

POLITICAL SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



SKIDMORE COLLEGE

Dear Students,

I'm happy to be in touch with you through this introduction to our newsletter. These will be my last introductory remarks, as in June of 2017 I'm stepping down as Chair of the Department to be replaced by Professor Natalie Taylor, our current Associate Chair. I would like to wish Natalie the best in the certainty that she will do a wonderful job leading us in the next few years. In the meantime, until the end of this Spring term, if you need to discuss anything related to your major or minor in Government, obtain authorization for courses to be taken abroad, or talk about any other requirement, please don't hesitate to contact me. My office is located in Ladd 319 (X5249) and my e-mail address is avacs@skidmore.edu. Thank you.

As you know, these continue to be exciting times for all of us –faculty and students alike– who are interested in the study of politics. We will continue to organize a number of stimulating events to keep us informed about these developments, involved in them, and assessing their potential repercussions on our lives. On one hand, the domestic political situation has become ever more interesting as issues such as the Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections, the possible replacement of *Obamacare*, the discussion of the federal budget, the nomination of a new Supreme Court Justice, and a number of other issues studied in our classes which are related to public policies, role of the state, religion-state relations, Supreme Court composition and decisions, Congress-Executive relations, voter participation and identification, reproductive rights, gun control, access to education, and welfare policies that generate political controversies and confrontation multiply and that we would continue to analyze and debate in our classes and events. At the international level, multiple developments, such as the confrontation with ISIS and the developments in the Middle East and Persian Gulf –especially concerning Syria, Iraq and Iran–, the conflict over migration policies and treatment of refugees, the relations with Russia, the growing friction with North Korea, the disagreements with allied countries, NATO, and the G-20, the political economic problems with China, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other issues around the world challenge the capacity of the U.S. and other state and non-state actors to find effective solutions, attaining peace and security while promoting democratic stability and economic development. In this complicated context, we hope that political science studies provide the opportunity to understand what is happening in the world and to consider intelligently what policy approaches could provide an effective solution to these problems, while engaging in activities that contribute to solve them.

As you can see in the following pages, the Department of Political Science, through its students, faculty and visitors has been very much interested in addressing many of these issues through the organization and sponsoring of presentations and debates, participation of students and faculty in conferences, offering of courses on related topics, supporting volunteer academic activities and action committees, and participating in different non-governmental organization devoted to important political and humanitarian causes.

I take this opportunity to announce that Prof. Yelena Biberman-Ocakli and I will be on sabbatical leave during the next academic year and that Prof. Ron Seyb, having been appointed Associate Dean of the Faculty for academic student affairs will only teach a few courses at the Department in the next few years. The Department is happy to let you know that we have already completed the process of hiring two new temporary faculty members to fill these vacancies. As you will read in the following pages Prof. Mara Suttman-Lea will be teaching courses in American Politics while Prof Megan Turnbull will teach courses in International and Comparative Politics. Please welcome them to Skidmore and consider registering in their courses in the coming terms, in the belief that you will have a great experience.

Finally, I would like to thank Barbara McDonough and all the Political Science Department student assistants for their efforts in making it possible for the Department to work so efficiently and to do all we did and expect to do in the future for the Department. To all the newsletter collaborators that contributed their time and energy to create this wonderful bulletin, many thanks on my part and from the rest of the Department.



Cordially,

Aldo Vacca, Professor and Chair

(and Mr. Curious)

FACULTY NEWS

Jack Schreuer '17

Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli's book manuscript, entitled *Gambling with Violence: State Outsourcing of Warfare in South Asia*, was the focus of a book workshop sponsored by the Center for Contemporary South Asia, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University. Professor Biberman is now incorporating the invaluable feedback she received at the workshop while preparing the manuscript for submission to a press. In February, Professor Biberman presented a paper she co-authored with her former student, Rachel Castellano '16 at the International Studies Association annual conference. Also, in February, the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank, published her op-ed, entitled "An Opportunity for Regional Leadership in South Asia," which explores the future of South Asia with the new U.S. administration. She continues to serve as a Nonresident Fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center. Professor Biberman has exciting plans for her upcoming sabbatical. They include continuing to work on a book project she started with Professor Xiaoshuo Hou from the Sociology Department and in collaboration with Zewen Hu, '20 and several articles on different topics – from biological weapons in collaboration with Brian Roberge, '18 to inter-ethnic relations in Kolkata, India in collaboration with Jan Janiszewski, '20.

Professor Kate Graney is enjoying her sabbatical, and now that the snow is gone, she will be spending less time skiing and more time trying to revise her book manuscript in light of Europe's ongoing implosion and the potential rise of a Putin-Trump axis across the Atlantic. She reports that her dog Bean is no closer to catching that darn squirrel, no matter how hard she throws herself at the glass doors in the kitchen.

Professor Chris Mann is busy with research using data collected during the fall election. In January, a paper on "I Voted" stickers with Henry Jaffe '18 and Chloe Singer '18 was presented at the Southern Political Science Association in New Orleans. He is presenting three papers at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference in Chicago in April related to his Election Research class last fall. The first paper is about the length of lines at polling places, using data collected by students at Skidmore and nearly two dozen other colleges around the country. The second paper is about the educational value of this type of field research for students using surveys of students at participating institutions after they observed polling places. The third paper is a co-authored project about gun control policy for which he conducted survey experiments last fall. Later in April, he is presenting a co-authored paper on voter mobilization at a conference at Princeton. He is in the midst of analyzing 15 field experiments on voter registration, voter turnout, and reducing down-ballot roll-off from the 2016 general election. In early March, he hosted Melissa Michelson and Brian Harrison to give a talk about their experiments on changing attitudes about LGBT rights and visit his Experimental Research course. In January, he joined the Advisory Board of the new Election Data and Science Lab at MIT.

Professor Feryaz Ocakli has been active with his research agenda. He published two academic articles: "Politics in the Kurdish Periphery: Clan Networks and Local Party Strategies in a Comparative Perspective" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, and "Oil-Fueled Insurgencies: Lootable Wealth and Political Order in Syria, Iraq, and Nigeria" in the *Journal of Global Security Studies*. The latter was coauthored with a former student, Matt Scotch '14. Professor Ocakli also presented his new research at the International Studies Association conference in Baltimore, MD. This spring, he will participate in various other conferences and workshops, including the New England Political Science Association conference, Northeast Middle East

Politics Workshop, and the Association for the Study of Nationalities conference. In addition, Professor Ocakli gave a talk at the Tang Museum as well as at Colgate University entitled "Turkey in Turmoil: Life and Politics after the Failed Coup." He is teaching a number of courses related to Middle Eastern politics and society, research methods, and comparative and international politics.

From **Professor Ron Seyb** we received this message: I continue to "transition" into my new administrative position (a transition that is taking longer than the U.S.'s transition to the metric system). My "personal and developmental goals" (I can at least now write like an administrator) for the next few months are the same as they have been for the last few: (1) Try to look less stupid than I really am during meetings with the hyper-competent administrators and staff at Skidmore, (2) Try to learn how to read a budget without regretting the day I decided not to learn my times tables, and (3) Continue to shop "Who's Yelling at Me Now?" to the Game Show Network. I miss my colleagues in the Political Science Department and, of course, the nonpareil students who manage to keep their love lights burning even when I ask them to guess where Mitch McConnell hides his turtle diary. But despite my frequent absences from the sacred linoleum of the third floor of Ladd, I am still around the department just enough to cause my colleagues, in the words of that trenchant social commentator Katy Perry, to cry, "Days like this I want to drive away."

Professor Natalie Taylor continues to work on her book project, *Portrait of Democracy*, which examines Clover Adams's place in the political thought of her husband, Henry Adams, and her long-time friend, Henry James. She figured prominently in both authors' fiction and was called "the incarnation of my native land" by James. Professor Taylor is also working on a paper, "Henry Adams 'Remembers the Ladies' in *The Education of Henry Adams*." She will deliver the paper in June at the Sons of the American Revolution's annual conference. This year the conference will take place in Quincy, Massachusetts and will mark the 250th anniversary of John Quincy Adams, Henry's grandfather. In the meantime, Professor Taylor is looking forward to attending a conference in Seattle on "Liberty and the American West in the Films of John Ford."

On January 20 **Professor Flagg Taylor** delivered a lecture at the University of Notre Dame called "Totalitarianism and the Challenge of Freedom: The Case of Czechoslovakia." This January marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of Charter 77—the Czechoslovak human rights group dedicated to protesting the abuses of the communist regime. On February 31 he participated in a panel at the Czech Embassy in Washington, D.C. called "The Enduring Significance of Charter 77" to commemorate the Charter and reflect on its accomplishments and legacy. Professor Taylor wrote a few blog posts on these topics for the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and for the Library of Law and Liberty.

<http://blog.victimsofcommunism.org/the-moral-awakening-of-charter-77/>

<http://blog.victimsofcommunism.org/the-parallel-polis-and-the-arts-of-freedom/>

<http://www.libertylawsite.org/2017/02/14/building-the-parallel-polis/>

He is also the editor of a forthcoming collection of essays by the Czech dissident Vaclav Benda. The book, *The Long Night of the Watchman: Essays by Vaclav Benda, 1977-1989*, will be out at the end of April. In February Professor Taylor did a podcast on Benda, Vaclav Havel, and the Charter with The Federalist Radio Hour:

<http://thefederalist.com/2017/02/02/historical-look-totalitarianism-vaclav-benda-charter-77/>

As the new Director of the Honors Forum, Professor Taylor was proud to institute two new events this semester. First, he held the first Honors Forum Policy Debate. This year he welcomed Jason Riley of the Manhattan Institute and the Wall Street Journal and Richard Reeves of the Brookings Institution to debate

the subject of inequality and race. Second, Professor Taylor held our first Faculty to Faculty Dialogue. He interviewed Matthew Hockenos, the Toadvine '56 Chair in 20th Century History, about his research on Nazi Germany and his path to becoming a professor.

Professor Bob Turner is chairing the Saratoga Springs Charter Review Committee which is reviewing the city's charter or constitution. His group of 15 citizens has been meeting weekly for the past 9 months to study how the city government functions and how they can make it serve the citizens and taxpayers of Saratoga Springs better. Professor Turner has discovered a new found love and appreciation for constitutional thinking. When they were discussing how many seats should be on the City Council, he turned to Federalist #10 and read that it must be large enough "in order to guard against the cabals of a few; (but) must be limited to a certain number, in order to guard against the confusion of a multitude." Similarly, Professor Turner has used the voting, polling and spatial data from students in his Real Democracy class to inform the discussion of whether to elect city council members at large or in wards. Finally, he has learned that Lin-Manuel Miranda's "The Room Where it Happens" is a great walk-up song before going into a big meeting.

This June **Professor Aldo Vacz** will be stepping down as Chair of the Department of Political Science to take a sabbatical leave during which he will conduct field research. He will work on a book manuscript and several articles which focus on the study of the recent and current political economic developments in the Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay) and the evolution of the international relations of these countries in the last few years, particularly relations among themselves in terms of integration as well as with specific countries and blocs outside the region (especially, China, the European Community, Russia, and the United States). Throughout this sabbatical period Professor Vacz intends to travel to these South American countries to gather information and data, interview some central actors, and write the initial drafts of the manuscript and articles. He expects to travel mainly to Buenos Aires and Rosario in Argentina; Sao Paulo, Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil; Santiago and Valparaiso in Chile; and Montevideo in Uruguay. In the fall of 2018 Professor Vacz return to the department to teach.

Professor Katie Zuber has been researching the role of legal advocacy in the fight for LGBTQ rights. Although courts are commonly viewed as the primary guardians of minority rights, as they are insulated from the influence of the political system and electorate, she has found this is not always the case in regards to LGBTQ issues. Many times these activists will build social and lobbying movements to win local battles before winning victories in the courts. She is excited to be working with Eliana Kosova '17 as she pursues her research. This research ties into her larger field of study about the role of the courts as agents of social change or a bulwark of the status quo. Next semester she will teach a course on the politics of LGBTQ rights that will relate to her current research and field of study.



Professor James Sieja recently stopped by the department (he taught public law courses in the 15-16 academic year) and recounted recent travels to Gettysburg.

Thank you to the following contributors to this edition of the political science department's newsletter

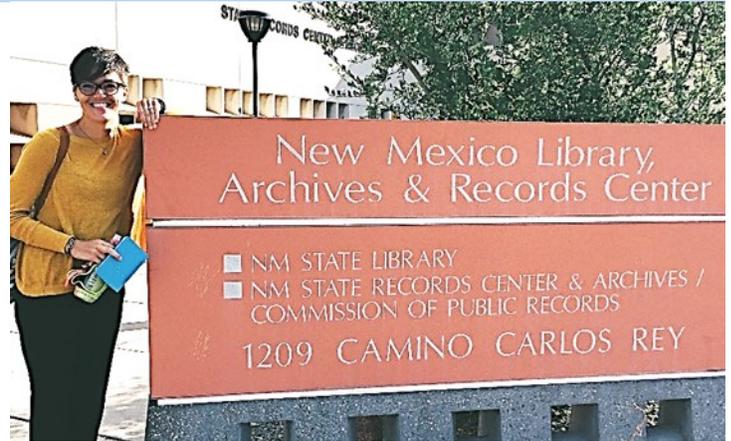
Jackson Benarroch '18, Will Berg '18, Emma Bernstein '19, Hannah Buckley '17, Elizabeth Bushey '19, Mary Callaghan '20, Alexis Cantor '18, Gonzalo Chavez '17, Trevor Cloen '18, Lizzie Collins '17, Biba Contin '19, Cristian Fernandez '19, Jack Galardi '18, Kira Geary '18, Orr Genish '17, Hannah Fishman '19, Katherine Hamilton '17, Hannah Hoey '18, Nosheen Hotaki '18, David Immerman '17, Henry Jaffe '18, Eliana Kosova '17, Claudia Lamberty '18, Erin Mah '19, Alex Mahoney '18, Rachel McPherson '19, Hannah Miller '18, Luca Mobilia '17, Kelly O'Donnell '17, Jane Moretta-Miller '18, Katie Plowright '17, Jackson Price '19, Dylan Quinn '18, Ricky Rios '18, Brian Roberge '18, Benjamin Rudman '18, Brian Elie Saleeby '17, Megan Schachter '17, Jack Schreuer '17, Jillian Siegel '18, Matthew Simkowitz '19, Chloe Singer '18, Zach Stiller '17, Jason Sutherland '18, Rachel Thomeer '18, Graham Van Korff '17, Josh Wagner '17, Emily Walter '18, William Ward '19, Megan Weitzner '19 and Nicole Werner '18

New to The Political Science Department

Mara Suttmann-Lea

I am thrilled to be joining Skidmore's Department of Political Science this fall. My research focuses on election laws, political campaigns, and citizen engagement. At Skidmore, I'll be working on my book manuscript, *Convenience at a Cost: The Unintended Consequences of Early Voting*. I'll also be launching my next research project, which examines how poll workers evaluate voter eligibility. Though I am open to all research methods, I have a soft spot for archival research, and spent the summer of 2015 driving across the country to six state archives.

This fall, I'll be teaching the American Presidency and Introduction to American Politics. My Presidency course will examine the age-old question: "what makes for presidential greatness, the person or the times?" In this course, we'll analyze how presidential power has changed over time and evaluate key theories of presidential power and leadership. There will be many "Hamilton" interludes with a likely performance or two. My Introduction to American Politics course will evaluate the development of American political institutions, behavior, and ideas, and consider the role they play in sustaining American democracy.



Both courses will feature discussions and applications of key theories to current events in American politics, with plenty of talk on the goings on in the Trump administration and prospects for the upcoming 2018 mid-term elections.

I currently hail from Chicago (go Cubs!) but am originally from Michigan (go Tigers!) I have two hound dogs (Ladybird the beagle and Bailly the basset hound) who will be joining me in Saratoga Springs, and it's likely you'll see me walking them around campus this fall. I'm an avid runner, and can't wait to explore Saratoga's trails. The only downside of living in the area is that my husband Will, a music teacher, will remain in Chicago, but he's planning many trips to "get out of the city" and visit!

Megan Turnbull



I am excited to join the Department of Political Science this coming fall as a Visiting Assistant Professor. My research interests center on political conflict, development, and violence, with an empirical focus in Sub-Saharan Africa. My dissertation, *State Responses to Armed Groups and Political (Dis)Order in Nigeria*, examines the conditions under which elected officials seek to collaborate with, tolerate, or repress armed actors. The project studies three armed groups- the Bakassi Boys, the Ijaw Youth Council, and Boko Haram- and how local governors changed their responses to them over time. Drawing on ten months of field research in Nigeria, I argue that elected officials' behavior vis-à-vis armed groups is driven by their need to win elections. This finding offers important insights about the impact of democracy on the consolidation of state authority as well as the trajectory of civil war.

Beyond my dissertation, I am also working on projects which examine the drivers of post-election riots in Sub-Saharan Africa and the relationship between state-building, vigilantism, and political participation.

This coming fall, I am excited to teach *Introduction to Comparative Politics and International Relations* as well as *Africa's Rise and the Changing Global Order and States, Markets, and Politics in Developing Countries*. In *Africa's Rise*, we'll explore the recent wave of democratization and how the continent's rapidly growing markets are re-shaping world politics. In doing so, we'll pay attention to common themes and important differences between African countries. *States, Markets, and Politics in Developing Countries* will broadly examine the political economy of development. In this course, we'll study competing approaches to development, recent gains, and remaining challenges.

In my spare time, I love to get outdoors and enjoy skiing, cycling, and competing in 5ks, half-marathons, and triathlons. I also appreciate good coffee and look forward to exploring Saratoga Springs' cafes this coming fall!



The seats were filled in Ladd 307 as Professor Turner addressed political science majors and minors, faculty, and Saratoga Springs community members on February 6th. Friends of the PL Facebook page were able to watch the talk via FB Live—that is, until technology let our political science pals down. In his talk Prof Turner spoke of the insights he has acquired about local politics since last June when he became chair of the charter review committee. I asked Professor Turner to answer some questions for our newsletter readers – here are his responses.

Was this an eye opening experience or has the process mirrored what you learned in graduate school?

It is one thing to read about checks and balances and the importance of institutions, it is an entirely different experience to try to create them. In drafting a constitution, one has to try to create rules that are fair, while also imagining how someone might try to game them. You also need to think about how any provision will affect whether the charter will pass in the referendum.

For example, last night we discussed whether to put in salary amounts for the city council and mayor. On one hand, some thought setting levels was a bad policy idea because they should be set by the elected officials and not put in a charter. Others thought that setting levels was a poison pill that would turn off voters who thought they were too high or too low. And another group worried that a city council hostile to charter change could set the salary levels so low as to sabotage the future council.

In your opinion are the politics of Saratoga Springs typical of all towns? If not, what sets us apart?

Saratoga Springs has a culture where citizens are expected to contribute to the life of the community. I am not sure why that is. Maybe it is because we all benefit from the good work of our forebearers who created Congress Park or revitalized the downtown and feel the need to pay it forward. There is a very high level of social engagement of citizens in the life of the city. The number of citizens who serve on or are members of local boards, Downtown Business Associations, nonprofits, youth sports, social clubs, fraternal organizations, and charitable organizations is high enough to give even Robert Putnam hope about social capital.

Is there such a thing as a generic city structure?

Yes and no. 95% of all local governments are one of 2 main forms—Mayor Council (think President, Congress) and Council Manager (a city council sets the policies and priorities and has a professionally training administrator implement them.)

We the People of Saratoga Springs

Gonzalo Chavez '17

However, there are an infinite number of smaller decisions with significant consequences that one has to make in drafting a charter. Who creates the city budget? How many city council members are necessary to call a meeting? Does the city council have to approve the Mayor's appointments to land use boards? Who hires the city attorney and who do they report to? Should the city's debt limit be 7% as the state recommends, or 2% as in the current city charter? What happens if a city council member is no longer able to serve? Is the seat vacant until the next election or is it filled by a vote of the City Council?

How has your direct involvement in this process changed you?

I have a fundamentally greater appreciation for the importance of politics and civic engagement. I have had the opportunity to meet hundreds of my fellow Saratogians and am inspired by the potential for self-governance.

I also have a new found sense of humility about the limits of data and social science as a tool for persuasion.

Have you ever considered running for public office?

I have always had a fascination with observing and studying elected officials that has only been enhanced by my experience in working with and around the City Council so far. I also have a new found appreciation for the challenges and necessity of explaining complex ideas in a clear, simple fashion to voters. That said, I enjoy fishing, hiking, and skiing far too much to run for office.

What is your greatest take away so far?

The "slings and arrows" of public life are very real.



A moment of levity as charter commission wrestles with how to structure staggered 4 year election cycles.

Self-Study and External Review of our Political Science Department

Professor Natalie Taylor

This year our department undertook a self-study and an external review – something that happens only once every ten years. The purpose of the self-study and the review is to determine the strengths and weaknesses of our program so that we may offer our students the best possible education in politics. You may have noticed the stacks of paper that were growing and multiplying in the conference room throughout the winter months. Barbara, with the help of Jason Sutherland, Megan Schachter, and Biba Contin, put together ten years of syllabi and other documents, such as assessment reports, newsletters, and faculty résumés. We also collected as much information regarding our students and alumni as possible. We were gratified to see how Government – now Political Science majors – thrive in and outside of the classroom and how they have gone on to lead meaningful professional and personal lives in their years after Skidmore. The self-study culminated with an review by three colleagues from other colleges. They visited campus on March 1. They met with faculty and students throughout the day in order to get to know our department better. While we have not yet received their report, they did indicate that they were impressed by the breadth of the courses offered in our department and with enthusiasm of our majors.

The Pets Behind the People

Bean Graney



Loki Turner



Jack (so cute)
McDonough



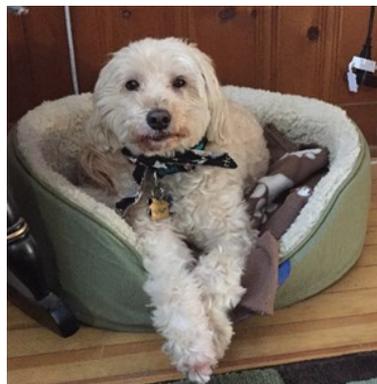
Molly Turner



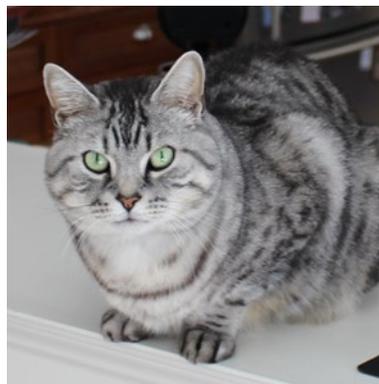
Robbie Seyb



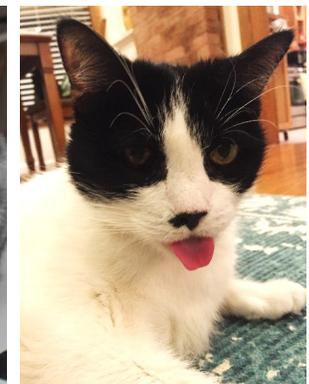
Curious Renwick-Vacs



Dewey McDonough



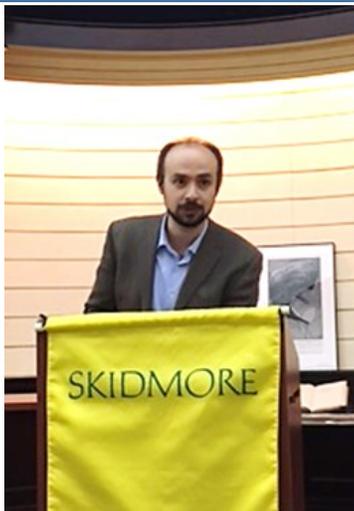
Babe Zuber



Congratulations to our members of the Tau Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha

Class of 2017

Matthew Bristol, Orr Genish,
David Immerman, Eliana Kosova,
Luca Mobilia, Megan Schachter,
Rachel Talanian, Graham Van Korff,
Joshua Wagner



"A liberal education, based on the foundations of skepticism and critical thinking, should provide the motivation, as well as the tools to take on perceived reality, strip it of the convenient narratives that reproduce it, and lay bare the underlying structures of power, interest, domination, and exploitation. It should also identify the potential for collaboration and change."
Professor Feryaz Ocakli

Class of 2018

Edson Acosta, William Berg,
Trevor Cloen, Isabelle Fischer,
James Galardi, Kira Geary, Henry Jaffe,
Dylan Quinn, Chloe Singer,
Jason Sutherland, Rachael Thomeer,
Rachel Turk, Kali Villarosa,
Emily Walter, Nicole Werner



The Student Conference on United State Affairs at the United States Military Academy

Nosheen Hotaki '17 and Graham Van Korff '17

In early October, we were invited to attend the 68th Annual Student Conference on U.S. Affairs (SCUSA) at the United States Military Academy, West Point. As the conference was scheduled to start the day after Election Day, the overarching theme, and title, of the conference, "Democracy and Democratization: Challenges and Opportunities," seemed incredibly relevant. The four-day conference addressed challenges and obstacles facing the nation. Civilian students – us – and West Point delegates engaged in comprehensive discussion to better tackle these issues, which culminated in a brief policy proposal. Student delegates were divided into topic-based groups in their particular field of interest. The topics ranged from the future of the EU to challenges of democracy to political radicalism to ethno-religious conflict. The groups deliberated over their respective issue, keeping in mind the overarching theme of the conference.

Upon arrival in November, the volunteer cadets, who ranged in age, fields of interest, and places of origin, graciously greeted us. All of the student delegates were hosted by cadets in the Barracks (dorms) allowing for us to closely witness their daily routine. We soon discovered that each cadet had an incredible passion for their education and service to the country. One host cadet, who had been adopted by American parents at the age of four from China, wanted to repay the nation with her service, claiming that she would not be where she is had she not been adopted. Others had family histories of military service. We realized that every second the cadets spent at West Point was already a form of service to the nation, which they were aware and proud of.

Each morning, we woke at 0600 by a wakeup call initiated by the "plebes" (first-years). We then gathered by our host-group cadets who had to accompany us outside of our rooms at all times. We met for breakfast with our respective groups at the

very large and impressive dining hall, "Washington Hall" then we continued to discuss the specific challenges associated with our groups in two three-hour sessions each day. Throughout the day we were led on tours of the campus, and even attended elite social mixers at Eisenhower Hall. We examined a variety of weapons of all shapes and sizes, and then attended a wrestling match (Penn State v. Army).

The conference culminated with a keynote address by Dr. Richard N. Haass, the President of the Council on Foreign Relations. Dr. Haass addressed many of the issues students had been discussing over the course of the conference, hitting topics such as the role of the U.S. in the international realm, domestic politics, and some of his expectations for the incoming Trump administration. At the speech's conclusion students were given a chance to ask Dr. Haass questions one of which was whether or not he would accept the position of Secretary of State if offered. He declined to answer. The conference concluded with a series of presentations, in the form of skits, during which groups presented their policy proposals, some were more light-hearted than others.

We met Mr. Colin Buckley, a Skidmore alum and former Government (RIP) student who was participating at SCUSA as a Co-Chair for the Economic Development roundtable. We told him that we had gained an immense understanding of our particular group topics, Political Radicalism (Graham) and The Future of the EU (Nosheen), and other challenges.

We grew newfound respect for the military, West Point culture, and the student cadets that we so closely engaged with. We found this conference to provide a timely platform to discuss and channel the various issues raised by divisive election into dynamic discourse, which we will forever treasure.



We can See Russia from Skidmore

Claudia Lamberty '18

On November 18, 2017, students of Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli's "Politics of Modern Warfare" course were provided an opportunity to interact with student representatives from the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow. While students were instructed to begin with the question, "What is the global issue to which world leaders should pay the most attention?" the discussion expanded to a variety of topics, including US-Russian relations, the rising threat of the Islamic State, the global refugee crisis, climate change, and the future policies of President Donald Trump.

The conversation revealed some major differences in the Russian and American political perspectives. Recent events have exacerbated tensions between the two countries, and both sides raised challenging questions. Differences in opinion emerged over discussion on the policies of Bashar al-Assad, climate change, and Donald Trump, during which my fellow students and I noticed seemingly unwavering support for President Putin's domestic and foreign policies. Nonetheless, it was a pleasure to address sensitive political affairs through diplomatic dialogue. For many students, the ability to openly discuss and defend American principles was an empowering experience. It is our hope that Russia and the United States will someday effectively collaborate on resolving the global challenges of our time.

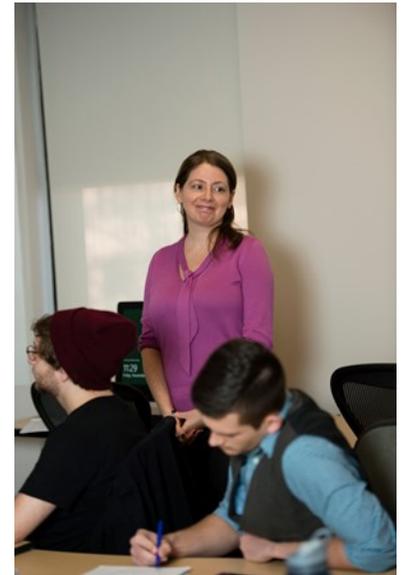


Photo credit to Erin Covey



PL 367: Election Research

David Immerman '17

One of the most rewarding experiences of Professor Mann's Election Research class this past fall was the opportunity to go out in the field and collect original data. On Election Day in November, Professor Mann scattered the class and some additional student-volunteers from the Political Science Department across the Capital District region in teams of two to survey randomly selected polling places. We visited polling locations in Albany, Rensselaer, and Saratoga counties. Our day started at five in the morning and many of us did not return until seven that evening.

The survey, which we built as a class in the weeks leading up to the election, aimed to capture data on the quality and accessibility of each voting place. While impossible to eliminate all subjectivity from a survey like the one we did, we worked hard to mitigate bias by making the questions as clear as we could. All data collectors attended one training session and each individual in each team filled out a survey at each polling place. We used an app developed by computer programmers at MIT and Dartmouth to capture data on the length of lines at the polling places and the time it took voters to get through different stages in the voting process.



Once we had physically collected the data, we needed to clean it and prepare it for analysis. This part of the class was Professor Mann's version of a crash course in data management. We had to clean our survey data, merge it with data from the smartphone app, and combine all of that data with demographic info from the U.S. Census. It was a time consuming and tedious process, but an extremely valuable lesson in what it takes to conduct original research.

After we had our dataset, the final project in the class was for each of us to come up with a research question and try to answer it using the variables our data gave us. Many of us looked at the ways in which different demographics affected line lengths and other indicators of a successful polling place, while others looked at more specific variables (such as the layout of a polling place) and how those factors impacted the voting experience. In order to test these relationships between variables, Professor Mann needed to teach us some basics on regression analysis. In a little under two hours, he was able to show us how to read and interpret the output of a regression, which was not only impressive, but also another very important takeaway from the class in terms of learning what it means to do real research. We each wrote a report that explained our research question and gave the results of our regression models. Having a final product come out of all of our hard work from the semester was a nice way to close out the process and class.

SUMMER RESEARCH PLANS

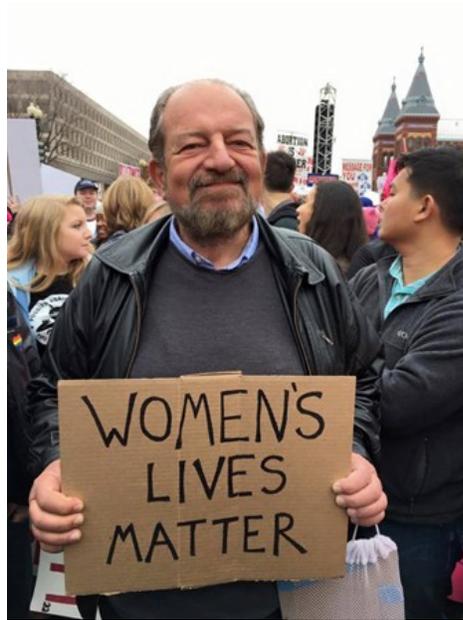
Political Science major, **Brian Roberge '18** will be conducting research with Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli this summer on the political-military implications of the current revolution in biotechnology, in particular the development of new tools for analyzing and changing an organism's genetic material. It is an inter-disciplinary inquiry into the relationship between scientific innovation and international security. Their focus will be on "personalized bioweapons" – the prospect of designing a pathogen that targets a specific person's genome. The first of its kind, the project will examine the history and current state of the science, and identify potential scenarios for the use of biological weapons and, in particular, genetically personalized bioweapons. We will also

identify the social, political, and economic implications of personalized bioweapons.

Ricky Rios '18 has been selected as an Upstate-Global Collective Summer Research Fellow for the 2017 summer term. The fellowship, which is made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is part of an initiative to promote student-faculty collaboration across the New York Six Liberal Arts Consortium, and to encourage interdisciplinary inquiry that connects local interests with global issues. His research position will be Utica Refugees Summer Research Associate with faculty research mentor Paul Hagstrom (Chaise La Dousa, or Erol Balkan) from Hamilton College.

We Were at the March for Women

In Washington D.C., Buffalo, NYC, San Francisco

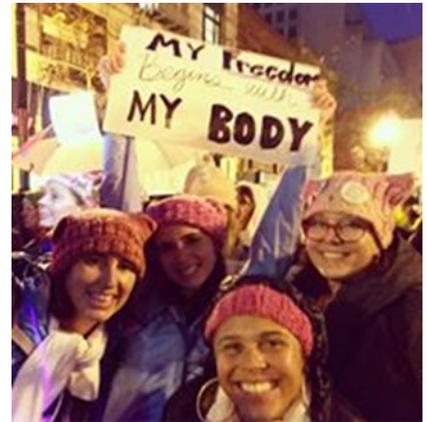


Left to Right top row

Rachael Thomeer '18 with her mom in Buffalo

Prof Vacs in Washington DC

Jane Moretta-Miller '18 in San Francisco



middle row by Katie Zuber in NYC, **bottom middle and right by** Joshua Wagner in Washington D.C.

Photos continue on page 12

EXPLORE MORE!

Political Science Department

March 28
5:30-6:30
Ladd 307



We were at the March for Women continued from page 11



Photo Credit:

top and bottom left by Alex Mahoney '18 in Washington DC

center by Emma Bernstein '19, Erin Mah '19 and Hannah Fishman '19 in Washington DC

bottom right by Jane Moretta-Miller '18 in San Francisco



Post-Election Feelings

Biba Contin '19

Last week, as I was driving on the New Jersey turnpike, four black SUVs were patrolling the highway and sporadically stopping cars for random inspections. Before leaving for my ultimate Frisbee tournament, I had read on Facebook about how the Trump administration had been sending out police officers on raids to detain undocumented immigrants. As an international student, I technically do not have anything to worry about – I am a documented student with a Visa that lasts for my four college years. However, as I rushed to get ready to travel with my team, I left behind my I-20, the document that can prove my legal status in America, as well as my passport, and if any of the raid cars wished to pull me and my friends over, they could arrest me.

When I came to America I never imagined that I would have to worry about being detained because of my cultural background. During my freshmen year, I saw Trump use his hate rhetoric towards undocumented Latino immigrants as well as Muslims, specifically Arabs. Since I fall so close between that intersection: a Latina with Lebanese decent, I find that I am often times in fear of how my physical appearance could harm my presence in America. On November 8th, when Donald Trump was elected, I had never felt more unwanted in a country. In so many ways, I embody all of the intersections that Trump supporters seem to hate: the queer, Latino-Arab woman. For a long period after his election, I kept asking myself if coming to the United States has been the right

decision. But I eventually chose to make use of my privilege as a Political Science student to try and understand what this election means—and more than just for me.

When I came to Skidmore and was being shielded by the “liberal bubble” I didn’t think Donald Trump being elected was a possibility, after all I was entirely surrounded by Bernie Sanders supporters who would like to see America go down a Democratic Socialist path. But I now understand the danger of being in such a politically homogenous campus is that you just can’t fully understand what is happening in the United States because there isn’t much political diversity. I think that the only way that the United States can avoid complete political divergence is through conversation and discussion. Especially as a Political Science major, I need to be able to sit with my political counterparts and be able to discuss what sort of political measurements would be the most beneficial to the country I reside in as well as for the political arena.

Despite Trump’s administration making me feel like I am unwanted and undesired in this country, I am thankful that his election will allow political scientists to take a more critical look at America. We can’t just wallow in self-pity and sit idly by as we wait for his 4-year administration to go by. We need to understand the political context that allowed for the Trump presidency and we need to attempt to find a way to make America less politically polarized.

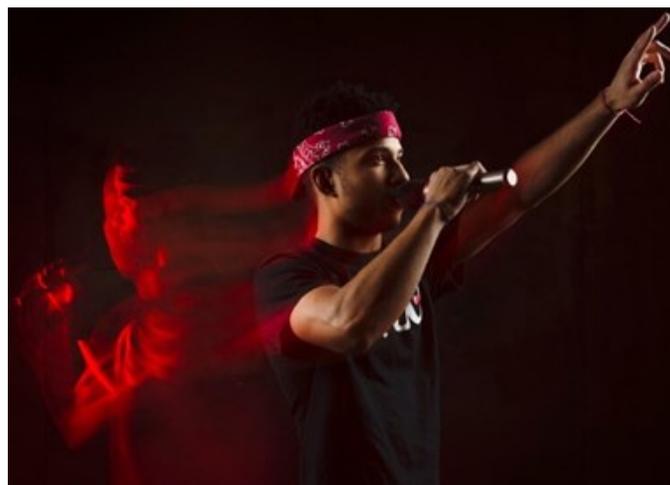
Hip Hop Inspired by Politics by Hannah Fishman '19

Cristian Fernandez, a Political Science and Business double major (Class of 2019), is not your typical aspiring hip-hop artist. Known around campus by his stage name QUO, Cristian creates music in order to bridge the gap between the political and the hip-hop worlds. His music translates complex political concepts and theories into a more widely accessible format. Cristian combines ideas from, for example, a Politics of Modern South Asia class discussion on caste with personal experiences to craft a verse, or even an entire track. As an ardent believer that systemic barriers should not prevent these topics from being accessible to everyone, he merges political and personal influences to create a common language.

Cristian did not always include politics in his music. He began to write his own lyrics during freshman year of high school. But, by junior year, he transitioned into a more political type of song writing. His inspiration was work at a non-profit organization called the Brotherhood/Sister Sol (Bro/Sis). The experience directly exposed him to the socioeconomic problems prevalent in his Harlem community. Cristian’s time at Bro/Sis gave him a unique perspective on societal disparities, and prompted him to take up the stage name QUO – to represent his struggle against the status quo. One of his challenges is ensuring that the listener picks up on the song’s

political message while, at the same time, the message is not so overpowering as to distract from the beats and music.

Cristian’s music has garnered a considerable following among Skidmore students. By bridging his academic interests and passion for music, he is able to develop and push the boundaries of both.



Tales from the Campaign Trail

Jackson Benarroch '18



It was just two weeks from when the idea was first brought up to me that I found myself on a plane to Columbus to take part in the last organizer training for the Hillary Clinton campaign in Ohio. I landed, rented a car and settled into my Airbnb all before it sunk in that I was committed to this state, the campaign and my coworkers for the next few months before the election. No matter how packed those two days of training were, there was very little to prepare me for life as a campaign staffer.

My job was to organize as large and committed volunteer teams as possible to engage in the grassroots voter-contact you hear so much about around election time. My “turf” (the geographical area I was responsible for) consisted of two counties on the Indiana border. One of which had the highest Republican turnout of any county in Ohio in 2012. When I arrived, those vast stretches of corn fields were the first indication of how far away from home I had come. Being the only paid and trained campaign staffer within thirty miles was daunting and lonely.

The very first day I arrived, I was asked by the chair of the County Democrats to give a speech at the local party office opening along with the chair and local Democratic candidate for Congress. My first impression on those local Dems I hoped to inspire into volunteering was probably shaky at best. I spoke after the chair and prospective member of Congress to a crowd of mostly seniors explaining that the Democratic Party, to me, was first and foremost about inclusion. I told them as the son of a middle-eastern immigrant of religious minority, that this election was personal. My hope was that my age, appearance and background would fade as an interpersonal boundary with all the talk of inclusion, but small town people generally just don't work that way.

Weeks later, I was feeling more sullen than ever about my place in the reddest town in Ohio when I found the most rewarding part of my campaign journey. In rural Ohio, the biggest gathering you can find is on Friday nights at the local high school football game, under the lights. In theory, it's a great opportunity for voter registration. The only problem though, is when you find a lot of folks together, in unison rooting against a rival town, they tend to take on a heightened



sense for the “other”. And the guy with the Hillary button asking people if they are registered to vote doesn't quite fit in. My visible ostracization led me to the two most exceptionally kind, welcoming, helpful and inspiring people on the campaign trail.

Emma and her mom, Beth, were enthusiastic when I approached them sporting my Hillary pin. I asked if they would be interested in volunteering for the campaign and before I knew it, Beth was my most committed adult volunteer and Emma was my bright and eager intern. Throughout the following weeks leading up to Election Day, we all shared dinners and long days canvassing. Emma, Beth and many others showed up not only to support the cause, but to support me as well. Words fall short in describing how all the people I met on the campaign trail made me feel like family, but I can say that most of those relationships, short-lived as they were, made my experience grounded and meaningful. We shared the hardship of intense work and little thanks, fighting for something patriotic. I found the beauty of grassroots campaigning in how, in no time at all, you can deeply bond with so many people who'd otherwise be worlds apart.

Senior Thesis 2017

Political Science majors completing PL 375 share brief descriptions of their research

Orr Genish '17 *Centralization within the United States military and how to expand that knowledge to Afghanistan and Iraq*

Luca Mobilia '17 *The Effect of Student Aid Policy Design on Political Participation Among Millennials* Why young people who are eligible to vote choose not to is a persistent question in political science. The traditional logic holds that young people aren't motivated to participate because their concerns aren't addressed. However, this ignores the fact that there are a number of government programs devoted to improving college access, an issue that many millennials cite as their number one concern. I am building upon the work of political scientists Joe Soss and Suzanne Mettler to see if the design of student aid policies disincentives participation in some way.

Megan Schachter '17 *Reconsideration of Sex Offender Public Notification Laws* My thesis examines five critical sex offender public notification laws. I argue that the impulse for their creation stems from a moral panic and fear among the public, rather than fact. While their success -difficult to assess from a lack of research- is mediocre at best, public support sustains their existence and prevents any re-evaluation. It represents a larger need for both citizens and the government to consider the basis of their opinions, and hold our legal and justice systems accountable for the consequences of their laws.

Jack Schreuer '17 *Legitimizing the Revolution State through Constitutional Creation* Revolutions are exceptional moments in history, when one governmental system is swept away in favor of charting a new course, this creates unique a crisis of legitimacy as both governmental legality is trampled and traditional legitimizing norms discarded. I will be analyzing under what revolutionary conditions a constitution can serve as a legitimizing mechanism, based on Weber's theory of descriptive legitimacy. Rather than examining the

Senior thesis continues on page 18



Teaching Trump

At left Erin Mah '19, political science major, contributes to the Teaching Trump discussion in the Tang Museum on October 26th

Below Skidmore College faculty in discussion during Teaching TRUMP, A More Perfect Union, Tang Teaching Museum, October 26, 2016



Student News

Collected by Jason Sutherland '18

Emma Bernstein '19 Despite only being a month in, this semester has been a whirlwind. Outside of my classes, I am President of Skidmore's animal rights club, Compassion for All. Recently we have been discussing currently contested legislation pertaining to animal welfare. The next four years will be a constant fight on behalf of wild and domestic animals.

Mary Callaghan '20 This past year I graduated high school, and dove right into college with an ever-strengthening passion for Political Science. Due to our current political atmosphere, I declared my major during my first semester on campus. Over winter break I marched with my family in DC, and this summer I plan on working in politics in my home state of North Carolina.

Jack Galardi '18 Today I am going to the European Commission in Brussels as a part of my IES Abroad European Union program. With the program, I will visit and experience the culture of 13 European and North African countries. If that wasn't cool enough, this summer I will be interning with the National Basketball Association doing live event production!

Kira Geary '18 I'm currently abroad in London at King's College taking courses in their War Studies department. I'm enjoying the chance to take different courses and explore Europe, and at the end of May I will be headed back to the States to begin a summer internship as a Public Affairs Intern with SKDKnickerbocker, a progressive political consulting firm.

Orr Genish '17 Currently, I am working on my thesis which involves looking at the creation of a federalized military system in the United States from pre-Revolutionary times up to present day, and how we can compare that to current security building in Afghanistan and Iraq. One class I'm taking this semester (that has been amazing so far) is Politics of Congress with Professor Seyb. After graduation, I will be commissioning as an Officer in the Air Force as a Navigator - which I am incredibly excited about.

Katie Hamilton '17 As a second semester senior, I'm greatly enjoying my (only) three classes which include Seyb's Politics of Congress, Biberman's Politics of Modern South Asia, and Ocakli's Senior Seminar in IA. I'm now looking for jobs at think tanks and NGOs in Paris for next year, and hoping to be employed by graduation!

Hannah Hoey '18 I am currently studying abroad in Freiburg, Germany on the IES: European Union program. I am having a fabulous time travelling Europe and studying its political cultures, especially at this interesting and volatile juncture for the EU. This summer I will be interning at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium which I am incredibly excited about.

Henry Jaffe '18 This year I've been working a lot on academic policy at Skidmore for SGA. This semester I've taken advantage of the liberal arts experience and have

stepped back from PL classes to explore other things. I can't wait to return as a resident, instead of a visitor, to the third floor of Ladd next semester!

Eliana Kosova '17 This semester is bittersweet, and although I'm excited to graduate, I'm also savoring my time here. I'm taking two awesome Political Science classes, Law and Gender and Experimental Research, to finish off my senior year with. I'm currently applying to public policy internships for this summer, and I can't wait to see what the future holds!

Rachel McPherson '19 This semester my favorite class is Media and Politics taught by Christopher Mann. Outside of academics, I hold the position of Jonsson Tower ResHall Senator and Sophomore Class Marketing Officer within SGA. I am also a Peer Health Educator and on the E-board for the Skidmore Republicans Club. This summer, I look forward to competing in horse shows and then spending the fall semester studying abroad in Germany!

Hannah Miller '18 I am abroad right now in Denmark, studying urban planning. At Skidmore my focus is on local politics (whaddup @ Bob Turner) so it's cool to tie in the surveying of cities on a local level. While in Copenhagen, we go from city to city interviewing residents and studying the landscape to see if the planners' visions are aligned with those of the residents. All is fun!

Luca Mobilia '17 I'm currently SGA's Executive Vice President (EVP). The EVP is a position that was created as part of the new SGA Constitution, and is still finding it's institutional role; it is an interesting experiment in government to speculate how the decisions I make will shape the role for years to come.

Kelly O'Donnell '17 This semester I am interning at the Albany office of Senator Schumer. Although the office is small, I am learning a lot about constituent service, and how regional offices operate. It has been great so far, and I am looking forward to when the Senator visits the capital region.

Jane Moretta-Miller '18 I am currently studying abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and loving every second of it! One of my favorite parts is learning about politics and social change from non-Eurocentric, non-US centric professors and courses. For example, today we considered "original accumulation", a term used here to refer to the mass amounts of silver, gold and blood of native and African people which allowed for the material and social success of the industrial revolution in Europe. These courses are helping me develop a deeper understanding of the colonialist history that has been engrained in me, as well as challenging the Euro-centric understanding of politics and social change- I am so excited to apply my new learning to political science courses at Skidmore!

Katie Plowright '17 During my junior year I studied in D.C, where I worked on Capitol Hill and lobbied for environmental action, and in India where I worked with local organizations on international development. This semester I am taking a wonderful class with Professor Mann called Experimental Research and working as a UA for 4 and 6 Cane

Jackson Price '19 I spent this past summer at the Euro 2016 football tournament in Paris, and then working at a summer camp in the French alps. On campus, I host

Student news continued from page 16

a summer camp in the French alps. On campus, I host a weekly radio show (on Saturdays) covering topics in the world of football, and I also contribute articles to Skidnews. For this upcoming summer, I am excited about an internship at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. Although I plan on traveling abroad to Paris next year, I am looking forward studying more in the Political Science Department!

Dylan Quinn '18 Over the course of my junior year, I have been exposed to the intricacies of the college's administration through my involvement in Academic Council and the Committee on Academic Standing. I am also continuing as the co-Vice President of the Honors Forum, co-President of the Franklin Forum, and the Faculty and Administration Editor of SkidNews. Although I am waiting to hear back from internships for the summer, I am already enrolled in a week-long course on U.S. Grand Strategy at the Hertog Foundation.

Ricky Rios '18 This semester, I am spending my time abroad in Chiang Mai, Thailand learning about the intricacies of international development from a non-western perspective. My study abroad institution's (ISDSI) focus on sustainability has challenged me to think critically about our globalized world. The collective discussions about alternative political, economic, and environmental theories, coupled with intensive Thai language classes, prepared me for an internship with a local NGO. As part of our experiential learning, ISDSI pairs students up with NGOs for six weeks. I am working with Shan Youth Power, an organization that focuses on enabling the Shan people (a subgroup of the Tai people) through leadership development, traditional cultural retention, and access to educational opportunities. I am teaching the students English and performing ethnographic studies to further understand the political tension between the Shan and Burmese people.

Benjamin Rudman '18 This summer I will be staying on campus to work with Professor Ocakli on a survey to study Armenian Genocide denial within Turkish society. This will be the first time that I have ever worked on a project that hasn't been for a class, and I am very excited to work with Professor Ocakli on a very interesting and important topic.

Brian Saleeby '17 This semester I am doing an independent study with Professor Ocakli on the "Political Economy of Development." So far it has been one of the most intellectually stimulating classes I have taken at Skidmore, not only because of the dynamic readings, but also because of its one-on-one structure. It was definitely a fantastic idea, and I would recommend that whenever possible, students should try to engage in courses of this nature.

Megan Schachter '17 This semester, I am taking classes part time while working at Bolton-St. Johns, a political consulting firm with offices in NYC, Albany, and Buffalo. Thus far, I have had responsibilities including leading Lobby Day meetings between organizations and legislators, drafting research memos for clients, and scheduling meetings and events. It's given me great insight into increasingly important state and local politics and helped me understand the root of the word lobbyist (Hint: They spend a lot of time in the lobby of the capital building). I'm also beginning to wrap my head around graduating in a few months!

Jillian Siegel '18 So far this semester is going great! I am looking forward to spring break because I will be going to Guatemala with eleven other Skidmore students to volunteer with Safe Passage, an NGO. This summer I will be interning in D.C. with newly elected Congressman Ro Khanna from California's 17th Congressional District and it will also be my fourth summer as a riding instructor at an overnight camp. I am very excited for the rest of the semester, but I am really looking forward to my summer plans!

Matthew Simkowitz '19 I'm super excited to be spending my summer in Israel as part of the Onward Israel Government and Politics internship program! I'll be interning in Jerusalem, hopefully working for a left-wing politician or political party within the Knesset. I'm also excited to study abroad in Buenos Aires next fall with SIT's Transnationalism and Comparative Development program! I've definitely got a fun and enriching year ahead of me, and I can't wait to bring my experiences and lessons learned back to Skidmore in 2018.

Chloe Singer '18 This semester I'm studying at John Cabot University in Rome. One of the classes I'm taking is a comparative analysis of central and eastern European governments. This class is especially interesting because there are full-time (not study abroad) students in the class that are from central and eastern Europe. Being able to study such an interesting subject with input from this variety of students has been a fantastic opportunity.

Jason Sutherland '18 This semester has been a lot of fun. I am enjoying my job here at the department and the political science classes I am taking. It is also my first semester as president of Skidmore's Model UN club, which has been a great lesson in leadership. During the summer, I will participate in a two-week seminar in D.C. with the Hertog Foundation. Like I always say, life is good (except when you're playing Flagg Taylor in soccer).

Rachel Thomeer '18 I am currently studying abroad in Geneva, Switzerland! I am here on the SIT International Relations and Multilateral Diplomacy program and it has been a great experience. So far, the program has taken us on visits to the UN, Doctors without Borders, and the International Committee of the Red Cross Headquarters. I plan to do my culminating research project on either Swiss voting systems or the role of women in global conflicts.

Josh Wagner '17 I am spending my last few months at Skidmore filling out law school applications and finishing up my Political Science and History majors. I will also be appearing in the Theater department's production of Balm in Gilead in April, and I am preparing for a two-week excursion to the Balkans to study post-Yugoslavian political culture after graduation.

Emily Walter '18 I am currently studying abroad in London and having an amazing time. When I am actually on campus I enjoy squirrel watching and participating in SGA.

William Ward '19 I'm excited about all of my classes this semester. I am taking U.S Foreign Policy, Politics of Modern South Asia, and Intro to Comparative International Politics, all of which are very interesting and informative. I am especially looking forward to studying abroad in Spain next semester where I hope to gain fluency in Spanish and eat muchas tapas!

Student news continues on page 18



Congratulations to four Political Science majors qualified for membership last fall into the Thoroughbred Society. Members of the Thoroughbred Society are student-athletes who have maintained a GPA of 3.67 or above for the previous semester.

Marc Cibelli, 2017, Ice Hockey

Erin Mah, 2019, Lacrosse

Kelly O'Donnell, 2017, Soccer

Megan Weitzner, 2019, Swimming & Diving

Senior Thesis

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intricacies of the governmental structures established by a constitution, I will be looking at the founding process and the following regime's relationship with the constitution. My case study will consist of the three failed constitutions of the French Revolution, testing them against Thomas Paine and Beau Breslin's arguments for constitutional success. I will then use Nicaragua as an example of a case in which the fulfilling of this constitutional criteria led to a surviving constitution and peaceful transition of power.

Zach Stiller '17 *Variations in State Responses to Oil Targeting Insurgencies* I am looking at the differences in cases that include Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria, in terms of why the state chooses to respond in particular ways. I will be analyzing territorial integrity and relative military capacity to see how those variables affect the ability for the state to respond. Currently the conflicts are very dynamic and appear that further state intervention in Iraq and Syria will require international support. On the other hand, the current oil insurgency in Nigeria is turning towards a more peaceful resolution for the time being, involving a greater social services infrastructure.

Jane Moretta-Miller in Argentina

I am studying abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina with the program API. I take classes at the University of Belgrano, a private university with a large international student population. I arrived in January in order to participate in an intensive Spanish course. Although I did not learn to read or write in English until the 3rd grade, returning to Spanish grammar proved to be very challenging. Regular classes have begun, and I am enjoying them immensely! One of my favorite things is learning from a non-US centric, non-euro centric perspective. I am taking U.S Latin American relations, Political and Social Change in Latin America, Latin American Cinema, Latin American History in the 20th century, and Advanced Spanish Production. Although I am only two days in to classes, I can tell the professors will challenge my understanding of the role of the United States in Latin America, and the relationship between the government and the people. Expectations from my classes seem to be similar to those given at Skidmore, although no grade percentage is given to participation.

I am staying in a home stay in a neighborhood called Recoleta with a single mother and her three children, ages 29, 26 and 24. A cultural difference here is that children live with their parents until they marry, so we have a very full house! My host mother, Anna, is a lawyer, and loves to help me with my homework. My host brother, the eldest, does handy work. My eldest host sister is a fashion designer, and the youngest is studying to be a lawyer. The family is very loving and invested in my well-being, and has helped me integrate

Jane M-M continues on page 19

Student News

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Megan Weitzner '19 Currently, I am abroad studying at the University of Westminster in London. My political science classes here are especially interesting due to the Trump administration. My international relations class is focusing on how Trump will affect the U.K, and since I am the only American in my class I am bringing an interesting perspective on the future. I am also looking forward to seeing everyone back in the Political Science department next fall.

Nicole Werner '18 I am currently studying abroad at Trinity College, Dublin, where I am taking courses on Irish politics. I am excited to come back to Skidmore in the fall and compare and contrast what I've learned here to with my American government classes.



Jane Moretta-Miller in Argentina

Continued from page 18

into argentine culture. I am provided with breakfast and dinner every day. I was told that it would be very difficult to be vegetarian in Argentina, but have encountered no problems thus far.

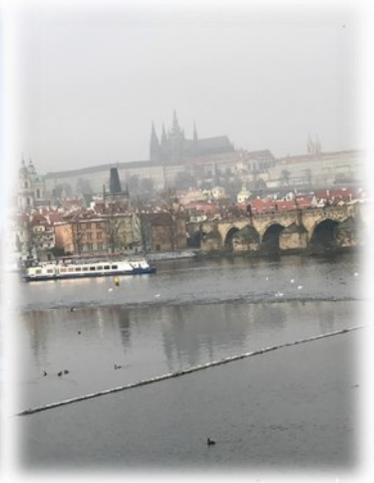
Last week I had the honor of traveling to the carnival capital of Argentina as well as to Patagonia. Both trips were amazing and awe inspiring.



Will Berg writes from Copenhagen

This semester I am studying abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS). DIS is a study abroad program and not a true college; essentially, it is home to students from across the U. S. who wish to study in Denmark. Over 1200 American students are living in Copenhagen and taking classes at DIS this Spring semester. I am living in a residential community (RC) in Christianshavn, a popular neighborhood in Copenhagen that is merely a twenty minute walk over a harbour from DIS and the greater Copenhagen city center. DIS students predominantly make up my RC; however, a Danish family lives on the fifth floor and there are two Danish college-aged students living as RAs as well. Harkening back to freshman year, I am living in a triple. While it is a change from the personal space I am accustomed to at my house off campus in Saratoga, it has been an enjoyable experience and it has afforded me great friends who are always willing to explore Copenhagen.

My academic classes have definitely been pretty different from my Skidmore academic experience. There has not been nearly as much academic work, which has been crucial; with less responsibility I have been able to travel to Prague, Malmo, and Berlin. I have other trips planned for the coming weeks as well. While not strenuous, my classes have been pretty interesting as professors at DIS are practitioners first, and academics second. As such, we hear different insights than what we are used to at Skidmore. I am taking two political science classes: Danish Politics & Society, and EU-US Relations. Both classes have provided me with different perspectives on how EU governments function.



Put simply, I have had an unbelievable experience thus far living and learning in Copenhagen. The academic experience in and of itself has not necessarily been academically stimulating, but that, at least to me, has been secondary to my cultural education. I have a host family that I have dinner with and see at least once a week, and it has been great seeing museums, discussing Danish politics, and having traditional Danish meals at their house. Further, exploring the city by walking and taking public transportation has allowed me to travel through most of the greater Copenhagen area. One main thing that I have learned is how much Danish residents follow US politics and how every person speaks perfect English. It really has made me self-reflect on how we as Americans often fail to look outward and learn more about foreign languages, cultures, and governments. I definitely suggest other political science majors at Skidmore attend DIS as well!

RICKY RIOS WRITES FROM THAILAND



Through the University of Minnesota's MSID (Minnesota Studies in International Development) program, I am spending my spring semester in Chiang Mai, Thailand. There are 13 students total (including myself). The host organization that sponsors us is called ISDSI (International Sustainable Development Studies Institute) and the staff at the organization goes above and beyond to make all of us feel welcomed and adequately assisted. MSID requires us to stay with host families; I live with a host

family of 5 who have treated me like one of their own since the first day I arrived. My *Mae* (host mom) teaches 5th grade math at a private school. My *Paw* (host father) works as a chef in Sri Lanka, but he also used to be a middle school math teacher at the same school Koon Mae works at. My siblings are all around my age: 18 (host sister), 20 (host brother) and 22 (eldest host brother). My sister is entering Chiang Mai University (CMU) in the nursing program, my younger brother is a rising-senior at CMU studying chemical engineering, and my eldest brother just graduated from CMU with a degree in architecture. I've had the privilege of attending both *Nong Pear* and *Pi Peach's* graduations and spending many weekends exploring the streets of Chiang Mai with the rest of the family.

Delving deeper into the meat of the program, MSID is broken up into two main phases: classroom and fieldwork. The classroom phase ended just before our spring break trip in mid-March. Every morning, as a collective group, we took a course titled "Country Analysis" in which our professor had us spend the first 15 minutes of class meditating and "retreating into silence." The class discussed a variety of topics such as *non-western international economic theories, gender and sexuality, environmental sustainability, public health, etc.* Coupled with Country Analysis, we also had a course that specialized on a track topic we individually chose. Some students decided on education, others were in sustainability, while I, along with almost half the total students, was in the social service track. Although this class was not as rigorous as I am used to back at Skidmore, the discussions we had with *Ajaan* (professor) Kay were invaluable. She specialized in grassroots movements in Thailand and was able to grant insight into the perspective of the average Thai countryman. Our last course of the day was our Thai language course. All of our ajaans taught Peace Corp volunteers so they were intense, but they were also loving and extremely efficient teachers. The most rewarding aspect of learning Thai is venturing into areas with less foreigners and communicating with locals who insist your Thai is proficient (when clearly it is not). But aside from learning Thai for personal benefit, the main purpose was to prepare us for our internship placements with local NGOs.

What attracted me the most to MSID was the program's focus on experiential learning. Most programs that I researched lacked a practicum component. MSID guaranteed students placements with local NGOs, and that is where I believe the most impactful learning begins. I am currently placed with Shan Youth Power, an organization whose mission is to "provide Shan youth the opportunity to participate in democratic development through education, awareness-raising, and capacity building." Although there are smaller tasks that I perform occasionally, my main role is to teach English. The number of students fluctuate daily, but their ages range from 6-50 years old. Regardless of age, Shan students are recognized for their great respect for their *Kroo* (teacher). They try to engage as much as possible and they always make light of their (and others) mistakes. There has yet to be a class that has not finished in an uproar of laughter.

Although I am in Thailand primarily for study, I have been able to take advantage of the free time that I have in order to visit other parts of the country. On March 11th, I set out on a 9-day trip that took me to Koh Pangan, Koh Samui and Bangkok. The islands, in all of their beauty, were respectively different. Koh Pangan was a paradise in nature-- one can spend hours twisting and turning along the narrow roads surrounded by coconut and bamboo trees. Here I was able to hike up Khao Ra (the highest peak on the island). In contrast to this experience, Koh Samui was a bit more developed. It is recognized as a family-friendly island, with its many tourist spots and shopping centers. Both were wonderful, but depending on the experience you were looking for, you might prefer one over the other. My final spot was Bangkok, it had all the advantages of a typical major city: big supercenters, adequate public transportation, and incredible nightlife. In Bangkok I visited the floating markets, numerous *Wats* (temples), the Grand Palace, and one of the world's largest weekend markets. Bangkok was perfect to find incredibly cheap food (even for Thailand), and enjoying strolls along busy roads at night. My 9-day trip ended with a beautiful boat tour around the city with friends.

Thailand began as an unexpected alternative location for my semester abroad. But as many people had reassured me before heading off, it became a blessing in disguise. The connections I have made, both Thai and *Farang* (foreigners), have proven to be invaluable. With six weeks left before the end of the program, there is a lot to get done, a lot to reminisce about and a lot to take in. But I choose to live in the moment, and continue enjoying everything Thailand has afforded me. Here's to *suu-suu na krap* (fighting on)!



Enjoying cake with friends and ISDSI staff on my birthday!



Trying my first scorpion with friends in Bangkok!

Posing by Mork Fall Waterfall in Chiang Mai, Thailand!
With friends by the Mae Ping River during our scavenger hunt



FALL 2017

TOPICS COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PL 251B: Africa's Rise and the Changing Global Order

Megan Turnbull

Once labeled "the hopeless continent," the political and economic developments in Africa today suggest the exact opposite. Africa's economies are among the fastest growing in the world, with at least a dozen countries enjoying a growth rate of six percent or higher since the mid-1990s. The number of democracies on the continent has risen from a mere three in 1989 to twenty-three in 2008. What explains these political, economic, and social changes? How are emerging African economies re-shaping world politics and international markets? What are the consequences of China's increasing role in the region? To answer these questions, we will travel through Africa's recent political history, beginning with colonial rule and its legacies, the independence movements and development policies of the 1960s, economic crises, foreign aid, and civil war in the 1970s and 1980s, and the wave of democratization and economic growth starting in the mid-1990s to today.

PL251C: The Politics of Gay Rights

Katie Zuber

Today same-sex couples can get married in all fifty states, and yet only twenty-two states prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation (there are even fewer protections based on gender identity). As such, you can obtain a marriage license in any one of the remaining twenty-eight states and still be fired for being gay. How has the United States been able to achieve full marriage equality in the absence of basic legal protections for gay men and lesbians? In exploring some possible answers to this question, we will study the development of the LGBT rights movement in the United States, from its origins in the 1950s to the present day. In addition to studying the movement's history, we will analyze social movement goals and strategies, as well as the ensuing backlash, across a wide range of issues including employment discrimination, political and legal representation, gays in the military, marriage, and transgender rights, just to name a few. We will then conclude with an exploration into the relationship between gay rights and the renewed push for religious freedom.

PL 251: Introduction to Political Research

Chris Mann

Political science research seeks to answer interesting and important questions with valid inferences about political processes. This course will introduce the wide range of research approaches used by political scientists to study American, comparative, and international politics: observational data, surveys, and experiments; quantitative and qualitative; case studies and comparative designs; and more. The primary goal is becoming a smart consumer of political science research with the ability to understand research techniques, interpret findings, assess appropriateness of research designs, and identify challenges to valid inference. The course will discuss principles of data analysis and statistical tools frequently used in political science, but the emphasis is skills to read, understand, and critique research. **Note: this course will not count for the American Politics subfield in Political Science since it covers research methods.** Pre-requisites: PL101 or PL103 or ES100 or instructor permission

PL367: Real Democracy

Bob Turner

How well does democracy work in Saratoga Springs? How do we know? Real Democracy uses the 2017 Saratoga Springs City Council elections as a real life laboratory for studying the practice of democracy in 21st century America. Students will design and implement several research projects including mapping voter turnout, surveying city council meetings, analyzing local campaign strategies, interviewing local political elites; and conducting an exit survey of citizens' vote choice in the 2015 Saratoga Springs city. The culmination of the class will be a public presentation of our analysis to the general public and candidates. The class is more of a workshop than a class or seminar.

PL 367: Experimental Research

Chris Mann

Political science increasingly relies on experiments to understand the causes of behaviors, attitudes and events: why do people vote, what is the effect of campaign ads, what influences legislators, how much discrimination still exists, and many more questions. In this course, we will discuss the logic of experiments, its strengths and weaknesses compared to other ways of studying political science, and the ways in which experimentation has been -- and could be -- used to investigate political, social, and economic phenomena. Students will learn how to interpret, design, and execute experiments, with an emphasis on field experiments and survey experiments.

FALL 2017: WHAT COUNTS FOR WHAT?

AMERICAN POLITICS	POLITICAL THEORY	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	COMPARATIVE POLITICS
PL251C: The Politics of Gay Rights (Katie Zuber)	PL 341: French Liberal Tradition (Flagg Taylor)	PL251B: Africa's Rise in a Changing World (Megan Turnbull)	PL 239: Middle Eastern Politics (Feryaz Ocakli)
PL 311: Constitutional Law (Katie Zuber)	PL 354: Feminist Political Thought (Natalie Taylor)		PL 327: Politics in Russia and the Soviet Successor States (Kate Graney)
PL 334: The United States Presidency (Mara Suttmann-Lea)			PL 349: States, Markets and Politics in Developing Countries (Megan Turnbull)
PL 367: Real Democracy (Bob Turner)			
PL367: Experimental Research (Chris Mann)			

POLITICAL SCIENCE FALL 2017 COURSES

PL-101 001	Intro to American Politics	Katie Zuber	T R	02:10 PM-03:30 PM
PL-101 002	Intro to American Politics	Mara Suttmann-Lea	T R	08:10 AM-09:30 AM
PL-101 003	Intro to American Politics	Mara Suttmann-Lea	T R	11:10 AM-12:30 PM
PL-101 004	Intro to American Politics	Mann, Christopher	M W	02:30 PM-03:50 PM
PL-102 001	Intro Political Philosophy	Taylor, Frank	T R	09:40 AM-11:00 AM
PL-103 001	Intro Comp/Intl Politics	Ocakli, Feryaz	M W F	10:10 AM-11:05 AM
PL-103 002	Intro Comp/Intl Politics	Megan Turnbull	W F	08:40 AM-10:00 AM
PL-239	Middle Eastern Politics	Feryaz Ocakli	M W F	12:20 PM-01:15 PM
PL-251 01	Intro to Political Research	Chris Mann	M W F	12:20 PM-01:15 PM
PL-251B 01	Africa's Rise in a Changing World	Megan Turnbull	M W F	11:15 AM-12:10 PM
PL-251C 01	The Politics of Gay Rights	Katie Zuber	T R	09:40 AM-11:00 AM
PL-327	Politics in Russia and the Soviet Successor States	Kate Graney	T R	11:10 AM-12:30 PM
PL-334	U S Presidency	Mara Suttmann-Lea	T R	02:10 PM-03:30 PM
PL-341	French Liberal Tradition	Flagg Taylor	T R	03:40 PM-05:00 PM
PL-349	Politics of Developing Countries	Megan Turnbull	M W F	01:25 PM-02:20 PM
PL-354	Feminist Political Thought	Natalie Taylor	M W	02:30 PM-03:50 PM
PL-367 001	Real Democracy	Bob Turner	M W	04:00 PM-05:20 PM
PL-367 002	Experimental Research	Chris Mann	W F M	10:10 AM-11:30 AM 11:15 AM-12:10 PM