

**Workshop 5:  
How to enhance research competences?  
A UK Perspective from UCL**

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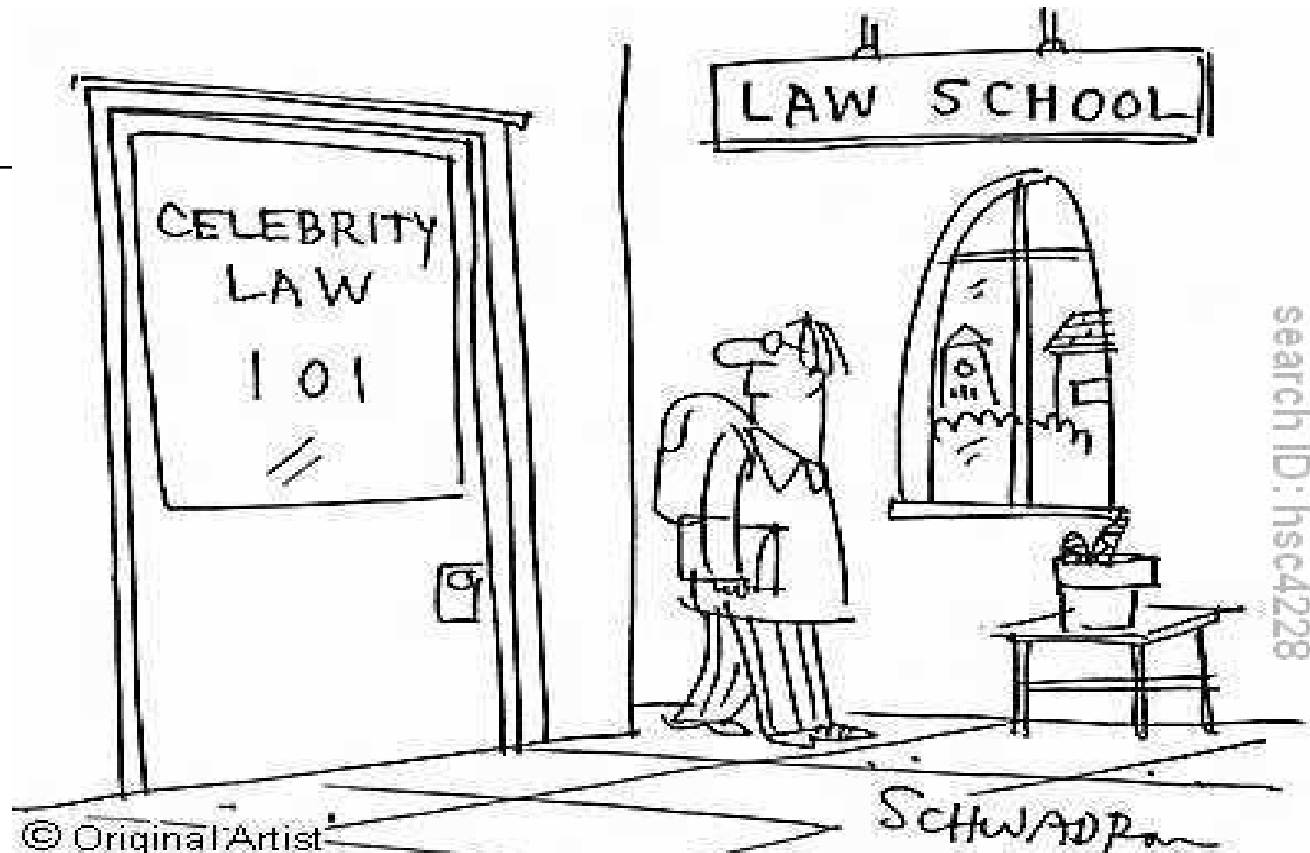
**18 March 2010, Berlin**



# Outline of the Talk

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- Introduction: The research context at UCL ✓
- LLB Research Essays
- LLM Dissertations
- Programme of seminars for research students
- Recent developments elsewhere (LSE)
- Concluding observations



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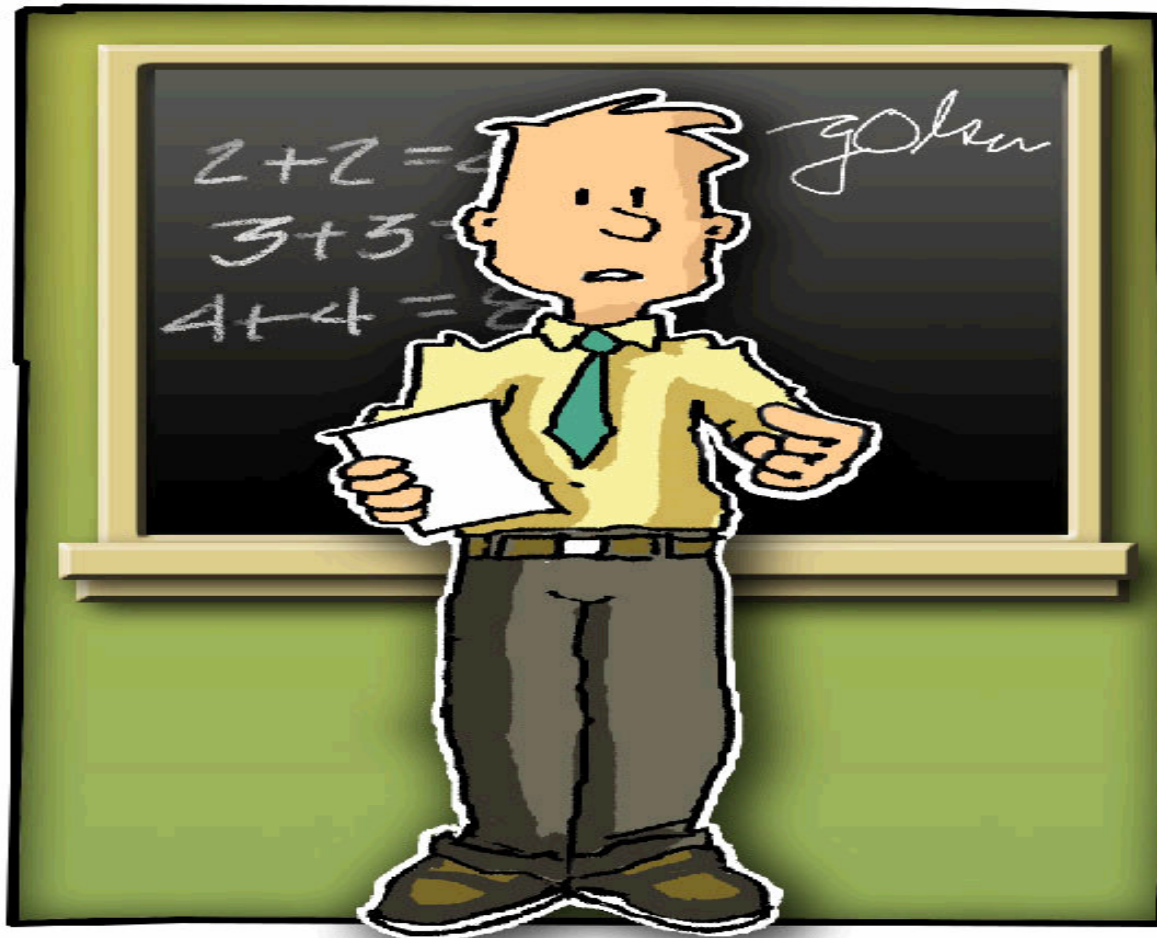


## Introduction: The research context at UCL Laws

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UCL Laws position as a world-leading law school has recently been confirmed by the UK government December 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE):

- **UCL Laws is placed joint 1st in the UK** for the proportion of its research activity in the top two star categories (75% 4\*/3\*- world-leading and internationally excellent research)
  - **UCL rises to 4th in the 2010 University World Rankings by the Times Higher Education QS World University Rankings**
- a substantial and intellectually strong community of researchers is at the core of a top ranking Law Faculty such as at UCL
  - Our strategy in respect of research is:
    - to **attract top flight students** from around the world
    - to provide **a first class research environment**, both intellectual and physical, commensurate with the status of UCL as a top 5 global institution.



**"You'll be interested to know that while school was cancelled due to weather I enrolled in an on-line university, and I now have my Doctorate."**



## LLB RESEARCH ESSAY AT UCL LAWS

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- Every final year student **MUST** submit a Research Essay.
- It counts as a **full-course** for final classification.
- The essay is to be on a topic to be chosen in consultation with an appointed supervisor before the end of Term 1.
- It must be submitted at the start of Term 3.
- The supervisor decides whether to provide seminar-based supervision or individual supervision.
- It is up to the student to meet the deadlines set out in the chart and arrange meetings with the supervisor.

<b>TERM 1</b>	<b>Arrangements for choice of essay topic and supervision</b>
Thursday, 1 October	Introductory Lecture
5 to 16 October	Supervisors meet students individually or in groups to discuss possible topics. If a supervisor has not advertised in advance when he or she will be available to see students it is up to the student to arrange to see the supervisor. At the meeting, the student should have a fairly firm idea of the topic for the essay. The student should ask the supervisor whether he or she will agree to supervise and if so to sign the essay choice form.
Friday, 23 October	Students to hand in their essay choice forms, giving first and second choices of supervisor/topic.
26 to 30 October	Faculty Office allocates students to supervisors and publishes allocation of topics and supervisors.
2 to 6 November	<p>Each student meets their supervisor once to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•agree essay title and chapter headings</li> <li>•receive guidance on reading</li> <li>•agree dates for the submission of draft material for feedback from the supervisor</li> <li>•agree dates for feedback</li> </ul>

<b>TERM 2</b>	<b>Writing of essays, feedback on draft material</b>
Before Reading Week	<b>Individual supervision:</b> the student will be entitled to submit two drafts of up to 3,000 words to the supervisor, each submission to be followed by either a one-to-one meeting for feedback or an email response by the supervisor with feedback. It is up to the student to submit the drafts on the agreed dates, and to approach the supervisor to arrange the feedback meetings in accordance with the agreement between them.
By End of February	<b>Seminar-based supervision:</b> students to submit draft of up to 3,000 words for feedback on agreed date and supervisor either meets student to give feedback on the draft or gives feedback by email.
Late February or early March	<b>Individual supervision:</b> students may submit second draft of up to 3,000 words to supervisor by agreed date for feedback and supervisor either meets student to give feedback on the draft or gives feedback by email.
Vacation	By the end of Term 2, you should have substantially completed your essay. No feedback will be given in vacation.
TERM 3 Thursday, 29 April	<b>Submit essays.</b> Hard copy to the UG Faculty Office, and electronically via TurnItIn,



# Research Essays LLB (LAWS3015)

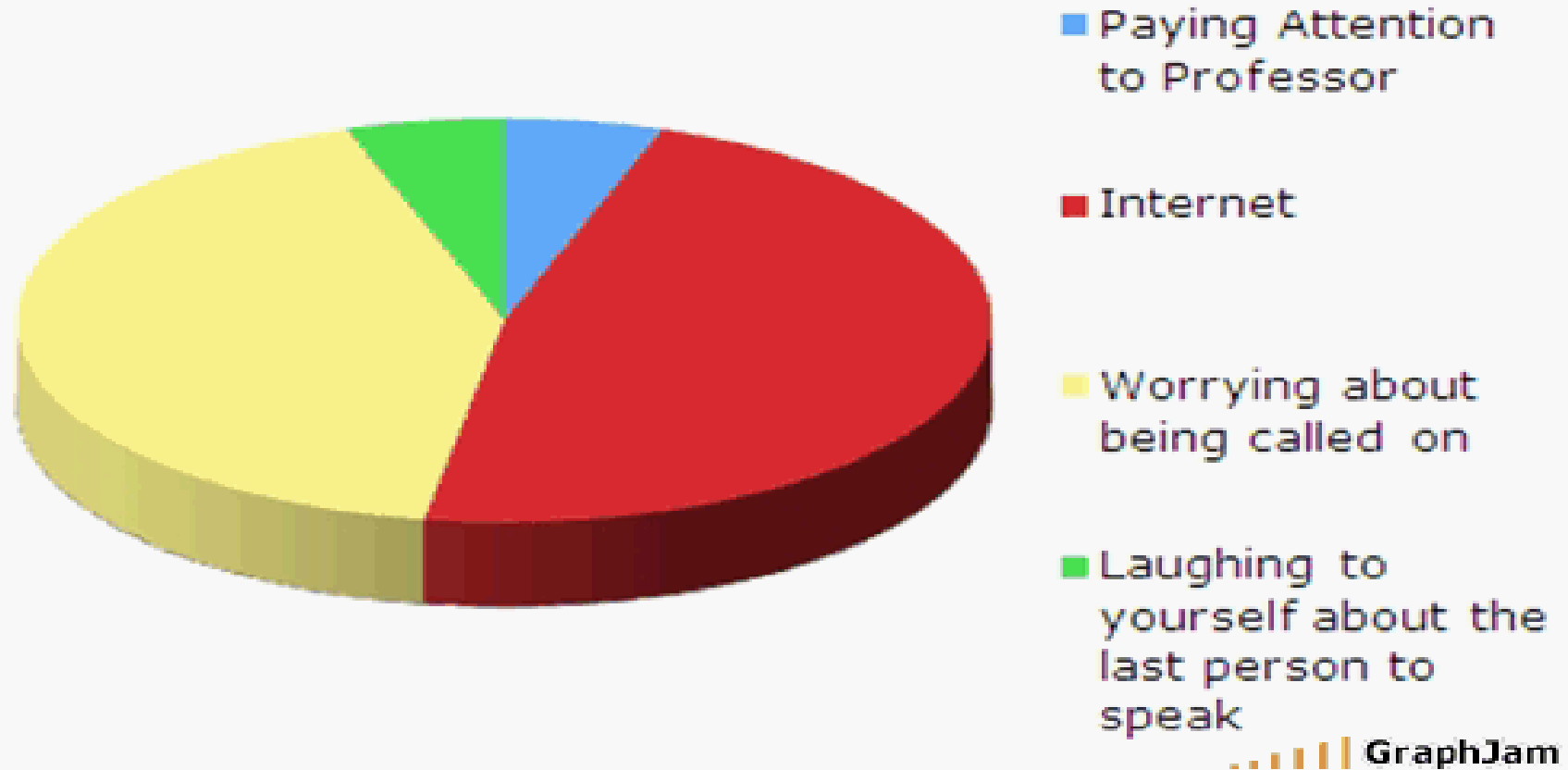
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- **Welcome to the LLB Research Essay website**

This site contains information relating to the procedures for writing the LLB Research Essay.

- [News forum](#)
- [What does reading law do for you? Word document](#)
- [How to write your LLB Research Dissertation Word document](#)
- [Penalties for late or over-length essays PDF document](#)
- [Research Essay Supervisors and Topics for 2009-10 Word document](#)
- [Timetable Chart for 2009-10 Word document](#)
- [Essay Choice Form Word document](#)
- [Supervision Record Form Word document](#)
- [2009/2010 Research Essay Supervisor Allocations](#)

# Law Student Activity During Class





# LLM Dissertation Overview

## Extracts from 'Dissertation Handbook 2010'

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- The dissertation is a compulsory element of your LLM programme and makes up 45 credits (equivalent to a full course) of the 180 credits required for an LLM award.
- This handbook is designed to guide you through the planning and writing of your dissertation.
- If you have previously not had the opportunity to produce a researched paper of some length, you will find this handbook particularly useful.
- The dissertation is more like a 'seen examination' or an extended piece of coursework than the sort of thesis containing original ideas that a doctoral student is expected to submit; although this is not to discourage LLM students from original ideas.
- The dissertation should show that you have identified and understood the key issues in the selected topic and the relevant law and literature (books, articles, reform proposals, etc.), and that you have a capacity for critical analysis.
- The dissertation must originate in issues raised by the course(s) you selected and studied as your dissertation course(s). You are expected to follow that course in the normal way because, although the dissertation may focus on a relatively narrow part of the course, a good understanding of the broader context will improve the quality of the finished work.



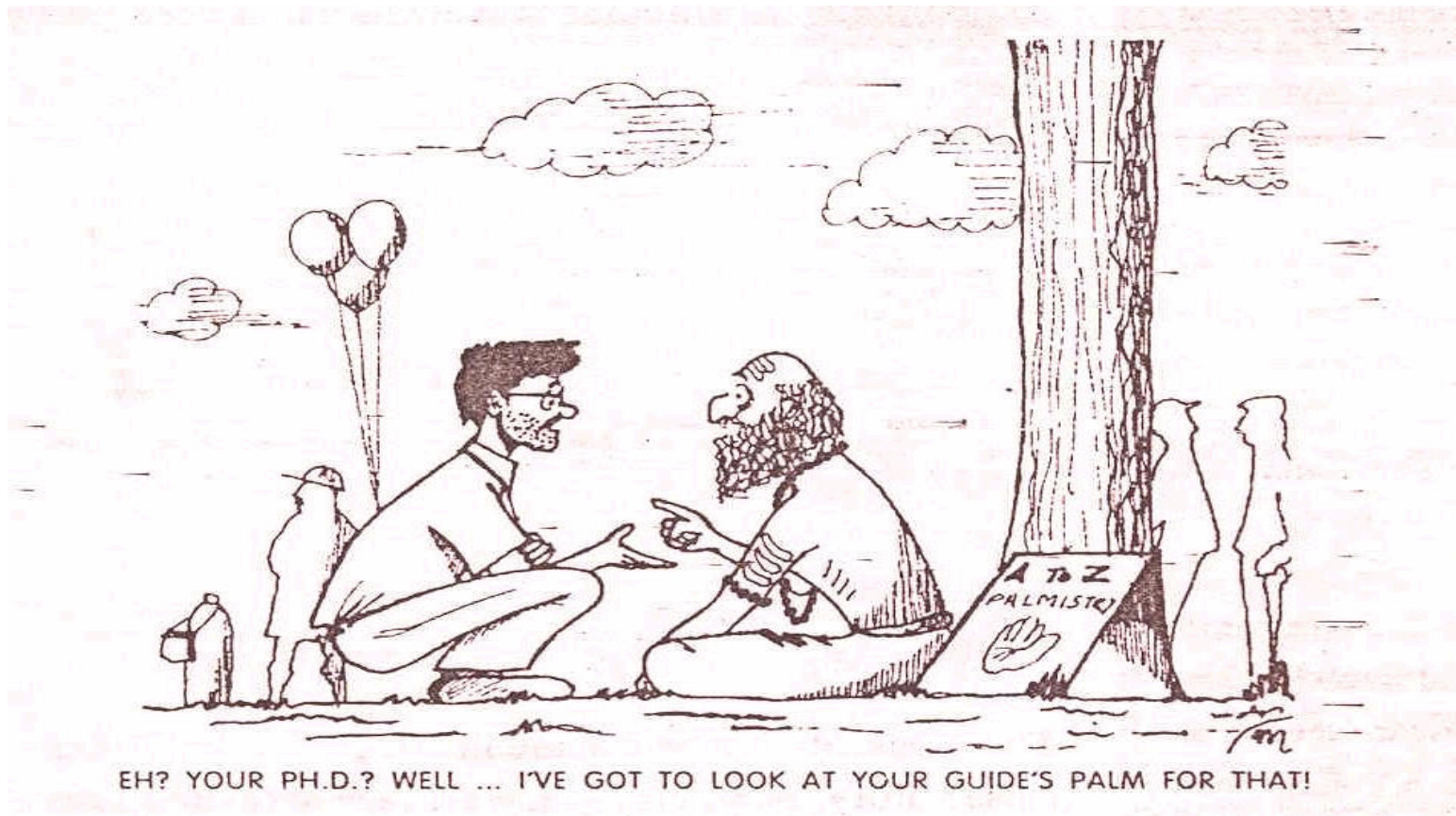
## Extracts from 'Dissertation Handbook 2010'- 2

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- The word limit for the dissertation is 12,000 words, which includes all appendices and endnotes/footnotes but not the bibliography.
- Students at master's level are expected to acquire advanced research and writing skills. The best way to acquire these skills is to engage in the task:
  - read contextually and specifically on your topic;
  - think about your arguments;
  - consider the published viewpoints of others, who may have addressed some part of your topic;
  - question everything;
  - and write.
- Expect to go through more than one draft. Even the most experienced legal commentators will go through many drafts of a paper before it is ready to be shared with others.
- Above all, the dissertation should be an enjoyable, challenging exercise.

# What is a Ph.d?

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# PH.D RESEARCH SEMINAR PROGRAMME

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The following is a programme of seminars designed for research students.

The aims of the programme are to:

- provide research students with a general course in legal research methods, as well as a more tailored approach, depending upon the stage of research reached and the methods adopted;
- provide an advanced course in empirical legal methods;
- offer insights into important 'intellectual currents' through a series of seminars exploring key thinkers and theories;
- encourage students to participate actively in the research students' forum;
- provide a drop-in 'methods clinic';
- give practical information and advice at all stages of the PhD process – getting started, building the research project, upgrade from MPhil to PhD, PhD examination, disseminating one's research and career planning during the doctorate, and post-doctoral research opportunities.



# FIRST YEAR PROGRAMME

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## **Introduction to PhD life**

The aim of these seminars is to introduce research students to academic life in the Faculty of Laws and provide some stimulating reflection on starting the PhD process.

- **Seminar 1 (Thursday 8 October): What is a Law PhD?**  
What to expect; introduction to the research studies team and research students' forum (Please note this session will take place as part of the research students' induction day)
- **Seminar 2 (Tuesday 13 October): Getting Started**  
literature review, research questions and focal theories; honing your research proposal and framing your thesis; the research and writing process, starting your research log (JH).

Please read H. Kritzer, 'Research is a Messy Business' (Ch. 23 of S. Halliday and P. Schmidt, *Conducting Law and Society Research: Reflections on Methods and Practice* (CUP, 2009), pp. 264-285).



## Building your research project

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This aim of this set of seminars is to introduce research students to some of the main research methodologies and research designs, and to discuss their appropriateness for individual research questions. The advanced course in empirical legal methods provides a more tailored approach.

- **Seminar 3 (27 October): Structuring your thesis:** macro and micro approaches (JH)  
Please read: P. Dunleavy, *Authoring a PhD*, Chs. 3 and 4 (pp. 43-103) (Jane Holder).
- **Seminar 4 (17 November): Introduction to Methods I** 'armchair vs wellies'; social research methods – the nature and value of quantitative and qualitative research (Professor Pascoe Pleasence)
- **Seminar 5 (1 December): Introduction to Methods II** social research design; applying theory to research questions (Pascoe Pleasence)
- **Seminars 6 and 7 (12 January and 19 January): Advanced course in empirical legal methods** (Pascoe Pleasence)



# Intellectual currents

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The aim of this set of seminars is to provide a 'way in' to influential theories and intellectual currents. Available generally to members of the Faculty as well as research students, the seminar leader will provide a guide to key works in each area.

- Seminar 8 (26 January): **Law and Darwinism** (Professor Dawn Oliver)
- Seminar 9 (2 February): **Feminist theories**
- Seminar 10 (9 February): **Systems, communication and autopoiesis theories** (Luhmann, Habermas, Teubner) (Andreas Philipopoulos-Mihalopoulos, University of Westminster)
- Seminar 11 (16 February): **Law and (New) Governance** (Professor Joanne Scott)
- Seminar 12 (23 February): **Ecological theories** (Jane Holder)
- Seminar 13 (2 March): **Criminology**
- Seminar 14 (9 March) **Bentham(ism)** (Professor Philip Schofield)



## SECOND YEAR RESEARCH STUDENTS

### Further dimensions of research

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- **Seminar 1 (6 October): Interdisciplinary research and 'Law in Context':** the joys and dangers (Jane Holder).  
Please read L. Lattuca, *Creating Interdisciplinarity* (Vanderbilt UP, 2001) ch. 1.
- **Seminar 2 (20 October): Case study approaches** (Jane Holder) Please read the classic work in this area, 'C. Mitchell, 'Case and Situation Analysis' (1983) *Sociological Review* 188.
- **Seminar 3 (3 November): Dissemination:** publishing your research in journals (Jane Holder)
- **AND Research methodology 'clinic' (3 November, 12.30-2.00pm)** (Jane Holder and Pascoe Pleasence)





## LSE100

### Understanding the causes of things launched on Monday 11 January 2010.

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- **Innovative and interdisciplinary**

LSE100 is an innovative new course aimed at introducing first year undergraduates to the fundamental elements of thinking as a social scientist by exploring real problems and real questions, drawing on a range of disciplines across the social sciences.

This distinctive course will actively challenge students to analyse questions of current public concern and of intellectual debate from a rigorous social science perspective.

- **Broadening the intellectual experience**

Focusing on 'big' questions – such as 'How should we manage climate change?', 'Does culture matter?' and 'Why are great events so difficult to predict?' – students will explore the different types of evidence, alternative forms of explanation and different strategies for abstraction and modelling that are used in the different social sciences.

In this way, the course aims not only to broaden the intellectual experience of undergraduates at the School, but also thereby to deepen students' understanding of their own discipline.



## LSE100

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- **Developing critical skills**

The course also helps students develop the **critical skills** that underpin the study and application of the social sciences.

**Students will learn research skills, including information skills and analysis of evidence, and communication skills, including both writing and presentation skills.**

- **Leading lecturers, challenging classes**

Among the lecturers in the first term will be Professors Nicholas Stern, Rita Astuti and Michael Cox.

While the topics of the three-week modules will be broad-ranging, the classes all follow a similar format aimed at developing an understanding of the core methodological concepts of evidence, explanation and theory and at building and reinforcing critical research and communication skills.

The lectures and classes are carefully designed to be challenging but, at the same time, accessible to students from all backgrounds and disciplines.

- You will find an overview of the course and more detail on <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/LSE100/Home.aspx>



# Concluding observations

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- ❑ Concentrated effort to integrate research at all levels and enhance research competences at UCL Laws
- ❑ Tailored to fit in with the particular demands of the LLB, LLM and PhD programmes
- ❑ Excellent feedback from LLB +LMM students + generally they do well (also enhance their future career)
- ❑ Fertile ground to identify/test:
  - future researchers (esp. LLM students);
  - appropriate areas/topics and supervisors
  - suitability for conducting research



