



Student Guide

2021



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Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the ISHPSSB Student Guide. If you are reading this, you are probably a graduate student in either history, philosophy or social studies of biology. And we are sure that you have many questions, questions about your future as a professional, questions about how to actually enjoy this time as postgraduate student, questions about the resources available for you, questions about how to connect with other students and professionals in the same areas. **MANY QUESTIONS.** And we all do. This guide aims to answer a few of those questions, hopefully! This is a little bit of what you will find here:

First thing on the agenda is to know about the Society. The International Society of History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Biology (ISHPSSB), or Ishkabibble, is an amazing way to connect with academics and other students in your field. Connections that can sprout into collaborations to amazing friendships. If you are not a member, we strongly recommend you to become one!

Second on the list is to know about us. We are the Student Advisory Committee. As you can see in our name, this committee's goal is to advise and help the job of the Student Representative. The representative has a seat in the Council of the society and is responsible to bring the voice of the students to the table and to the society's agenda.

For sure, the best part of being involved in the Society as a student and a professional becomes clear when we gather! The ISHPSSB meetings happen biennially (on odd years) and are open spaces for professionals and students to share their ideas. The meetings are known for innovative, transdisciplinary sessions, and for fostering informal, co-operative exchanges and on-going collaborations. But the fun isn't confined to odd years. In the even years, between biennial meetings, ISHPSSB supports several "off-year workshops". Check them out!

To acknowledge the amazing academic contributions from the students during the meetings, the society offers two prizes, each recognizing a different type of achievement: The Werner Callebaut Prize and The Marjorie Grene Prize. Also, the David L. Hull Prize can be awarded to individuals at any stage of their career.

One of the big worries of the graduate student is what to do next and how to navigate their career. Because of that, next on the agenda is a section with a couple of profiles and short interviews with ISH members that are working within academia. And right after that, we mention a couple of ways we can keep in touch!

We hope this guide helps in any way your experience as a graduate student. Because this is the first edition of the guide, there is a lot of space for improvement. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any more questions and suggestions! We'd be delighted to hear from you. Just drop us a line at students@ishpssb.org.

Enjoy!

About ISHPSSB

The International Society of History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Biology (ISHPSSB) was formed in 1989 in order to hold a biennial meeting, bringing together researchers interested in biology as a discipline, and specifically in its history, philosophy and sociology. From that, it became an organization committed to stimulate the discussion and the gathering of those researchers in a much broader way.

Membership is open to all people sharing the core interests of the ISHPSSB. Regular fees are currently US\$35 per year, while graduate students qualify for a reduced fee of US\$10 per year, and emeriti can pay-as-they-please. (We try to keep fees as low as possible, and to raise them infrequently.) Become a member here: <https://ishpssb.org/membership>

The society has many committees (check the list below!) and you can be part of them! Just be present at the General meeting and you will be able to put your name down to one of those and help to build this amazing community. If a student wants to serve on a committee and can't make the member's meeting, they should contact the President, whose job it is to compose the committees. But before that, check the website where you will find the description of each of the committees.

Main operations committees:

Executive Committee
Communications Committee
Student Advisory Committee
Operations Committee

Development committees:

Education Committee
Membership Development Committee
Membership Development (Diversity) Committee

Gatherings:

Local Arrangements Committee for the Biennial Meeting
Program Committee
Site Selection Committee
Travel Support Committee
Off-Year Workshop Committee

Prizes:

Nominations Committee
David L. Hull Prize Committee
Marjorie Grene and Werner Callebaut Prize Committee

Recently, the Society got a wikipedia page. It is still being developed but it is already a great tool for reaching more students and professionals in our field. Let us know if you would like to contribute to improve the page!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Society_for_the_History,_Philosophy,_and_Social_Studies_of_Biology

About us (Student Committee)

The ISHPSSB Student Advisory Committee is charged with advising the ISHPSSB Council on all matters related to student participation in the Society. It aims to be the voice of students in the ISHPSSB Biennial Meetings, discussing what could be improved from the point of view of students. Our Student Representative, Lucia C. Neco, communicates our ideas directly to the Council.

Our goal is not only to facilitate the communication between students and the Council, but also the communication between students themselves, by sharing new publications, job opportunities, etc. ISHPSSB meetings promote new fruitful connections among researchers in all different career stages, and the Student Committee tries to make sure that students are also getting the best out of it.

This committee is renewed every ISHPSSB meeting, at the student meeting (check the program for the 2021 meeting). Anyone interested and willing to help is welcome to join the new committee. During this meeting, we also vote for who should be the new student representative. Feel free to contact us with questions or suggestions: students@ishpssb.org

The members of the ISHPSSB Student Advisory Committee are:



Lucia C. Neco
(Student Representative)

I am a Biologist, M.Sc. in Animal Behavior and PhD Candidate in Philosophy at University of Western Australia under the supervision of Prof. Rob Wilson. My interests are philosophy of biology, mind and cognitive and social sciences, animal behavior, and culture. I am also involved in the Philosophical Engagement for Public Life (PEiPL) network and philosophy for children (P4C) initiatives in Perth, Australia.

About us (Student Committee)

Joana Formosinho

I work at the intersection of STS and HPS, investigating the role of conceptual and narrative imagery in the production of knowledge within biology. I'm a PhD fellow at the University of Copenhagen (Medical Museion and Department of Public Health), and my PhD thesis follows the holobiont concept across disciplinary conversations. I have a background in biology and ecology.



Marco Casali

I'm a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy of biology at the IHPST (CNRS and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)/University of Rome Sapienza. I have a bachelor's degree in biology, and a master degree in philosophy of science. I'm working on the conceptualizations of chance in cellular and molecular biology. I'm also interested in epigenetics, reductionism and biology, normativity in philosophy of science.

Gina Surita

I am a PhD candidate in History of Science at Princeton University. I study the history of modern biology, medicine, and the biomedical sciences. My dissertation project considers the history of bioenergetics and metabolism research in twentieth-century biochemistry.



About us (Student Committee)

Jorge Mendonca Junior

I'm a PhD Candidate in Philosophy at The University of Western Australia. My background is in philosophy and my main areas of interest are philosophy of mind and philosophy of biology. My research investigates the plausibility of the hypothesis of psychological altruism from an interdisciplinary point of view, considering research on philosophy, evolutionary biology, and psychology.



Luis Felipe Eguiarte Souza

I'm a PhD Candidate in the History of Science and Technology at The University of Minnesota. My background is in history and my main areas of interest are technocracy, science fiction, and the history of evolutionary biology. My research is on the popular science and science fiction written by three British biologists of the first half of the 20th century, JBS Haldane, Julian Huxley, and JD Bernal.

Alex Aylward

I'm a historian of modern biology and eugenics. I studied Natural Sciences and History & Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge before joining the University of Leeds for my PhD. My doctoral project, supervised by Greg Radick, studies the writing, publication, reception and legacies of R. A. Fisher's celebrated book of 1930, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*.



ISHPSSB gatherings

The Society runs a large international meeting every two years (in “odd” years). In the early years, the location of the meeting tended to alternate between Europe and North America, but more recently meetings have taken place in Mexico (1999), Australia (2009) and Brazil (2017). (A list of past meetings, including programs and abstracts, is available on the ISH website). The Site Selection Committee is always keen to hear from members who are interested in hosting a future meeting, and is especially interested in proposals which would take ISH to new countries and continents! In an ISH-first, this year’s meeting is being held online (hosted by the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory) due to the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. It’s set to be fantastic! #ISH21

These meetings are highly interdisciplinary, and famously friendly. Many researchers in our field(s) find them an ideal venue for sketching out and getting feedback on new and fresh ideas. For graduate students, an ISH meeting is pretty much the perfect place to give your first paper – it’s welcoming, collegial, and the Program Committee encourages diverse forms of presentation, from traditional conference papers, to posters, flashtalks, or whatever else you think might be useful, interesting and fun.

The Society is committed to nurturing the involvement of its students and early career members. Towards this end, graduate students as well as postdoctoral fellows and independent scholars are eligible to apply for Travel Grants supported by ISHPSSB and the US National Science Foundation to assist with the costs of attending its meetings.

But the fun isn’t confined to odd years. In the even years between biennial meetings, ISHPSSB supports several “off-year workshops” – smaller, thematically-focused events conceived and organised by you, ISH members. If you’ve got an idea for a cool meeting on ISH-y themes, why not submit a proposal to the Off-Year Workshop Committee? Whilst the Society isn’t able to fund said workshops (this would have to come from other sources), it will help with publicising it and spreading the word.

“A lot of what makes an ISH conference so successful lies, it seems to me, in the Society’s endearingly awkward name. By being explicitly international, and also by embracing historians and philosophers and social scientists and all the scholars whose work lies across and between those categories, the Society thumbs its nose at borders, geographic and disciplinary. The spirit is one of welcome, wherever you come from. Yet within all the diversity there remains the unifying interest in biology. The result is a meeting which, at its best, offers unrivalled scope for sharing work-in-progress with fellow specialists while also maximizing chances for encountering new ideas and perspectives which are just the right distance from where you’re at now to be surprising but stimulating. You leave the conference energized – and looking forward to the next one.”

– ISHPSSB President Greg Radick



Prizes

The ISHPSSB awards three prizes at its biennial meetings to recognize excellent achievements in the fields covered by the society. Each prize is named after a pivotal and dearly missed member of the Society and the broader academic community.

Two prizes are aimed at graduate students, to recognize outstanding papers presented at a previous ISHPSSB meeting: Werner Callebaut Prize and Marjorie Grene Prize. To recognize extraordinary contribution to scholarship, and service that promotes interdisciplinary connections between history, philosophy, social studies, and biology, the society awards the David L. Hull Prize.

We asked recipients of these prizes to talk about their experiences. We hope you enjoy them and get inspired to apply or nominate!

The Marjorie Grene Prize

The Marjorie Grene Prize is named after Marjorie Grene, a leading Philosopher of Biology. It is awarded every two years for the best manuscript based on a presentation at one of the two previous ISHPSSB meetings by someone who was, at the time of presentation, a graduate student. The prize was first awarded in 1997.

Rick MORRIS
PhD in Philosophy at UC Davis
Recipient of the 2019 Marjorie Grene Prize



"Before applying for the Marjorie Grene Prize, I had never thought to submit for any academic award. When my adviser circulated an email to our lab calling for applications, I looked at the submission requirements and realized they would be quite simple to meet. I had already turned my previous two ISHPSSB submissions into dissertation chapters, so I picked my favorite, filled out the cover sheet, and sent it off. A couple months later, I was surprised to be notified that I had won! It was very nice to receive the recognition, especially as a graduate student who was always uncertain of the quality of my own work. Aside from the recognition, it also gave me the chance to make contacts with some other scholars doing similar research. I would encourage every current or recent graduate student to submit if they can."

Prizes

The Werner Callebaut Prize

The Werner Callebaut Prize, in memory of Werner Callebaut, is offered as an interdisciplinary early career prize to graduate students "working at the intersection of the fields represented by the ISHPSSB." The award is given on the basis of a manuscript that came out of a presentation at one of the last two annual meetings. The paper has to take an interdisciplinary approach and the recipient must be a graduate student at the time of the presentation. The prize was first awarded in 2015.



Lynn CHIU (and Scott Gilbert!)
PhD in Philosophy at University of Missouri
Recipient of the 2017 Werner Callebaut Prize

"I self-nominated, for lack of a better word, for the Callebaut prize because I had the honor to overlap with the last two years of his life. The paper was possible only because Werner invited me to the Euro Evo Devo conference in Vienna in 2014 and took a picture of me when I spoke to Scott Gilbert—my academic hero and now life-long friend—under a tree about my work. The story would've ended then if not for an email from Werner, sending us the photo. The email prompted Scott to invite me to coauthor a piece with him, a piece that was accepted by the journal *Biosemitotics* with no corrections as is, a piece that later won the *Biosemitotics* paper of the year award. It became the decisive paper that convinced my postdoc PI to hire me and was the paper I presented at ISHPSSB in 2015. To be recognized by ISH in memory of Werner was personally significant. The submission process was very straightforward: I explained how the paper came to be (the story you just heard) and what we did to make it happen (a highly intellectually stimulating process!). I wrote about what it was like for me to coauthor with someone who had inspired me to enter the field. I wrote about Werner's encouragement, both during my fellowship at the KLI and after the EuroEvoDevo talk. I know that some submissions at the time, a year after his death, were also driven by personal connections with Werner and wished that we could've all gotten the award as a testimony to his mentorship and influence. I wish I could've been there at ISH17 to receive it in person and am grateful for the committee members for reading my acceptance comments out loud to the audience. The prize came with a delightful and classy plaque—not plague, mind you—that had been and will be passed on from awardee to awardee. As for the aftermath of the award? Winning the prize helped lay to rest my persistent anxiety that "I wasn't doing philosophy." Interdisciplinarity is part of what it is to be ISH, to be a philosopher of biology, to be a fellow at the KLI. Receiving the Callebaut prize is a validation that it is more than "ok" to continue this research path. I hope that current eligible interdisciplinary scholars can see that they can and should apply, too!"

Prizes

The David L. Hull Prize

The David L. Hull Prize in memory of David Hull, is awarded to individuals at any stage of their career. The intention is to recognize extraordinary scholarship and to promote awareness of the significant efforts made to promote interdisciplinary connections between history, philosophy, social studies, and biology. The prize was first awarded in 2011.



Jon HODGE (and Ana Barahona)
Emeritus Historian of Biology
from the University of Leeds
Recipient of the 2019 David L. Hull Prize

"I am grateful indeed for this kind invitation to share my thoughts about David Hull and the ISH prize awarded biennially to commemorate his legacy as a truly admirable and inspiring ISH person. And I am grateful for two reasons especially. The first is general rather than specific, and can be confirmed from what is written about David in the ISH website; and from the invaluable, moving memoir by Michael Ruse in the journal *Biology and Philosophy* (2010) David's life and his work conformed so thoroughly and honourably to the interdisciplinary ideals that ISH was founded to uphold and encourage that he was rightly regarded as an exemplary role model for recruits young or old, professional or amateur, foreign or domestic. The second reason is more personal. Within a few years of finishing my doctorate I found myself wanting to assess various attempts—by diverse philosophers of science—to show that Darwin's theorising fitted and so vindicated their favourite philosophical analysis of a what good scientific theory looks like. I came to the conclusion that these various attempts had one thing in common. They included and depended on claims that were historically questionable. As luck had it just when I was ready to publish to this effect, Michael Ruse, as editor, invited me to contribute a paper to a volume of essays (*What Philosophy of Biology Is*) dedicated to David (and very informative about his work). I had come to know David fairly well by this time and so was emboldened to raise an obviously rhetorical query which I called "the Hullian question:" namely, in pretty much these words, "how can philosophers get the philosophy right if they are getting the history wrong?" David's response to this, in his essay in the volume, was as positive and cheering as any response I have had to anything I have written. And David was, typically for him, glad to learn later that the two philosophers I had criticised most explicitly had become my good friends despite our academic disagreements, one of them following David himself getting us together at an ISH conference dinner."

Working life

A PhD student's career is full of uncertainties. One of the most common worries for a young researcher is what happens next. In this section, we interview two researchers about their ISH experiences as well as their career trajectories. For both, ISH gatherings have been fundamental in developing new projects and paths. We hope this interview reassures students and allows them insight into the next steps. Practically every academic has gone through a period of uncertainty and doubt, but the career trajectories and pathways offered are immensely rich, varied and, of course, sometimes unpredictable!



Francesca MERLIN

Permanent research fellow (CR)

Institut d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences et des techniques (IHPST)

“[ISH] helped me to grow up as a student by listening to so many talks about disparate topics, to create stable international collaborations and, more recently, to find students to mentor and work with.”

How would you describe your relationship to biology as a discipline?

Biology is the science through which I look at the world in order to answer general philosophical questions and try to build a big picture of the way things hold together.

What drew you to biology in the first place/ what has kept you working in the field?

A very inspiring professor of philosophy of science at the University of Padua, Giovanni Boniolo, introduced me to biology. In particular, he allowed me to combine my passion for ancient Greek philosophy and my curiosity for the natural world by supervising my research Master thesis about a possible biological origin of the Ancient Greece canon of beauty.

What is your job title and affiliations?

I am a permanent research fellow at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). My lab is the Institut d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences et des techniques (IHPST) which is both part of CNRS and of the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

What does your day-to-day work look like? What are the main activities?

My typical working day includes times during which I look for scientific articles, read them, write notes, and reflect on their implications for my own research project; and times to make progress in the paper I'm writing at the moment. If I go to the lab and

Working life

meet my colleagues (which currently is not the case because of the sanitary crisis), I like to spare some time for gathering together, in particular in the context of discussion and working groups. Unfortunately, I also spend a lot of time checking my emails and answering them, which is not the most inspiring and fruitful work of my daily activities.

Could you give us a glimpse of your first/ most memorable ISHPSSB experience to date?

My first ISHPSSB meeting was in 2007, in Exeter. I was a second-year PhD student. It was my most memorable ISH meeting because everything was new for me. I did not know anybody apart from the other students coming from Paris and my supervisor, Jean Gayon. Moreover, it was the first time I traveled abroad in order to attend an international conference. It was a great experience thanks to the inspiring and thoughtful talks I listen to and to the informal and friendly atmosphere characterizing every ISH meeting! Another memorable ISH experience was the 2011 edition in Montpellier. Why? Because I organized it in collaboration with a few colleagues of mine. It was memorable because it was tough! To organize a meeting for more than six hundred people requires to plan too many different things! But all the positive feedback from the attendees compensated for the effort!

What role does ISH membership/ ISH conferences play in your (working) life?/ Has participation at ISH gatherings been of help for you professionally?

Yes, of course. ISH conferences are THE meetings in my discipline and, if I had to choose, I would skip all the other conferences. Indeed, it's the only occasion to meet nearly all the people doing history and philosophy of biology all around the world (it's a small world indeed!). It helped me to grow up as a student by listening to so many talks about disparate topics, to create stable international collaborations and, more recently, to find students to mentor and work with.

What is the preciousness of going to a ISH meeting for you?

It's the best way to meet people who are passionate about philosophy and biology, to start exchanging with them in order to establish new research collaborations, and even become friends... and don't forget that ISH meetings have always been organized in very nice places all over the world!

Working life



Sara GREEN

Assistant professor
University of Copenhagen

“ISHPSSB is a great place to test out new ideas, not only via feedback on talks but also during informal talks during the conference. For me, several paper projects have started at ISHPSSB – and so have many friendships.”

How would you describe your relationship to biology as a discipline?

I have an interdisciplinary background in philosophy and biology, so I'd say that I have a foot in each camp. To combine such diverse topics was not considered a wise career strategy during my undergraduate years. I was told repeatedly that I needed to specialize in philosophy to even have a remote chance of getting a PhD scholarship. Nevertheless, I decided to spend two years only focusing on biology. One day I noticed a call for applications for a PhD scholarship, available in a large research project on interdisciplinarity, led by Hanne Andersen at Aarhus University. I asked one of the philosophy professors, if he thought I would have a chance. His reply was discouraging. He said that I had probably ruined my chances by spending so much time at the biology department. After giving it some thought, I sent Hanne an email to express my interest. She enthusiastically replied that this kind of interdisciplinary background was exactly what she was looking for, and that she would like to meet up to discuss ideas for a project. This was a lucky shot for me – and I'm happy to have learned that hybrids like me are not as uncommon as my former philosophy professor thought.

What is your current job title and affiliations? (e.g., any cross-departmental affiliations?)

I work as assistant professor (tenure-track) at the Section for History and Philosophy of Science at the Department of Science Education, University of Copenhagen, where I teach philosophy of science to students from biology and sports science. I also have an affiliation with the Centre for Medical Science and Technologies Studies, at the Department of Public Health in Copenhagen, where I'm part of a large research project called MeInWe, or Personalized Medicine in the Welfare State. Since February this year, I also have an affiliation with the Center for Medical Ethics, Institute of Health and Society, at the University of Oslo, as part of an EU-funded consortium on the Ethics of Organoids (HYBRIDA).

Working life

What drew you to this field of research?

My PhD project was on heuristic strategies in systems biology, including the use of data-intensive methods. It is hoped that systems biology approaches will improve the predictive capacity of biomedical models, and it was a natural step for me to look more into these visions in personalized or precision medicine. This also allows me to dive into issues about how science and health technologies impact our understanding of disease and health.

What does your day-to-day work look like? What are the main activities?

I never have two days that look the same. During some periods I focus fully on teaching, while other periods are research-intensive. I really appreciate the variation – and the flexibility to in the daily worklife.

Has participation at ISHPSSB been of help for you professionally?

Yes, very much so. Because the focus of ISHPSSB is so broad, as the name implies, there is space to explore the connections between history, philosophy and social sciences. I've always experienced the discussions at ISH as constructive, and the conferences as very welcoming to young career scholars.

Could you give us a glimpse of your first/ most memorable ISHPSSB experience to date?

I've participated in the ISHPSSB meetings in Montpellier, Montréal, São Paulo, and Oslo, and each of them have had memorable highlights. But one thing I remember clearly was a feeling of happiness during my first ISH-meeting (in Montpellier). After having some doubts about my project, I realized that I felt very much at home in this community, and that philosophy of biology was exactly what I wanted to work on.

What is the preciousness of ISHPSSB meetings for you?

ISHPSSB is a great place to test out new ideas, not only via feedback on talks but also during informal talks during the conference. For me, several paper projects have started at ISHPSSB – and so have many friendships. I very much hope that new members will have similar experiences.

Creating community

Being in touch

Arguably one of the most important aspects of going to a conference is the creation of community. Staying in touch with a network of scholars with similar interests can be as important as going to the talks for your academic future. Some of the traditional ways of creating this community and starting those relationships are, for example, going for food during the lunch breaks or participating in the after-conference activities that organize themselves organically. These important social interactions allow us to discuss, in a more informal setting, ideas that can spark collaboration or research projects. Social media has traditionally played an important role in the creation of this community. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become central. Some of these ways may not be possible for the moment but there are other ways to create connection and community. From emailing and starting the conversation with someone to just using the chat and forums from the conference platforms (Slack and gather.town, for example!). In particular, we recommend the use of Twitter, following @ishpssb and the hashtag for the conference (#ISH21) will help you know how the conversation is going. Many students and scholars live-tweet the conference!

Newly formed Student Advisory
Committee on the ISHPSSB 2019
Oslo Meeting in Norway.



Closing

That's it for now! Thank you so much for reading this guide. We hope you got good things out of it. Because this is the first edition of the guide, there is a lot of space for improvement. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any more questions and suggestions! We'd be delighted to hear from you. Just drop us a line at students@ishpssb.org.

We are looking forward to meeting you in person, soon!!