

NEW MYP AND IB COURSES



THE GIST

Y10 COMBINED SCIENCE

Y10 CIVICS

IB HL HISTORY

IB SL & HL GLOBAL POLITICS

IT'S 8:30 A.M. SOMEWHERE

MAY 2021 SPECIAL ISSUE

CONVERGENCE

A GLIMPSE INTO THE NEW MYP AND IB COURSES

Over the past year, despite the interference of the COVID-19 pandemic, UCC has introduced several new courses, such as IB Global Politics, IB HL History, and Y10 Civics, and made significant changes to some others such as Y10 Science. After one full academic year, I thought that it would be a worthwhile effort to interview teachers and students involved in these courses, so that more students are made aware of what these courses have to offer. It might also help the school understand how current students think about these new offerings and identify any potential fine-tuning that could be done.

Our Co-Manager Raymond Liu and Editor Rahul Nanda have led the efforts to interview many teachers and students. They have spent days on this initiative and put together this special issue. We hope that this issue will help the teachers, students, and the school alike. We would like to thank the teachers **Ms. Wang, Mr. Moon, Mr. Paschalidis**, as well as Year 11 student **Nick Resznetnik** and an anonymous student, for taking the interviews. Your valuable input will benefit all of us.

Kevin Liu, Editor-in-Chief.

MYP: YEAR 10 INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE



Teacher: Ms. Lulu Wang

Can you tell us the difference between this current science course and what would have been offered to students in past years?

In previous years, students were given an opportunity to select individualized Science courses in Year 10. For example, a student might select Biology and Chemistry to take, both as full courses throughout the year. The current Year 10 Science course includes all three sciences (Chemistry, Biology and Physics) in one course. It is similar in format and time allocation of each unit as Y8/Y9 science. The only difference is that specialized teachers teach each subject. Therefore, students will have a total of 3 teachers for this one course.

(I do want to point out that the current course has been further changed due to

the new schedule developed for our pandemic situation.)

Which format of teaching science do you prefer as a teacher and which do you think is better for students? Can you offer some pros and cons for the new course?

I believe there are pros and cons in both models. Teaching one class for an entire year helps me connect with my students. Teaching a general course that rotates between teachers has been difficult to get to know my students in each of my sections this year (again, this is exacerbated by the pandemic). Having individualized sciences benefited students who truly knew what they wanted to take in the DP. However, I would say the majority of students showed a bit of hesitation in their selections. I think the Y10 Science course gives those students the opportunity for a better understanding of each Science before making that tough decision. I would say that Y10 Science gives students a larger perspective on the individual DP Sciences so they can make a more informed decision.

How was the change from science teachers' perspective? Were you involved in this decision and how was the course designed?

It was a big change for us. We took a lot of time to craft a course that we felt would sufficiently prepare students for the DP but also cater to students who may not take any of the specific sciences taught in the course. I think each of us teachers took a while to understand the depths of an interdisciplinary course. After this pilot year, I am sure we will make alterations to parts of our course to help refine it further.

Do you think that the breadth and depth of knowledge students acquire in the new science course will sufficiently prepare them for the Group 4 courses students will take in the IB?

I think students will be prepared for the DP courses. If we look at other IB Independent or public schools, they typically do not have the intermediate Y10 Chemistry/Biology/Physics course that leads into the DP. These students seem to flourish and perform well so I think ours will too. As you know, this is our pilot year and we will have more feedback on this after it has run for a few years.

How has your experience been so far with teaching this class? Anything that students should look forward to? Closing thoughts?

I've really enjoyed teaching three different classes in one course. I have enjoyed teaching the same content and building on it or adapting it to the students that I am teaching. I think it's been a challenge to teach two units of Chemistry over an 18-day cycle, especially if it is remotely/virtually. If we were not in the middle of a pandemic, teachers would have had more time to push out the content with an alternating schedule.

Students should look forward to a robust course with greater depth into each Science. Ideally students would use this course as an opportunity to justify their DP courses in the year to come.

Y10 Student: Anonymous

Would you be able to outline, briefly, what the Year 10 Science course looked like this year and how it was different from previous years?

In short, the science course consisted of four main cycles. The first three cycles were 20 days long, the 4th was 10 days, and the 5th (exam cycle) was around 12 days plus exams. The main (first three) cycles were biology, physics and chemistry. The order is dependent on your personal schedule. Each rotation you have a new teacher that specializes in the given science. Generally, there were 2-3 assessments per rotation. The final rotation was the Interdisciplinary Unit (IDU), where we chose a scientific related topic to research—with or without a partner—and present in a video. Finally, the exam cycle is simply just review, where you spend a few days reviewing each subject with each of your teachers. Compared to previous years, instead of choosing 1-2 Sciences to study, you are taking this 'Interdisciplinary Studies course.' The main differences between previous years and now is that you don't get a full year of knowledge in your chosen subjects and you will instead receive a different course credit. This year's credit was the IDC30 credit, whereas in previous years, you would receive the credits for your chosen science (e.g., SBI3U, SCH3U or SPH3U).

If any, what were the negatives of completing this course holistically, rather than specializing on a specific subject?

Undoubtedly, not being able to get that full year of learning in a specific science was a negative of this course, as it makes us less prepared for the rigorous IB Science Curriculum. Additionally, we did not get to experience the workload of two science courses at the same time, making the transition next year even more challenging.

As well, we generally only focused on one unit or topic in each rotation, for example in Physics we only learned kinematics and predominantly focused on equations of constant acceleration, and acceleration due to gravity. Conversely, in Chemistry, the test and course content were heavily focused on stoichiometry, rather than the full five or six units you'd get in standard specialized curriculum.

Did you benefit from having the ability to learn from three different teachers throughout the year?

Yes, in fact this was probably the most beneficial part of the course. It provided a different learning system than grades 8 & 9, and it allowed you to get to know some of the senior level teachers who you might have in the IB. From personal experience, I can say that having a "specialized teacher" for each of the disciplines provided me with additional insight as to which sciences I excel in and what my performance would likely be in a given discipline.

Obviously, without the ability to choose up to two sciences this year, the arts remained a compulsory course. What are your thoughts on this decision in regards to the arts? Was it beneficial, detrimental, etc.?

Grade 10 is supposed to be the "Foundation Year"—where you acquire the skills you need for the Diploma Programme. Having to partake in either Drama, Art, or Music can both aid the idea of a "Foundation Year", and also

degrade it. For students who like the arts, the arts requirement is beneficial as they get to continue developing their creative and artistic skills. However, for the students who aren't interested in arts and don't plan on taking a Group 6 subject in the IB (which is generally the majority of students), the arts requirement for Grade 10 is quite detrimental. In essence, it just adds more summatives and tasks for students. I think that the school could have provided the option to instead choose between taking an Arts course and an extra Science or Humanity. I will note that when you look at this arts requirement from a purely "marks/grades" perspective, most students wouldn't complain as the arts courses tend to do some justice to overall averages.

Are you confident that this Year 10 Science course will specifically prepare you for the 1-2 Group 4 Subjects you will be taking in the IB next year? Or would have preferred a specialized science curriculum as done previously to get a head start on IB courses?

No, I think I can speak for the majority of my grade by saying that we don't feel the same preparedness as other grades have had in past curriculum. Specifically, the depth my brother's grade (who experienced the old curriculum) went into—in a Grade 10 Chemistry, Biology, or Physics course—was remarkably different from the breadth of knowledge we gained from completing this year's curriculum. This isn't really a surprise, though, given that a year-long course is undoubtedly going to cover more content than a 20-day cycle.

Furthermore, I think that this year's course has given a misleading perception regarding each Science course as a whole. In general this year, if you put in a decent amount of work you should be able to perform quite well on the tests since they only focus on a very narrow set of skills, considering the 20-day cycles. In combination with the large number of Criterion D assessments we have had (in every unit except physics), the average summative this year has

been easier for students, given that people tend to perform better on Criterion D's as opposed to tests. As a result, I think that these types of assessments have given a perception that science is less labour-intensive in the IB, which evidently is untrue due to its differing assessment structure.

What is your advice to current Year 8s or Year 9s that are preparing to com-

plete this course in the next few years?

First of all, take the course as seriously as you would with any other subject and approach each cycle/discipline with the same level of effort, despite your interests. If you put in the same amount of work for each rotation, you will gain a better understanding of yourself with regards to your science capabilities. This can help you make a more educat-

ed decision on which Science is best for you in the IB. At the same time, if you aren't doing as well in one discipline, don't immediately base your future on a few tests. And my final word of advice is to talk to your teachers. Use the change in teachers as a way to further understand how you would fit in some of the IB courses.

MYP: YEAR 10 CIVICS

Teacher: Mr. Edward Moon

Is this the first time you have taught this course or any course like this? Do you have any general feedback for the experience as a teacher?

No - the Civics course is far from new. I taught back in 2017-18 when I first arrived at UCC and I know the other teachers have heaps of experience teaching it too. I really enjoy it; it's varied, there's ALWAYS something relevant to the course happening in the news, something controversial, something impactful to all our lives... and it's important to be civically minded.

What is the difference between this course and the selections that students would have made in past years? Do you prefer a generalized civics course to getting a head start on potential IB courses?

This new course differs to that of the past in that we have added the 'Global Citizenship' component that allows us to really investigate ideas around plu-

ralism, diversity and sustainability. This year we have investigated experiences of colonialism(s), created videos around UN development goals, and focused on a range of Toronto-specific ideas (around gun crime, teenage mental health, neighbourhood gentrification, and etc).



What are some of the key values that students can expect from this class? What are the ideas of "civics" that are being communicated? Anything for students to look forward to?

The aim is to ensure all UCC graduates are informed and active citizens who understand their roles within—and responsibilities towards—the local, provincial, national and global commu-

nities that we inhabit. It's essential to understand the ways in which Canadian democracy functions, in order to protect and promote the shared values on which our society functions, and to ensure each generation contributes to their strengthening. People have fought long and hard for the rights that characterize our society so it's important we recognise and uphold their achievements.

How will this course prepare students for the Group 3 courses in the IB? Closing thoughts?

Well, we cover a little bit of all the DP Group 3 courses throughout the Civics course. You'll study some History, some Geo, some Econ. We philosophise and consider our place on earth (and beyond) in relation to global politics. There's critical thinking; we learn how to conduct quality research, we use documents, graphs, data, news sources...continually developing the skills around which the DP I&S programs revolve.

IB: HL HISTORY

Teacher: Mr. Edward Moon

Can you give a brief description of what will be covered in this course?

IB DP History covers the emergence, growth and eventual collapse of authoritarianism in Europe and Asia, with a particular focus on Stalin and Mao. We investigate the causes and consequences of conflicts such as the Spanish Civil

War and the Sino-Japanese war. We look at international diplomacy throughout the 20th century—successes and failures alike. And all students complete a research essay of their own choosing.

Do you know why history became a strictly HL subject? How intense are the assessments and material? What would you recommend for someone who was originally considering SL History?

No idea. I've never known a DP History course that wasn't HL. But there's so much overlap between the content of the 2 x SL and 1 x HL papers. The ideas you need to learn for SL make answering the HL paper easier... so you may

as well just do HL. Assessments are no more or less intense than in any other IB subject—or so I'm told. So long as you do the reading!

What has your experience been like teaching the HL course this year and for years before? A lot of students look forward to meaningful debates and discussions, what is the environment in the classroom like?

This year has had its challenges for

sure but, as with most things, you get back what you put in. And the historical record remains the historical record whether you study it in class, or in your spare room at home. Rest assured that HL History remains impossible without debate. I mean, that's what the subject is..."a discourse with the past". There are few right and wrong answers, just better argued cases.

IB: SL & HL GLOBAL POLITICS

Teacher:
Mr. Christos Paschalidis

Can you tell us a little about the course itself and why it has been introduced? What are some of the units and what are some topics that interested students should look forward to? What is the additional content offered at the Higher level?

Historically, civic education and the cultivation of civic values in relation to community and public service have been at the heart of the College's founding, identity, and mission. Please allow me to remind our readers here that—etymologically speaking—our word politics is rooted in the Ancient Greek word for city-state or community, Polis, and is also found in related words such as polity, police, geopolitical, cosmopolitan, metropolis, etc. The new Global Politics course then continues and expands on the College's proud tradition and legacy albeit using a more modern and contemporary pedagogical framework consciously anchored in interdisciplinarity where history, geography, and economics symbiotically coexist in one offering.

In Year 11 the units are:

(1) What is Power?: Nature of Power & Operation of State Power in Global Politics, (2) International Organizations and Non-State Actors: Function and Impact in Global Politics, (3) Interde-

pendence, Cooperation, and Conflict: Nature and Extent of Interactions in Global Politics, (4) Borders, HL Global Political Challenge Case Study 1, (5) Human Rights: Justice, Liberty, Equality

In Year 12 the units are:

(1) Development: Meanings and Factors of Development, (2) Development: Pathways, Debates, and Challenges of Development, (3) Identity, HL Global Political Challenge Case Study 2, (4) Peace and Conflict

HL students are required to cover two additional case studies (see above) and, additionally, they are required to complete two oral presentations regarding a contemporary Global Political Challenge. They may select a case study from six broad thematic areas: Environment, Poverty, Health, Identity, Borders, and Security.

What, in your opinion, differentiates this course from the other Group 3 selections like History and Economics? Who is recommended to take this course?

Let me start by pointing out the similarities to the other Group 3 courses. For example, there is emphasis on "how to think" rather than "what to think". In other words, critically engaging with sources, documents, and perspectives. Research skills, authoring an argumentative essay, and working on meta thinking skills are also common with

the other Group 3 offerings.

In terms of differences, inquiry based learning is employed using the epistemological tools and methodology of political science, as you know each academic discipline has its own inquiry and epistemological model, to arrive at logical and objective analysis. Specifically, political theory anchored in diverse ideological and philosophical frameworks such as: Liberalism, Marxism, Realism, Feminism, Post-Colonialism, Environmentalism, Constructivism and Post-Structuralism, is applied to deconstruct all contemporary political issues. To better understand and analyze individual and group perspectives, students evaluate and scrutinize parameters and identities such as: socioeconomic class, culture, ethnicity, gender, language, and religion.

Another key difference is that knowledge and content is centered in contemporary politics no later than the birth year of a student; 2004 being the cutoff year for the current Y11s. To that end, all current affairs are analyzed through different levels of analysis and dimensions such as, community, local, national, regional, international, and global.

There are no prerequisites for the course. As long as a student has passion and interest in contemporary political issues and matters, (political, social, economic, religious, environmental, civic, military, etc) the course would be a fit.

What are some of the key values that students can gain from this class as future participants in our democracy?

This is indeed a most relevant question! The class emphasizes that citizenship in a modern democratic society entails respect, understanding, and empathy of the different political traditions and accompanying voices and perspectives generally defined as the (centre) right, centre, and the (centre) left of the political spectrum. Indeed it is the polyphonic, many voices, nature of democracy that gives it an advantage over authoritarian regimes.

The epistemological gifts, namely critical thinking capacity and flexibility of thought, that the class bestows upon the students inoculates them from demagoguery, populism, and equally important from misinformation, and disinformation.

Finally, the course provides for each and every student a community, a sense of belonging and purpose, based on the shared principles, values, and ideals of our Liberal Parliamentary Democracy. By Liberal, here, we mean individual liberties such as freedom of expression, thought, association, assembly, conscience, religion and also equality, justice, opportunity, and finally the rule of law. These democratic freedoms define and unite us irrespective of our socio-economic class, ethnicity, language, religion, race, gender, and sexual orientation.

A lot of students look forward to meaningful debates and discussions, what is the environment in the classroom like?

Debates and discussions are a key component of our democratic system and consequently they are also integral parts of the Global Politics class culture and milieu. After all, the etymology of the word dialogue reveals to us that we can “achieve Logos (logic) through a conversation”. Treating each other with dignity, and respect, especially when students disagree on political is-

suess, is another element that the class consciously and overtly cultivates. As Evelyn Beatrice Hall reminds us, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” Students also have much autonomy to deeply inquire into political topics and issues that are deeply meaningful and relevant to them.

Closing thoughts?

Selfish individuals-citizens who only strictly, narrowly, and myopically care about their own private matters, and who did not participate in the public and civic life of their community, and ultimately individuals-citizens who did not promote the common good, were labeled as idiots in the birthplace of democracy, Ancient Athens. Etymologically speaking, our modern word, idiot, derives from it and its link to its ancient antecedent is most revealing.

I would like to remind everyone to embrace the rights and responsibilities of citizenship bestowed upon them by our democratic polity. As the Athenian youth proclaimed in their formal induction to the ranks of citizenship upon reaching the age of majority at 18 years old, “we will transmit this City not only not less, but to a great extent better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us!” Let us strive then not to be idiots, according to the classical definition of the word, and let us strive to always improve and better our communities whether at the community, local, national, regional, international, and global levels.

YII Student: Nick Reszetnik

Can you tell us a little about the course itself and which level you take it at (HL vs SL)? What are some of the units and what are some topics that interested students should look forward to? If you are aware, what is the additional content offered at the Higher level?

I'm currently taking Global Politics at the Higher Level. To be honest, there's not a huge difference between the standard level and the higher level apart from a few extra projects. Overall, however, most of the content across the levels is very similar. In the beginning of the year, you learn about political theory and various ideologies—such as realism, liberalism, and Marxism. Then within each unit, we often look at a number of case studies. For example, you transfer your knowledge of topics such as security, borders, or human rights into conflicts between different nations or firms.

Additionally, during these studies, our class often discusses current affairs before class and how it relates to what we are about to learn.

Overall, I have really enjoyed the course thus far.

As a Y10 Student last year, what motivated you to choose this course, especially given that it was entirely new? Was it the teachers? Are you particularly interested in pursuing political science?



All of those factors attracted me to the course as a Y10 student. Especially for me, I've always been really interested in current affairs and global politics. Throughout the Upper School, I have been a member of the Model UN club and I have really enjoyed debating current issues and learning about the world around us. This was particularly the main motivation that caused me to choose Global Politics over History, although I was seriously considering both.

In the end, I thought that learning about the present in Global Politics was subjectively more relevant and valuable for me. It allowed me to have the ability to analyze real world issues and study how the world is continually changing.

Furthermore, one of my favorite aspects of the course are the teachers. For me, I currently have Mr. Paschalidis, who is one of the friendliest and smartest teachers I know. Although I have never been a student in his class before Global Politics, I heard especially great things about his teaching style with regards to History in Year 9 and 10.

Apart from these factors, I also was motivated to take the course given that I want to further pursue Political Science, International Affairs, and Economics in the future.

What are the assessments like in this course? If you take another Individuals and Societies course, such as History or Economics, how do the tests compare to those?

Currently, I am taking two humanities at the higher level: Global Politics and Economics. I also take HL Language and Literature (English), SL AA Math in addition to SL Spanish and SL Chemistry.

In terms of the assessments, I feel as though they have been manageable so far. In essence, many of the assessments are very similar to history. Our first assessment was an essay about power in global politics. We learned about how and why states and nations

use soft power versus hard power and in which circumstances one might be better used. The submission for this assessment was a 1000 word essay, which was not too laborious. It was slightly different to your standard history essay, as Mr. Paschalidis provided us with the research question. We had to incorporate Case Studies we had learned to justify our claims. For example, I chose China's infrastructure investment in Africa and also U.S sanctions on North Korea.

The second assessment was a typical History or Global Politics test. We were given four/five sources and had to answer questions about them and also write a long essay during a certain time period. Although it was very similar to an assessment in History, I liked the Global Politics test format because it was more analytical. Instead of knowing specific facts about the tested issues, we could utilize our learnings from class to apply it to the scenario in the test. This is a little different from History where sometimes you need to memorize certain events or dates, while in Global Politics, you are given the opportunity to research different case studies and apply them to a scenario. Overall, I really enjoyed the test.

In terms of Economics, Global Politics is very different. In Economics, we've had a test this year that was mostly knowledge-based and we had to apply our learnings from the textbook into various test questions. As you can tell, this makes Global Politics even more unique, given that it is more interpretive than Economics.

How are the classes structured? Are there many debates?

Usually, we enter the class with a quick discussion on current events and how everyone's doing. Mr. Paschalidis is especially great at interacting with all students to ensure everyone is involved before we go right into the lesson.

Following this, he presents PowerPoints filled with information from the textbook and various case studies

that he researched. As well, he provides articles that we read in between slides during the lesson. Essentially, Mr. Paschalidis presents a slideshow in which students will take notes on for about 30 minutes. Then, we spend the last 15-20 minutes discussing the lesson and its articles, while in the asynchronous time, he provides us with about 5-10 pages of reading from the textbook. Specific to Global Politics, we have two textbooks that we get readings from. If we have an upcoming assessment, Mr. Paschalidis is always great about giving students ample time to prepare for a test, an essay, or a presentation.

What is your favorite aspect of the course? Is it learning about a particular topic, its approach to learning, its types of assessments, etc?

What I really enjoy about the course is having the ability to take an objective lens on a particular issue, rather than taking a side. Instead of stating whether an author's points align with your political ideology, you're looking at the circumstances objectively. Being able to view current affairs from a new lens is very valuable to me. It is extremely different from casually talking about news with your family or friends. In Global Politics, you get a different perspective; an approach to learning that you may not receive from reading an article on your own.

In terms of an enjoyable topic of the course, I think that learning about borders was quite interesting for me. Although borders seems pretty self-explanatory, our lessons delve deep into the different case studies, such as the Crimea conflict. Global Politics provides a ton of new insights by studying events in depth that you might not necessarily get from reading an article in the news. In this instance, we were able to gain a way deeper understanding of border issues by hearing the perspectives of different stakeholders from the private sector to the nations themselves.

Delving into the specific case studies is probably my favorite part of the course.

Does the course have similarities with Model UN?

Yes, for those interested in Model UN, I'm sure you'd enjoy global politics, given that the case studies we cover are similar to debate topics in MUN. Additionally, the content and skills that I have learned in Global Politics have really helped me in Model UN, as I was able to provide new perspectives to the committee that I might not have known if I didn't take Global Politics.

Although they are similar, the way we discuss a case study in Mr. Paschalidis' class is different from Model UN. Instead of taking a stance, we present the different arguments objectively.

What are some of the key values that students can gain from this class as future participants in our democracy?

In the internal assessment, especially, we are able to become fully engaged within the topic we are studying. For me, I was able to investigate what barriers are preventing the production and adoption of renewable energy and why coal and gasoline powered plants are still functioning today, despite their environmental detriments. Through this activity, we were able to engage in the content in a very unique way. For me, I was able to take a course on solar panels and study how beneficial they are to the environment. I think one of the best parts of the Global Politics course is you have the opportunity to look at issues you are actually passionate about. I started the IA in March and we hand it in at the beginning or midpoint of next year; you really have a lot of time to engage with your topic. To explore your issue, you can take courses, participate in rallies, attend congressional meetings, talk to stakeholders, meet with MPs, organize

discussions, etc. I think the IA Engagement Activity is something that sets Global Politics apart from other courses. For me, it has been definitely one of my favorite courses this year given how unique the content is. It allowed me to try something new and exciting that was conventionally different from History or Economics.

Closing thoughts?

To those students who are debating between choosing Global Politics or History, I think your choice should be dependent on whether you want to investigate the realm of the future and current affairs or analyze the past. While I know History has so many benefits—given that it informs our opinion on the present—being able to discuss issues that are currently happening and educating yourself on the present is truly invaluable.

EDITOR'S NOTE - JOINING CONVERGENCE

Interested in joining or contributing to *Convergence*?

It is easy to become a **Staff Reporter** - all you need to do is to join the Convergence club, show up to club meetings, present your ideas, and write articles (reports of an event, interviews, opinions, etc.).

Also, anyone in the Upper School can be a **Contributor** to *Convergence* without full-time commitment. Your articles can either be related to UCC or cover social/political events of general interest. Please just send them to us at convergence@ucc.on.ca.

Your potential contribution to *Convergence* will be greatly appreciated, and will be a strong factor in determining executive roles such as **Manager** and **Editor** for future years.

The *Convergence* Team.