

Lecture policy – Politics and International Studies

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The Department of Politics and International Studies recognises the pedagogical and social benefits of in-person lectures. Lectures provide a unique environment for collective learning and engagement between academics and students. The vitality of this environment, both for students and academics, depends upon regular and healthy levels of attendance. Lectures are not intended to provide content for reproduction in essays, but rather to introduce topics and orient thinking. Attending lectures enables students to form better connections with their wider cohort and to interact with the lecturer. These larger collective forums are a vital complement to the small-scale supervision teaching that is a hallmark of a Cambridge degree, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in Politics and International Studies. The schedule of lecture delivery throughout terms sets the appropriate rhythm for engagement with topics across each paper.

Standardised recording of lectures has led to declining attendance, undermining the status of in-person teaching and depriving students of the pedagogical and social benefits of collective lecture hall learning. Repeat viewing of captioned lectures has also led to the misuse of lectures, transforming them from launchpads for further reading and critical reflection to quotable forms of content to be reproduced in exams and essays. Binge-watching of lectures at the end of term undermines their role in setting the rhythm of the paper by sequentially introducing topics. Recording of lectures may also inhibit student participation.

For academics, recording reduces the space for creative and improvisational forms of delivery, turning lectures into a forensically documented record that might plausibly travel well beyond its intended context. This discourages engagement with difficult or controversial political and ethical issues by undermining the space of relative intimacy and trust that lectures rely on. These considerations are particularly important for teaching in Politics and International Studies, where subjects regularly raise and require critical engagement with controversial and sensitive themes. These are themes that often do not reflect a lecturer's own views, but which it is important for participants in the course to consider and discuss. Effective research-led teaching relies on academics' confidence that intellectual property, particularly unpublished work, is secure. Recorded lectures undermine this confidence.

In light of the benefits of collective in-person teaching, the observed negative effects of standardised lecture recording, and the regularity with which controversial and sensitive issues are discussed within Politics and International Studies, **lectures will not be recorded as standard in 2024-25**. The department also strongly discourages the recording of seminars and of discussions during lectures, on pedagogical grounds and grounds of academic freedom and security.

Students who require recordings as a reasonable adjustment on disability and accessibility grounds are able to request permission to produce or access recordings with support from the [Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre \[link\]](#).

This statement draws on the collective statement of the HSPS Faculty, of which POLIS is part.