

# CONNECT

Innovation, Interdisciplinarity, Inclusiveness and Internationalism

IATL Newsletter: Summer 2017



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## Interdisciplinarity

Dr Nicholas Monk, Director, IATL

Now, more than at any other time in recent memory, interdisciplinarity and its variants are talked about in higher education with a real sense of purpose. Warwick has committed itself in thought and deed to this path via the University strategy and in its support for a range of initiatives from the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, to the new Liberal Arts and Global Sustainable Development programmes in the School for Cross-Faculty Studies, to IATL's own modules. The latter are increasing rapidly in popularity, and the University is committed to making it easier for students to select them as options. Survey data tells us that the appetite is there both from students and employers for the kind of study that places a problem or a



topic, rather than the discipline, at the heart of the student learning experience. From IATL's suite of modules, examples that work from this premise are 'Genetics: Science and Society,' 'Community Engagement: Theory into Practice,' 'Sport, Philosophy and Practice,' and 'Applied Imagination: Theory and Practice'.

At IATL we recognise three levels beyond disciplinarity. The first is multidisciplinarity, which features in the many excellent joint degrees at Warwick, and in a number of IATL modules where each individual discipline, independent of any others, offers students its own perspective on an issue. The second is interdisciplinarity, in which one discipline might begin to challenge

the pre-conceptions of a partner discipline, and question its own. And finally, transdisciplinarity, in which disciplines work together, beginning with the problem or the issue, rather than starting from a disciplinary stance. In the latter case, students have an important role to play in synthesising disciplinary material in collaborative ways to arrive at insights that are new to them, and may even break fresh ground in the wider academic world. Students are offered the opportunity in this way to become learners by research as they collaborate in the creation of knowledge both within their peer group, and with their tutors.

### IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ The benefits of interdisciplinarity
- ▶ New IATL interdisciplinary modules for undergraduates and postgraduates
- ▶ Registration open for undergraduate modules and opens late summer for postgraduate modules
- ▶ Your options for IATL funded projects

## WARWICK

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED  
TEACHING AND LEARNING

## UNDERGRADUATE MODULE – A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

# Sport, Philosophy and Practice (IL022)

Cameron Humphreys, Physics Undergraduate

In my fourth and final year, looking for a bit of a change from Maths and Physics modules, I decided to take Sport, Philosophy and Practice. The initial appeal was that it was a module focused around sport, something I have always taken a keen interest in, and that as a first term module all of the assessments would be complete by the start of term 2. 15 CATS less of exams!

The module was better than I could have hoped! We had a seminar once a week for a couple of hours. We discussed a great range of topics and engaged with serious issues within sport, some of which had been apparent to me for a while, others which I may not have considered without a prompt. The seminars were invariably engaging and varied. There was a great balance of different ways of learning. The approach was refreshing compared to lectures and classes within my home department. Group tasks, organised activities and even a field trip really added to the experience. It was great to

work with a range of students from other departments all over the University. Group work is really important but something I have had less opportunity to do on my degree.

I was worried about the approach to philosophy coming from a scientific background but everything was made very accessible, with terms and ideas well explained. We were just encouraged to have a go and give opinions regularly which helped a lot with learning, understanding and confidence justifying opinions and views. The module leaders, Phil and Jonny, ensured the module was really enjoyable and a great success.

Reflective writing for the blog articles helped me to engage fully with the module and inadvertently this meant I kept on top of the module throughout, making the deadlines and essay writing very manageable. The essay was a chance to focus on a particular topic, relevant to my personal experiences

and draw on literature to analyse it. In stark contrast to my Maths and Physics degree, I really enjoyed writing this essay. Further, the group activities we had to lead for the final part of assessment were a really nice way to round off the module, which brought everyone together for a full day for one last time.

While the skills involved in writing the assessments may not be overly applicable in a scientific context, the real contribution this module had was in providing a change of scene and learning environment and a chance to engage with topics, ideas and people I otherwise would not have.

## UNDERGRADUATE MODULES – A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

# Sport, Philosophy and Practice (IL022) and Entrepreneurship: A Critical Perspective (IL020)

Michael Rose, History Undergraduate

Doing modules outside your department is important to me. It facilitates exploration of other areas of interest you may have, and can encourage you to try something different that you might want to pursue. When selecting modules for this academic year, I knew that I wanted to take outside modules and so it was refreshing for me when I found out about IATL's interdisciplinary modules. In addition to my second-year history modules, I chose to take IATL's *Sport, Philosophy and Practice* and *Entrepreneurship: A Critical Perspective*.

I wasn't sure exactly what to expect from the modules I'd chosen, but I was definitely excited by the prospect of them. And it didn't take long for this feeling of excitement to be justified, as the unique learning experiences that these modules provided fuelled me to truly delve into

the debates and discussions surrounding topics both in entrepreneurship and the philosophy of sport.

IATL interdisciplinary modules offer a different style of learning, one that promotes deeper engagement with the real world than traditional academic subjects generally do. In turn, I feel that the modules continuously related to my everyday life, making for a far more personal learning experience. This could be seen through how both modules included constant reflection of the content covered, through which we could link the module to our own lives and current affairs, especially since sport and entrepreneurship are very connected to the students' personal lives.

The style of assessment tied in with this reflective style of learning as both

modules were partly assessed by weekly blogs or an end-of-module reflection piece, in which we could bring academic resources if necessary. One aspect of our assessment that I particularly liked was how we were encouraged to draw ideas and conclusions for our work from previous assignments. For example, in the reflection assignment for Sport, Philosophy and Practice, I discussed the first topic that we covered in the module, which explored what makes something a sport. I was then able to link my conclusions from this assignment to the final assignment, in which we were asked to be creative in devising and leading an activity for the whole class to participate in, and during the preparation for this activity I could further reflect on my initial work.

I'm very pleased that I chose to take two IATL interdisciplinary modules this academic year. They have undoubtedly complemented my studies, accommodating for a more well-rounded education, which is why I have been promoting these modules to many people. For me, the future of education looks much brighter with the inclusion of modules like those that IATL offer.

POSTGRADUATE MODULE - A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

# *The Medical Mind in Literature and Culture (IL901)*

Emily Dunford, English Postgraduate (Taught)

As a taught student (UG or PGT), it can feel like an essay is handed in and grades received never to be spoken of again - all knowledge of the books you crammed into your brain erased. One of the greatest strengths of IATL's module offering is that it encourages students to take responsibility in their learning, to connect the dots between disciplines and between prior educational experiences.

In each week of The Medical Mind, a member of our small cohort, largely composed of MA students from English, Philosophy, and Cultural Policy Studies, made an observation which brought to light some aspect of the matter at hand that had previously remained in the shadows from the comfort of my home discipline. We took part in a Beckett workshop run by IATL's Dr Jonny Heron, had the opportunity to speak with Professor

of Psychiatry Femi Oyeboade, and, outside of the classroom, we shared articles and TV episodes via social media. To conclude the module, we each gave a presentation, workshop, or performance on a topic of our choosing, drawing together an interdisciplinary understanding of our subject with communication skills that'd been honed through weeks of student-led seminars.

IATL is leading the way in innovative teaching and learning at Warwick, but also helping the University move away from humdrum classes and assessments in favour of a holistic approach to higher education that is undoubtedly beneficial for postgraduate study in the long and short term. I just wish more students had the option to get involved with IATL modules advertised by their home department.

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## *Hogwarwick for the day - Exploring wellbeing and study*

Hannah Hickman, Community Engagement Officer, Library



To mark University Mental Health Day and World Book Day, the Library held a series of workshops, events and activities that encouraged students to reflect on their wellbeing, find out about initiatives offered across the University to support wellbeing, and take some time away from their stressful studies... all using the theme of Harry Potter's wizarding world! For one day, the Library transformed into 'Hogwarwick'.

We felt that it was important to lead in with a soft-touch approach. Students often describe the Library as somewhere they 'live' but it's also a place they associate with the stress of deadlines, revision and endless amounts of work. By focusing on feelings of wonder, play and childhood reminiscence students would be reminded of a time and a mindset when they were free from stress. Studies have shown that stress can negatively affect performance, so our aim with these events is to offer an opportunity for students to destress, to boost their wellbeing, and to find out about further support available.

Who better to turn to when you need to create a playful and creative atmosphere than IATL and the Dark Would?! We used the set-up from the campfire to create a Divination circle with a starry night to create a feeling of fantasy. The props really helped to set the scene, like using glass bottles to recall Harry's green eyes and Snape's potion bottles, to the tea lights that mimicked Hogwart's magical floating candles. We even borrowed a cape, which the students loved wearing. The space we had to deal with is grey and business-like, and the Dark Would props were critical to supplement the event and create an immersive environment. The Dark Would is a collaborative and transdisciplinary pedagogic project established by IATL in 2014. Find out more at [warwick.ac.uk/thedarkwould](http://warwick.ac.uk/thedarkwould).

The session was well-attended, pulling in over 160 students over four hours, and generated positive student feedback - it was definitely a magical afternoon.



# Introducing new undergraduate and postgraduate modules from IATL

## POSTGRADUATE MODULES

### **Habitability in the Universe**    **Thinking Water (IL905)**

**Dr David Armstrong, Research Fellow, Physics**

Habitability in the Universe is a new postgraduate module that will be offered by IATL in the Spring Term of 2018. The module will draw together concepts of habitability from across the university, starting in our own Solar System and exploring how we find and understand habitable planets in the wider galaxy using modern telescopes. We will look at life at the extremes, considering extremophiles on Earth, and what they might tell us about habitable conditions elsewhere, before approaching the sustainability and long-term habitability of our own planet.

From this initial exploration of the realities of habitability, we will turn to our own reactions to it. Popular culture is replete with the idea of the other, within our normal environment and outside of it. A sense of precariousness underpins literature and film, from Jules Verne to Ridley Scott's *The Martian*. In cinema, the development of special effects is closely linked to the presentation of alien life and other worlds. Finally, even the ideas of politics are affected: how should we organise a growing settlement on another planet, where small mistakes can rapidly lead to failure and death?

**Dr Elena Riva, STEM Teaching Fellow, IATL**

The aim of this new postgraduate module is to present a global topic such as water in its complexity and to encourage students to become involved in every stage of the learning process so they can discover, research and experiment the great potentialities of an interdisciplinary approach to the matter.

During the course of the module students will explore this tiny molecule that has shaped our history. We will investigate water's unusual properties and analyse its ingenious chemistry. We will consider the diversity and importance of ecosystem services related to water and the pressures that industry, agriculture and other human activities put upon them. There will be opportunities to undertake a field study on the Warwick campus where we will explore environmental and water ecology issues such as the fate of soluble pollutants and contaminated fine sediments within rivers and urban drainage systems. Other topics to be covered within the module include the relationship between culture and water, rivers, flooding and drought, at a time when flooding, drought and water management is a growing future global concern, along with the history of water and the social, cultural and political impact of flooding.

By the end of the module students will have a greater understanding of the exceptional and extraordinary nature of this liquid, water, that we take for granted. "Of all known liquids," wrote the great water chemist Felix Franks, "water is probably the most studied and least understood."

## UNDERGRADUATE MODULES

### **Computer Modelling for All (IL027)**

**Dr James Kermodé, Associate Professor, Engineering**

What links shortening World War II by two years, landing a man on the moon and knowing if it will rain tomorrow? Computer modelling played a key role in cracking the Enigma code, preparing for the Apollo landings and providing the first accurate weather forecasts.

As computing permeates everyday life at an increasingly rapid pace, it is becoming critical for students of ALL disciplines to appreciate the capabilities and consequences of describing real-world phenomena on a computer. STEM students should take this module to expose themselves to challenges arising in seemingly unrelated fields of enquiry and how mathematics and computing can help tackle those challenges. Non-STEM students (e.g. those located in the Arts and Humanities or Social Sciences) should take this module to expose themselves to the possibilities afforded by describing and analysing real-world phenomena (e.g. food security, population growth, conflict) in a technical computing language. Employers are increasingly demanding graduates who can collaborate and work across the disciplines to tackle the big problems and upcoming challenges for society.

### **Gender and Violence (IL026)**

**Dr Ravi Thiara, Principal Research Fellow, CLL and Dr Khursheed Wadia, Principal Research Fellow, CLL**

Did you know that gender-based violence is considered to be a form of gender inequality and an abuse of human rights? Maybe it's time to consider such a question and what possible answers might mean to you and society?

Studying the Gender and Violence module provides many opportunities to explore how violence is intimately connected to gender and gendered power relations, the significance of the link and to consider what it means for men and women. The module enables students to review the different forms taken by gendered violence, how it can be understood and explained, and the political and policy responses to it.

Incorporating many different information sources the module considers how gendered violence is represented in cultural forms such as novels, films and the media along with how occurrences vary over time and in different societies. The module also investigates how gender and violence manifests itself on a societal scale as well as in the most intimate and private of relationships, and the effects it has on women and girls.



# Students as Leaders: A Campus of Ideas

**Nia Hughes, Politics and International Studies Undergraduate**

**Dominic Nah, English and Comparative Literary Studies Postgraduate**

**Dammy Sokale, WBS Undergraduate**

We began working as undergraduate researchers with IATL, Estates and Engineers Without Borders last October. At the time, we were given the stimulus of “student engagement” and “sustainability”, which became the basis of our research. As student researchers, we wanted to explore what student-led sustainability would look like when applied in the context of teaching and learning. Just over five months later and with the end of our research approaching it is interesting to reflect on how our goals and outcomes have developed. More important than identifying how these areas have changed is to recognise why we have made these changes. This will inform future research into this area, where the obstacles we faced were often in themselves indicative of wider issues within the University.

Dominic started off wanting to create a student-led module focused on sustainability. Early on he realised the deficiencies within the module application system, which was geared towards lecturers and academics. This structure meant that a student-led initiative would have difficulty being proposed by a student. He is now keen to further student engagement in critical reflections and creative interventions with real-world sustainability projects on campus and in the local area. Capitalizing on the Warwick NEST initiative and inspired by emerging connectivism learning approaches by staff (see #KNOWHOW on Twitter), a campus brand and platform for both enthusiasts



and the uninitiated to engage can be set up at low cost. Half termly 75-minute mini-conferences can be set up with six- and sixteen-minute presentations known as the Sustainability 6 and 16, showcasing promotions and reflections respectively for sustainability-related projects, guided by a clear, focused research question.

Dammy began her research focusing on outreach and events, with the central aim of establishing a sustainability festival. Within the context of Warwick, it became clear that there was already a saturation of similar events. It was apparent that the onus would be on publicity rather than on highlighting the intersections of student engagement and sustainability. She then began to consider how best to measure the success of an outcome: is it by creating a platform for ideas to develop? Or is it by how many people are physically present at an event? She is now creating videos exploring: “how can students help to build a sustainable future?” and “what does sustainability mean to you?”. This

will help to challenge pre-conceived notions of what ‘sustainability’ can mean and creates a clear link between sustainability and student engagement. The format of videos rather than an event allows us to meet people where they are at rather than imploring them to come to a fixed location. This means the outcome is not static and can constantly be built upon. For example, she collaborated with “Go Green Week” to build on already existing platforms and networks.

Nia was focused on creating a handbook for student-led initiatives. We identified early on that there was a lack of practical advice for students who want to begin their own projects or be leaders in their own education. Because of this, the handbook will act as a step-by-step guide to the process of completing a student-led project. In order to make the advice more practical, Nia will be drawing on the experience of student-led projects that are already underway, such as the Warwick NEST project, which the student society Warwick Without Borders are working on. The obstacles faced by this project, and the way they were overcome, will be used as an illustrative case study into how students can shape their own learning experience through independent projects. As an outcome, Nia aims to have the basic content of the handbook done, and ready to put online/print off if necessary. In addition, she has also come across the idea from other universities of making a Prezi alongside the handbook to go online, as a shorter overview of student-led projects. Hopefully, this can act as a basic introduction and motivation for students to pursue more information on projects, through materials such as the handbook.

Find out more at [warwick.ac.uk/iatl/funding/fundedprojects/strategic/cardinalkilgallon](http://warwick.ac.uk/iatl/funding/fundedprojects/strategic/cardinalkilgallon) and [warwick.ac.uk/about/environment/get\\_involved/nest](http://warwick.ac.uk/about/environment/get_involved/nest)

## Interdisciplinary Modules

IATL will be offering a portfolio of 16 interdisciplinary modules for undergraduate students and 7 for postgraduate students on 2017-18. More detailed information on the modules can be found on the IATL website: [warwick.ac.uk/iatl/modules](http://warwick.ac.uk/iatl/modules).

We are able to offer a home for interdisciplinary modules that range across faculties, and we welcome proposals for developing further new modules. The kind of interdisciplinary work we seek to promote has the potential to provide our students with the essential skills, and insights that will equip them for a world in which the problems they

face will be increasingly complex and multi-faceted.

We welcome proposals from all University departments and from any individual, from postgraduate tutor to professor. Module proposals will be considered by an IATL committee and, if approved, will be administered by us. All you need to do to propose a module is:

- ▶ Visit IATL to discuss your idea.
- ▶ Submit a module proposal to IATL by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017
- ▶ Work with IATL to set up and publicise your module

# IATL MODULES FOR 2017-18

Registration open

## Autumn Term Undergraduate Modules:

- Challenges of Climate Change** ..... IL006  
Prof. David Mond (Maths) & Dr Michael Pounds (Physics)
- Reinventing Education** ..... IL008  
Dr Will Curtis (CLL)
- Ethical Beings**..... IL015  
Dr Rebecca Fisher (IATL)
- Local and Global Shakespeares** ..... IL021  
Dr Paul Prescott & Dr Fiona Gregory (Warwick and Monash)



## Spring Term Undergraduate Modules:

- Applied Imagination: Theory and Practice**..... IL005  
Naomi de la Tour (IATL)
- Global Connections** ..... IL014  
Carolyn Debray (CAL) & Birgit Breidenbach (English)
- Achieving Sustainability: Potentials and Barriers**..... IL012  
Prof. John Pickering (Psychology)
- The Science of Music** ..... IL016  
Dr Gavin Bell (Physics)
- Community Engagement: Theory into Practice** ..... IL017  
Mark Hinton (CLL)
- Censorship and Society**..... IL018  
Roxanne Bibizadeh (English)
- Sport, Philosophy and Practice**..... IL022  
Dr Jonathan Heron (IATL)
- Genetics: Science and Society**..... IL023  
Dr Elena Riva (IATL)
- Laughter: A Transdisciplinary Approach**...IL024  
Dr Nicholas Monk (IATL)
- Applied Imagination: Long Project**..... IL025  
Naomi de la Tour (IATL)
- Gender and Violence (new module)** ... IL026  
Dr Ravi Thiara (CLL)
- Computer Modelling for All (new module)**..... IL027  
Dr James Kermod (Engineering)

Registration opens late summer 2017

## Autumn Term Postgraduate Modules:

- The Medical Mind**..... IL901  
Dr Elizabeth Barry (English)

## Spring Term Postgraduate Modules:

- Ways of Knowing: Gender, Bodies, Power** ..... IL902  
Dr Cath Lambert (Sociology), Dr Maria do Mar Pereira (Sociology)
- Experimental Ecology** ..... IL904  
Prof Barry Kershaw (Theatre Studies), Dr Jonathan Heron (IATL)
- Thinking Water** ..... IL905  
Dr Elena Riva (IATL)
- Habitability in the Universe (new module)**..... TBC  
Dr David Armstrong (Physics)
- Contemporary Memory Studies (new module)**..... TBC  
Prof Alison Ribeiro de Menezes (Modern Languages)
- PGA Interdisciplinary Pedagogy (new module)**..... TBC  
Dr Jonathan Heron (IATL)

## IATL Staff and Student Funding Deadlines for 2017-18

Deadline	Funding stream	Available to
28/06/2017	Student as Producer (Performance, Collaboration, Research); Performance Festival Bursary	Undergraduate and Postgraduate students
13/10/2017	Academic Fellowships; Pedagogic Interventions; Strategic Projects	Academic staff
06/12/2017	Student as Producer (Performance, Collaboration, Research); Performance Festival Bursary	Undergraduate and Postgraduate students
14/03/2018	Student as Producer (Performance, Collaboration, Research); Performance Festival Bursary	Undergraduate and Postgraduate students

## Forthcoming Events

26 and 27 September 2017

### The International Conference of Undergraduate Research (ICUR)

This two-day conference gives undergraduate students the unique opportunity to expand their research, cultural and international experience without leaving their university.

For more information about this event and how to register your attendance please check the Forthcoming events section of the IATL website. [www.warwick.ac.uk/iatl/activities/events](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/iatl/activities/events)

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