American Revolution. Leaving aside those topics answered by only one or two candidates, the question on Smith attracted some very strong answers, and the standard for the Marx and the Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany topics was also high. Candidates tended to outperform the average when answering on Nationalism, Gender, Empire, the French Revolution and Burke. It is notable that many candidates performed better when answering on Section B topics than on Section A. At the other end of the spectrum, Rousseau once again proved challenging to a number of candidates, with marks clustered at the lower end of the 2.1 spectrum; the same was true of Mill. The question on Luxury and Commercial Society was not, as a rule, well-answered, with many candidates unsure what to do with the 'ancients/moderns' distinction. There was, however, one answer of outstanding quality on this topic, and there were also notably strong individual answers on Smith, Wollstonecraft, Gender, and Empire.

It was not evident that the shift to an 'open-book' assessment had any great impact on the standard of answers. To perform well, candidates needed: firstly, to answer the question in front of them, rather than offer a generic overview of the topic; secondly, to demonstrate first-hand knowledge of the specified texts; thirdly, to produce a coherent, logically-structured argument. Weaker answers were deficient in respect of one or more of these requirements.

In turning to individual topics, I again confine my comments to those questions where some level of generalisation about the quality of answers is possible. For Section A, I will begin with Montesquieu. This question invited reflection on a number of Montesquieu's primary intellectual concerns. Most candidates rightly made much of the phrase 'modern liberty', but weaker answers confined their attention to threats to liberty arising from constitutional

arrangements, to the neglect of other factors, such as the growth of commerce. On Rousseau, most candidates linked the question to the problem of perfectibility, and some saw the pertinence of recent scholarly literature, with Neuhouser proving a popular interlocutor. However, weaker candidates struggled to make sense of the reference to 'reason', and not every candidate appeared to be entirely at home with the argument of the *Second Discourse*. Answers on Smith, as noted, were of generally high standard, with candidates displaying high levels of conceptual precision, and close familiarity with both the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and the secondary literature. The question on Burke received a mixed response. Better answers focused closely on the problem of 'moral equality', but rather too many defaulted into generic accounts of Burke's attitude towards revolution and reform. There were few very weak answers on Wollstonecraft, but there were quite a number that offered merely descriptive responses that did little to interrogate the notion of the 'good life' with any great analytical rigour. On Kant, answers veered between those that were informed by close textual analysis, and a series of generic answers that failed to engage with the question adequately, for instance, by offering an overview of Kant's views on revolution, rather than focusing on the problem of progress per se. One strong answer aside, responses to the question on Mill also suffered from a want of attention to the specific premise of the question, with few candidates showing more than passing interest in the contrast between 'social' tyranny and 'political' oppression, or in-depth knowledge of the relevant sections of *On Liberty*. On Marx, the best answers were able to relate the discussion of commodity fetishism to a range of texts other than *Capital*, but even at the upper end of the range there was only a limited sense of the interpretive questions that can be asked about the relationship between the early and later writings.

For Section B, as noted, the Luxury and Commercial Society topic was, in the main, poorly answered. This topic often attracts generic answers that rehearse the arguments of Fénelon and Mandeville with little reference to the question, frequently relying more on the secondary literature than on the primary texts themselves. This year was no exception, but this was compounded by confused treatment of the 'ancients/moderns' distinction. There was one exception – an answer that demonstrated an outstandingly sure grasp of the secondary debates and close reading of the primary texts. Beyond this, Section B topics were generally well answered. On the French Revolution, candidates took the reference to 'the British model' in their stride, and there was some good comparative discussion of the primary texts. 'Culture and Aesthetics' was answered with some degree of conceptual precision, and candidates made use of a wide range of primary texts. On Gender, most candidates focused squarely on rights, though the question of change was handled with less confidence. There were signs that the Nationalism topic is starting to generate more conceptually ambitious answers – some candidates appeared to have found Kelly's article on Bluntschli particularly illuminating – though at the weaker end of the spectrum it remained the case that some answers made little attempt to draw out connections or comparisons between the set texts. On Empire, it was pleasing to see some candidates drawing on theoretical perspectives from sociology and anthropology, though this sometimes came at the expense of any close engagement with the primary texts.

Overall, candidates are to be commended on their performance under exceptionally challenging circumstances.

POL10: The History of Political Thought from 1700-1890
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins

Eight candidates sat the exam in this sitting. Due the Coronavirus pandemic the exam was conducted remotely on an 'open-book' basis. In light of restricted digital access to some of the set texts, it was agreed with the chair of examiners that candidates would not be unduly penalised for failure to make use of material thus affected. It was further agreed, with the support of relevant exam boards in the History Faculty, that certain exam questions would be revised where lack of access to specific texts would materially compromise candidates' ability to answer. Two questions were amended on this basis in advance of the date of the exam.

Two candidates received first-class overall marks, one of which would have qualified for a distinction. A further five candidates received a mark in the 2.1 range. One candidate received an overall 2.2. The median mark was 65.5; the mean marginally higher at 65.75. Whilst not an outstanding year, the mark profile was broadly in line with previous years, and under the circumstances this is to be welcomed. A wide range of questions were attempted. Kant and the Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany questions each received three answers. Hume, the American Revolution, Nationalism, and Empire each received two answers. Rousseau, Burke, Wollstonecraft, Bentham, Constant, Hegel, Tocqueville, Marx, the French Revolution, and Gender received one answer each. No candidate attempted the questions on Montesquieu, Mill, Natural Law, Luxury and Commercial Society, Socialism before 1848, or Social Science.

The very best answers were resolutely focused on the question posed, rigorously argued, and displayed outstanding critical understanding of the primary texts and of relevant secondary debates. There were few instances of an outright failure to answer the questions posed, though a number of candidates produced somewhat generic answers that were insufficiently focused. Weaker candidates tended to display a more superficial level of analysis, a weaker grasp on the primary texts, and looser argumentation. Some candidates, perhaps encouraged by the 'open-book' format, reproduced long strings of quotations, without sufficient analysis or attempt to weave them into a compelling argument. Given the range of topics covered by a small number of candidates, it is difficult to generalise about responses to individual questions, so I will merely highlight a few particular issues arising, where these do not fall under the generic categories listed above. For Burke, the legal origin of the term 'prescription' should have been attended to. On Wollstonecraft, candidates would have been advised to give more consideration to the philosophical and theological concerns underpinning her account of progress. On Kant, the question required a clearer account of the argument of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and the relationship between this text and Kant's doctrine of right, than some candidates were able to give. The question on the American Revolution was poorly answered; candidates demonstrated very little conceptual and historical precision in handling 'democracy', and there was some evident confusion about the political affiliations of some of the authors of the specified texts. Answers on the Nationalism topic suffered from limited knowledge of the primary texts, though it was notable that candidates made a concerted effort to draw out comparisons between individual authors. On Empire, candidates showed much greater confidence in discussion of the secondary debates than in treating the primary texts.

This was an examination taken under unique circumstances, and all candidates are to be congratulated on their performance in the face of unprecedented challenges.

POL11: Political Philosophy and the History of Political Thought since c.1890
Examiner: Dr Samuel Zeitlin

33 students took this paper from Part IIB HSPS, 3 students from History, and 11 students from History and Politics. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some additional students remain scheduled to sit the examination, with a completely different examination paper, at a later sitting. As remains customary, a separate report is provided both for HSPS and for History. In HSPS, the most popular questions were Nietzsche (9), Rawls (7), Hayek (7), and Weber (6) in Section A, whilst the most frequently answered questions in Section B of the examination were punishment (8), justice (8), and the political theory of the environment and the Anthropocene (7). In Section A, Q. 3, on the rise of modern Marxism received no responses in HSPS, which was also the case for Qs. 24, 25, and 29 in Section B of the examination, on the category of humanitarian intervention in political philosophy, on the import of arguments of welfare to modern theories of equality, on methodology in political theory and the history of political thought, respectively. Overall, the examiners agreed one lower second mark, seven first class marks, and the rest in the upper second class amongst the HSPS students.

Once again, and in line with earlier reports such as that of the past years, those who achieved highest marks were able to distil a knowledge of the texts (showing they knew clearly how relevant books and arguments were put together), making it appropriate to the particular topic, and then expanding on that knowledge (especially in Section A) to explore the relevance of other texts and historical contexts to the interpretation of work involved in answering the question, and being comparative where necessary. Relying too much on lecture handouts and interpretations, or just one rather rigidly applied and pre-determined particular structure that is then made to fit an answer, is insufficient to do really well here. No less, for Section B in particular, excellent marks were rewarded for genuine attempts at making proper normative arguments in the style of much contemporary political philosophy rather than solely reporting on the positions held by others. Amongst the strongest answers were those offered on the British Idealists topic (which received only one answer) and on the question in Section B on feminist utopias.

The examiners wished to note that this year was the first year in which History and Politics students sat the POL 11 (History Part II, Paper 5) examination, and the examiners were impressed by the showing of the History and Politics students as at least equivalent to the showing of students in both HSPS and History.

Those who did best with the Section B topics, were able to build on a broad base of knowledge in political theory, its history and its conceptual/normative claims, to answer more abstract questions. Successful candidates *made an argument* and advanced their own claims rather than merely reporting the views of others. Equally, all the most successful candidates were able to present a critical discussion, one that shows a level of engagement with the material and its re-presentation, rather than just dropping names and articles in. This is crucial to reiterate, for it is very important that candidates recognize that what we are looking for is awareness of texts, a sense of their complexity (and where relevant, their contemporary relevance), but also a sense of their possible weaknesses, problems, and difficulties, and what knowing this might do to the interpretation of claims in political theory and philosophy. This might take the form of more adept or adroit use of secondary materials, the incorporation and awareness of historiographical debates and transitions, or political and/or internal or immanent critique, allowing students to engage with the questions being posed. Those who made it into the first-class category in either or both sections were more able to do these sorts

of things, whereas those who remained in the upper (and occasionally lower) second class were less able to deploy their knowledge in such a critical fashion. Some scripts were genuinely brilliant, showing breadth and depth of knowledge at this level of work that remains astonishing and highly commendable, across the paper. This year, however, as in previous years, although the general spread of answers was diverse, followed the major topics discussed in the majority of lectures. The paper itself remains challenging for both Historians and HSPS students, but we hope rewarding, as seen in an exam that spans over a century of the most fractious and fraught theorizing about modern politics.

POL12: The Politics of the Middle East
Examiner: Dr Glen Rangwala

The examination for the Politics of the Middle East paper was taken remotely this year on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in an open-book format. Most students chose to type their essays. It was taken by 25 students, from a range of Triposes: History & Politics, and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and three different tracks of HSPS. The same standards were applied across all students.

The quality this year was high. 6 students received average marks of 70 or above, including (as it happens) at least one student in each of the three Triposes. Only 2 students received marks lower than 60, in both cases receiving marks in the high 50s. The large majority of answers this year drew well upon the literature and were factually accurate, which in part follows from the open-book format. What was impressive this year was how many of the essays were able to make well-focused arguments through both developing critical accounts of the literature and staying engaged with empirical detail. There was on the whole a good balance between evidence and argument, and between broad themes and case-based specificity.

A few essays had extended descriptive sections at the expense of argument. Often this was done by asserting at the start a contentious judgement – that, for instance, in response to Q.12 that Turkish politics used to be exceptionally secular but is no longer – and then using the rest of the essay to fill this in with detail. This approach often failed to engage with the issues with a sufficient sense of complexity and awareness of different judgements. A somewhat larger number of essays answered the essay question only somewhat indirectly, and this was probably the largest problem for responses to Qs. 4 (on obstacles to gender equality) and 5 (on the Israel-Palestine conflict) in particular. It was striking that a number of answers to Q. 4 did not address at all what the obstacles to gender equality are in the Middle East.

Finally, it should be noted that a number of third essays in a script were less well-developed than the other two – in that they were both significantly shorter and more abruptly argued than the preceding two essays – and this sometimes had a disproportionately negative effect on the overall mark. Presumably this was due to a shortage of time, prompted perhaps by the novel examination format. In a few cases, it brought the overall mark below 70. This was disappointing to see, as a more equal distribution of time between the essays could have resulted in a higher mark.

The most popular questions were on the origins of the Middle Eastern state (Q. 1, 11 answers), on the Israel-Palestine conflict (Q. 5, 10 answers) and on regional cooperation (Q. 6, 9 answers). The least popular questions were on economic liberalisation (Q. 3, 2 answers),

on US-Russian rivalry in the Middle East (Q. 7, 1 answer), and on the legacy of the self-styled Islamic State movement (Q. 10, no answers).

This paper will not be running in 2020-21, but may be in back in future years.

POL13: The Politics of Europe
Examiner: Dr Peter Sloman

The POL13 paper in British and European Politics has continued to grow, and was taught to 53 students this year – 37 in HSPS, 8 in the History and Politics Tripos, and 8 from the Economics Tripos. 27 students specialized in British Politics, 13 specialized in the Politics of the European Union, and the remaining 13 studied both modules. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the paper was assessed through an online written exam, and all Economics candidates and some candidates on HSPS joint tracks dropped the paper, so only 42 candidates took the exam. The question paper had been written and approved in Lent Term and was not changed as a result of the pandemic, but an upper word limit of 4500 words was introduced and candidates were allowed to use their notes on an 'open book' basis.

The standard of work this year was relatively high: out of the 34 HSPS candidates, 10 gained overall marks of 70+, whilst there were 23 marks of 60-69 and 1 mark in the 50-59 category. The performance of the 8 History and Politics candidates (for whom individual, rather than agreed, marks are reported for classing purposes) was slightly weaker, with 2 marks of 70+ (from different candidates), 12 marks of 60-69, and 1 mark of 50-59. Answers to the British Politics questions were marginally better than answers to the EU questions this year, with average marks of 66.7 and 66.0 respectively, but those candidates who answered questions on both modules did best of all: in fact, more than half of them received Firsts.

The number of answers and average mark for each question are set out in the tables below:

British Politics section

	Q.1	**Q.2**	**Q.3**	**Q.4**	**Q.5**	**Q.6**	**Q.7**	**Q.8**	**Q.9**	**Q.10**
Number of answers	4	7	12	19	9	7	7	8	6	2
Average mark	67.5	66.1	67.7	66.2	66.4	65.2	67.6	66.3	67.9	64.8

The Politics of the European Union section

	Q.11	**Q.12**	**Q.13**	**Q.14**	**Q.15**	**Q.16**	**Q.17**	**Q.18**	**Q.19**	**Q.20**
Number of answers	6	4	1	10	1	5	8	0	4	6
Average mark	64.8	65.5	66	66.1	66	65.2	67.9	-	66.9	64.8

The question on New Labour (Q. 4) was the most popular with candidates, followed by those on Thatcherism (Q. 3) and the EU's democratic deficit (Q. 14), though apart from this clustering – and the total neglect of Q. 18 on EU policy-making – there was a reasonably wide spread of answers and a relatively even performance across the paper. The very best candidates stood out both for their command of empirical detail and the secondary literature (which may have been aided by the open book format) and for the precision with which they

answered the questions. Other capable scripts were held back by problems of structure and clarity of expression which made it difficult to follow the argument, or by an over-reliance on prepared material which was not sufficiently tailored to the question. The very weakest answers lacked either detail or argument, and suggested that the authors may not have put enough work in. Several candidates received marks in the 50s for some of their essays but were pulled narrowly over the 2.1/2.2 borderline by more competent answers to other questions.

POL14: US Foreign Policy
Examiner: Prof. Brendan Simms

This year 32 students took this paper on US Foreign Policy. As always, some questions were more popular than others, with 27 (of 32) students choosing either a question on the greatest threat to US hegemony (22 students) or one on the 1990s origins of US decline (5 students). Students pointed primarily either to China or to US domestic politics as the most serious threat facing US dominance in the future. For candidates' other two essays, however, there was generally a good spread of choices, apart from some clustering around a question on human rights in Latin America (11 students), which invited a focus on US policy particularly during the Carter Administration. Some students adopted an unnecessarily hectoring tone at times, though this was perhaps in the nature of the exercise. Perhaps facilitated by the open-book nature of the exam, there tended to be extensive engagement with the scholarly literature, almost to a fault in that several candidates tended to follow existing arguments too closely. This tended to inhibit intellectual ambition. There was a certain lack of very strong performances on the exam, but given pandemic conditions this is not wholly surprising. What was more surprising, given the fact that the exam was conducted online, was the number of typos.

POL15: The Politics of Africa
Examiner: Dr Sharath Srinivasan

In 2019-20, in what was an exceptional year given COVID-19, 15 students (out of 20 who originally enrolled) took the POL15 Politics of Africa examination (the option of assessment by long essay was not offered this year). 13 students were from HSPS and 2 students were from History and Politics. The examination was open-book and taken remotely. The changes in examination format and conditions no doubt suited some students more than others, yet overall the performance on the paper was consistently good.

POL15 is expansive, covering a range of themes, a variety of disciplinary perspectives, a long time period, a critical reflexivity towards the politics of studying Africa, and empirical diversity and depth. It challenges students and lecturers alike to be attentive to country- and region-specific particularities whilst also addressing core theoretical and thematic concerns, including those from the study of world politics, that lend themselves to broader analysis and argumentation. Equally, this presents real opportunity for students to push beyond formulaic answers in examinations and to creatively and originally develop their conceptual arguments and case examples.

Students who master the core readings and case material included in the classes and lectures, and who can deploy this knowledge in their examined work with due attention to sources, are able to achieve a low 2.1 with little difficulty. Students find it challenging to achieve a high 2.1 or a First. Those who do are able to take command of the course as a whole, working

from and across texts, debates and case analyses throughout the paper to make their distinctive arguments. They appreciate that nothing is formulaic about the politics of Africa, there is no established canon to work from, but rather independent and critical reasoning can thrive and authentic and original argument, working with and from carefully selected knowledge sources, is highly rewarded. They draw on subtle and well-grounded empirical knowledge, often of individual countries or comparisons across countries relating to discrete issues, to substantiate, qualify or rebut major lines of argument in the broader literature. The best candidates understand what is at stake, theoretically and thematically, in the question, and address this through focused and grounded analysis. Moving beyond rehearsed debates and piecemeal use of country case empirics to prove a point, candidates who make careful choices on country cases throughout the year and who get beyond the core readings and designated case studies will develop their own confidence in tackling the core themes of the paper.

In the 2019-20 examination, the most popular questions were Q. 12 (on digital communications and African futures, 9 answers), Q. 3, Q. 5, Q. 10 (on global economic order and African development, on Africa and China, and on explaining conflict and violence in Africa, 5 answers on each) and Q. 4 (on the politics of 'good governance', 4 answers). The overall performance by candidates was strong; this was a very good cohort. The average mark obtained for HSPS students was 67.

Three students obtained Firsts, which is about average for a cohort of this size. These students showed consistently outstanding quality across all of their answers, evidenced by originality and boldness in argumentation, strong command of the underlying rationales of different sides of debates in the literature, nuanced and confident use of empirical material and clarity and coherence in written execution. These and many more students who obtained high marks on individual questions also showed a strong and subtle command of the key lines of argument concerning the question, originality in how they developed their answer and addressed alternative arguments, and, where relevant, empirical breadth and depth in animating and justifying their answer. Students who fared best had clearly prepared well considered and thoughtfully evidenced lines of argument ahead of the exam on their chosen topics, which they then adapted to ensure they answered the specific questions asked.

One student was awarded a low 2.2. This script evidenced difficulties experienced in the examination setting, with the misfortune of combining very strong and thoughtful introductory paragraphs followed by very short and limited answers. The need to practice execution in an examination setting was clearly heightened by the disrupted circumstances of this year.

The great many scripts which scored in the low to mid 2.1 range came in broadly two types. One type, often averaging around or below 65, showed consistency in accurate and well-informed answers that remained close to the question but did not develop in distinctly original or nuanced ways. Scripts that obtained a low 2.1 tended towards descriptive generality, a lack of engagement with key sources or weaknesses in logical argument. There is often a danger with lower performing candidates that they do not work from a detailed study of the course readings and lectures, or they make basic errors. The other type, often with a wider range of marks for individual answers, showed originality in argument or novel use of empirics, but not always across all answers and sometimes with errors in logical argument or a lack of persuasiveness. These scripts mostly averaged around 65, sometimes a little higher.

Scripts that obtained a high 2.1 but fell short of a First had one or both of two distinguishing features. First, a difference of judgement between the two markers sometimes left students on the borderline. Secondly, students may have had one or two answers that were of very high quality and obtained a First, but then had a third answer fell sufficiently short to pull down their average.

POL16: Conflict and Peacebuilding
Examiner: Dr Devon Curtis

Twenty candidates wrote the exam for this paper. Four candidates received first class marks. Two candidates received first class marks from one examiner and 2.1 from the other examiner. One candidate received a 2.1 from one examiner and a 2.2 from the other examiner. One candidate received a 2.2 from both examiners. The remaining 12 candidates received 2.1 marks.

We were pleased that many candidates answered the questions directly, rather than veering towards prepared supervision essays on slightly different questions. Most candidates developed clear arguments, which they supported through effective examples and evidence. Many of the stronger scripts showed a good understanding of the conceptual debates, and illustrated their points using appropriate empirical examples. A few candidates intelligently assessed relevant policy literature, and primary documents. Answers at the lower 2.1/ 2.2 end tended not to present a clear argument or failed to engage with relevant literature. In a couple of cases, candidates did not focus on the specific question or made factual errors.

All of the questions were attempted by at least two candidates. Q. 4 was only attempted by two candidates, but the answers were thoughtful and well considered. Q. 8 was the most popular question, answered by 9 candidates. There was a very big spread of marks on this question. The weaker answers did not explain what was meant by political order(s) and instead offered a blanket overall assessment of either peace negotiations or disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes. The strongest answers discussed different kinds of political orders and presented thoughtful analyses. Several candidates struggled with Q. 1, sometimes presenting a laundry list of problems rather than a coherent argument. Other answers suffered from repetition. The range of marks for Q. 2 was also quite wide, with some underdeveloped answers, but other excellent answers that used relevant case examples and successfully connected ideas from different parts of the course. For Q. 3, several candidates did not specify which kinds of institutions they were interested in, whereas there were other exceptional answers, particularly the ones dealing with gender. Several candidates had difficulty with Q. 5 and Q. 6. On both Q. 5 and Q. 6, there was a tendency to answer a slightly different question, with several candidates explaining general limitations of peacekeeping rather than engaging with the part of the question asking about different security threats. However, there was a superb answer for Q. 5 and another excellent answer for Q. 6. Q. 7 tended to be answered well, providing clear, persuasive arguments. The best scripts on Q. 9 brought in relevant readings and examples, whereas the slightly weaker ones struggled with the part of the question about democracy.

The three case study questions (Qs. 10-11-12) were very well done and we were impressed by the candidates' knowledge on the cases. Several of the answers on the Latin American case study were particularly well done, with high levels of conceptual sophistication.

Overall, we were very pleased with the candidates' ability to make interesting connections between the different topics in the paper, and to present logical persuasive answers.

POL17: Law of Peace: The Law of Emerging International Constitutional Order
Examiner: Prof. Marc Weller

This course represented something of an innovation, offering for the first time a full course on international law, running over two terms, at undergraduate level in the department. The lectures were co-taught with the MPhils, while separate seminars and supervisions were arranged for the undergraduates. The course was heavily taught, with two hours of lectures, and two hours of seminar or supervision per week. In addition, a range of materials were made available to candidates, mainly in the shape of fairly voluminous handouts.

The fact that the course was taken along with MPhils, the previously unknown mysteries of legal methods, and the heavy reading load all contributed to a sense on the part of participants that this venture was a risky one for them, placing a heavy burden on them, with results that were difficult to predict. This sense only slowly dissipated over time and may have persisted for some until the examination results became known.

The course sought to offer an overview of the main challenges in international law, which track similar discussions in other branches of IR, such as nationalism and ethnic conflict, use of force between states, dispute settlement, human rights, etc. In addition, it offered a somewhat critical perspective, seeking to investigate whether certain constitutional functions are performed at the international level, through the means of international law.

The examination retained its 3-hour format, despite the virus. It offered five questions. Candidates had to answer one. Three of the questions were problem questions, with two being offered in essay format. There was a word limit of 4,500 words.

The problem questions were complex, building three case scenarios, covering use of force/anticipatory self-defence, forcible humanitarian action and sources of law/law of the sea in a problem format, and *jus cogens* and self-determination respectively as problem questions.

Only seven candidates took the course, so there is little value in any statistical consideration concerning questions attempted. Two candidates addressed self-determination, two candidates covered self-defence and three candidates addressed forcible humanitarian action respectively. There were no takes for sources/jus cogens.

The overall result was very good indeed. Marks ranged from 64 to 77, with an average of 72. The result was one of the best of all courses, but was left unmoderated by the exam board, given the small number of candidates. This is appropriate—the quality of the answers is indistinguishable from the graduates, or in parts superior. The small number of the candidates, and the fact that they were self-selected for what was expected to be a difficult and challenging journey meant that the candidates were highly motivated and extra bright. They are to be congratulated on this stellar result, which was fully agreed/confirmed by both markers.

POL18: Politics and Gender
Examiner: Dr Jude Browne

Twenty five students sat the exam for POL18 in the Easter Term 2020. One student of these 25, sat a different paper due to extenuating circumstances and as with all papers there will be a second sitting for POL 18 with a new exam paper in the Michaelmas Term for those who were unable to sit the exam in Easter due to COVID 19. Of the 25 who sat POL 18 in the Easter Term, 11 were from the Politics and IR track, 6 from the Politics/Social Anthropology track, 4 from the Politics/Sociology track and 5 were from the History and Politics Tripos.

All students answered three questions from a three-hour exam paper featuring 12 questions. The overall average mark was 67.1 reflecting the high quality of responses. The top final average mark was 76 and the lowest, 59.

The most popular questions were Q. 2 and Q. 3 on rights and political representation respectively - fifteen students answered each – followed by Q. 12 on conflict and security which 12 students answered.

Weaker answers tended to summarise lecture notes without innovation, were overly repetitive or were too narrow in their approach relying heavily on only one or two thinkers for example. Some read more like a list of points or references rather than a narrative and one or two used outdated data from secondary sources. The exam answers which secured the highest marks presented a range of theoretical approaches to the question chosen as well as analysis and critique of differing perspectives in place of mere description. These answers also were able to relate sometimes quite abstract theoretical ideas to contemporary real-world empirical examples that went beyond those discussed in the lectures. A large array of possible directions could be taken to answer the broad questions set in this exam but in all cases of the high-mark answers, there was a strong argument structuring the essay and a decisive conclusion.

POL19: Conceptual Issues in Politics and International Relations
Examiner: Prof Brendan Simms

This year 39 students took this paper on Conceptual Issues in Politics and International Relations. Candidates are given the chance to investigate topics in more detail and more subtly than can be achieved in regular supervisions. Some off the answers succeeded very well, showing real engagement with the literature, while also demonstrating originality of thought. Most of the essays showed a good understanding of the topic, but as was the case last year the majority were perhaps a little too respectful of established authors and hesitant to venture their own opinions. If a question had both a historical and a contemporary angle, candidates tended to concentrate too much on one to the detriment of the other. Perhaps inevitably, certain topics tended to bring out personal and not always substantiated views more than others.

POL20: The Politics of the Future, 1880-2080
Examiner: Prof. Duncan Bell

Eighteen candidates took POL20 this year. As before, it was examined by two long essays, one submitted at the start of Lent Term, the other at the start of Easter. The titles were circulated as part of the paper guide, with six choices for each of the first and second essays.

Candidates tackled a good spread of questions, and none of the 12 went unanswered. The most popular topics were, for the first essay, on Aldous Huxley's writings and, for the second essay, imagining the end of capitalism and Hannah Arendt's account of the space race.

The Examiners awarded 10 First-class marks, and 8 2.1s. The average mark for the paper was 69. The highest mark was 74. The bottom mark was 64. The examiners concurred that the overall standard of the answers was high, with many candidates demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the topic, and even the weakest scripts showing a decent grasp of the material. A handful of the essays were of exceptional standard. The usual qualities that make for good essays were rewarded: clear answers, independent argument, conceptual sophistication, solid structure, and so on.

POL21: China in the International Order
Examiner: Dr KC Lin

Due to the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic, seventeen students out of the class took the final exam. Overall they performed very well, averaging to 68.8, which falls within the range of expected average for HSPS Part II modules. Students showed strong interests on questions of historical order in Asia, the PRC's bilateral relations, and China's impact on specific issues such as maritime order, climate change, trade and investment, and peacekeeping. There were impressive demonstrations of empirical knowledge and critical reflections of relevance for current events in 2020. The highest mark was 74, and around a third of the exam takers received a score of 70 or higher. The main issues on many papers were under-utilization of key theories, imprecise definitions of norms and institutions that PRC seeks to challenge, and neglect to address counter-arguments and evidence mentioned in lectures and readings.