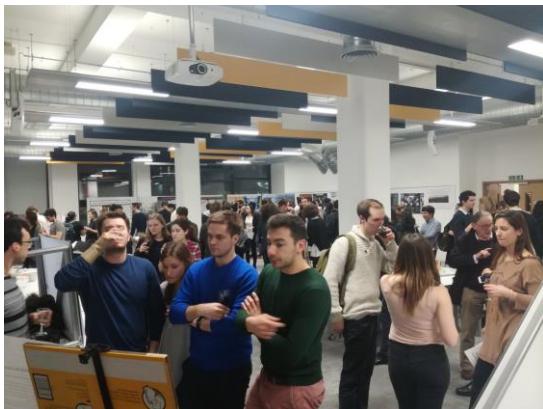


CASE STUDIES

Teaching and Learning Centre Case Studies

Designing and presenting posters

Balancing the need for students to develop their understanding of a course, become research proficient, embrace theoretical positions, and engage with real-world issues is tricky. It takes good teaching, good planning and hard work to develop such a course. Luckily, in meeting with Dr Jennifer Jackson-Preece to talk through her course on Ethnic Diversity and International Society (EU457) it becomes clear that she has the drive and ability to develop just such a course. Talking with Jennifer creates one of those moments in life when you can't help but be caught up in the enthusiasm of someone who has a genuine passion for teaching and learning.



The course, taught at LSE's European Institute, examines ethnic diversity in a world of nation-states with a particular focus on processes of securitization and desecuritization. Like their peers, students studying on this course attend seminars and workshops; they read literature; they examine theoretical frameworks, and they synthesise a range of world views. But what this course emphasises is self-management, team-work and communication. These are key skills that underpin postgraduate study but, by placing these skills front and centre, Jennifer has developed a course that accentuates individuality; embraces choice, and energises autonomy while maintaining academic rigour. Initial funding from the TLC's TLDF in 2016 helped to cover the printing costs and other event expenses.

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Eighty percent of course assessment is essay based and 20% comes from a research proposal that takes the form of a research poster. It is this poster element that gives the course much of its vibrancy and focus. Students on EU457 present these research posters at a public exhibition in LSE Life. The secret of a good research poster is to take detailed and scrupulous academic work and make it succinct and accessible. This is not an easy skill; the pressure of presenting work is something that every academic knows about. The latest poster presentation at LSE LIFE on 21 February 2017 was a real triumph. Students presented insightful academic work on topics as varied as border security, television satire, self-desecuritisation and French cinema, supported by a range of world figures who included Angela Merkel, John Oliver, Nigel Farage, Donald Trump, Milos Zeman, Adolf Hitler and the grandmother from the TV show 'Jane the Virgin'.

Developing a course that puts such emphasis on using visual literacy to examine complicated human concepts is really exciting and, in a world of business infographics, blogs and data visualisation, this gives the course a real-world focus. During a previous poster exhibition, a group of individuals from the 'milk round' happened across the students' work and were impressed by the quality of what they saw. They spent time speaking with the students; took pictures of the work, and left excited by a group of students who showed a real depth of understanding. Jennifer tells us that the visit left everyone on a real high and that "*students loved the celebratory moment of being able to show and tell.*"

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Sitting in the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre café, Jennifer shares an iPad full of pictures of students' work and shows picture after picture of smiling students standing next to their high quality research posters. Two things are quickly evident – first of all, the work that the students have produced is rigorous, cutting-edge and engaging: there is a high level of visual literacy and the work demonstrates real awareness of the problems of diversity and community in a world of nation states. The second thing that is clear is that Jennifer is passionate about what she teaches and driven to do her best for her students. Not only has the development of this course supported high quality student learning but Jennifer is keen to share that she has been inspired by her students; that "*engaging with them deepens my own thinking*" and this helps strengthen her approach to her own research. So this learning-centred course doesn't just benefit the students academically, it also makes them more employable and enhances Jennifer's own research expertise.

The secret of the success of this course seems to be in getting the right mix of subject, assessment and engagement. Jennifer has designed a course that gives students control over the topic they choose to research and control over how they present their work. EU457 broadens the range of assessment but maintains the rigour of academia. As Jennifer puts it: "*I think the moral of this particular story is that good ideas in teaching and learning can grow beyond the spaces where they begin.*"

It took Jennifer time and effort to develop this course and she is rightly proud of it but, as she says, "*You don't have to do it on your own.*" There is help and support out there for people who want to develop new courses, relevant assessment methods and a student-centred pedagogy. If, like Jennifer, you have an idea about a course you would like to develop then you might want to [contact the LSE Teaching and Learning Centre](#) and get the

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support of departmental advisers who are experts in course design. You may also wish [to apply for funding through the Teaching and Learning Development Fund](#).