UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Politics and
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HUMAN, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

TRIPOS POLITICS

PART II EXAMINERS' REPORTS
2020-2021

REPORT FROM THE SENIOR EXAMINER

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This was my second year serving as Senior Examiner for the Politics Exam Board, with Chris Brooke having served for a year in between (2019-2020). The Board administered the Politics and International Relations and Politics and Sociology tracks within the HSPS Tripos at Parts IIA and IIB.

The ongoing pandemic meant that examinations were taken online and open book for the second year in succession. Departing from the five hour window available (with students asked to complete the exam within three hours) to sit exams in 2019-2020, a six hour window was opened for students to complete their examinations. Students with disabilities were in some cases allowed a period that extended beyond six hours. Most exams were subject to a 4,500 word limit, while exams that would ordinarily only be two hours in length under traditional in-person exam hall conditions were capped at 3,000 words. Moodle served as the technical platform for the examinations once again.

For HSPS Part IIA and B Exams, a number of mitigating measures were introduced in consideration of the ongoing effects of the pandemic. The most significant of these were a) the move to class on the basis of the best three papers out of four that were sat b) the introduction of a cohort equity policy, which ensured that the distribution of classes this year was no less favourable than the average class distribution for the three years immediately preceding the pandemic. The classing criteria for HSPS were adjusted in accordance with the move to class on the basis of three rather than four papers c) automatic progression for all Part IIA candidates onto Part IIB. In addition, the normal regulations around granting of extensions for coursework and dissertations were relaxed in lent term, with the granting of 14 days additional time on request without need of supporting evidence. The relaxed criteria were subsequently applied retroactively to cases from the preceding term that would have qualified for a 'no questions asked' extension under the new rules. Finally, students whose coursework or dissertation research was affected by the pandemic were able to submit an 'impact statement' associated with assessed work. This related specifically to unforeseen impacts of the pandemic on access to physical resources (such as particular books or libraries).

Overall, the examinations went very smoothly. There were no significant technological failures and the marking of a very large number of exam scripts was conducted in a highly efficient and thorough manner thanks to the dedication of POLIS academics. Our administrative team also performed extremely well and applied themselves with the utmost commitment and endeavour. Many thanks to Alice and Jo for doing such a wonderful job under pressurised conditions.

Most of the exam papers were spread over the first three weeks in June, and concentrated in the first two weeks. There were several POLIS exams that fell much later within the window (POL6, POL10, POL16, POL17). The deadline for reporting marks for the majority of papers was noon on Thursday 17th June. But for the aforementioned late papers the deadline was Monday June 21st. These deadlines allowed us to set things up so that the External Examiners were able to do the bulk of their work on Tuesday June 22nd and Wednesday June 23rd ahead of the Final Examiners' Meeting on the afternoon of Thursday 24th June.

We had a pair of new External Examiners this year, with Dr Matt Sleat (University of Sheffield) and Professor Juanita Elias (University of Warwick) serving for the first time. Both of them did a fantastic job. They were engaged, supportive and extremely professional throughout. They offered swift and rigorous scrutiny of the examination process as required.

There were, unfortunately, several instances of plagiarism this year. These were identified on the basis of the mass review of all typed scripts through Turnitin software. A twenty five per cent match to outside sources was set as a threshold that triggered further review by the Senior Examiner. Thankfully the cases of genuine plagiarism were ultimately very few, with only two minor cases of plagiarism being dealt with by the Exam Board. In both cases, remarking occurred absent the plagiarised content and a small deduction of marks occurred. There were more serious incidents of plagiarism by students from other departments who borrowed POLIS papers, but these were dealt with by their respective Exam Boards. The Senior Examiner for POLIS attended two investigative meetings involving Economics students who had borrowed POLIS papers. This is an issue that will need continued vigilance on the part of examiners, in particular if we continue to utilise online open book exams.

The overall results for this year can be summarised as follows. At Part IIA Politics and International Relations, this year's marks produced twenty four Firsts (39.5%), thirty five Upper Seconds (57.5%), and two Lower Seconds (3%). At Part IIA Politics and Sociology, there were sixteen Firsts (43%), nineteen Upper Seconds (51%), one Lower Second (3%), and one Fail (3%). The failing grade took us below the cohort equity target but could not be adjusted to a higher class due to its status as a Fail.

At Part IIB Politics and International Relations, this year's marks produced seven Starred Firsts (8%), thirty eight Firsts (42%), forty three Upper Seconds (48%), and two Lower Seconds (2%). This set of results met the cohort equity targets, meaning that no adjustments were required. At Part IIB Politics and Sociology, there was one Starred First (4%), fifteen Firsts (60%), and nine Upper Seconds (36%). Cohort equity targets were met.

In terms of the gender breakdown for grades this year, the following trends can be observed. For Part IIB, one hundred and fifteen students completed all exams. Of the sixty two female students, there were thirty three Firsts (53.2%) and twenty nine Upper Seconds (46.8%) with nothing lower. Of the fifty two male students, twenty eight achieved Firsts (53.8%), twenty two Upper Seconds (42.3%), and two Lower Seconds (3.8%). One non-binary student achieved an Upper Second. There was no significant difference between the attainment of male and

female students at Part IIB. For Part IIA, ninety eight students completed all four exams. Of the sixty one female students, twenty three achieved Firsts (37.7%), thirty six secured Upper Seconds (59%), and two were awarded Lower Seconds (3.2%). Of the thirty seven male students, eighteen achieved Firsts, eighteen were awarded Upper Seconds (48.6%), and one was awarded a Lower Second (2.7%). This meant that there was a substantial gender difference at Part IIA, with male candidates significantly outperforming female candidates. The causes of this are unclear, but gender differences of this sort will need to be kept under review.

Arrangements for next year's exams will undoubtedly remain under review as we chart our progress through the pandemic, but the most likely scenario is the continuation of online open book examinations. The Senior Examiner role will be taken up by Christopher Bickerton with Duncan Kelly taking over as Deputy Examiner. I have every confidence that they will do an excellent job.

EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Examiner: Professor Juanita Elias (University of Warwick)

This is my first year as external examiner and I would like to thank both Jeremy and Alice for ensuring that the process ran smoothly and efficiently and for dealing rapidly with any questions that I had (of which there were many). Using Moodle to access scripts and marksheets and other documents relating the examination process was very straightforward. The virtual exam board format also ran very smoothly.

Overall, I was extremely impressed by the quality of the written work that I was asked to look at. Students display a breadth and depth of understanding of theoretical and empirical issues and the standard of work is, in my view, exceptionally high. It is clear to me that the six-hour take-home examination format enabled students to produce their very best work. In particular there was very little evidence of students trying to 'retrofit' their revision to an exam question that they have not necessarily revised for (as is common, I find, with shorter written examinations). Given the pressures that the students have faced over the last 18 months the standard of work was even more remarkable. The department has clearly maintained exceptionally high standards of teaching and student support in order to generate such excellent student work.

Given that this is a mode of examining that I have little familiarity with (in the sense that at my own institution examinations were done in a much shorter 2-3 hour window) it was extremely useful to be provided with sample 'benchmark' scripts.

I was asked to look at the following:
   (a) Marking discrepancies – where the markers could not agree a mark. Of which there were 8 cases with marks ranging from 52 to 74
   (b) Borderline cases – in which a slight movement in the grade towards one of the grades given by a marker could result in them falling into a higher-class mark overall. There were 29 cases that needed to be looked at.
   (c) Failing scripts of which I had 2.
   (d) Reading for the dissertation prize (2 theses). This was an absolute pleasure and both dissertations were well assembled, innovative pieces of academic writing –

demonstrating a level of performance that easily exceeded the expectations of a UG dissertation.

I also looked at a number of scripts that had been referred for plagiarism and I was supportive of the line taken by the department that these constituted poor academic practice rather than deliberate efforts to cheat. It was evident from the discussion at the exam board however, that there does need to be greater guidance to staff and students regarding the penalties that will be applied to cases of poor academic practice and plagiarism.

The grades awarded to scripts, were in my view both consistent and appropriate. Most markers were willing to use the full spectrum of grades.

In terms of process, it was useful to be provided with marksheets from the first and second examiners. The inclusion of short marker comments on the marksheets was also helpful. There were a few cases in which these were not provided or were difficult to locate especially when there were multiple markers. Those that provided marginally more detailed comments (rather than an 'ok' or 'good') were inevitably a lot more useful – especially when I was asked to make judgements on papers that were significantly outside my specific areas of teaching and research expertise and/or when there was a significant divergence in grades between examiners.

Given the comments that I have made above, I felt very confident that the examination process was robust and fair and I also very much appreciated how the process was well managed throughout.

Examiner: Dr Matt Sleat (University of Sheffield)

This is my first year as external examiner at Cambridge and I would like to begin by registering my thanks for the initial invitation to take on this role, which I was very happy to have the opportunity to accept. I would also like to thank Jeremy Green and, in particular, Alice Jondorf for providing me with the relevant material in an exemplary efficient and accessible manner, as well as having the patience to answer numerous questions while finding my feet in my initial examination cycle.

In terms of my initial reflections on the quality of the assessments that I read: you attract students of the very highest calibre and through your teaching equip them with the analytical, conceptual, and critical skills required to produce work of quite tremendous quality. Although in a certain sense this was not a surprise and it is just as you would expect from a Cambridge department, nevertheless the consistency of the quality was astonishing. Most striking was the high-level of intellectual independence that the students exhibited in their assessment, and not just those achieving the highest marks. I was much struck by the regular willingness exhibited by students to take risks by addressing questions in unexpected or unorthodox ways, often drawing upon material likely encountered in other modules or maybe beyond their degree entirely, to produce novel perspectives or approaches and in ways that almost always led to fascinating insights. A particular highlight was the Schmitt prize winning assessment which looked at the relationship between empire and religion using the religions of Ancient Egypt and Rome as its source material. In an age where students have not necessarily been encouraged or rewarded for such intellectual independence in their pre-university career, it was incredibly heartening to see so many taking such risks in their

undergraduate studies, and you should be commended for clearly providing them with the confidence and skills to do that.

Reading the two candidate dissertations for the John Dunn Prize was a particular pleasure as these were both pieces of outstanding brilliance. The level of scholarship on display would have deserved a very high mark for a postgraduate degree, and I could easily envisage them being considered for publication in a good academic journal as they both made significant contributions to the existing literature. I certainly learned much from both, and it is a testament to their quality that I have found myself thinking about them several days after first reading them.

The changes brought in this year in response to the pandemic seemed to have worked very well indeed, and I believe the Department and University is right to be considering maintaining some of these changes beyond the immediate crisis. I certainly appreciated not being asked to read handwritten scripts, but, more importantly, writing by hand is a skill so little practiced by students these days that it is easy to see how they are more likely to produce their best work through typed assessment.

The standards applied by markers seemed consistent and appropriate both within and across the modules. The previous external examiner had noted that though there was an increasing tendency to reward excellent work by pushing into the high 70s and 80s there was more that could be done on that front. I tend to agree. I encountered several pieces where the comments suggested excellence but the mark was 70%, implying that it only just deserved a distinction where really a mark of mid-70s might be more appropriate. Likewise, very strong material often warranted marks of 75% or higher but seemed capped around 73%. Hence I would continue to encourage greater use of the full range of marks for the very best work. There were also *a few* instances where there was a discrepancy between the comments by the markers and the marks they awarded. Sometimes this occurred in cases just discussed where the comments suggested pieces of the highest quality but the mark was in the low 70s. But work was sometimes described as 'fine' or 'ok' and yet awarded a distinction. Encouraging greater consistency between marks and comments would be helpful, including for external examiners when they are being asked to adjudicate between marks on papers outside of their immediate area of expertise.

The examination process seemed rigorous, robust, and fair, and I was deeply impressed by what I saw in my first assessment period. I appreciate that it has been a very challenging and trying year for everyone involved with the examination process at Cambridge so I would like to just end by congratulating those who were involved for a job very well done.

INTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

POL3: International Organisation
Examiner: Dr Giovanni Mantilla

Ninety-six students took the POL3 exam this year, requiring 2 answers to be written in response to 13 possible question choices. This resulted in 33 Firsts, 44 2:1s, 13 2:2s, and 5 3rds, and 1 Fail. The average mark was 65 and the standard deviation 9.66.

These are outstanding results for an exceptional teaching year: 77 students performed excellently or very well in the exam. Remarkably, these results do not radically differ from

those seen in the previous "normal" examination year (2018-2019), where 80 (out of 100) students received a 2:1 mark or higher. The special examination conditions (a longer time-window, open-book format) therefore seemed to only marginally facilitate the ability of the strongest students to craft excellent essays. However, consideration of the proportion of Fails (1 this year compared to 9 in 2018-19) suggests that the special examining conditions particularly helped the weaker students to do a little better, at least enough to avoid failing, but enlarging the number of 3rds (nil in 2018-2019, 5 this year).

Fortunately, the open book format did not have the negative effect of leading too many students to rely on summary rather than argument, and there was (so far) only one discernible case of plagiarism.

Responses to questions were unevenly distributed. Whether the question was more explicitly theoretical or explicitly thematic/empirical however did not seem to matter in terms of results: both types of questions elicited very good as well weaker answers. The average individual score for all questions ranged from 60 to 67, except for question 13 on climate change which only three students answered.

There were 7 outstanding exams in the 77-80 range that made clear, consistent, and compelling arguments showing a sophisticated understanding of diverse readings, also combining theoretical and empirical points to level original critiques of the literature. Exams in the 70-76 range also had clear, consistent and compelling arguments showing deep understanding of a reasonably wide range of readings.

Exams in this upper (70+) range generally include a roadmap section indicating the steps to be taken by the essay, and generally followed them. They featured a strong authorial voice, announced and defended an argument throughout the essays, and demonstrated analytical nuance by considering counterarguments, or by referring to scope conditions, whether historical or theoretical.

Among those in the 60s range, those towards the top of the range made clear and consistent – if mostly conventional – arguments, using a reasonable number of readings. Some faults included perhaps an odd mishandled or misinterpreted text, briefly lapsing into summarizing, 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 summarized 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.

The only failing exam resulted from the student answering one question (poorly) rather than two.

POL4: Comparative Politics
Examiner: Dr Christopher Bickerton

This was the second year of exams conducted in the shadow of the corona virus pandemic. The format for the exam was a six hour window, with all exams taken virtually, typed by students and then uploaded onto the university system. It was thus an open book exam, as in 2020, though with a longer window than previously. Contrary to last year, all students were expected to take the exam, though in calculating final marks for Part 2A it was possible to not take into account the lowest mark of those papers taken.

148 scripts in total were marked. The format was the same as in previous years: a general section with 9 questions, and then sections made up of two questions based on the modules covered by students in Michaelmas term. Students were asked to answer one question from the general section and then two questions from two different module sections. Each student therefore answered 3 questions in total. Scripts were double-blind marked.

The distribution of marks was as follows: 30 students obtained a first class mark; 104 students obtained a 2.1. mark, 12 students obtained a 2.2. mark; and 2 students failed the paper. The average mark for the paper was 66.

There was an even spread of questions attempted by students, more even than in the past. The spread of marks for Section A questions was as follows: 8 for Q1, 20 for Q2, 9 for Q3, 2 for Q4, 31 for Q5, 3 for Q6, 16 for Q7, 21 for Q8, 0 for Q9. For the modules, all questions were answered, with an even spread across the two questions asked per module paper.

The quality of scripts was as high as in recent years, with the open book exam having a discernible effect on the detail and precision of the scripts overall. Nevertheless, it was possible to distinguish between the stronger and the weaker scripts. The standard of the module answers was particularly robust, though in some cases it was possible to discern a standardized answer based heavily on lecture material. It is worth reminding students that the reproduction of lecture material in exams is unlikely to lead to very high marks. This is as true for answers to Section A questions as it is for those answering questions from the module sections.

As is usually the case with POL4 exams, the best answers were able to combine precise and clear conceptual arguments with detailed, relevant and complex examples. Some of the best scripts focused on a small number of examples and discussed them in great depth. Others ranged more widely but contained, overall, a very high and sophisticated level of empirical material. The weakest scripts were those containing almost no empirical material whatsoever.

In Section A, the most popular questions were about the link between economic development and democracy and about the role of organized interests in shaping government policies. Answers to the question on democracy were generally strong, with some of the very best answers giving detailed accounts of how this complex relationship can be understood and analysed in relation to specific empirical cases. The answers on organized interests were a little weaker, with general accounts of pluralism and corporatism dominating in place of answers with more focused empirical discussions.

The answers to the module sections were of a good standard. In answers to questions about varieties of capitalism, there was a tendency to give descriptive answers laying out the theory and model. Elsewhere, answers could have been strengthened by focusing as much as possible

on the precise question being asked and the relevant terms deployed. A question about the role of institutional factors explaining differences in post war party systems in France and Germany elicited some outstanding answers but also many that did not clearly delineate institutional factors from other sorts of factors. In answer to a question about how war has shaped the state in Rwanda and Burundi, some answers did not focus on any particular period and tended also to discuss all factors shaping the state in these countries rather than focusing on war specifically. The best answers are those which answer in a direct and very precise fashion the question being asked.

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

This year 62 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. Most of the candidates did a good job of engaging with the literature, but relatively few had the courage to strike out on their own, with most tending to following up paths already laid out for them. The best answers were very sophisticated and well-presented. There were, though, a surprising number of typos and other infelicities in many of the scripts. Given the nature of some of the topics it was perhaps to be expected that quite a few answers erred on the side of opining rather than analysing.

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

While there were initially 45 students enrolled, in the end 42 candidates submitted work for assessment (15 HSPS Part IIA, 16 HSPS Part IIB, 8 History & Politics Part 1B, 3 History & Politics Part 2). The assessment consisted of a coursework element (a report of maximally 5000 words on a data analysis project) and an online exam (designed as a two-hour exam, but to be done within a 6-hour window). Both elements count for 50% of the overall mark.

As last year, the results were generally good. More specifically:
- For the *overall marks*, the average mark was 66.5, with 13 candidates receiving a First class mark, 23 candidates a 2.1 mark (5 of which were 69), 5 candidates a 2.2 mark, and one candidate a third class mark.
- For the *coursework element*, the average mark was 66.8, with 13 candidates receiving a First class mark, 24 candidates a 2.1 mark, and 5 candidates a 2.2 mark.
- For the *exam*, the average mark was 65.9, with 13 candidates receiving a First class mark, 22 candidates a 2.1 mark, 6 candidates a 2.2 mark, and one candidate a Fail mark.

Half of the candidates (21 out of 42) received at least one First class mark for an element of the course, while five candidates obtained First class marks for both the coursework and exam elements.

For the coursework, candidates had to choose a topic from a provided list. The choices of topics were reasonably spread out over the available options: 11 candidates investigated voting behaviour in elections, 8 candidates focused on patterns of conflict, 7 candidates looked at attitudes towards globalisation, 7 candidates chose the new topic of the political dynamics of the COVID-pandemic, 5 candidates focused on patterns of corruption, and 4 candidates undertook a project on Sustainable Development Goals.

The quality of the data analyses and reports was generally high and impressive, and some of the work was truly excellent. All reports showed an ability to formulate a research question and design a specific quantitative analysis to address it. As in previous years, the reports that received the highest marks presented convincing accounts of the reasons for and the interpretations of the results of the analysis. They generally presented the results in a compelling, and sometimes innovative, way, and did an excellent job bringing together and describing the data that were used. Some of the issues that prevented reports from getting more than a 2.1 mark were: insufficient or not entirely convincing links between the used literature and theoretical arguments, on the one hand, and the statistical results, on the other; the inclusion of too many hypotheses and/or models (making it difficult to give each enough attention in the discussion); a lack of balance between the different aspects of the report (e.g. too much emphasis on background literature and descriptive statistics, and not enough on the interpretation and implications of the results); no mentioning of descriptive statistics and/or regression assumptions; and some mistakes in the interpretation of models and results. The reports that received the lowest marks generally had several of these shortcomings, and – in some cases – were based on very limited statistical analyses (for example, only on a few basic bivariate associations). It should be emphasised that the best reports tend to have a well specified and relatively narrow focus, which in turns makes it possible to use existing literature effectively and have enough space to both present the data and variables and discuss the results effectively.

The exam scripts showed a good understanding of the statistical methods taught in the paper. The very large majority of candidates were able to answer most questions competently and adequately. The best scripts distinguished themselves mostly in the more 'open ended' questions (the parts of the questions that related to the substantive interpretation of results, suggestions for improvements of analyses). Some candidates were let down by not reading the questions carefully enough and failing to answer some parts of it. The question on how one might investigate the possibility of different effects of an explanatory variable across countries in the multi-level regression model turned out to be challenging, with not many candidates realising that this can be done in both random slope and random intercept models (in the latter case, by including a cross-level interaction variable). Because of the time that candidates had to work on the exam and the existence of a word limit for the overall script (3000 words), an additional issue this year was that candidates had to decide how to balance the lengths of their answers to the different questions. Most candidates did this well, but some gave overly long answers to the more straightforward questions and relatively short answers to the questions that were more open ended and needed more discussion. The weaker scripts made some mistakes in the statistical interpretation of results and did not provide much detail on the substantive interpretation of these results. The script that received a Fail mark did not answer many of the questions at all.

The nature of the exam this year (open book, a maximum of 6 hours to work on it) made some of the questions a bit less challenging than they used to be under previous exam conditions. If future exams are held under similar conditions as this year, it is worth considering the inclusion of a different type of question (which focuses on more general aspects of statistical methods), although the large majority of questions will remain of similar nature as has been the case in recent years.

POL7: The History of Political Thought to c. 1700
Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Forty-five POL7 scripts were submitted in 2021 (compared to 24 last year, when the assessment was effectively optional, 47 in 2019, 42 in 2018, and 38 in 2017). After last year's exceptional measures we returned to the traditional way of marking POL7, with full blind double-marking restored. The standard was good, with the average mark across all scripts 66.9. There were fifteen first-class marks, twenty-six upper seconds, and four lower seconds.

Popular questions were on Plato, as ever (25), Machiavelli (22), More (13), and Aristotle (10), with the other topics getting single figure answers: Hobbes (8), reason of state (8), Romans (7), Renaissance humanism (7), sovereignty (7), international law (6), Locke (5), Greek critics of democracy (5), resistance theory (3), Augustine (2), temporal and spiritual power (2), religious toleration (2), the mediaeval reception of classical thought (1), mediaeval Roman law (1), and the conflict we used to call the English Civil War (1), with no answers on Aquinas or on the political thought of the early Christians. This is in line with recent patterns; the Renaissance humanism topic in particular is less popular than it used to be.

Like last year, the exam was taken remotely in the 'open book' format, i.e. candidates had access to their notes, essays, books, internet, etc. while working on their script, though this year the 'window' was six-hours long for candidates without an allowance of additional time. There was no evidence of malpractice—e.g. plagiarism—but a small number of essays did read as if they had their origin in supervision essays that were addressing a different question altogether, and candidates do need to be advised on the one hand that it's pretty obvious what they are doing when they hand in an essay that speaks more to the themes of, say, last year's Tripos question on a particular topic than to the question in front of them, and that on the other hand they are never likely to do especially well if they do that. The essays they have written for their supervisions are an invaluable resource when preparing for these exams, but the answers they submit do need to have been freshly composed in the examination itself, and tightly addressed to the particular questions that the Examiners are asking.

Turning now to those particular questions, some comments follow on those where we have five or more answers (so as to make generalisation possible). In Section A, stronger answers on Plato tended either to reflect on how the word 'utopian' can be taken in different ways or to discuss the way in which the analogy between the city and the soul complicates a straightforward answer to the question. The more successful essays on Aristotle got stuck into particular parts of his discussions of particular issues rather than just offering an overview of the basic argument. The essays on Machiavelli were stronger to the extent that they identified points of disagreement between the arguments of the *Prince* and the *Discourses* and talked about those; weaker essays offered bland summary of some of the things that the two texts had in common, which wasn't helpful in getting a grip on the central issue raised by the question. The essays on More were generally fairly good, though a surprising number ended up spending too long discussing topics that weren't really relevant to the matter at hand. Essays on Hobbes often focused too narrowly on his argument about the covenant early on (sometimes also the state of nature and the laws of nature), bypassing his various practical discussions of how the Sovereign might prevent the commonwealth from falling apart through judicious management of religion, education, opinion, and so on. The weaker essays on Locke explained how he was disagreeing with Filmer; the stronger essays paid specific attention to the intriguing mention of 'a Captain of a Galley' in the title quotation.

For the section B topics, essays on the ancient critics of democracy found an ingenious number of different ways of approaching the topic of law, which was refreshing. Answers on the Romans went wrong either because they didn't pause for long enough over the distinction between what was 'social' and 'political' or because they focused more on how various Roman writers were distinctive, rather than addressing the character of Roman political thought more generally. The stronger answers on Renaissance humanism, unsurprisingly, were those that focused their attention on texts presented in dialogue form.

Essays on *raison d'état* that had more to say about what the various authors said about 'structures of government' were better than those that had less, and those essays that were more firmly plugged into the detail of the literature—both primary and secondary—were better than those that were not. Answers on sovereignty rewarded those candidates who were able to make pertinent distinctions amongst the various set authors, and who thought harder about what it might mean to 'escape the orbit' of absolute monarchy. The essays on international law were generally well done, with candidates having both a sense of how the various authors were deploying different sources, or locating their argument in different traditions, and sometimes with a good sense of how this cashed out in different opinions about war, empire, etc.

In short and in sum, on the evidence of these Tripos scripts the POL7 paper remains in rude health. The candidates themselves are to be congratulated for getting through the year in sometimes extremely challenging conditions.

POL8: The History of Political Thought from 1700-1890
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins

Seventy-six candidates sat this paper; one additional candidate was assessed following special arrangements. In line with university guidance, the exam was sat remotely, on an open-book basis, with candidates writing three essays in a six-hour window.

Overall, the general standard of answers was higher than in previous years. Whilst there were few truly outstanding scripts received, the proportion of candidates classed below a 2.1 was unusually low. This may perhaps be attributed to the longer span of time allotted for completing the exam and to candidates' access to texts and notes. In total, of those who sat the main exam, twenty candidates were awarded a mark of 70 or above; fifty-four candidates received a mark in the 60-69 range, one in the 50-59 range, and one in the 40-49 range. The median mark was 67; the mean was 66.6. There were 134 answers on Section A topics and 94 answers on Section B topics. The most popular topic by some distance was Wollstonecraft (33 answers), followed by: Rousseau (26), Empire and Civilization (23), Gender and Political Thought (20), French Revolution (12), Burke (11), Luxury and Commercial Society (10), Constant (9), Marx (9), Smith (8), Hegel (8), Mill (8), Kant (7), American Revolution (7), Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany (7), Bentham (6), Socialism before 1848 (6), Nationality and the Theory of the State (5), Hume (4), Social Science (4), Montesquieu (3), Tocqueville (2). No candidate attempted the question on Natural Law and Sociability. There were notably strong answers on Kant, Hegel, the American Revolution, and Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany. Additionally, candidates tended to out-perform the average on Hume, Smith, Wollstonecraft, Constant, Tocqueville, the French Revolution, and Social Science. On average, candidates performed better on Section A than on Section B. The four topics with the lowest average mark were Nationality and the State, Gender and Political Thought, Socialism before 1848, and Empire and Civilization.

As in previous years, stronger answers were marked, firstly, by their focus on the question asked, as opposed to generic overviews of the topic; secondly, by detailed knowledge of the primary texts; and thirdly, by coherent, well-structured arguments. It was noticeable that a few candidates appeared to have attempted to repurpose answers to questions posed in previous years. Where this was the case, essays suffered from a want of close engagement with the terms of this year's questions.

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. I will begin with Rousseau. The standard here was higher than in recent years; most candidates understood well enough that the question required reconstruction of the argument of the *Second Discourse*. Some tried to draw out links to other texts, and in a small number of cases, this provided a useful supplement to the discussion. In others, however, generic accounts of the argument of the *Social Contract* added little to the question at hand, and took up space that could have been better employed more usefully on the *origin* of evil, rather than Rousseau's proposed remedies. On Burke, most candidates offered a more or less sophisticated account of the distinction between the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution. Better answers multiplied the instances of legitimate resistance, usually with reference to America or Ireland, and the best demonstrated a deeper understanding of Burke's thinking about popular sovereignty, often drawing on the works of Prof. Bourke. Wollstonecraft attracted some very strong answers, and few weak responses. What distinguished the best answers was greater conceptual rigour, but it was noticeable also that some candidates made good use of the *Short Residence in Norway, Sweden and Denmark* to broaden their discussion. The question on Kant required a good understanding of the central arguments of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and this was uniformly on display, albeit with some variations in the quality of exposition. On Bentham, most candidates had something to say about his critique of natural rights, and most linked it to the theory of fictions. Some of the weaker essays tended to ignore the emphasis in the question on his 'political' thought; others gave a generic overview of his political thought, but without linking it consistently with the critique of natural rights. On Constant, there were one or two very strong answers, displaying great depth of understand and, crucially, focusing on the 'institutions' element in the quotation, something neglected or under-emphasised by weaker answers. On Hegel, most candidates were able to give an overview of the 'ethical life' sections of the *Philosophy of Right*, but several evinced a rather sketchy understanding of his defence of constitutional monarchy. On Mill, there were a few good answers that made use of a range of Mill's texts and gave thought to whether and how the idea of 'civilizational progress' might underpin his political thought at large; too many candidates treated this as if it solely concerned his thought about colonial empire. On Marx, one or two very knowledgeable answers aside, the standard was not the highest. Few candidates gave evidence of any great depth of understanding of Marx's critique of capitalism, and whilst most were familiar with the concept of alienation, it was strikingly rare to see any candidate attempt to give any account of the development of Marx's thought over time, or to register differences between the set texts.

On Section B, the responses to the Luxury topic were mixed. The best answers gave consideration to the different ways that 'commerce' featured in eighteenth-century political debate. Several recognised that Fénelon was not consistently hostile to commerce; some made good use of Ryan Patrick Hanley's 2020 book on him. Weaker answers simply equated commerce with luxury and rehearsed standard characterizations of Fénelon as a critic of luxury, and Mandeville as its defender. The American Revolution was generally answered to

a very high standard, with most candidates demonstrating an impressively detailed knowledge of the topic, and making good use of texts such as Pocock's '1776: The Revolution against Parliament' and Nelson's, *The Royalist Revolution*. The French Revolution was also generally well-answered, with some confident answers clear on the different conceptions of representation in play in revolutionary political debates. Equally, the German Aesthetics and Culture topic attracted some excellent responses, with candidates demonstrating good knowledge of the texts, and, particularly salient to this question, of the eighteenth-century intellectual background. The Gender topic caused some difficulties. The best answers recognised that to adjudicate the question of whether principles were sacrificed in the name of partial reform, they would need to attend to what principles individual thinkers were defending. Weaker answers approached the problem as a clash between 'radicalism' and 'reform', so that any 'reformist' attitudes on the part of individual thinkers could be treated as reneging on 'radical' principles. Too often, what was invoked as 'radicalism' was an ahistorical conception of what feminist principles should be, rather than what the theorists under discussion were concerned to defend. On Socialism, candidates were often better in thinking about the ways in which thinkers were and were not critics of property, than in linking this to the critique of existing forms of government. On nationality, there were a number of poor answers which missed the point of the question, and simply provided some commentary on historical events that might have shaped debates on the issue, rather than reflecting on the use made of arguments about history by theorists of nationality. On empire, two issues stood out. Firstly, very few candidates attempted to define what they understood by 'imperialism' or 'anti-imperialism', with many using 'imperialism' simply to denote the negative consequences of empire. Even where it was noted, usually with reference to Hobson, that the concept was sometimes distinguished from others, such as 'colonialism', this rarely led to any sustained reflection on what was being rejected by 'anti-imperialists'. Most candidates converged on the conclusion that most (or all) critics of empire endorsed some forms of colonialism. Too often this led to over-generalized characterization of debates about empire, in which distinctions between different positions got lost. A second source of problems concerned some candidates' lack of attention to the stipulation that the answer should make reference to critics of empire 'in nineteenth-century Britain'. One might make concessions for Marx (writing in Britain), and for Hobson (1902). It is rather a stretch to do so for Constant, Smith, Burke, or Fanon.

POL9: Conceptual Issues and Texts in Politics and International Relations
Examiner: Dr Jeremy Green

The POL9 Exam consisted of ten essay questions and no gobbets this year. This adjustment was made due to the new circumstances of online and open book examinations. The paper was not examined in 2019-2020 and this was therefore the first time that the exam had been sat since 2019.

87 candidates sat the POL9 examination this year. 21 of them achieved Firsts. No candidate scored below a Lower Second.

This was a very strong group of scripts overall, with a significant number of really outstanding essays. Candidates demonstrated a great deal of creativity, logical argumentation and analytical insight. The strongest candidates developed original and insightful arguments that were well-evidenced, accurate and logically argued. They also made effective use of counter-arguments to buttress their own position. They engaged with appropriate scholarly literature in a critical and sophisticated manner.

Those candidates who scored lower in the exam tended to lack either sufficient supporting examples or engagement with counter-arguments. Some candidates did not define or discuss key concepts. Others strayed away from the question in the development of their essay and drew upon pre-existing knowledge that was not well-suited to the question that they had selected. It is critical that candidates answer the question and that the knowledge and analysis deployed are thematically appropriate as a response to the question.

Answers were reasonably well distributed across the ten questions, but two questions, questions four and six, only attracted a small number of answers.

Overall, the creativity and quality of work displayed across POL9 were hugely impressive. This paper continues to showcase some of the finest work produced by HSPS undergraduates, allowing them to demonstrate their capacity to think politically and utilise the full breadth and depth of knowledge that they have acquired during the degree.

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

Seven candidates sat this exam, which was conducted remotely, and on an open-book basis. One candidate was awarded a first-class mark; the rest received marks in the 2.1 range. All told, there were ten answers on Section A topics, and eleven on Section B. There was a pleasing spread of topics covered: three answers on Kant; two each for Smith, Burke, the French Revolution, and Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany; and one each for Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel, Luxury and Commercial Society, the American Revolution, Gender and Political Thought, Socialism before 1848, Nationality and the State, Empire and Civilization, and Social Science. Given this spread, generalizations about individual topics are out of the question, but as in previous years, stronger answers combined excellent textual knowledge, a focused approach to the question at hand, and clear argumentation.

POL11: Political Philosophy and the History of Political Thought since c.1890
Examiner: Professor Duncan Kelly
Examiners Reports: HSPS POL11/History Paper5 – Professor Kelly (Polis) & Dr Mackinnon (History)

48 students took this paper from Part IIb HSPS, and 33 took it as a History paper, the latter comprising 17 from the History Tripos, 13 from History & Politics, and 3 from History & Modern Languages. This year, given covid-related arrangements, students were asked to answer 3 questions, one from each section, in a 6-hour window, with the convention that the total wordcount for the paper would be around 4500 words, meaning a rough division into each question of around 1500 words. This is rather longer than would be conventional under 'normal' 3-hour, unseen examination conditions. Of the 48 HSPS students and 33 in History, only one student failed to complete the paper.

In HSPS, the most popular questions in §A were on Nietzsche (20), imperialism (13) and Rawls (10). In the next §B, politics/morality (17), with all other questions (save obligation, which found no takers) generating between one and eight answers. Among the least attempted answers (on Lukács and on British state theory), candidates did tremendously well.

On those with a great many takers, the marks were unsurprisingly perhaps more varied, ranging from high 2ii to high first-class marks.

In the History and the History Joint Honours scripts, the most popular questions in §A were Nietzsche (8), Liberal Critics of Totalitarianism (7), and Hayek (7), with Theorists of Critics and Imperialism (6) and Rawls (6) close behind. In §B, Feminism (8) was the most popular, followed by Politics and Morality (6) and Concepts of Liberty (6). On the History side, several questions from both §A and §B went without answers: those on the Crisis of Weimar; the Earlier Frankfurt School; Rights and Utilitarianism; Multiculturalism, Toleration, and Recognition; and International Relations and War. Several questions received only one answer: those on British State Theory; Theorists of Welfare and Democracy; State, Sovereignty, and Political Obligation; and Property and Markets. As with HSPS, these sole answers were often excellent.

The strong results speak to the quality of the work undertaken by candidates, and this was a very impressive series of scripts for such a broad-ranging paper in such a difficult year. This year it was again pleasing to note that there were quite a few answers on topics like feminism, ecology, equality, and methodological history, and that candidates therefore once again did try to use the full range of the paper.

Once again, and in line with earlier reports such as that of the last year, 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 (esp. in Section A) to explore the relevance of other texts and historical contexts to their interpretation. Obviously too, success here involved actually answering the question asked, rather than merely either displaying erudition for its own sake, or just rehearsing something like an older supervision essay with only minimal changes.

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, was insufficient to do really well, especially when there is extra time and an open-book format. But doing really well is more than possible – the highest marks for this paper were very high, getting into the 80+ range, showing the possibility of real rewards for engaging in detail with both texts, concepts, and historically-informed explanation. Those who did best were able to build on a broad base of knowledge in political theory, its history and its conceptual/normative claims, to answer more abstract or challenging questions. 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 both in their own time, and in terms of knowing what this might do to the interpretation of claims in political theory/philosophy more generally. This can take the form of more adept or adroit use of secondary materials, the incorporation/awareness of historiographical debates and transitions, or political and/or internal/immanent critique, allowing students to engage with the questions being posed in a variety of ways.

POL12: Politics and Religion
Examiner: Dr Iza Hussin

The POL12 exam was attempted by 20 students. The quality of responses was high, with 5 students receiving average marks of 70 or above. 10 students received average marks in the high 2.1 range and 3 in the low 2.1 range. Only two students received average marks below 60, with one student receiving 57 and another 38.

With the exception of Q12, all questions were attempted by at least one student. Q9 and Q1 proved the most popular questions.

The very best answers demonstrated a firm grasp of the conceptual issues at stake in debates over "religion," "secularization," "modernity," etc. They combined that with an ability to not just summarize but also to critique prominent theoretical perspectives. They also demonstrated a firm command of relevant case studies that illustrated and supported a clear overarching argument.

Weaker answers typically did not address the actual question, showed a more limited grasp of key concepts, made unfounded assertions, or leaned heavily on a limited range of readings.

While most students demonstrated awareness of the analytical pitfalls associated with generalization, essentialization, and reification of religious categories, a number of essays showed more limited awareness of the corresponding pitfalls with regards to notions such as "the West" and "the secular state."

POL13: British and European Politics
Examiner: Dr Julie Smith

Forty-one students sat Pol 13 this year. In line with most Part 2B POLIS papers, the examination took the form of a six-hour online paper from which candidates were required to answer three questions and write a maximum of 4,500 words. The word cap was that same as in 2020 but the 'window' was rather longer and candidates knew much earlier in the academic year that they would be facing an open-book rather than sitting an invigilated examination. Last year the transition to online assessment seemed very smooth and the quality of scripts was overall very strong, reflecting the normal approach expected in Tripos essays but with the benefit of legibility because the scripts were mostly typed. This year candidates knew very early in the year that assessment would be online and this seems to have affected their preparation. The strongest answers and scripts were outstanding, with candidates expressing themselves fluently, directly addressing the question and creating effective arguments with which to do so. The top couple of scripts were excellent and would be worthy of graduate students. In these cases, and to a lesser degree in the cases of several other scripts, the candidates seemed to have taken full advantage of the three innovations as far as Tripos is concerned - the longer time window, the fact the essays are typed and open book – to produce sophisticated and effective answers to the questions as set. The better scripts generally had a strong grounding in relevant academic work and detailed pieces of empirical evidence.

By contrast, the weakest candidates seemed to rely too heavily on pre-prepared answers, including large numbers of quotations there were at best tangentially related to the question

as set. Other pitfalls included scripts which used pieces of evidence which were quite vague, scripts with multiple minor factual errors, scripts which summarised 2-3 key points without forming them into an overall argument, and scripts which were a little confused (either because the argument was not clear in places or the stated question was not answered fully).

The vast majority of candidates had opted to study British Politics with four doing EU Politics only and seven opting to do both British and European topics. This is reflected in the balance of questions chosen: 25 candidates answered on Thatcherism and 18 on New Labour, while some questions were not attempted by any candidates. The numbers overall are too small to show real patterns but Q17 was particularly well answered.

POL14: US Foreign Policy
Examiner: Dr Mark Shirk

On the whole the exam for POL14 went well. There were 13 firsts out of 41 exams, which may be a bit on the high side but seems to align with the overall percentages in the department from the data given at the examiners meeting. We also only gave 1 student a 2.2 (though two were sent to externals and I am not sure who they ended up). There was a mean score of 66.67 with a standard deviation of 5.1. This may be a little low.

Questions 6 (Jan. 6), 13 (Latin America), and 8 (NATO in Asia) were the most popular with 17, 12, 10 answers. There were either 8 or 9 answers for Questions 1 (Trump and American Exceptionalism), 4 (race), and 9 (climate change). The others all had a few answers to them. So a bit of imbalance but nothing too out of the ordinary.

The exam conditions were different than normal with 6 hours given and it being open book. This is probably why so few were of very low quality. However, while many were in the 70s, there were a lot right on the line, few were in the mid to high 70s. Most answers had plausible answers with clearly stated arguments put into their first paragraphs and some decent evidence to back this up. In other words, the extra time and open book nature of the exam seems to have prevented bad exams. The worst exams did not have these things and sometimes it was obvious that a student had just reposted a supervision essay since their answer did not really address the question. The best exams did these things very well and a few had some really good, interesting answers. I do wonder if the exam conditions did not lead to the lower standard deviation on both ends as there were a lot of good 'technical' essays that checked boxes but few that were really bad or truly excellent (though again 13 firsts is really good!).

POL15: The Politics of Africa
Examiner: Dr Sharath Srinivasan

In another year heavily disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, 17 students took the Pol15 Politics of Africa examination. 15 students were from HSPS (11 single track Pol&IR; one Pol&Soc; three SocAnth&Pol) and two students were from History and Politics. The examination was open-book and taken remotely. Per the University mode of assessment adopted by HSPS, students had a six hour window in which to answer three questions with a word count limit of 4500 words. Owing to this format, Pol15 students were given a choice of 16 questions (one per each lecture topic) rather than 12 in previous years, but the questions were more focused and a little more complex. The intention here was to remove the element

of pure 'chance' in terms of student preparations, but also to ensure that students were required to address the question at hand and not just have generic pre-prepared essay content. On balance, this strategy worked well and the scripts were of a high standard.

The examination format appeared to suit the nature of Pol15. The paper is both wide-ranging and expansive in terms of themes and time periods under study, as well as multidisciplinary, empirically complex and critically and reflexively engaged. Students need to carefully develop their own depth and mastery from within this, on topics that hold their passion, for scholarship and case material that they are eager to dip deep into, and on major debates and disputes in scholarship that activate their critical faculties and political commitments. It is in preparation for the examinations that students ensure they develop original lines of argument that are well substantiated through engagement with scholarly debates and case evidence. They have the time to draw from across the paper, making connections and taking command of the key debates and disputes in their own distinctive ways. Pol15 students who thrive discover their voice for reasoning and arguing about politics far from well-trodden debates in the study of politics in the North or West.

The format of the exam this year raised the bar on expectations and students by-and-large relished the opportunity to be stretched. This was evident in an unusually high average mark of slightly above 67, and the awarding of 6 First Class marks. Students who excel on Pol15 grasp the essence of the paper as a whole, as demonstrated by how they think from and across texts, debates and case analyses throughout the paper to make their distinctive arguments. Students who find their stride 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 2020-21 examination, students answered a wide range of questions. The most popular questions were Q4 and Q8 (on post-colonial African economies, and on international intervention in conflicts, 6 answers), Q3, Q11, Q13 (on decolonisation and Independence, and on class, 5 answers) and Q1, Q10, Q13, Q14 (on the decolonising African studies, on identity, on protest, and on digital technology, 4 answers).

What was striking about the students who obtained Firsts, but also evident in some of the scripts of students who obtained high II.1s, was that those who treated the examination as an opportunity to utilise their own bold and original arguments, carefully prepared in advance to engage effectively with the literature, key debates and empirical examples, but fully adapted and made relevant to the question at hand in order to provide precise and compelling answers, really thrived in this examination format. The very best of knowledge and insight was on display, even within the constrained word counts. Often, outstanding scripts went beyond the lectures and set texts, finding illumination and justification for arguments from scholarship elsewhere in the reading guide or further beyond. These students demonstrated how they had

become students of the politics of Africa in all of its rich contemporary urgency and importance, not merely students of a syllabus for Pol15. One student was awarded a III. This script evidenced difficulties experienced in the examination setting, with the misfortune of providing two very solid answers to two questions but omitting to even begin the third essay. This was a reminder of the need to practice execution in an examination setting.

POL16: Conflict and Peacebuilding
Examiner: Dr Devon Curtis

Despite the difficult year we have all had, and the fact that most of the teaching for POL 16 was online, we were very impressed with the examinations. Thirty-nine candidates wrote the exam for this paper. Five candidates received first class marks from both markers, with three of those candidates receiving marks above 75. Another twelve candidates received first class marks from one examiner and 2.1 from the other examiner, with nine candidates receiving an average mark of 70 or above. One candidate received a 2.2 mark from both examiners. The remaining 21 candidates received 2.1 marks.

We were very pleased to see that so many of the answers thoughtfully engaged with the precise questions, and many candidates showed an ability to develop well informed arguments. We were impressed by the way in which some candidates make intelligent connections between different parts of the course. The best scripts were clear, interesting, and persuasive, drawing upon relevant evidence and examples. Many candidates used the literature effectively and we were pleased that candidates drew from literature across the different sections of the paper guide. Some of the strongest examination answers skilfully assessed claims made by different authors and/or policy documents. Weaker answers suffered from some of the usual shortcomings: a lack of engagement with the specific question, an unclear argument, a failure to acknowledge or discuss counter-arguments, and insufficient evidence or examples.

Each question was attempted by at least one candidate. The most popular question was Q1, which was attempted by 18 candidates. Many of the answers for this question were excellent and demonstrated a wide range of knowledge. No two answers were alike, and there were outstanding answers that challenged different aspects of the question. The answers to Q2 were more mixed. Some answers went off track with unfocused debates about the 'new wars' literature, while others provided insightful arguments. Q3 was the least popular question. Only one candidate attempted this question, but they provided a first-class answer focusing on the arms industry. Q4 was a new topic this year and some candidates responded thoughtfully. Others, however, focused on whether these factors were security threats, rather than answering the question about the consequences of viewing them as such. There was a big spread of marks on Q5. The weaker answers provided pre-packaged answers on ethnicity and conflict, with several candidates discussing the instrumentalization of ethnicity by elites. Stronger answers went farther, and engaged with the question of prediction. Q6 also had a fairly wide spread of marks, mostly due to whether or not a candidate sustained a coherent argument. Several candidates (12) attempted Q7 and generally the answers were well done. There were some outstanding answers that demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of patriarchy and the difficulties of addressing it through existing institutional structures for peace operations. Several candidates discussed how peace operations themselves are structured by patriarchy. On the other hand, candidates had more difficulty with Q8 and Q9. In both cases, some candidates struggled to respond to part of the question. In Q8 for

instance, there was a temptation to discuss whether or not state fragility was a helpful term, without engaging sufficiently with the question on peace negotiations. The answers to the case study questions (Q10-11-12) were generally good, with the very best answers successfully linking conceptual arguments with the case, and showing a detailed knowledge of the empirical material.

We were pleased that so many candidates came up with such thoughtful, interesting arguments and that they were able to flexibly connect material and insights from different parts of the paper.

POL17: The politics of the international economy
Examiner: Professor Helen Thompson

There were 25 scripts. Three candidates received a first-class mark, nineteen an upper second, and two a lower second. There was one pass mark.

Generally, the scripts were of good quality and there were some excellent answers on individual questions beyond the agreed firsts. The best answers demonstrated a good command of detail and a high level of analytical precision. Several candidates had read some way beyond the reading list and used that additional reading to good effect. The less impressive answers were marked by a high level of generality or the absence of an analytical set up to the argument. With some of the perhaps harder questions – the questions on the origins of monetary union and the 2007-8 financial crisis – most candidates didn't grapple enough with what was exactly being asked or use the question sharply enough as frame to structure their answer.

Perhaps the best answers were on the end of Bretton Woods question: of the four candidates who answered this question, three gave first class answers. Here, candidates engaged very directly and analytically with the question set about whether the Eurodollar markets are a sufficient explanation for Bretton Woods' end. By contrast, more candidates answered on the creation of Bretton Woods, but the highest mark was only 68 and most were lower than 65. Here, there was more of a tendency to generalise and some unwillingness to unpack 'American power' in a systematic way or to think through what it would mean to say that the creation of the Bretton Woods order can indeed be entirely explained by American power.

The most answered question was the one on colonialism and the rise of the West. All the answers here were of at least 2.1 quality and more often than not in the higher range of 2.1 marks. All candidates here showed that they had read widely and were prepared to develop a clear argument. There was also though some reluctance to engage with the serious counter-argument to the colonialism thesis around the place of the geographical accident of coal in the West's early industrial development. Quite a few answers cited Pomeranz only to ignore entirely his thesis about coal. Throughout these answers, there was a tendency to generality about the raw materials used in industrialisation as if cotton or sugar rather than coal fired steam engines and the industrial revolution was not an energy revolution.

POL18: Politics and Gender
Examiner: Professor Jude Browne

Twenty three students sat the exam for POL 18, Politics & Gender in the Easter Term 2021. Due to COVID this was, for the second year running, an on-line open book exam.

Of those twenty three, 11 were from the Politics & IR track, 2 from the Social Anthropology & Politics track, 6 from the Politics & Sociology track and 4 from the History and Politics Tripos.

All students answered three questions from a 12 question paper.

The overall average mark was 70 reflecting some very high marks for this paper including more than one 85 mark.

The most popular questions were #1 & #2 on representation and rights , followed by question #4 on inequality and subsequently a more even spread over the rest of the questions.
The strongest answers were outstanding. They not only provided an impressive grasp of complex theoretical positions but also applied these to contemporary empirical examples. These essays provided a strong narrative from beginning to end with punchy conclusions following strong and clear structures, the content of which went well beyond the lecture material.

Weaker answers tended to come with meandering arguments, a focus on too few thinkers, a lack of empirical examples or simple repetition of lecture material.

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

This year 35 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. Most of the candidates did a good job of engaging with the literature, but relatively few had the courage to strike out on their own, with most tending to following up paths already laid out for them. The best answers were very sophisticated and well-presented. There were, though, a surprising number of typos and other infelicities in many of the scripts. Given the nature of some of the topics it was perhaps to be expected that quite a few answers erred on the side of opining rather than analysing.

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

Twenty-two candidates took Pol 20 this year. As in previous years, 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 the political thought of H. G. Wells and on Sutton E. Grigg's account of white supremacy, and, for the second essay, on how to think about the political implications of Artificial Intelligence, the role of religion in Aldous Huxley's work, and the character of 1970s feminist utopianism.

The Examiners awarded 10 First class marks, and 12 2.1s. The average mark for the paper was 68.5. The highest mark was 76. The lowest mark was 63. The examiners concurred that the overall standard of the answers was, as in previous years, very high (especially given the

deep challenges of lockdown). Many candidates demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the topics under discussion, and even the weakest scripts showed a decent grasp of the material. A significant number of the essays were of exceptional standard, showing originality and argumentative complexity. The usual qualities that make for good essays were rewarded: independent argument, conceptual sophistication, illuminating historical contextualisation, careful use of secondary and primary texts, clear structure, and so on.

POL21: China in the International Order
Examiner: Dr K-C Lin

The module syllabus was updated this year to add topics on the Covid-19 pandemic and US-PRC trade and technological rivalries. The students benefitted from subject-expert guest lectures on Sino-Russian relations, international law and the South China Sea, and climate change – all other lectures were recorded by Dr Lin. Dr Lin also offered flexible and additional supervisions to any student who requested them, to help them catch up after illness or other pandemic-related disruptions. The students did extraordinarily well, taking advantage of online materials and instructor's availability, resulting in an average mark of 69.2 for the twenty exam takers, with nine of them scoring 70 or above. Student interests were roughly equally divided between historical and contemporary topics of maritime security, the energy-security nexus, and climate change. They showed a strong command of facts, and readiness in linking arguments to IR theories. Many students took initiatives via email or in supervisions to raise awareness of current debates over China's rise, enriching the otherwise limited format for discourse.