

Name: Siobhan Bowater
Company: Politics Matter
Contact details: siobhan.bowater.1@gmail.com

BRIEF:

For my final year project, I would like to run my own website, that's purpose is to engage and entertain young people, and also educate them within the world of politics. Now is a crucial time for young people to learn about the real matters within our world, and I want to encourage young people to be more politically engaged and no longer so apathetic. The problem with politics today, is that it is not talked about on a simple level for young adults and people to learn easily; it is not a mandatory subject within schools; which means that young people do not care about what actually happens around them. The huge rise in tuition fees says it all...

This is a project I want to continue beyond graduation, as this is something that is greatly important to me. For the time being, my content for my 'News' page would include Student Politics at Birmingham City University, UK politics, and World News too. There will be reports and updates that would be worded simply, with a hint of satire, however, on a level that young people can understand. I will construct interviews, and a variety of different content as time passes. I would like to have a drop-down menu on the homepage for each different political party within the UK; simply a description and a brief history of each party, along with pictures of their leaders, MPs and so on. Each political party page can have a different colour theme to them as long as it correlates with the party's colour, e.g. Labour = Red.

Also, another page dedicated to explaining different terminologies to people; e.g. right-wing/left-wing/shadow cabinet/blairite/communism/socialism... the list is endless; diagrams may be needed depending on the subject.

I would like the domain name to be Politics Matter, to put the subject as simple and relevant as possible, and the use of wordpress would be sufficient. The branding would generally be Politics Matter, the colours I have chosen are simple black and white; when discussing politics, it is better to keep it simple, and also picking a particular colour, such as blue or red; could be inferred as a bias towards a particular political party, e.g. Conservatives or Labour. I want the site to look simplistic, however, with a certain edge to it, suiting both the topic of the site, and its target audience.

I know that interactive content can cost, however, I am more than happy to avoid this; if viewers and the audience would like to contact me, I'd like a contact page, where my email address will be available; so if a viewer requests a certain term to be explained, I will be able to follow it through and post it on the website, and inform that viewer when it is available. Alongside this, I would like an 'About' page; simply a non-changing content page, where there will be a feature article that is permanent, about WHY I want to follow up this project and came up with it in the first place.

I did make a very brief demo page of Politics Matter, within a few minutes just so you can have a vibe of how I'd like the homepage to look, along with the different menu options and the top of

the site. I would like social media outputs, available for when I can promote content, a recommended reading lists menu, and a slider menu at the top (if possible, like Buzzfeed) with available articles on a smaller scale. Some of the demo articles on the wix site, are some articles I will be following up, I have two article content that I can share with you, so you can look at the style of my writing too. See below.

CONTENT:

This article is from the time around the General Election last year, which you can access on my blog www.workitghurl.wordpress.com if you'd like to see more of my writing.

ADDRESSING THE NOT-SO "APATHETIC" GENERATION

POSTED ON MAY 1, 2015

40% of UK residents didn't vote in the 2010 election, and the numbers haven't gotten any lower for the amount of people registering to vote for this year's General Election on May 7th. This general election is one of the most unpredictable elections we've had in decades, with the registration deadline coming to a close; nobody really knows what could happen.

My generation; that is those affected by the tripled tuition fees, need to vote, I urge you to. If we don't start to vote now, in 20 years, we will still have no idea how to interact with the electoral system. There is a reason why a lot of people my age aren't lining up outside village halls and primary schools on May 7th.

It's not because we're stupid, or naïve, or "apathetic." Nor are we inspired by Russel Brand's "Don't Vote/Revolution." It is simple. We are confused, ill-informed, but most of all – we are ignored.

"I always thought your generation was a bit apathetic about politics in general; since 9/11, the world has changed and the way we see people, you don't trust anyone. You are the future generation, you have the right to shape your future and make that change. Your generation is distracting themselves with iPhones, social media, celebrities, and a long list of irrelevant things, from the harsh reality of the world you choose not to face."

My mother said that to me, when I was debating whether to register to vote or not. She pointed out that I sign plenty of online petitions, to save the bees, or addressing feminist issues; but I ignore the Westminster boys fighting over my vote. "You are political, you know what you want. You want change, right? Go and read something," as she slammed down Labour and the Green Party's manifestos in front of me.

"People all over the world, in eastern countries such as Iran, they fight for their right to vote. They could get killed. Women died so you could have your right to vote. Stop underappreciating your rights."

After researching and educating myself in a short amount of time about UK politics, it is obvious to me, that things need to change. I am tired of hearing the word apathetic to describe people my age. The story is that we hate politics; or to use the most popular phrase; 'we've lost faith in it, we think all politicians are the same' so we don't vote.

I want to prove these theories wrong. To tell young people that they do not care about politics is simply wrong. Our generation may just be the most political in history, with the rise of Facebook, Twitter and blogs, we as a generation are analysing and commenting on the world around us on a far greater scale than our parents. We

are a much more welcoming generation; we accept different walks of life, cultures, sexualities. We embrace these differences.

We marched in our 1000s against the war in Iraq, the fight against tuition fees, and for fairer alternatives to the economic masochism of the coalition government. We do care. Student activism and politics is a phenomenon that is growing and will always continue to.

“There was nothing at my university that would give us information on politics, literally bare to nothing. I wanted to change that,” said Laura Peberday, creator of Scratch Politics at Birmingham City University.

“There’s an attached stigma to politics; that you must be smart to understand it. WRONG. I wanted to talk politics in plain English, so young people could understand, and take an interest, and hopefully make a difference.”

An example of student activism is the No More Page 3 Campaign, possibly one of the most important socio-political movements of the decade. It was the brainchild of 20 somethings spread through social media, receiving most of its support through student unions.

The young generation is constantly churning out videos, songs, stories, plays, flashmobs, and slutwalks, challenging every societies’ gender norms, to post-modernist theories. In a sense, we are doing politics better. So why is it that the public and politicians opinions seem to be that we’re apathetic? It’s probably because we keep getting told we are. This story is paraded by print media, TV, and somewhat contradictory, politicians themselves.

Politicians are waging a public policy on us ‘millenials’. We’ve been charged the highest tuition fees in Europe, denied housing, and expecting us to spend an indefinite amount of time working for free, trying to get a foot in the door.

None of this will stop me, nor should it stop you. Change needs to happen. It may not happen this election, and may not even be the next one. Change is slowly happening, and the cracks are beginning to show in society. We are a much more connected society, with smart phones, and e-petitions and a more accepting collected mind set, we are a much more switched on generation.

Do not let the untrustworthy faces of Clegg and Cameron deter you from taking an interest in politics. We all need to grow up and do grown up things; like taking control on what happens to our future.

Register to vote at gov.uk

Take a quiz to see which political party you side with at uk.isidewith.com/political-quiz

Take a listen to this documentary addressing the issue, guaranteed to make you wake up, and have a giggle at the same time.

<https://soundcloud.com/lisaviolewilliams/the-student-vote-documentary>

And this article is one that I have wrote for Birmingham City University's the Scratch Magazine; this article will be published in the February edition.

Scratch Politics

BCUSU ELECTIONS 2016

What you need to know...

Whilst we're all at university, we all moan about a variety of different 'issues.' Loud housemates, eating beans on toast for dinner for the gazillionth time, workloads, never having enough money to go out when you want to; the list is endless for your time at university. However, when you're on campus, (actually studying, you know), do you moan about the food that's available on campus? Or the employability schemes that are available are not tailored towards you? There's a society that you just wished existed but there is no way you could do it on your own? I've heard students moan about all these issues that affect your education; things can change, and there is a way to do it.

Politics is a topic the millenial generation (us) that has only recently being talked about; especially with UK Politics in the past year; the rise and popularity of Corbynmania, the UK's involvement in the Middle East Crisis, the Refugee predicament, Climate Change talks, tuition fees, nurses bursaries; 2015 was an enlightening year to most of us. It is time to educate ourselves in the world around us. Politics is not for everyone; it is a choice to take interest in the world; but it is a choice we all make.

However, when it comes to YOUR education, and the fact we're all paying the 2nd highest tuition fees in the world on average; you should take interest in how things can change for the better whilst you're at university.

Our Student Union is a fine establishment; thanks to them, we have our own lovely pub The Eagle and Bull at the back of Curzon building; giving us a lovely warm atmosphere, cheap food and friendly staff; we have a campus shop too in Curzon; we have more student development programmes, giving more employability advice to those who are terrified about exiting university life, and ASK student help services, along with Student Support services; where those who suffer whilst studying can get the help they need.

There are many ways to get involved in the 2016's BCU Student Union Elections; either get involved physically; nominating a candidate or putting yourself forward as a candidate, OR simply educating yourself and actually voting.

There are 5 roles at the SU, that are actual jobs; and you can actually get paid for them(!).

- Student President
- Student Development
- Student Engagement
- Student Experience
- Student Voice

These jobs are full time jobs that pay just over 17k for the year - means you can still go to university and live the life but get paid!

And now ladies and gentleman, a word from our president:

Hi, I'm Jen your BCUSU President,

Being a sabbatical officer at BCUSU is simply the best job in the world. You will get opportunities and experiences that are impossible to replicate anywhere else. You will work with so many different every day and be able to make a difference at BCU and your employability level will soar.

There is not much more satisfying than helping fix an issue for a student or winning funding for a new service or event. You get to go to meetings with senior University staff including the Vice Chancellor and make decisions that affect the whole University.

As an officer you are in control of the Students' Union, you are a company director a trustee and it is your job to set the priorities of the organisation. Students really do run the Students' Union!

There are five full time roles and seven part time roles. The full time roles are paid positions, whereas the part time roles are voluntary and you must still be a student whilst you are a part time officer.

For the full time roles you can run at any time and simply take a gap in your studies or run in your final year so you start the role as a new graduate.

It's really easy to get involved, simply submit your manifesto stating what you want to improve at BCU, grab some mates and go out campaigning to get votes. We will support you throughout the process.

If I could be an officer forever, I would be, but now it's your turn!

If you would like more information, feel free to email or Tom Clarke at Thomas.clarke@bcu.ac.uk or myself at union.president@bcu.ac.uk and we will be happy to help

So, candidacy opens on the 4th January and closes on the 12th February; this is your time to go for a role yourself, or if you know someone who would be perfect for one of them you can nominate them (all anonymous too)!

From 29th February - 4th March is when campaigning starts; your opportunity to get your name out there; get your ideas flowing, and get people on board and interested in the change you want to make!

Voting opens on 4th March; where lots of voting booths and volunteers will be around all the campuses to encourage all students to vote! Get your vote in quick as the polls will close on the 9th March. There will be a Results night party held at the Institute in Digbeth, with special guests and much fun to be had!

There will be more updates from Scratch Politics covering the SU elections as time passes; this is information to consider if you want to make or see change whilst you're with us at Birmingham City University. For more information you can email Tom Clarke or Jenny Watkins (see above ^) or visit <http://www.bcsu.com/> . Let's get political.