

1830s Emergency Motion Saving American Studies passed 21 January 2016

Proposer: Aliyah Rawat (BME LGBT+)

Second: Connor Rand (Undergraduate Education Officer)

UNION NOTES

1. There are proposed changes concerning degrees in the American Studies department (courses affected would include BA American Studies, American History, American and English Literature, English and American Literature, American Literature with Creative Writing and Film and American Studies) which would see the replacement of a very significant number of second year module options with two generalised compulsory modules and a significantly reduced amount of optional modules for second year study, thus significantly reducing the diversity and appeal of what is designed to be an interdisciplinary humanities course
2. These changes have been proposed in order to a) make the American Studies degree 'more streamlined' and b) as a cost-cutting procedure
3. These changes are set to be finalised in the immediate future, and will affect current first year American Studies undergraduates in their second year as well as future students
4. No current American Studies undergraduates have been consulted about these proposed changes and any information about these changes has been deliberately withheld from students until the proposed changes are entirely finalised
5. UEA's webpage advertising the degree boasts that it is number one in the country for American Studies and holds a 96% student satisfaction rate, and still currently lists that a large, diverse number of modules are available for second year study¹ for both current students and prospective students, which is false advertisement
6. It is a requirement of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs)² that universities provide clear and correct information regarding courses, including course structure and module information. Under the CPRs, giving misleading or outdated information or a misleading impression constitutes what is known as a misleading action and breaches student's consumer rights.
7. There currently remains no information openly available about these changes to current students who are investing large sums of money into their undergraduate degree, nor is there information openly available to prospective students who will have made a misinformed choice with the 2016/17 entry UCAS deadline having been 15th January 2016. There is insufficient information provision which presents an issue under consumer law

UNION BELIEVES

1. The current variety of module options available for second year American Studies undergraduates is hugely varied and allows for specialisation into specific topics which is

¹ <https://www.uea.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/degree/detail/ba-american-studies> [accessed: 15th January 2016]

²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415732/Undergraduate_students_-_your_rights_under_consumer_law.pdf [accessed: 15th January 2016]

highly beneficial in preparing students for their dissertations, in allowing students to advance and broaden their intellectual knowledge, in providing representation outside of the canon, and for allowing staff who have done significant amounts of research on these fields to teach their specialisation

2. The proposed module changes for second year American Studies would negate all of the benefits stated above
3. Students should have been consulted in regards to these changes and should have openly been made aware that these were set to happen, and should not have to wait until the changes are finalised and cannot be actively opposed to be told about these
4. UEA's American Studies department is currently ranked as first in the country with a very high student satisfaction rate, and much of this is due to the diversity of the course, its options for specialisation, and that it is taught by professors who have done research in the fields many of these modules are about. Reworking the course in this way, which many students may oppose, may lead to UEA losing its number one status and lowering its student satisfaction rate

UNION RESOLVES

1. The information regarding the proposed changes to American Studies courses should be openly published on the university's website for all students, potential students, staff members, potential staff members and members of the general public to have access to
2. Current American Studies undergraduates and teaching staff should be consulted on these changes, and should be made aware of the routes they can take to oppose these changes, both before they are finalised and after they have been finalised if they are taken forward
3. Current first year American Studies students (including those on joint degrees) and incoming first year American Studies students should be directly informed of these proposed changes to their degree. Although the details of these changes are still being worked upon on a week-to-week basis, current undergraduates who this will affect should be kept updated on a week-to-week basis and should not have this information deliberately withheld until the changes are finalised