

Diversity and Inclusion Audit Modern Greek

2023-24

As part of the Faculty wide conversation on diversity and inclusion, the Sub-faculty of Byzantine and Modern Greek is undertaking an annual diversity and inclusion audit. The aim is to revise our curriculum and to make sure that a plurality of voices, subject positions and experiences related to the Greek world and the Greek language are represented in our undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, our research, events and presentations, as well as our outreach and impact projects.

Our Sub-Faculty has a longstanding tradition in the study of literature/language and identity, diversity and Greek popular culture, ethnic minorities in Greece and their cultural expression, as well as gender and/in Greek literature and Greek queer cultures. Conferences and events on these topics who have been acknowledged as agenda setting in Greek studies internationally have happened in Oxford in recent years, often producing highly acclaimed publications (eg. 'Ourselves and Others' (1996/7), 'Gender and Identity in Contemporary Greece' (2008), 'Diversity in 20th and 21st century Greek Popular Cultures' (2015), 'Greece in Crisis: Culture, Identity, Politics' (2016), 'Crossings: Negotiating Borders and Boundaries in the Mediterranean' (2017), 'New Queer Greece' (2017), 'We have never been racist: Rethinking Race and Ethnicity in Modern Greek Studies' (2021) and 'Thirty Years Later: Rethinking Albanian-Greek Identity' (2022)). In 2023-2024 we hosted two artists whose work promotes diversity and inclusion: choreographer/performer Dimitris Papaioannou, who held a research lunch with postgraduates and offered a very well attended Q+A in the Taylorian, and director/performer Mario Banushi, perhaps the most recognised and influential Albanian-Greek artist at the moment, who held a masterclass on his work and an open seminar in the Taylorian, speaking among others on citizenship, inclusion, racism and the role of art in addressing all these.

Our language and translation work invites students to examine a series of topics related to diversity and inclusion in the Greek-speaking world, to understand complex debates in the Greek public sphere (eg. the "memory wars", the rise of racism and the antiracist movement, the new gender, intersectional feminist, antiracist and transqueer mobilization in Athens and Thessaloniki), as well as to address and critique the official Greek and Cypriot state policies regarding language education and standardization, literary canon formation and ethnic and religious minority representation. In 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 we undertook to diversify even further the corpus of texts students are asked to study and translate, a project that will be continuing throughout 2022-2023.

In this context, undergraduate and graduate students also participated in 2021-2 in the Faculty's "Diversity translation project". The work finally chosen to be translated and published was by trans activist Erofili Kokkali, titled "Stories of Lola Karambola" (2022). Kokkali went on to publish "Lola Karabola" as a book in Greece, citing her

experience of working with the SubFaculty of Greek as formative and influential in her decision to expand the project.

A series of other literary texts by underrepresented voices were identified in the process and the aim is to continue their translation as part of an ongoing workshop in 2023 and 2024.

Undergraduate teaching

Since 2021, the Sub-Faculty has organised special meetings with the participation of tutors and students, where we tried to identify which parts of the curriculum need to be revised in order to reflect new approaches and to make space for underrepresented voices, especially those from gender, ethnic and religious minorities and racialised groups.

As a result, the **Prelims Literature** course has now been revised and includes a much more diverse set of authors writing in Greek. It also includes novels and films that directly confront racism, homophobia and gender subordination in Greek society. Short stories focusing on intercommunity dialogue and trauma in Cyprus, Greek Albanian identity and racism, and a short film addressing transphobia, were added to the list of material taught in 2023.

The **Prelims History** (part of Paper IV) also includes a special focus on minorities, Greek Jewish history, religion and identity in Greece and Cyprus, the treatment of religious minorities and the exchange of populations.

The **FHS course** has a number of relevant papers – the contents of which have now also been revised to reflect this ongoing dialogue.

In **Paper VIII** students are presented with the possibility to study a very wide range of authors that fall outside the male and heteronormative dominated canon and/or to consider approaching a variety of texts through the lenses of feminism, cultural studies, critical race theory and queer theory. We have decided to invite students to devote at least one of their tutorials on questions of racialization and racism in Greek society as approached in literary and/or cinematic works and another one on the representation of gender and sexual identity in literature written in Greek. We have also worked to include, as part of the Paper VIII and Paper XII material, options to study literature written outside the Greek state and/or by bilingual authors. Finally, a more focused “Decolonizing Hellas” topic was added in 2023 to the topics available to study for Paper VIII.

In **Paper XII** a number of options (Greek women writers; Translation theory and practice; Greek cinema; Greek popular culture) have been redesigned in recent years to allow further reflection on issues of diversity and inclusion, and to increase the freedom students have to integrate in their work the analysis of under-represented authors, artists and genres, bilingual and transqueer expression, new media, migrant and refugee experience. In 2023-2024, we continued redrafting the description of these already very open Papers in our handbooks, in order to underline these new openings (eg. by pointing out to students the possibility of also studying short films and documentary in the Cinema paper; trans women autobiography in the Women

Writers paper; graphic novels, graffiti, rap and hiphop in the Popular Culture paper; and texts published in blogs and fanzines in the Translation Theory/Practice paper). There is an ongoing conversation about these papers (and about Paper XI) in our Subfaculty, which we expect to produce further proposals for change in 2023-2024.

In **Paper XIV (extended essay)** our students have in the past benefited from the openness of the paper and adopted oblique approaches to canonical texts, or addressed non-canonical authors and topics. Recent submission-based work has included queer readings of canonical and non-canonical authors, lesbian literature in the 1930s, race and ethnicity in Rebetiko music, transqueer identity and literature, gender violence in film, the Greek family biopolitics/necropolitics in literature and cinema.

Last, but not least, **Paper XI** has been long identified as the paper that needs urgent revision (as it currently includes only male canonical authors). There has been a long conversation (and a very heated debate) about all of the options in Paper XI. Some interim measures have been taken, but the SF will discuss a detailed programme of radically reorganizing Paper XI (along the lines of the Portuguese Paper XI changes, and after taking advice from colleagues in Portuguese on the experience of their new Paper XI model). Details of the interim changes and the direction the Subfaculty has taken have been included in our previous EDI audits as well as SF minutes.

Graduate teaching, research and impact

Our main graduate seminar and reading group in the modern period is normally organised around certain keywords every year. In recent years these included 'racialization and ethnicity', 'transqueer', 'queer survival', 'citizenship', 'hauntology and archive trouble', 'migration' and 'governmentality'.

The Sub-Faculty has also entered into a partnership with the Universities of Amsterdam and (as from 2023 also) Durham, creating *Greek Studies Now*, a Greek Cultural analysis and study network (see <https://greekstudiesnow.org>). Among the network's primary aims is to promote diversity and inclusion in Modern Greek Studies, as well as encourage further conversations on (the effects of) racism, gender violence, homophobia and transphobia, necropolitical border control, toxic masculinity and nationalism in Greek culture and society.

With the participation of students and staff of the participating universities, the network has already organised more than 20 events (as of 2022), created at least 24 hours of video material and a long series of blogs on topics related to the aims listed above.

The Sub-Faculty also follows closely the work of Greece-based initiatives such as 'Decolonize Hellas', 'Feminist Autonomous Centre' and 'Signal: researching and confronting the far right', aiming to collaborate more closely with them in the future, in events and the building of teaching resources.

Last, but not least, of the senior members of the Sub-Faculty, Kostas Skordyles has a longstanding interest in the history of Greek Jewish populations and in religious and ethnic minorities more generally, and participates in various research and teaching

initiatives to diversify Greek language teaching and decolonize Greek translation studies.

Kristina Gedgaudaite (former postgraduate, then teaching associate, a role she kept in 2023-2024) is a specialist on ethnic memory, conflict and identity, and the trauma of populations exchange and refugeehood. She currently works in close proximity with members of the Sub-Faculty on a Marie Curie Fellowship studying the rise of graphic novels in Greece, with a particular interest in the ways this genre is used to articulate minority and suppressed memories.

Dimitris Papanikolaou's work is known for its focus on Greek queer cultures and the combat against homophobia and gender violence, as well as its iconoclastic readings of canonical literature and cinema, often from the prism of queer theory and theories of biopolitics. In the last six years he has co-edited volumes on *New Queer Greece* (2019), *Greece and the Global South* (2022) and *Queer Politics and Memory* (2021); he has been a co-convenor and editor of *Motherland, I See You*, a project for the (diverse) study of Greek cinema (2021); a co-convenor of *Queer Politics/Public Mourning*, a series of public meetings in Athens to mark the killing of queer and antifascist activist Zak Kostopoulos (2020-2021); the co-convenor of *Performative Citizenship* a series of public events in EMST, the Greek National Museum of Contemporary Art (2022-2023); the convenor of public programmes in the 2024 edition of the Athens and Epidaurus Festival, where he introduced the programme *Future Perfect?*, hosting sold-out talks on, among others, marginal archives, algorithmic cultures and surveillance, communities and care and a roundtable on 'how to live together' ; finally, the advisor of the oral history and public engagement project 'HIV in Greece: A Political Archive', run by Positive Voice, the Association of People Living with HIV in Greece (2019-ongoing).