Editors Letter

The new look, revamped and raring to go Department of Politics newsletter is here. Two issues a term, a twitter handle and Facebook Page the Political Animal has arrived. Weekly seminars, contentious topics, career advice, student opportunities, debate, critique, analysis… It is clear then that the mission of the Political Animal is to engage young people in discussing politics and to inspire and intrigue active citizenship.

Also in this issue...

Spot your quote:
Our favourite quotes from the Politics Department submitted by many of you feature throughout this issue.

The Writers’ Corner
Want to contribute to the Newsletter? Write to us on any contentious topic that month and email it to our email address: ujpoliticsnewsletter@gmail.co.za

"[South Africa’s]
Parliament is neither an unmitigated failure, nor is it an unblemished success”
-Aubrey Matshiqi

“Parliament should be a forum for national debate…”
-Dr F. Ginwala

Our favourite notice board quotes:
“Don’t raise your voice, improve your argument” - Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu

“I think therefore I am” - Rene Descartes

“Man is by nature a Political Animal” - Aristotle

Wars is when your government tells you who the enemy is… revolution is when you figure it out” - Mlungisi

“No prizes for guessing our absolute favourite” #PoliticalAnimal

"This Newsletter reflects the opinions and views of student contributors and not necessarily the views of the Politics Department or the University of Johannesburg"
The Story of Rick Turner:

A “white consciousness”

-Nezo Sobekwa

Billy Keniston, author of Rick Turner’s biography gives an intriguing account of the life of a man considered to be one of the greatest original thinkers to come out of South Africa. At the University of Johannesburg politics seminar series, Kingston highlights major themes and lessons from Rick’s life, chief amongst them is the power of choice. This explains the title of the biography “Choosing to be free: the life story of Rick Turner”. A second theme of Rick’s life (and alluded to in the title) is the desire to be free. It is to this aspect of Rick’s life that we turn our attention. An anti-apartheid activist in the 1960s and 1970s Keniston lets us know that much of Rick’s life during that period was spent educating white South African’s on the true meanings of freedom. He punctuates in his efforts the idea that even well-intentioned white people of the time were prisoners within themselves (worst still the staunch conservatives during that time).

One of his most famous quotes is “The refusal of blacks to want to be ‘like whites’ is not racism. It is in good taste.” really what he is saying here, as Keniston shares with us, is the notion that white people were within a supremacy prison of some sort. That they never really knew what it was to be human beings living with other human beings. Their existence was never one rooted in free choice, it was based on pre-determined laws to which they had no choice. And so when blacks are within all sorts of other prisons, why would they want to be like whites who too were in a prison.

A great seminar with many interesting angles. The book promises to be an eye opener into the realities of the white struggle, but greater than that, into the realities of our life’s choices. Succinctly put, Rick fought for South Africans (black and white) to break the societal limitations in their lives. Or as Bob Marley puts it “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, non but ourselves can free our mind”

What’s your take?

More notice board quotes:

“...you educate a woman, you educate a generation” - Brigham Young

“If you’re not careful the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing” - Malcolm X.

“An eye for and eye will make the whole world blind” - Mahatma Gandhi
Advocate Thuli Madonsela has become a familiar feature in our media. One could attribute this either to increased public participation in civil duties or increased corruption in state organs. Either way, the role of the public protector and associated duties and responsibilities to the public have become more apparent. The wide powers the office of the public protector possesses, as well as the discretion of this office to investigate certain cases, much to the disdain of particular high level officials, has become an issue of public debate.

Section 181 and 182 of the Constitution of South Africa stipulate the roles and functions of the Chapter 9 Institutions as well as those of the Public Protector. This section establishes The Public Protector as an institution that should strengthen constitutional democracy in the Republic and it should do so independently and is subject only to the Constitution. Although independent, it is accountable to the National Assembly. With such wide powers it may be easy, as many (government officials and ruling party top officials) have argued recently, for the public protector to abuse its powers.

The profile of Adv Madonsela on the Public Protector website (ironically) mentions that she contributed as one of the drafters of the very constitution that she and her office are accused of abusing. Prior to being appointed she was working at the South African Law reform Commission as Project leader. What is interesting about her appointment is that she received a 100% vote in Parliament in favour of her appointment. This suggests that she is not only highly regarded by the ruling party but opposition parties also recognise, or recognised at that time, her capabilities.

During her tenure, she has had to investigate very high profile citizens such as the Deputy President of South Africa and former Deputy President of the African National Congress Kgalema Motlanthe and the infamous former minister of Communications Dina Pule, where it was found that she had misled Parliament. More recently, she has been accused by opposition parties of stalling the release of the Nkandla report, now due to be released on Wednesday the 19th of March. A report that could adversely affect the President of the Republic Mr Jacob Zuma as well as the minister of Public Works two months ahead of elections. With great irony and some coincidence, this is the same date as that of the IEC’s invitation for political parties to sign the IEC code of conduct.

More recently, her office has released the report on the Chief Operating Officer of SABC, Mr Hlaudi Motsoeneng. The report states that his appointment was irregular and that he lied about his qualifications, one of them being that he completed matric which is in fact incorrect. The Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association has accused Madonsela of not conducting her investigation carefully and thus refuse the findings. Her findings on this provisory report on Nkandla have been greeted with the same re- ception, with ANC refusing to accept her report that Zuma indeed failed to protect state funds and has cost the tax payer dearly.

Although the Public Protector’s findings may not be binding as such, its political and moral force and influence on the public and its perceptions on government are important factors, especially with the upcoming national elections. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to see how the office holds up after the release of the Nkandla report and the impact it will have on the electorate. Are our Chapter nine institutions still relevant when their findings may not be binding as such, its political and moral force and influence on the public and its perceptions on government are important factors, especially with the upcoming national elections. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to see how the office holds up after the release of the Nkandla report and the impact it will have on the electorate. Are our Chapter nine institutions still relevant when their findings can be tossed aside at the whim of those involved? Are we truly protected or are these institutions just for show?

Are we Protected?
Chapter 9 Institutions still relevant?
- Matsie Molope

The politics Department Hosts the AYGS Youth Conference
Inter-university Debates!
UJ represented itself proudly at the 8th Annual Institute of South Africa (AISA) Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) Conference, hosted by the UJ Arts Centre from 16 – 19 February. As part of conference Student students from across South Africa competed in a Model UN debate challenge, entitled, Going Green: Eco-awareness or eco-unwillingness. Three UJ Politics Honours students competed in the debate and presented their country’s position on the topic: Noxolo Gwala (Azerbaijan); Grace-Bingoto (France) and Simon Gray (the Russia federation). Congruntations to Noxolo Gwala and Simon Gray who won first and second place respectively in the debate!

Dr S Graham (UN Debate Facilitator)
Senior Lecturer, UJ Politics Department
Justice At a Price?
Quality of SA’s Justice.
- Luanda Mpungose

Oscar Pistorius the infamous paraplegic athlete also known as the ‘Blade Runner’ has a new found reputation. Oscar is on trial for allegedly shooting and murdering his late girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in his Pretoria home on Valentine’s Day 14 February 2013. He pleads not guilty.

The marriage between South Africa’s legal system and its citizens is nothing short of colourful. We explore more of that relationship by looking at some of the social issues to come out of this trial.

It would seem that the most apparent of these issues is access to justice. The ordinary citizen versus Oscar — was George Orwell right? Are some ‘animals’ more equal than others? One enjoys the cushions and safety nets that are acquired through his monetary capacity whilst a regular man who might be accused of the same legal charges may not be afforded some of the privileges Pistorius has enjoyed, let alone an opportunity to prove his/her case the same way. This trial has made apparent that a good and experienced attorney is imperative in a legal case of this calibre regardless of the status of the accused. Pistorius has been under the defence of Barry Roux and his legal team, a criminal law defence attorney a likened to top defence lawyer Johnnie Cochran (OJ Simpson’s defence attorney).

The Guardian Newspaper has estimated Roux to be charging around R50 000 in Billable hours a day which totals R300 000 a week and this trial seems like it is far from over. Does money buy you better justice? Secondly, the accused arrives escorted by honorary guards from the South African Police Service and bodyguards daily. Also, the witnesses in this trial have their identities undisclosed to the public; the phenomenon in regular murder trials is that witnesses are afraid to come forward as they fear of what might become of their lives and the lives of their loved ones. The route to justice between Pistorius and a regular South African man holds few similarities.

Other social issues include the shorthand of the law (those in rural parts of the nation) have to travel miles for meaningful justice (which it would seem is rather expensive). The gendered nature of South African violence is yet another issue. Sure our legal system is not without its flaws, however some questions are worth considering. Are the rich and famous at a greater advantage in legal criminal trials? How well does our legal system live up to the words in the constitutions preamble “…every citizen is equally protected by law…?”

Social Media
Twitter is on the way.
AFM
Look out for the Politics Department on twitter soon. Get the low down on the events happening in and around the university.
Keep up to date with the weekly seminar on via twitter.
Find out which publications are freely available for students at the department.

Writer’s Corner:
Eager to write? Want to contribute?
Write to us at ujpoliticsnewsletter@gmail.com

Every week one article will be selected for publication with full recognition. What are you waiting for?

The Political Animal Team:
Editor:
Nezo Sobekwa
@Nez_Sobekwa
Assistant Editor:
Luanda Mpungose
Assistant Editor:
Matsie Molope

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“was George Orwell right? Are some ‘animals’ more equal than others?”

QS Ratings: We made it!!!
You may already be aware that if your looking for UJ, you ought to look in the top 4% percent of universities in the world. That would place us in the top 650 universities in the world, the youngest university on that list...

... but did you know that the politics department in rated amongst the top 200 departments of politics and international relations in the world? Yes indeed, the only other department in the Faculty of Humanities to enjoy this accomplishment is the English department!

UJ Politics #PoliticalAnimals!!