



YE END OF HISTORY?

A quick history lesson:

Ciaran Bermingham: Course Rep 2nd year, Cultural Studies

'The University of Sussex was the first of the new wave of universities founded in the 1960s, receiving its Royal Charter in August 1961. Forty years on, the University has become a leading teaching and research institution. In 2003, we created new schools and departments, which support our long-established inter-disciplinary and subject-specific approaches to teaching and research. We currently have over 11,000 students, 2,500 staff and turnover is £100m a year.' (Source: Online Application Form for the University of Sussex)

Ironically, that's probably the only history lesson you'll be getting here as the History department are shutting down their inter-

sort US out



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USSU

socialist
STUDENTS and

Autonomous Students

for the USSU campaign of the same name

www.ussu.net/sortusout

www.socialiststudents.org.uk

disciplinary courses. The Department is financially unable or unwilling to convene modules for subjects such as Cultural Studies, which of course rely heavily on inter-school academia. If your major is history, you will no longer be able to do modules in other subjects; if your major is in other subjects you will no longer be able to do a History-run module.

So, while the University is very proud to give history lessons in all its published propaganda about its intellectual traditions, its claims lack substance outside the rosy image painted by the PR department. This is undoubtedly indicative of Sussex University's prioritisation of profit over principle.

Is the interdisciplinary ethos of Sussex fast becoming history? Please send your answers, 500 words max. with full bibliography to Alasdair Smith, Vice-Chancellor, c/o Sussex House, University of Sussex. You will be marked on your use of favourable language and your levels of syncophantic ability.



ANOTHER QUICK HISTORY LESSON

Enjoy them while they last:

Alex

In the past few years there has been much opposition to many of the university management's misguided stances, policies and plans:

- the last occupation in 2001 was against the introduction of top up fees, which were whole heartedly endorsed and supported by our Vice-Chancellor, Alasdair Smith
- Last year alone saw two protest parties, one on East Slope Hill to protest the construction of more car parks on our campus, and one in front of Bramber House to protest management's policy of ignoring student input into the running of the university
- Last year also saw the occupation of the Bolthole (the cafe in the library). After catering services had to close the cafe because of lack of staff, a few angry students, protesting against mismanagement and for self-empowerment entered the cafe and opened their own. Autonomous cafe provided (and still provides although irregularly) vegan food at donation price.

- This year in the USSU Annual General Meeting a motion of no-confidence in the University Council - the most senior University committee – was passed. The result is an official campaign by the Union that seeks to pressurise the university into taking student demands into account. For details of these extensive set of demands see <http://www.ussu.net/sortusout> and click on the 'Student Submission' button)

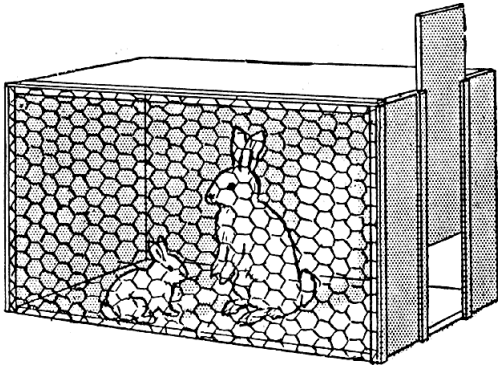
The campaign has consisted in a letter writing campaign to the university management ('Write the Wrong'), a petition (which had reached 1,311 signatures by the end of autumn term) and an independent film called 'From the Top Down'. The film will illustrate the problems faced by students on campus whilst trying to remain objective. If the council does not give USSU a satisfactory reply the union has been mandated by the AGM to call a student strike, a day of rallies and protest in which students will be encouraged to boycott lectures (more on this in the next issue of *Sort US Out*)

The *Sort US Out* campaign and the strike policy was approved unanimously by the hundreds of students who attended the Annual General Meeting in November 2005.

Do you have a story for *Sort US Out*?

We want to hear your stories of academic under-provision, under funded or unfunded sports teams, poor housing, lack of food provision, lack of books in the library, especially if you're a student rep.

Email: sortusout@ussu.sussex.ac.uk



On The Home Front.....

Matti, East Slope Resident

For a lot of us, university has been the first real chance to move away from home. Its the first time we've really had to be the ones who take care of rent, bills, keeping the place in good shape etc.

None of us were expecting luxury accommodation. Student accommodation was hardly ever gonna provide us with gold sinks and a man to dry you when you stepped out of the shower. But, whether on or off campus, what we're getting is nothing short of a pisstake.

We've had all sorts of problems with our flats. It wouldn't be so bad if we got them fixed quickly, but they don't. In my flat eight of us shared one toilet because it took over two months for someone to come and fix the broken one! Section Eleven of the Landlord and Tenant Act (1985) clearly states that it is the landlord's job to keep the homes 'in repair'. In many cases, they aren't.

People in host families haven't faired any better. Many host families weren't checked out by the uni at all, leaving students paying up to £36 a week more for even worse facilities.

On top of this there are plans to pull down East Slope and build new expensive flats with en-suite facilities so the uni can make money from conferences. By getting rid of affordable housing, the university is showing clearly that they couldn't give a toss about us, as long as they're making money. The Vice Chancellor's salary has gone up by over £15,000 in the past four years to £143,359.

Housing is one of the many issues we should be campaigning on. If we take action together, like going on strike alongside staff, we can embarrass the uni into getting its act together. Or those of us paying rent to the university could withhold our direct debit payments, hitting them in the pocket. Rent strikes like these have been used by students at kings College Cambridge both in 1999 and 2003 to stop increases in rent. We can use it here to make sure the university, our landlord lives up to its responsibilities.

SORT IT OUT!

What some students said about the service here at Sussex:

'Just to highlight, we have no seminars, and its apparently university policy that twelve credit courses only require two hours of contact time a week! Lectures were chosen over seminars because obviously fewer staff are required! Those I have spoken to in my year want to know what is going to be done. I appreciate its due to staff shortages but this doesn't make it acceptable.' - Geography, First Year

'Overspending on frills like electronic whiteboards but underspending on essentials like books'

'I am very upset about the fact that there are simply not enough contact hours. I think this poses a great problem to many students. ...One hour's worth of lectures and seminars is just touching on subjects of great complexity and it is simply impossible to get anything out of this. I just don't see why I pay money if I have to end up teaching myself anyway!'



Excellence in English?

Anna Golightly, USSU Socialist Students

Sussex University has long been known for a high standard of teaching in English. According to the University website '*English at Sussex was rated 'excellent' in the higher Education Funding Council's assessment of teaching quality, and received a grade 5 out of 5 in the last Research Assessment Exercise.*'

However the reality of the current situation is that due to cuts in funding this record of excellence in English is beginning to slide. Last year, for example, the weekly seminars for the first year 'Pastoral Poetry' course were abruptly cut at the end of the spring term, without any student consultation or prior notice. Seminars containing twelve to fifteen students were replaced with a lecture of three hundred students, much to the dissatisfaction of students and teaching staff alike. (Many of the latter were postgraduate students who were only paid by the hour.)

This year, second year English students have again had to put up with a lack of seminars. The core course for English, 'The Novel' has been taught by a single weekly lecture series. I am not disputing that lectures are an important teaching method, but it is widely agreed that smaller seminar discussion groups are essential for reviewing and validating concepts introduced in lectures, and the lack of contact with a seminar

group has left many students feeling isolated and distanced from the course. There was also considerable dissatisfaction that the lectures were disjointed and badly co-ordinated.

In the face of overwhelming discontent, and a petition signed by a majority of second year English students, the course administrators were forced to hold a meeting in which they admitted that resources for 'The Novel' were 'quite limited'. They justified these cuts by arguing that it was the only way seminars in our English courses could be funded. Most students have indeed found their other, seminar based English courses have been of good quality this term. However, I find it an extremely bitter pill to swallow that for one half of the course to be of the high standard Sussex lays claim to, the other half must be miserably under-funded.

As a result of a campaign by English students we have been told that from now, our year groups will have seminars for every course, which just goes to show that protesting and petitioning can be effective. On the other hand, the English department have recently reduced the number of options for third year students next year. All third year students must study one particular author in detail in the autumn term, and what particularly concerns me is that we can no longer study the work of a female author.

Sussex was founded on the principle of seminars and tutorials as a means of direct debate, and independent study for students. I believe that the latter of these is the only one that is not now being steadily eroded away, the reason being that it costs the university very little!

Socialist Students meets every Tuesday at 5pm
Training Room One, Falmer House

Sort US Out meets every Wednesday, 4pm in
Falmer House Meeting Room, 2nd Floor.