

Newsletter 2020/2021

MAP Newsletter 2020-21

We're coming to the end of another challenging (and largely virtual) academic year – restrictions are easing, the weather is getting warmer, and, as usual at this time of year, we'd like to tell you a little bit about what we've been up to.

EVENTS

Every Friday during term-time, we've met for our **MAP Lunches** to chat, share experiences, and support each other. In total, we held 12 online lunches in the Fall term and 24 lunches in Spring term, including 3 of them in person. The lunches proved to be an important space for new PhDs to get to know each other, especially since it wasn't possible to meet in person.

We held six well-attended and lively **discussion groups** on Teams in which we exchanged our ideas about a range of interesting topics:

- Stories of Social Exclusion (in the Art World) – led by Yang Yang
- Money Isn't Everything: Why working-class people are underrepresented at UK universities – led by Robert Brown and David MacDonald
- Meritocracy: Whom Is It Good For? – led by Dominik Boll and Quentin Pharr
- Imposter Syndrome – led by Morayo Lasekan

- **Mental Health and Neurodivergence** – led by Petronella Randell
- **Civil Disobedience** – led by Anna Hotter and Atul Satija

We'd like to thank all our discussion leaders for leading such thoughtful and engaging discussions, our discussion group organiser Atul Satija for his help in coordinating the events, and all those who showed their support by participating. We look forward to hosting more discussion groups next year – anyone is welcome to run one on any topic.

In collaboration with department staff, we organised two informational **Q&A sessions** in which we invited students thinking of applying to graduate programmes to ask current postgraduates questions about the application processes and what to expect from the MLitt, MPhil and PhD programmes. These events complemented the more formal presentations offered by the department; they made sure that the students who are the first in their families to apply for postgraduate study have access to up-to-date information, tips on how to apply, and examples of applications materials.

We also held a **panel discussion** 'Getting through the MLitt: Perspectives from recent graduates' during which we talked to current PhD students about the wellbeing and academic challenges of the MLitt programme. We're hugely grateful to Robert Brown, David MacDonald, and Petronella Randell for sharing their experiences, advice and reassurances with current MLitt students. This panel served as a starting point for further discussions with the MLitt Director, Dr Alex Douglas, about how we could improve clarity on various procedural aspects of the MLitt programme and opened up dialogue regarding the climate of the programme.

Finally, we ran our mentoring programme for honours undergraduate students and conversion diploma students who identify as members of under-represented or disadvantaged groups in academic Philosophy. The mentoring programme was organized by PhD students Camille Fouché and Eline Gerritsen, and involved the participation of many PhD students as mentors.

OTHER NEWS

Our PGR representative Lara Jost worked with the school's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity committee to organise further inclusive teaching training for PGR tutors. The training was led by Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal (Film Studies) and Lara Jost (Philosophy) and aimed to train tutors in inclusive teaching methods. This training was well attended and got excellent feedback from attendees. Given this success, the School of Philosophy, Anthropology and Film Studies has

decided to provide further funding for the AY 2021-22 to make this training mandatory for all PGR tutors in the School, with one training session each semester.

Following a discussion of the challenges faced by PGR tutors with dyslexia, Robert Brown and David MacDonald, two of our PGR members, encouraged the department to use a dyslexia friendly font for their documents and successfully petitioned the implementation of a mandatory essay template with dyslexia-accessible formatting. We greatly appreciate the cooperation of the department on this issue.

Unfortunately, this year was also marked by the loss of our Academic Advisor Professor Katherine Hawley. Katherine had been a great support for the creation of our chapter back in 2018 and was an incredible academic mentor for many of our members. We will deeply miss her.

We would like to thank this year's representatives, Gwendoline Choi, Hale McGrath, Elia Lawal, Helena Slanickova and Lara Jost for their work in running the chapter. While some of them will remain active within the chapter next year, we wish all the best to Helena, Elia and Hale as they graduate.

Finally, we'd like to thank everyone who was involved with our chapter this year – the relentless cheeriness, compassion and generosity has made this challenging year a little bit easier. Without you, our chapter would not be such a vibrant community. If you would like to get involved, share your ideas, or know more about any of our activities, please get in touch with us by email mapuk.sasp@st-andrews.ac.uk or on Facebook or Twitter (@mapsasp).

Before we come back with regular activities in September, we would like to remind you that you can reach out to us during the Summer, whether it is to organise an impromptu activity or to get support.

We hope you have a restful and sunny summer,

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