

POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



Dear Political Science Majors and Minors,

It is hard to believe that my all too brief tenure as the interim chair of the Political Science Department is coming to an end in two short months, when Associate Professor Natalie Taylor returns from her sabbatical.

I am happy to announce that the department will have a brand-new look this fall. After 30+ years, we are getting new carpeting, Roadster Axel, and new furniture for the department lounge. Infrastructure Week will commence at some point in late June.

Beau Breslin will be teaching in London in the Fall for the FYE program. Professor Emmanuel Balogun will be on leave for 2022-23 working for the Department of State. We are fortunate to have a new visiting assistant professor, Andrew Ivey, who will offer courses on Latin American politics. You can follow him on twitter at [@AndrewIvey77](#)

Professors' Graney, Biberman, and Ocakli gave their insights into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the motivations driving Russian President Vladimir Putin and Western allies, and the global implications of the growing conflict, as part of a panel, Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Causes and Global Implications.

Our majors are doing great things. Anissa Joseph, 22' has been named as a 2022-2023 Diversity Fellowship Program (DFP) Fellow with the American Political Science Association. This is an incredibly competitive national program for students applying to PhD programs in political science. Caitlin Neuhaus Kilgore is presenting her thesis at the Midwest Political Science Association, and Hannah Tuohy is presenting her thesis at the Northeast Political Science Association. Maria Bideiwy '24 and Olivia Kupiec '22 presented their research on participatory budgeting to the Saratoga Springs City Council.

As always, I am open to your ideas and suggestions. Stop by Ladd 316.



Sincerely
Bob Turner

FACULTY NEWS



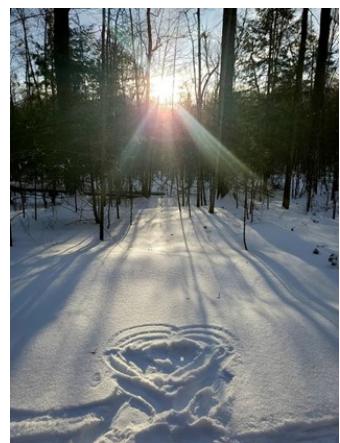
Yelena Biberman-Ocakli I participated in the panel “Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine: Causes and Global Implications,” a book workshop at the Center for Contemporary South Asia at Brown University, and a conference organized by the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry. An article I co-authored with former student Zach Troyanovsky ’21, entitled “How to Kill a Superpower: Do you remember the Belavezha agreement?,” was published in Inkstick on December 8, 2021 – marking the thirty-year anniversary of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The article presents the key takeaways from our five-episode podcast *How to Kill a Superpower: Lessons from the USSR*. It is available on Soundcloud, Spotify, and Apple Podcast – released by the Davis Center at Harvard University, where I am currently an associate. I also continue my work as nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s South Asia

Center. In connection with the podcast, Zach and I participated in two panels. The first, entitled “Autopsy of an Empire,” was hosted by the Atlantic Council’s Eurasia Center and included former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst, former Ambassador of Ukraine to U.S. Oleh Shamshur, and Russian dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza. The other panel, entitled “The Story Behind ‘How to Kill a Superpower’,” was hosted by Harvard University’s Davis Center. Both recordings are available on YouTube. Last semester, I hosted Afghan nonviolence activist Ahmadullah Archival in my classes and organized his all-college talk, entitled “The Rich History of Nonviolence in Afghanistan.” I am currently working on multiple new projects, including a new book on militarism and a documentary on Saratoga BLM with Opeyemi Majiyagbe ’25 and Emma Gill ’24. I served as Section Co-Head for Politics of Developing Countries for the Midwest Political Science Association annual conference, a book manuscript reviewer for Oxford University Press, and as an external reviewer for a National Endowment for the Humanities funded fellowship at the New York Public Library, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Division.



Professor Biberman-Ocakli and Zach Troyanovsky ’21 in “Autopsy of an Empire” panel (hosted by Atlantic Council’s Eurasia Center) with former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst, former Ambassador of Ukraine to U.S. Oleh Shamshur, and Russian dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Kate Graney I really enjoyed the winter weather, skiing and hiking and playing in the snow. But I am ready for spring, and sun, and gardening. I am going to be delivering the John Ramsey Honor’s Forum Lecture and a college-wide lecture for the Pi Sigma Alpha induction ceremony at SUNY-Oswego (by invitation of a former Skidmore colleague, Prof. Helen Knowles), both in March 2022. In April, I am going to be doing a “Cocktails and Conversation” event on Ukraine for the Skidmore Alumni Association (see what wonders await you when you graduate?), and at the Skidmore Reunion in June I’ll be doing an event for the Class of 1972 in conjunction with the Tang exhibit “We’ve Only Just Begun: 100 Years of Women in Politics” that Prof. Natalie Taylor and I helped to organize last year. Lots of wonderful things, yet I find myself overwhelmingly preoccupied with the horror and tragedy in Ukraine and Russia, parts of the world I have studied for a large part of my life. Let us hope and work for a quick end to this conflict, and all conflicts. Here’s a peaceful picture I took in the woods last month to inspire our efforts.



FACULTY NEWS

CONTINUED

Chris Mann Next fall, I look forward to teaching Election Research (PL335) for students interested in the 2022 election or news media in politics. Election Research will look at how the news media covers the 2022 election and how that coverage influences voting behavior. The 2020 election saw a massive increase in attention by the public and news media to topics such as voting by mail, early voting, and more. Although the attention was partially caused by the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, the (false) claims of voter fraud by former President Trump and allies put a spotlight on how we vote and made these topics central to American politics. State legislatures have made more changes to elections laws in the past 15 months than the prior 15 years. Candidates routinely talk about the false claims of voter fraud in advertising and debates. The Election Research course will look at what we know about the impact of this attention in 2020 and 2021 and examine how on-going attention influences the 2022 election.



On the research front, I am presenting a paper about an experiment on how government facilities impact feelings of security in occupied Kashmir at the Midwest Political Science Association with Professor Biberman. I am also looking forward to Caitlin Neuhaus Kilgore '22 presenting her senior thesis at the Midwest Political Science Association. I am working on completing several research projects about voting by mail and early in-person voting in 2021, in the wake of major changes in when and how Americans vote during the pandemic. This research will inform my preparation for another wave of experiments on the most effective tactics for mobilizing young people and people of color in the 2022 elections, as part of my work with several civic organizations to promote voting by a more representative electorate.

Flagg Taylor In January I published a review (co-authored with Titus Techera) in *LAW & LIBERTY* of the film *The Courier*. In February I gave a lecture to the Lyceum Program at Clemson University called “Vaclav Havel and the Problem of Dissent.” The most recent episode of my Enduring Interest podcast is a roundtable with three authors who recently published books on liberal education: Zena Hitz, Jonathan Marks, and Roosevelt Montas.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS

ISAAC BARDIN, SOPHIE MAE BERMAN, MARIA BIDEWIY, RAINA BRETN, BELLA BRUNO, ABBY CICCARONE,
SHAYNA COHEN, RINA DALE, TOMMY FLORA, SOPHIE G, EMMA GILL, GRACE GEURIN, KENNETH HARDY,
ETHAN HIDALGO, EVAN HOLLAND-SHEPLER, SAM HOTZ,ILENA, JORDAN K, LISLE JAMIESON,
CLAUDIA JOHNSON STONE, ANISSA JOSEPH, SYDNEY KASS, IZZY KROEGER, KATE LANDINO, SERITA LEWIS,
PHOEBE MARWILL, MADDIE, KAITLYN MOORHEAD, AVIK NANDY, CAITLIN NEUHAUS KILGORE, JULIA PLOURDE,
BEN POLSKY, JED PRICKETT, JARED SCHWARTZ, AMBER SOUCY, ALEXANDRA STEVE, HANNAH TUOHY,
PERIS TUSHABE, HUNTER WASSER, DANIEL WEISS, NATALIE WHITE, JOSEPH WILKANOWSKI, KIERAN YATER

STUDENT NEWS: WHAT DID YOU DO

Collected by Lisle Jamieson

OVER WINTER BREAK?

I did a road trip to Santa Fe from San Francisco and saw the Grand Canyon. -- **Kieran Yater '22**

I applied to law school. -- **Natalie White '22**

I did CrossFit. -- **Bella Bruno '25**

I went to a bunch of yoga classes and celebrated my 20th birthday with family and close friends. -- **Kate Landino '24**

My favorite part of winter break was visiting my extended family in Tennessee (after much COVID testing). I was also awarded a Fellowship with Humanities at Hertog, a program which Professor Taylor recommended. It was a really interesting experience where we discussed and wrote essays on some great books by Chinua Achebe. Finally, I worked at the independent bookstore in my town, Eight Cousins Books, where I gave people recommendations and wrapped about 1 million holiday gifts. -- **Izzy Kroeger '24**

I road tripped around California with friends and hung out with my family. -- **Claudia Johnson Stone '24**

I watched the Africa Cup of Nations tournament (and lots more soccer), did a whole ton of crosswords, and read a good bit! -- **Lisle Jamieson '24**

I worked on research about the possibility of implementing participatory budgeting in Saratoga Springs. -- **Sophie G '24**

I visited family in Washington DC. -- **Maria Bideiwy '24**

I attended a few UN Profession Junior Programs in order to assist with focus on corporate responsibility boards (Levi's, Target) through the non profit that I Co-Founded. -- **Joseph Wilkanowski '24**

I was finalizing research that I had conducted while abroad in Portugal last semester. -- **Jordan K '22**

During the winter break I conducted interviews for my senior thesis, which investigates how assumptions affect the inclusivity of local peacebuilding in Afghanistan. -- **Sophie Mae '22**

I read a lot. -- **Shayna '23**

I mainly spent time trying to unwind. I had a very stressful fall semester and just wanted to spend time with myself and my family. -- **Maddie '24**

I went home to California and road tripped around the West Coast! -- **Claudia Johnson Stone '24**

I spent time with family--Avik Nandy '24

I started an internship with Sustainable Saratoga developing social media content on the CLCPA, a piece of climate legislation coming to NY state! -- **Grace Geurin '24**

STUDENT NEWS: WHAT DO YOU HAVE PLANNED

FOR THE SUMMER?

I plan on enjoying free time before moving into and starting law school. -- **Natalie White '22**

I plan to go to the Beach and work out. -- **Bella Bruno '25**

I'm looking for an internship or some part time work, and I also applied to a travel seminar with the school. -- **Kate Landino '24**

This summer, I'm looking forward to relaxing after this busy semester. I'll keep working at the bookstore for my 4th year. I'm also hoping to do some sort of internship, potentially working on campaigns for the upcoming elections or working with archives at my local library. -- **Izzy Kroeger '24**

I am working to find opportunities to return to Costa Rica, where I studied abroad last summer. I am looking to otherwise get a job in hospitality so that I can learn more about the ways in which the Costa Rican government and culture embraces ecotourism, or an internship working with local community-based organizations. -- **Abby Ciccarone '22**

As of now, I plan to go to Rome and work in a sustainable kitchen and take an Italian course at the American school. I also hope to get a political internship back at home in Los Angeles. -- **Claudia Johnson Stone '24**

I will be working at Frost Valley YMCA as a counselor and coordinator in the Adventure Program, leading backpacking expeditions and training future counselors. I'm hoping to do some travelling around the Hudson Valley/Catskills Region in my free time. -- **Lisle Jamieson '24**

I am SO excited to spend this summer in Buenos Aires, Argentina studying Spanish at the University of Buenos Aires and completing shadowing hours with doctors practicing at Hospital Aleman. I am so excited to bring together my passions for Spanish, medicine, international politics, and culture together! -- **Sophie '24**

I will be doing summer research for Professor Biberman. I will travel to Uruguay, my home, to do some research with primary sources and such. I will return to campus early to meet with her and finalize everything. -- **Ilenna '24**

I will be working at Bloomberg as an intern in the analytics department to focus on transition from oil to electric solutions. -- **Joseph Wilkanowski '24**

I am planning on continuing research with The Soil Inventory Project, an organization founded by Professor Covey of the Environmental Science department. Additionally, I hope to be able to travel to Sri Lanka and conduct political science research on the government's repression of the Tamil community. -- **Jordan '22**

After graduation I plan on moving to Norway and joining the project "On Fair Terms: The Ethics of Peace Negotiations and Mediation" (FAIR) at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (pending grant funding)! As a member of the FAIR team I would examine women's instrumental inclusion in peace negotiations. I am grateful for the inspiring, supportive spirit of the Political Science Department at Skidmore, which will continue to guide my intellectual journey. -- **Sophie Mae '22**

I will be taking a summer class at Skidmore and writing for various publications. -- **Shayna '23**

A lot of my summer plans are still up in the air, but on my agenda are three things: 1. Getting a summer job 2. Learning how to drive 3. Learning how to cook. -- **Maddie '24**

I'm going to Bangladesh for most of the summer for family-related reasons, but I would like to get an internship of some sorts that can keep me busy while I'm there. -- **Avik Nandy '24**

I will be doing research with Professor Ocakli. -- **Ethan Hidalgo '24**

I will be working a lot, road tripping to Maine and Vermont, and possibly volunteering to work on some farms in the Northeast! -- **Grace Geurin '24**

In early June after graduation I will be moving to Washington D.C. and beginning work at Berkley Research Group as an Associate in the role of Quantitative Economics Analytics Consultant. -- **Daniel Weiss '22**

STUDENT NEWS:

HOW DO YOU INVEST YOUR TIME ON CAMPUS?

I am the co-President of Skidmore Democrats. -- **Kieran Yater '22**

I've spent this year working on my senior thesis, which is an ongoing project. -- **Natalie White '22**

During my first and second years at Skidmore, I devoted my time outside of classes to SGA, serving in multiple roles. I served as both a first-year marketing office and sophomore senator, with an additional role on the academic council. I am now studying off campus in Washington D.C. via the Washington Semester Program at American University. As a WSP student, the internship is an integral component of the program. I am currently interning with the Hans Riemer campaign for Montgomery County Executive (Maryland). -- **Amber Soucy**

I am the music director/social media manager of the Drastic Measures gender-inclusive charity acapella group! That takes up a lot of my time, and I also work at the Greenberg childcare center for my work study. I'm also part of a remote internship right now helping a NY state start up with its social media and marketing campaign. -- **Kate Landino '24**

This semester I'm working for Professor F. Taylor as a Research Assistant, so I've been spending some of my time hanging up event posters and looking for political cartoons for the board in Ladd. I recently started going to Democracy Matters meetings on Tuesday nights, and we're going to be tabling in Case soon and hopefully volunteering for Saratoga BLM. In my free time, I like going to Yoga at Wilson Chapel and climbing at Rocksport in Queensbury. -- **Izzy Kroeger '24**

I have been having the best time going with the PHE Citizenship and Service committee going to the Saratoga Senior Center and helping the seniors figuring out their technology. -- **Abby Ciccarone '22**

I am on the Tang Student Advisory Committee, I have a radio show, and I am involved in outing club. -- **Claudia Johnson Stone '24**

I'm one of three student managers of the Compost Program, which diverts thousands of pounds of waste each year and promotes sustainable agriculture/foodways in conjunction with the Community Garden, BikeMore, and Northwoods stewardship programs. I also have a radio show (JortsCenter, 5-6 PM on Thursdays) and I am involved in the PIC abolitionist/transformative justice group Study & Struggle. -- **Lisle Jamieson '24**

I am the Vice President of Speakers Bureau and love our little community. We host speakers from every discipline to share

their expertise, experience, art, and time with the Skidmore Community. -- **Sophie '24**

I'm the VP of Student Life within SGA, I do research in the Political Science department with Bob Turner, and I intern for Finance Commissioner Minita Sanghvi. -- **Maria Bideiwy '24**

I am part of PPGen (Planned Parenthood Generation). I also work in the Student Academic Services as an office assistant, and as a research assistance for the Sociology department. -- **Ilena '24**

For the most part, I have been focused on my thesis for political science on Transylvania and Sub-State Nationalism, thesis for Economics on Econometrics in Anti-Trust cases. I am also working on an independent study designing an experiment for experimental economics studying externalities. -- **Daniel Weiss '22**

As of right now, I am only able to be on the tennis team. I don't have a lot of time to join other clubs but there have been a few that I am interested in that I want to join next semester. -- **Joseph Wilkanowski '24**

I spend most of my time in the library working on class work and my research, but I also love to be in Zankel making music. -- **Jordan '22**

This semester I have enjoyed playing in Skidmore's cello choir! - **Sophie Mae Berman '22**

I am part of Skidmore News! -- **Shayna '23**

The transition into college with COVID running rampant really swayed me from not joining clubs at first, but I recently joined Democracy Matters! Since I'm a prospective political science major, I thought it would be a good idea to get involved locally. -- **Maddie '24**

I am involved in outing club and have a radio show! -- **Claudia Johnson Stone '24**

I'm the current president of Democracy Matters, am on the Environmental Action Club eboard, and volunteer for the Sustainability Office! -- **Grace Geurin '24**

I have mostly been working on an independent research with Professor Goff and my thesis this last semester. -- **Daniel Weiss '22**

I play lacrosse. -- **Bella Bruno '25**

STUDENT NEWS:

WHAT'S THE BEST BOOK, ARTICLE, OR ESSAY YOU'VE READ RECENTLY?

I love The Sun Also Rises because of the way it immerses you in the world and scenery. -- **Kieran Yater '22**

<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/wiener-conference-calls/erica-chenoweth>

I like that this article draws attention to the role of today's media in social movements. There is always so much content to consume on the internet, but this article asks the question: How has the digital age affected the success of nonviolent movements? -- **Amber Soucy '23**

I've been loving professor Sanghvi's book on political marketing and gender in the 2016 election! – **Kate Landino '24**

How could I choose just one book to recommend? My top 5 favorite books that I've read recently are: Nothing to See Here by Kevin Wilson, Enter the Aardvark by Jessica Anthony (which is a political satire!), Interior Chinatown by Charles Yu, Everyone in This Room Will Someday Be Dead by Emily Austin, and Assembly by Natasha Brown. – **Izzy Kroeger '24**

"Prisoners of Geography" [Tim Marshall] and its following works center geopolitics as an organizing force in security/economic dilemmas in contemporary intl politics. "Normal People" [Sally Rooney] & "Intimacies" [Katie Kitamura] explore politics as power's distribution in relationships, interrogating all that goes unsaid in our relations (and why). "Flyboy in the Buttermilk 2" by the late Greg Tate (December 2021) is a collection of beautiful essays delving deep into culture, race, and sexuality + all their peculiar/particular intersections. -- **Lisle Jamieson '24**

Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia by Timothy Frye; I've read multiple parts of the book and it has fantastic insight on the eternal character of Russian politics under President Putin. -- **Maria Bideiwy '24**

The Human Comedy, by William Saroyan. It is one of the greatest pieces of fiction for provoking agape and human empathy, in my experience. -- **Daniel Weiss '22**

Good Economics for Hard Times was a book that expanded the understanding of how best to find an equilibrium between economics and **political science**. It explains how this area of though came to be and focuses on societal influence in both fields. -- **Joseph Wilkanowski '24**

My favorite book that I've read recently is Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire. It tells the story of the shadowy networks of revolutionaries and their constant work of opposing imperialism. I would highly recommend it to every political science student. – **Jordan '22**

"How Beautiful We Were," by Imbolo Mbue has an incredible story and narration. – **Shayna '23**

I recently read an essay in Bob Turner's Environmental Politics and Policy class that explained why a lot of environmental policy is stuck in gridlock, and it really changed my perspective on the whole ordeal. The more I delve into this class, the more I feel I understand environmental issues and the politics surrounding them. – **Maddie '24**

Red Army, by Ralph Peters, describes an alternate history scenario about World War 3 breaking out between the West and USSR. This book is great because it looks at the war from the Soviet perspective and is also intensely realistic. -- **Avik Nandy '24**

The best book I've recently was "The Coming Insurrection" by The Invisible Committee. I liked how the book synthesized insurrectionary political strategy with the May 1968 uprisings in France to apply it to the modern day all while being accessible and easy to read. -- **Ethan Hidalgo '24**

The Human Comedy, by William Saroyan is one of my favorite novels for the extremely empathetic and loving outlook I found within it. -- **Daniel Weiss '22**

MEET A MAJOR

Geraldine Santoso '22



I am currently serving as SGA President, as well as Research Assistant to Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli. We are working on projects related to modern warfare and spatial analysis. Through this experience, I learned how war and mass atrocity touch the lives of ordinary individuals, and the reactions (and sometimes lack thereof) of the international community. I am passionate about the production and dissemination of impartial, nonpartisan foreign policy ideas, as I know how critical it is to bring into public knowledge international issues that shape the lives of people around the world. My experiences doing research and social justice-oriented work in my undergraduate years have inspired me to follow this passion. The lessons that I have learned about diplomacy and statecraft are also incredibly useful in my role as SGA President.

I have previously served as an undergraduate research intern at the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program at the Lauder Institute of the University of Pennsylvania. I also worked as an education intern for the Tang Teaching Museum and founded an initiative that provides clean water and safe sanitation solutions in rural Indonesia through the Davis Projects for Peace grant.

After graduating from Skidmore, I will be pursuing a doctoral degree in Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I credit my decision to pursue a career in academia to the research I have conducted with Professor Biberman-Ocakli outside the classroom and inside, specifically in her "U.S. Foreign Policy" seminar. This course impacted the way I see and think about the world. It sparked my research interest on the role of the United States in the domestic politics of countries in the Global South, and the readings I completed for the course inspired my undergraduate thesis on the effects of state-led repression on the socio-political, economic, and environmental landscape of Indonesia.

Photo Description: Geraldine Santoso '22, recipient of the 2019 Davis Projects for Peace grant with local village leaders in Purwakarta, Indonesia.

HOW TO KILL A SUPERPOWER: LESSONS FROM THE USSR

Yelena Biberman-Ocakli, Kate Graney, Evan Mack, Senior Teaching Professor of Music with Zack Troyanovsky '21
December 8, 2021



THE SKIDMORE TO DC PIPELINE: THE WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

AMBER SOUCY '23

When I first arrived on American University's campus on the outskirts of DC, I romanticized something about the neoclassical architecture and cherry blossom trees surrounding me. Perhaps it was the atmosphere of being in a new city—something so different from the small town in Maine where I was raised and so different from the historical springs and horse racing attractions of Saratoga Springs. Yet, it took less than one month of me touring the Smithsonian museums and strolling the Georgetown waterfront for me to realize that I made a mistake by applying to the Washington Semester Program at AU. I didn't want to stay just one semester in DC; I could see myself living and practicing politics here permanently.



I applied to extend my time in DC through the Washington Semester Program, from my original plan to stay in DC for the semester to staying the entire academic year. During the Fall semester, I took three seminar courses curated for WSP students. I learned about political transitions and the process of lawmaking in our government by professors full of wisdom from working on the Hill themselves. My peers and I were introduced to speakers with impressive political backgrounds. My favorite was White House speechwriter Lissa Muscatine, who told us tales of her time working as one of Hilary Clinton's speechwriters. Without a doubt, the most valuable course I have taken during my time at AU was "From Campaigning to Governing" taught by Professor Carrie Giddins-Pergram, a Skidmore alum, in which I learned about crucial communications skills needed in campaigns. Coincidentally, my former professor was not the only Skidmore alum I have met during my time in DC. From

my Economics TA and the alums I have connected within DC, the Skidmore to DC pipeline shows that my aspirations are more than achievable.



An integral component of the program is the internship. This semester I am interning with the Hans Riemer campaign for Montgomery County Executive in Maryland. The County Executive position is one of the most important elected government positions in the county, playing a huge role in implementing policy decisions for over 1 million residents. Hans has progressive plans to build a more robust economy, take climate action, and improve public safety, as well as other policy plans you can view [here](#). I work on the direct voter contact (DVC) team, and I speak directly to voters for most of my 20-hour work week. With my experience in political organizing, I enjoy being able to take on a leadership role in this department! I find DVC work to be a valuable and rewarding experience, making a real impact on voters.

My time in DC will come to an end for now in less than two months but it has been one of the most defining experiences in my college career. I have met the most amazing people from all over the world through the program (see photos). I have gained incredible knowledge and experience in a gorgeously historical city -- from watching the sunset over Capitol Hill and touring embassies, this off-campus study experience has been more than memorable.

JULIA IN GERMANY

JULIA PLOURDE '23



Hello! It is Julia from Germany! Specifically, Freiburg im Breisgau, a city of roughly 200,000 people, in Germany's Black Forest. That's Southwestern Germany, pretty close to the border of Switzerland and France. If you haven't heard of it, that's okay - I hadn't until October.

If I'm going to be brutally honest, my expectations were a bit low for Freiburg. I applied to study abroad pretty last minute; I was planning on going to New Zealand, but that got pushed back to Fall 2022. I had absolutely no desire to go to Germany, but it was one of the few programs that had university courses for Environmental Studies (which I needed to get extra credits for). Two weeks in, Freiburg has completely blown away my preconceived notions. The program was advertised as a pretty nature-y, not that I have a problem with that, but I pictured a pretty empty city focused on tree hugging and composting. Don't get me wrong - Freiburg is a green city. Here, basically everyone bikes to commute, and there is not a single plastic bag in sight. Yet, Freiburg is a very busy, lively city. Every time I get on the tram, it's crowded with people. The sidewalk is always bustling with university students and Freiburgers. It's definitely a semi-urban place to live.

There's nothing that really compares to this place in America. It's a very concentrated place. It's also pretty leftist - my first day, my neighbor told me I'd fit right in here because it was "hippie." I guess it's like a German college town, with really good public transport.

To give you the rundown on my living situation: I live in a university student housing complex, which we endearingly call "Stussie." I initially thought I would live with Americans, but I'm actually in an apartment with three other German roommates. We all have separate rooms, but share a kitchen, two bathrooms, and a balcony (my favorite). The German semester system is much less structured than America's; my friends and I have consistently found people continuously move in and out of our apartments. I was living with two people (one just moved out), and I loved both of them. Max and Nick, both German students at the university, are literally so lovely. I talk politics, food, and the whole gauntlet of culture differences with them. I really think I lucked out with them (also I kind of feel like I'm on an episode of *New Girl!*)

On the language barrier... People mostly speak German here. The city is relatively international, but it's definitely a novelty when I tell natives that I'm American. Cue the: "Oh my gosh! Where from? [I answer, New York] "...New York! No way!" I came here with about 3.5 days of Duolingo, and I've managed fine. People speak English, but I definitely feel a bit guilty that I can only piece together sentence fragments of poorly pronounced German. Hey! We're working on it! My program has us take a two-week German intensive class (which I just took the final for - wish me luck guys), and I have the option to extend my German studies to night classes two days a week. I think I'm going to do that, because I would really like to interact more with German people, and have actual, tangible conversations.

While my program did only start in March, I'm actually pretty glad about it. The weather is awesome - usually 50s or low 60s, and apparently, it's only going to get warmer in April. Overall, I would definitely recommend Freiburg!



1. Me and buds from my program at Seepark, a giant park with a lake behind my apartment complex. 2. At St. Stephen's Church, in Breisach, a very cute town close to Freiburg. 3. Germany has recently gotten a lot of dust blown over from the Sahara Desert due to the algae cycle - it made the sky look orange for a day. 4. This is Herz-Jesu Kirche; this picture is definitely a typical picture of Freiburg on a sunny day. Germans don't let a nice day go to waste - practically all the grass is taken up by picnickers.

THE TALES OF A WEST WING WANNABE: SYDNEY IN SPAIN EDITION

SYDNEY KASS '23

If you're reading this, it means that I have left the country. That I'm not Sydney in the City, no longer Syd at Skid, nor that Kass from your class. If you're reading this, then I have become Sydney in Spain. Allow me to explain. This semester I am studying abroad in Madrid. I write this to you from the plane. In some sort of geographic and jet-lagged limbo, I have considered and chronicled my expectations for this experience. Now, a few months later; in a different season; a new semester; and hopefully in a new political climate, you get to read them.

I don't know what to expect of Spain. That is why I am going. That's the easy answer, of course. It is hard to make predictions or put into words my perspective visions about life in a country to which I have never traveled. I have this dream of living some unrealistic glamorous life as a young American woman in Europe, but that's the fault of Hollywood. And things are never as they are in movies.

That which lies ahead—that which lies 3,500 miles away from you—I expect will mean a lot to me. I expect my worldview to change, the way I think to change. I expect to have a world-wind romance with the city of Madrid. Or, at least, so I hope.

And I have many hopes. That I will speak fluent Spanish when I return, that I will study less and see more, explore my Sephardic roots, learn a lot, and have the time of life. Call me a hopeful romantic.

As for me and Skidmore, I do expect to miss it. I'll miss my Monday morning catch ups with Barbara and Professor Seyb, talking Togian politics with Bob, eating New York bagels, and witnessing the hustle and bustle of Ladd Hall. I assume that the department will be quieter this semester....

I'm excited. I'm nervous. I'll miss Skidmore, but I will be back. Save me the stories of Spring '22, so that I keep my finger on the pulse.
¡Hasta luego!

I am incredibly superstitious and am cautious to write about things before they come to an end. However, I have decided to set aside my irrational fear of the jinx in favor of my love for the political science department. So here it goes.

I am so happy here in Spain. With every day and everything that I say, I learn something new—about Spain, about Spanish, about myself.

Speaking Spanish is one of my favorite things to do here, and that's good because I speak it a lot—big surprise. Before coming to Madrid, I was absolutely terrified that I was moving to an unfamiliar country half-way across the world without knowing how to speak the language. Well, as it turns out, I actually did know how to speak Spanish relatively well. I swear, I was shocked. Back in the U.S. I never used my Spanish, not even with my Cuban family. I only ever practiced it in class. There's something about being forced to speak Spanish that makes you actually speak it and speak it to the best of your ability: something I wasn't doing before I came here. As a non-native Spanish speaker, living in Spain is fun because life is intellectually challenging but not intellectually exhausting. Each day, I can hear myself getting better, and I am so proud of it.

Before this semester, I did not have a legitimate hobby. Apparently, watching the news all the time doesn't count. (By the way, CNN-go does not work abroad, and I really need to start reading my news, or I will be so out of "the know" by the time I return.) I have begun learning the salsa, the bachata, and the sevillanas, the latter of which is a type of flamenco. Dancing makes me so happy. One day, I hope to actually be good at it, but I don't even mind being bad at it. It's kind of fun to not have any idea what you are doing. The key is to dance with unequivocal gusto.

Soccer is the only sport of which I understand all the rules. I played it for years as a kid, and I still play it now from time to time. In Spain, people treat fútbol the way Americans treat football. Spaniards are as passionate

about it and prepare for it in the same way. I am embarrassed to confess that I do not understand anything about football. In Spain, I actually fit in with the sports culture. Go Real Madrid!

I love New York. I am the personification of a New Yorker. Always on the go. Always walking fast, talking fast, driving aggressively, and eating bagels. That's me. Sydney Kass, that girl from New York. But things are different here in Spain. The people here walk slower, so I walk slower. They don't eat bagels, so neither do I. Croquetas and the metro are works of art, gifts from the food and urban planning gods. And in Spanish, I talk slower. I love a good sobremesa. It's that time you spend talking to your friends at the restaurant after you've finished eating and before you've paid the check... or even after that. I'm not living a life of leisure, but there is certainly more leisure in my Spanish life.

The Californian writer, Joan Didion, once wrote about her experience living in New York as a twenty-something and said that "it is distinctly possible to stay too long at the Fair." I have been pondering this line for some time, and I don't believe that Ms. Didion and I are having paralleled experiences. I don't anticipate ever tiring of Madrid.

I love it here.



A REMEDY FOR RELIEVING TENSION BETWEEN MILITARY TRADITION AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT – SCUSA AT WEST POINT

Samantha Hotz '23

Three of your fellow soldiers are wounded in action: the first is shot in the chest, the second is lying on the ground with cerebro-spinal fluid leaking from his ears, and the third has lost both legs in an IED blast. You can only save one person. Who do you choose?

This is not the type of hypothetical you would encounter in a Skidmore College ethics course, but West Point cadets take mandatory classes on how to handle battlefield dilemmas just like this one. I had the opportunity to attend the 72nd Student Conference on U.S. Affairs (SCUSA) at West Point in November. While the main purpose of the conference is to collaborate with other student delegates, scholars, and practitioners in an assigned field to produce a policy memo, the casual conversations I had with cadets were the most impactful.

West Point is a liberal arts college, like Skidmore. But the military is apolitical. This creates an interesting paradox, as liberal arts institutions tend to be hotbeds of political activism. Cadets had a radically different perspective on politics than civilian students. It wasn't so much their opinions on political issues that struck me, but more so what they deemed to be political in the first place. For instance, one cadet I worked with had a BLM sticker on her laptop. When civilian student delegates asked if that violated protocol given West Point's commitment to remaining apolitical, she explained that the sticker was allowed because BLM is not a political organization. Meanwhile, at that time I was studying BLM in Professor Biberman's "Rebellion & Revolution" course as a sociopolitical movement. The tension between military tradition and the political engagement that is so often at the core of a liberal arts education fascinated me. This dynamic was further highlighted during the Q & A portion of the keynote address. The keynote speaker was the head of the NSA, General Paul Nakasone. Cadets refrained from asking Nakasone politically charged questions. Civilian students, on the other hand, didn't hesitate to challenge Nakasone on tough issues, pressing him on the NSA's policy toward whistleblowers.

Another highlight for me was working with Dr. Rebecca Pavlicek, the department head of the Wound Infections Department at the Naval Medical Research Center. She was one of two co-chairs for my round table: Public Health and the Biomedical Revolution. As someone with little to no science background, I took advantage of this opportunity to deepen my understanding of COVID-19. I asked Dr. Pavlicek about the risks associated with contracting the virus, herd immunity, vaccine research, and her opinion on vaccine and mask mandates.

Dr. Pavlicek spoke to our round table at length about the challenges of combating misinformation campaigns and protecting against cybersecurity attacks on the vaccine supply chain. Technology gives the public easy access to the latest scientific research. But our society is not scientifically literate. An unintended consequence of the scientific community's transparency—which Dr. Pavlicek viewed as progressive—is the propagation of misinformation. Together, we brainstormed policy recommendations to improve education and remedy this problem. We tackled the issue of cybersecurity, too. I worked closely with my round table to craft policy recommendations to improve data security related to vaccine research and development, as well as to prevent cold storage facilities from being hacked by U.S. adversaries.

The process of writing a memo was intense yet rewarding. We discussed our ideas at length prior to writing, often engaging in productive disagreements to push ourselves as political scientists. When it was time to put thoughts to paper, we wrote simultaneously on shared Google documents. It was a team effort from start to finish. I was impressed by the diversity of skillsets my fellow delegates brought to the table, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to engage with them in a conference setting and throughout our shared time at West Point.



SCUSA PROVED ME WRONG

Anissa Joseph '22

Attending SCUSA 72 was an incredible experience. I was initially hesitant, not only had it been my first off-campus travel experience since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I was going to be representing my department and I wanted to not only make my professors and mentors proud, but I wanted to make myself proud and put my knowledge to the test.

It was a short ride to West Point and upon arrival it was overwhelming. There were hundreds of cadets walking and trying to navigate the campus and security protocols was a new experience-- very different from the openness of Skidmore's campus with visitors coming and going as they please. Though I know many have enjoyed the experience of staying in the barracks, I was more than happy to forgo that experience and stay at the Historic Thayer Hotel in a gorgeous room all to myself.

After dropping everything off to our rooms, Sam Hotz'22 and I were ushered onto busses to the main hall where we would meet our teams. Unknowingly, Sam and I both wanted to be a part of the public health and biomedical warfare group, our experiences during the pandemic driving our interest to do so. When we arrived, three cadets were waiting for us in their neatly pressed uniforms, corralling all of the wide eyed "civilians" (as all non-cadets were affectionately referred) into the main dining space. To say that I was feeling intimidated is an understatement, the way the cadets moved about the space showed a level of maturity and discipline that I had never seen or experienced myself. As we entered the main space we met with other members of our team who came from all corners of the United States, we had students from Ithaca, Kentucky, Chicago, Pennsylvania and so much more. We brought our diverse backgrounds and interests into the conversation when exploring how we could find new ways of preparing and strengthening our public health infrastructure against future epidemics and pandemics. We had wonderful mentors; A professor from the University of Minnesota and a biologist for the navy, who guided us through the process and helped us understand how global health scares impacted their particular fields of expertise. These experiences working with our team, fueled a passion for political discourse that I had not experienced in a long time, I was applying the skills and concepts I had learned at Skidmore to some of the world's most prominent problems, and not just from the perspective of a political scientist, but I was being asked to consider the ways in which the U.S. military could be involved in solving some of these issues.

For me, attending this conference, was the first time I had ever been so close to a future soldier. Being a Black American, I did not have a positive connotation with the military, had no interest in serving, and was often confused why people chose to serve. When I arrived at SCUSA, I was shocked to find out that two of our cadets were people of color, and they were incredibly proud of their decision to join the army and proud of their connections to the military. Our other cadet, a "plebe" as they called their first-year students, was from Texas, and I was hesitant to engage in dialogue with him upon our initial meeting. But after about three hours with our cadets, I realized that I had to put my bias aside.

Our group leader, a "cow" (junior) from Atlanta, Georgia, came from a military family and was the most shocking cadet I had met. There was a sense of jovial play and joy that he had throughout our time together that completely reshaped how I perceived those serving. The media portrays soldiers as rigid, loyal, patriotic White men, and here was this fun, joking, laid back man of



color challenging all those notions. Though his behavior switched when a superior was in his presence, he provided the comedic relief our group needed during tense conversations, long hours of writing our policy paper, and showed us a different side to West Point. He reminded me of many of my friends at Skidmore, I often forgot that he was our group leader, because he felt more like a peer. He showed us pictures of his dog, told us about his sneaker collection, and he loved to start every meeting off with an icebreaker. My initial encounters with him shaped how I engaged with the cadets for the rest of the trip.

The youngest cadet in our group was the "plebe" from Texas who unlike our group leader very much embodied the physical stereotypes of a soldier; he was tall, very clean and neat, and had a quiet, steely, look about him. After the first day, he quickly became one of my favorite people to talk to. He knew so much about West Point, about history, about pretty much everything. Though he knew a lot, he wasn't arrogant, and he was quick to look things up if he didn't know the answer and always was willing to admit when he was wrong. He balanced out our group and though he was the youngest, he was incredibly mature. He told us about his Mexican ancestry, his twin, and his dad's experiences as a lawyer. One lunch, when I was sitting at a table with him, I looked around and watched as everyone was hyper-focused on one of his stories about his dad and some of the cases he had prosecuted. He was eager to teach us as well as learn from us, and I quickly realized that had I held onto my notions of people from the South, I would never have experienced what a kind, open, and intelligent person he was.

Our last cadet, who almost wasn't a part of our group was a "firstie," meaning she was in her last year at West point, was a young woman from Virginia who embodied the idea of strength, with badges adorning her jacket, she led our group and was always a source of answers even though she wasn't our group leader. She provided some of the most moving testimony on her experiences at West Point and her decision to serve. Though those conversations were some of the most impactful of my time at SCUSA, my favorite interactions

were the ones where we talked about our lives-- our friends, our experiences traveling, our little sisters, and the things we wanted for ourselves in the future. As two young Black-identifying women, about to head out into the world, I was naturally drawn to hearing about her experiences and her decisions to join West Point, and how, even though on the surface we may appear similar, made two completely different life choices. Through asking her hundreds of questions during our short stay, she exposed the humanity behind the military, behind serving this country, and reminded me that universality of Blackness does not mean uniformity.



I am immensely grateful that I was allowed to attend SCUSA 72, though the entire experience was impactful because I had the opportunity to meet brilliant future political scientists and got to experience the beauty of West Point's campus, those three cadets will always remain one of the best parts of my experience. I always considered myself an open person, someone who could look at things objectively, but SCUSA proved me wrong. I had a fixed image of soldiers, of the military, that I had never even thought of people who were my age or younger who were committed to serving this country. Though I do not feel as though I have been moved to total agreement with the decisions made by the United States regarding military action, I was forced to confront some deeply embedded biases about the military as well as myself. It was truly a privilege to get to know these three cadets and I could not have asked for better leaders and guides throughout that experience.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Abby Ciccarone '22 and Rina Dale '22

Political science senior majors Rina Dale and Abby Ciccarone are two of the four facilitators for the Spring 2022 Intergroup Relations Program. Rina and Abby co-facilitate a weekly race-based intragroup dialogue, and spend the rest of the week planning, learning, and reflecting on their work. They both will be graduating with majors in political science, and minors in IGR. This is how they see their studies and work in these programs intersect:

Intergroup Relations as defined on the Skidmore Website: "Intergroup relations is a nationally recognized academic, credit-bearing social-justice program that originated at the University of Michigan in 1988 as a means of addressing racial tension. Its primary goal was to support student learning and competencies around inter- and intragroup relations, conflict and social justice across a range of social identities, including race, gender, sexuality, social class, religion and nationality. Since then, it has expanded to a number of colleges and universities across the United States, including the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, University of Maryland, Occidental College and Mount Holyoke College."

What does Intergroup Relations (IGR) mean to you?

Rina: IGR means so many different things to me, and it means so much. In taking IGR classes I have learned so much about how systems of oppression and privilege such as racism, heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism and more operate in the U.S., and how I fit into those systems and the roles I play in them. I have also gained a deep understanding of my social identities and how I have been socialized, which has massively furthered my understanding of my positionality. IGR classes are spaces where students participate in dialogue about our lived experiences in regard to our social identities. They are spaces to learn and practice, empathy and accountability, critical thinking and introspection. IGR has pushed me to turn the critical lens toward myself.

Abby: To me, IGR is just one way to commit to doing social justice work, and it is a form that has helped me tremendously. IGR allows me to learn about systems of oppression while also giving me the space to reflect and unpack how and why I have benefitted from these systems. IGR has provided me with a space to learn more than I ever thought I could in a classroom. It has taught me how to balance my feelings and experiences with the content learned in class. IGR is conflict resolution, dialogue facilitation, and interpersonal interdisciplinary learning that is rooted in love and a desire to make the world a better place.

What made you get involved in IGR?

Rina: I was aware of Skidmore's IGR program when I was applying to colleges, and it was something that ultimately led me here. Though I didn't have much of an understanding of what dialogue was at the time, I was drawn to the fact that there was a way to engage in social justice work at Skidmore through my academics. I also firmly believe that engaging in social justice work and anti-racist work is a life-long commitment and I wanted it to be a part of my every day at Skidmore.

Abby: IGR is one of the main things that brought me to Skidmore. It provides me a space to process and learn about social justice work and myself as an agent of change. I believe it is so important to be action oriented in social justice work, while still taking time to learn more about ourselves and this world. I looked up to IGR dialogue facilitators my entire time at Skidmore, and I am so honored to be a facilitator this semester. IGR is a space that teaches me to hold myself accountable, while also giving me grace and support in my process of becoming.

Where do you see IGR and Political Science intersect? Do you think political science majors should take IGR classes? Why?

Rina: I definitely think political science students should take IGR classes and sociology classes generally. It is very easy particularly in a discipline like political science to speak in very abstract terms about institutions of oppression and privilege and make them appear as if they act completely independently of people. IGR teaches students to see ourselves within these systems and to see how we each are impacted by and contribute to these systems. IGR teaches that our positionalities impact the way we view the world, the society and communities we are a part of, and how our positionalities impact how we experience those spaces as well. By seeing where we fit in these systems of oppression and privilege—that are rooted in all U.S. political institutions and many global political institutions—we can have a more nuanced and critical perspective of politics.

Abby: It is so important that political science students take IGR or sociology courses. Everything we learn in political science has been impacted by or created the systems of oppression that many of us ignore or only view as academic structures rather than things we take part in. Political science and IGR intersect because our government and others are examples of intergroup (or intragroup) spaces that often fail to understand or consider sociological influences. I use my knowledge from IGR in all of my political science and government work. IGR has also allowed me to have more time to learn about political and historic events from a different framework, which has advanced my critical thinking and research skills from a multipartial lens.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR FLAG TAYLOR

Izzy Kroeger '24

Most students of Professor Flagg Taylor have listened to at least an episode or two of his podcast, Enduring Interest. The podcast consists of discussions about forgotten or neglected books which deserve more credit than they've received. The episodes are generally divided into series of five or six episodes around specific themes, so that if you listen to them in order, it's like attending a mini course. Sprinkled occasionally amongst those series are episodes about lesser-known books by authors of the great books. As a book lover myself, I'm interested in the concept of learning more about neglected books. Professor Taylor's podcast can spark interest in all of us to think deeply about our own favorite reads. I recently had the opportunity to ask Professor Taylor some questions to get to know his podcast better.



Izzy: Why a podcast?

Taylor: It's primarily a way to meet and talk to interesting people. I have my ideas that I'm interested in exploring, of course, that I would do through my own research and writing and all of that but this is something that would allow me to explore what other people think and say, rather than just starting with what I think.

I: How do you find your guests?

T: Most of the people I've had on up to now, I know pretty well, but in some cases it's a recommendation from a friend or a friend of a friend. Thus far it's only been academics but I'm hoping in the future it would be public intellectuals, writers, or journalists—people from a variety of professions and backgrounds.

I: What are some of the benefits of having a conversational format?

T: Kind of unexpected twists and turns; you learn to think about something in a new way because of the way someone frames an argument or a thought that you haven't thought of before. I think conversation is more organic and you can think out loud and allow people to articulate things in a way that they never would have planned if they simply given a lecture or something; those things are carefully thought out. With a conversation you get that responsiveness by the interviewer and the interviewee. I can respond to the way they put things and they can ask me questions, so I like the give and take.

I: Have you read the books you've selected before, and thought about them for a long time, or do you read them for the podcast?

T: So far, these have been books that I have read mostly a long time ago, and then had thought I wanted to revisit. Even if I'd read it a long time ago I'll reread it in preparation for the podcast. And that's also been true of the guests who've suggested books. This is really the core inspiration for the podcast—and I had this idea about 10 years before I put it into action, just out of, I guess, laziness, it takes me a while to put something into

action after coming up with an idea—but the basic idea was that for a long time, there were podcasts about just-published books. Publishers obviously want to have their books talked about to sell books, so you can find a ton of podcasts about books that have just been published, and authors are obviously eager to get their voice heard, and get their books out there. And there are also a lot of podcasts about the Great Books, the acknowledged classics. But there wasn't—there's a little more now, but there still isn't a lot—a lot of podcasts that treat all the books in between; the books that aren't obviously acknowledged classics like The Republic or Moby Dick. Interesting people always have lists of books that they wish more people knew about, so I was struck by that category of book. I thought it

would be a good subject for a podcast because people are always eager to learn about books they hadn't heard about before. I also thought it would be a fun way to get guests excited to come on a podcast because people are always eager to share, "oh, you don't know about this book, you'll love it!" That's the other benefit to me: people will respond with books I haven't even heard about. For example, take the episode on Hannah Arendt: I'd read lots of Hannah Arendt, but I don't think I had read ever the two essays that my guest, Rita Koganzon, suggested.

I: If somebody's going to listen to one episode of your podcast, what's the one they should listen to?

T: I really like the first one on Zamyatin. I think Jacob Howland did a great job showing the depth of that book. I also love the one on Hannah Arendt; Rita Koganzon is great on that one and very clearly articulates Arendt's critique of the prevailing thinking on education and its limits. So maybe those are two of my favorites. I love the conversation with Catherine and Michael Zuckert, they're two quite prominent political philosophy professors talking about Leo Strauss. That was the one that has been the most downloaded and the most popular.

I: What's something you hope listeners will take away from your podcast overall?

T: I suppose it depends on the subject matter. The other distinctive thing about my podcast is that I proceed according to theme. The first series of podcasts was around the theme of totalitarianism and ideology, and now we're in the middle of a series on liberal education. Next up is race, identity, and American culture. I guess it just depends on the theme. I hope listeners will, over the course of the episodes on a particular theme, learn to think more deeply and attentively, to pay attention to whatever theme we're investigating, and to appreciate the range of thinking and complexity around that theme. It's not meant to be a podcast that takes an official stand on this or that issue, but allow for a range of guests to talk about interesting books and show the complexity and depth of different issues that any interested citizen would want to consider.

SENIOR THESIS SUMMARIES

A TASK OF CHARITY OR AN ACT OF JUSTICE? ASSUMPTIONS AND LOCAL PEACEBUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

Sophie Mae Berman '22

Why would the World Bank support widespread corruption in Afghanistan's Ministry of Education? Why would Afghanistan's Independent Commission on Human Rights be asked to address women's equality from the perspective of Wahabism? International intervenors' violation of international norms and standards raises the question: How do assumptions affect inclusion in local peacebuilding? I investigate this question in the crucial case of Afghanistan, where over half a century of intervention and trillions in foreign aid were aimed at social transformation. I focus on local peacebuilding, as grassroots engagement and ownership have been pillars of conflict resolution, diplomatic, and developmental agendas in the country. My thesis addresses a gap in the existing literature on "going local" by looking at the types of inclusion that assumptions condition in local peacebuilding. Drawing on twenty-two original interviews with a diverse range of military and civilian experts as well as humanitarian aid recipients, I find that peacebuilders rely on assumptions to reconcile the tension of two competing demands: working within top-down institutional frameworks that are accountable to donors and supporting local peacebuilding.

Intervenors assume that they are needed to provide locals with moral capital, values that serve win-win solutions or solutions that promote equality and dividends. At the state level, this facilitates the inclusion of delegates, government officials who are tasked with implementing intervenor plans. While delegates carry out projects aimed at increasing descriptive representation or efficiency, some consolidate political power through corruption. At the civil society and local governance level, intervenors aim to convert locals to liberal peace through the provision of moral capital. This conditions the inclusion of spoilers, non-state actors and local leaders who appeal to donor preferences. Spoilers do not fulfill their projects, engaging in corruption and direct violence. The assumption of moral capital motivates intervenors to accept patronage as an ethical trade-off. A second assumption that marginalized groups can empower themselves when provided with opportunities conditions the inclusion of tokens, individuals of groups that have endured heightened inequality (i.e. women and youth) and are expected to uplift their identity groups through descriptive representation. Tokens are framed as panaceas of peacebuilding; their inclusion is expected to not only eliminate inter-group inequality, but also solve a broad range of other problems.

ADAPTABILITY AND ANARCHISM: WHAT ROJAVA, SYRIA TEACHES US ABOUT POLITICAL EXPERIMENTATION

Rina Dale '22

What can stateless self-governance teach us about the importance of experimentation in politics? In a world dominated by states, it is easy to forget the simple truth that all governing entities are experiments. A current example of such an experiment is Rojava, an anarchist society in northern Syria. Rojava is an astoundingly unique society: it is a non-state, self-governing entity guided by principles of communalism, feminism, grassroots-democracy, and ecological economy. Utilizing the outlier case study of Rojava, this paper asserts a need for political science as a discipline to return to its roots and celebrate cases like Rojava for embarking on such experimental endeavors, no matter what form they take. Through the analysis of existing anarchist literature, the popular discourse surrounding it, and a dissection of Rojava itself, this paper problematizes the reality that governing entities deemed dissident or deviant are not perceived as legitimate in the same way that systems of government aligned with the global status quo are. In a discipline that awards legitimacy, Rojava affords an opportunity to reconsider what is truly important in government: unchanging permanency or adaptability and experimentation.

THE MOST DANGEROUS BOOK IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Tommy Flora '22

Oklahoma City, 1995. Timothy McVeigh uses a homemade explosive he attached to a truck to carry out the most deadly domestic terrorist act in United States history, killing 168. What many don't know are the real-life parallels from the Oklahoma City bombing to "The Turner Diaries," a novel written by one of America's most important Nazis, William Pierce. Pierce used his novel to illustrate a revolution against the American government, which eventually led to the takeover of society by white supremacists. This book has influenced over 200 murders since its release and is considered by the FBI to be, "The Bible of the racist right." How has The Turner Diaries impacted far-right extremism, and is this book still influencing extremism today?

SENIOR THESIS SUMMARIES

SELF DETERMINATION: UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL IMPACTS ON IDEOLOGY IN HAITI AND THE UNITED STATES

Anissa Joseph '22

My thesis aims to understand how the structures of post-revolutionary Haiti and abolitionist and post-liberation America affect ideology regarding self-determination. I use qualitative methods to understand how the structures of these two countries have affected ideas regarding assimilation, non-domination, and the universality of Blackness. I focus on political and social thought from both countries during these key periods from thinkers such as Frederick Douglass and Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

DOES NONPROFIT EQUAL NON-POLITICAL? A COMPARISON OF ELECTION COVERAGE BY LOCAL FOR-PROFIT AND NONPROFIT NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

Caitlin Neuhaus Kilgore '22

Traditional news media ownership models are rapidly proving to be financially unsustainable. Different organizational structures are becoming more widespread with nonprofit news outlets holding a key position in this transition. However, no previous research has been conducted to study the possible implications this shift may have on media coverage. Non-profit outlets in the U.S. are limited by 501(c)(3) tax status in their ability to engage in political activity, which may impact political coverage - especially campaign reporting. My thesis investigates differences in coverage of competitive local elections between nonprofit and for-profit news outlets. The research uses five case studies (Texas, Arizona, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina) with an established non-profit outlet and a comparable for-profit outlet. A sentiment analysis and content analysis were performed to analyze the tone of the coverage, tone specifically about candidates, and to see whether either outlet structure was more likely to follow game frame or issue reporting. The findings may fill an important gap in understanding the growing shift towards non-profit news outlets and how the new structure is understood in political communication.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERSONHOOD IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Hannah Tuohy '22

What is environmental personhood? Under what conditions does it become international environmental law? The climate crisis is one of the predominant issues on the contemporary political stage. The time sensitive and transnational nature of the climate crisis necessitates a comprehensive international solution. Environmental personhood grants legal personality to natural entities, thus providing the foundation for legal protections to be established and upheld for the environment. Many states and localities across the globe have implemented environmental personhood as a solution to the climate crisis. The relatively new appearance of environmental personhood as an ecocentric solution within climate change discourse has facilitated a gap in literature about the likelihood of its successful implementation. This paper utilizes a cross-case examination between the successful implementation of environmental personhood for New Zealand's Whanganui River in 2017 and the failed implementation for the United States' Colorado River just three months later. This analysis illustrates the principle that environmental personhood has a far greater likelihood of success when pursued through legislation rather than litigation due to litigation's barriers to entry, legal obstacles, the broad environmental constituencies, and the social visibility of the movement. This conclusion drawn from the comparative case studies will coalesce with an examination of the emergence of other international personhoods to establish a policy recommendation about how to best pursue environmental personhood in international law.

EQUAL PROTECTION, LEVELS OF SCRUTINY, AND GENDER-BASED CLASSIFICATIONS OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING PERSONS IN AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

Natalie White '22

I have researched legal precedent and legislative history on both the state and federal level, analyzed modern cultural circumstances, and gathered contemporary cases involving gender-based classifications and transgender Americans. These considerations form an image that enables me to analyze the modern circumstances of transgender rights under the 14th Amendment and ultimately make a compelling argument for the level of protection transgender Americans should be afforded when the Supreme Court takes on such a case.

SENIOR THESIS SUMMARIES

PEOPLES WITHOUT A LAND AND LANDS WITHOUT A PEOPLE: TRANSYLVANIA AND SUBSTATE NATIONALISM

Daniel Weiss '22

What causes the formation of the national identity and national consciousness? In some regions, there develops a strong regional identity, often even leading to separatist sentiments. However, other regions readily adopt the broader identity of the nation state to which they are party. I examine through a theoretical and quantitative lens the development of substate national identities and movements and apply this towards a case study of Transylvania. Transylvania is an interesting case for this, having at once a somewhat unique history and folklore and having also incorporated a wealth of ethnic groups and been, in recent history, traded between The Austro-Hungarian Empire, Romania and Hungary. Despite this, it has not developed a substantial national identity towards the region, unlike other somewhat similarly situated regions (e.g. Quebec). I examine the reasons for this, owing to institutional, cultural and historical context.

RESTRUCTURING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Kieran Yater '22

My Political Science thesis is addressing the question: How can the United States promote democracy and human rights while respecting other countries' sovereignty? The United States is at an inflection point in its foreign policy, because of its declining relative power and the global rise of authoritarianism. The changing international system has forced the U.S. to reevaluate its post-Cold War strategy of liberal hegemony, and many new foreign policy frameworks have gained prevalence in public debate. To answer my thesis question, I am analyzing how human rights and democracy fit into existing foreign policy frameworks. I identified five of the most prevalent foreign policy frameworks (the frameworks are named after the organization promoting them if they did not have another name) those being the Vandenburg Coalition, the Quincy Institute, Fellow Travelers, the Free world Strategy, and the Biden Doctrine. After analyzing existing frameworks, I worked to craft my own policy priorities that would protect the human rights of civilians globally. The first recommendations fall into the category of harm reduction strategies such as not selling arms to authoritarian states, reducing broad sanctions, and limiting drone strikes. I then explore proactive steps the U.S. can take to promote human rights such as Due Diligence Laws and Truth and Reconciliation Committees. The goal of this thesis is to create a new foreign policy framework that would help the U.S. live up to the ideals of its rhetoric.

PROFESSOR BIBERMAN-OCAKLI'S REMARKS ON RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE



"I want to begin on a personal note. I am heartbroken over the suffering of the ordinary people who did absolutely nothing to deserve this – this war."

Thank you to President Connor, Dean Orr, and so many others, including our wonderful alumni, for reaching out to me during this difficult time. I am originally from Belarus. I have worked as a journalist in Russia and with the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine. My family and I came to this country as refugees. As my heart was breaking for those I knew and those I never met, I felt incredibly fortunate to be a part of such a warm and supportive community. We must recognize such a community to be our most precious resource. Like family, it is easy to take for granted. And, like family, it requires nurture and hard work.

War, pandemic, climate change – all this reminds us how interconnected we are not just politically but also physically and emotionally. Such interconnectedness can be a cause for hope but also a source of pain. My hope for the millions of Ukrainians fleeing from war is soon to find – and to be embraced by – as caring a community as the one we have here. Communities that embrace despairing outsiders and take care of their most vulnerable are our best hope for survival."

Yelena Biberman, Ph.D.



A FACULTY PANEL ON THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

EMMA GILL '24



One week after Putin's invasion of Ukraine, the Skidmore community comes together in hopes of discovering answers and unique perspectives on the rapidly evolving situation in eastern Europe. The Center in Case is at its full capacity of 60 people. Around 20 additional students, who had hoped to attend the event in person, are led to a nearby room to stream the event and over 400 more people are joining the event via zoom. Among those who attend in person are a wide variety of students and faculty including both the Dean of Faculty, Michael Orr, and President Marc Conner. Emmanuel Balogun, opens the panel by introducing himself and his colleagues who all possess unique viewpoints on the situation. One of Balogun's research interests focuses on peace and security governance. Kate Graney studies the Soviet Union, Russia, and Eastern Europe, Feryaz Ocakli contributes to the discussion with his research on comparative political economic development, Jennifer Delton studies U.S. history including the Cold War era. Finally, Yelena Biberman-Ocakli not only specializes in the politics of war from an academic standpoint, but she also provides a compelling personal perspective as she grew up in Belarus and has worked in both Russia and Ukraine.

Shock and utter disbelief are the consensus of the panelists. Like many others, none of them anticipated an invasion. "We thought Putin was content with the idea of building a parallel Europe," Graney says. Our shock, and disbelief over what is occurring in eastern Europe, is evidence of our very liberal and "western" view of the world, Delton suggests. Biberman-Ocakli tries to explain Putin's actions by combining two of the main arguments that have been brought up over the past week: In her estimation, Putin does, in fact, feel threatened by NATO, but also wanted to invade Ukraine and expand his power.

Is the West doing enough? That is hard to ascertain. While the sanctions against Russia aren't necessarily seen as conventional warfare, they are extremely violent in nature leading to devastating consequences for the Russian people in the future, Ocakli points out. He further states that this is a perfect real-life example of the fact that there is no clear separation between economy and politics. At the same time, Graney reminds the audience that Putin seems to live in his own world and cares relatively little about the well-being of his people which may reduce the efficacy of the sanctions. However, it is the west's primary responsibility to prevent war in the current moment. Ocakli states that this fact ties the hands of the West to a significant extent in terms of their range of responses.

While the discussion could probably continue for hours, a final and significant question remains that many have been asking themselves in the past days: what does the future, not only for this war, but also for this world look like? "Putin finds himself in an existential threat," Biberman-Ocakli points out, "he has everything to lose which makes him even more unpredictable." In the long term, the weaponizing of Swift might significantly impact the nature of future invasions, Balogun suggests. Biberman-Ocakli worries that the world is going to learn all the wrong lessons from this war considering a boost in military budgets across the globe. It would be much more beneficial, she suggests, if money was pumped into proper diplomatic institutions. Delton questions this, however, by asking if this isn't simply a natural response, especially considering that Ukraine has given up their nuclear weapons which would have now served them as an advantage. In a final chilling reminder, Graney raises a point many haven't even considered yet: What happens to all those weapons that have been handed out to Ukrainian civilians once this war is over?

I myself came to this panel in hopes of finding answers. I appreciate the many different perspectives brought together through this panel (perspectives that most definitely gave me new ways of looking at the unfolding situation). At the same time, I am left with more questions than answers. This is a time of uncertainty. Since Putin invaded Ukraine, a lot has happened, and it hardly seems possible that it has only been a little over a week. While the war itself worries, and, yes, scares me, I am also uncomfortable with my own rapidly changing viewpoints. If you would have told me a month ago that Germany (the country I grew up in) increased its military budget to 100 billion, I would have been shocked and would have strongly disagreed with that decision. But when I heard Chancellor Scholz's announcement on Sunday, I was not opposed to the decision at all. Similarly, I never would have imagined to even consider wanting to be part of active combat. But now, thinking about a scenario in which my country was invaded, I am not so sure if I would not pick up a gun myself. Watching the heart wrenching pictures coming out of the Ukraine, one cannot help to ask oneself, what would I do if I were there? Witnessing a large-scale paradigm shift feels unsettling. Within one week the world as we know it seems to have changed. Internally and externally. I am thankful, at least, to be part of a community like Skidmore that provides us with the setting to not only think about what is happening, but more importantly to continue, always, to ask questions.



AN EVENING WITH AN AFGHAN NONVIOLENCE ACTIVIST

HUNTER WASSER'23

It is Thursday, October 28, 2021, and I walk into Gannett Auditorium. The first thing I notice is a large, black-and-white picture of a man I do not recognize projected onto the wall before me. Above the picture, a caption reads, "The Rich History of Nonviolence in Afghanistan." Sitting below the picture are Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli and Afghan nonviolence activist Ahmadullah Archival. As Professor Biberman begins to list Mr. Archival's past life experience, it is hard not to be impressed. He has worked with the UN, the government of Afghanistan, the US embassy in Kabul, and many other organizations, including OSCAR, the Organization for Social Cultural Awareness and Rehabilitation, which he leads. If that weren't enough, Mr. Archival has two master's degrees: one in journalism from the University of Peshwar and another in international affairs from New School University.

As Professor Biberman and Mr. Archival began their conversation, I came to understand the caption of the picture occupying the wall behind them. The history of nonviolence in Afghanistan is rich indeed. I was surprised to learn how much I did not know—likely due to the tendency of Westerners to view South-Central Asia and the Middle East as inherently conservative and violent regions of the world. In stark contrast to this trope, however, Afghan nonviolence activists integrated Islam, feminist, and socialist ideology into their actions. Chief among them was Bacha Khan, the man on the wall. In the 1920s, he built schools to address literacy rates, organized collective protests, and made his own clothes to weaken the British textile industry. He described nonviolent social movements as being made up of an "unarmed army" whose goal is to empower the oppressed. Similarly, Mr. Archival sees the goal of nonviolence to be the empowerment of the oppressed. But nonviolence is not just the augmenting of conventional "power" by the oppressed, he argues. It is the elevation of their will and is driven by a firm belief that their goals and methods are unquestionable.

As the conversation continues, Professor Biberman asks Mr. Archival why we hear about nonviolence activists like Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, but not Bacha Khan. His response is one that echoes throughout history—that history is written by the victors. Bacha Khan, though he began his work before Gandhi (and was an inspiration for him), isn't a prominent figure in Indian history to the same extent that he is in Afghanistan today. When India was partitioned in the mid-20th century, it drove a wedge between Khan and Ghandi (and Jawaharlal Nehru) that affected his prominence (or lack thereof) in the Indian national con-

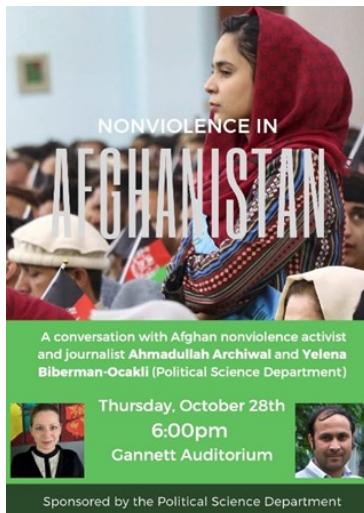
siousness, even though he worked closely with Gandhi. Bacha Khan remains an influential figure in Afghanistan today, though Mr. Archival doesn't think that all Afghans fully understand his work.

Towards the end of the talk, Professor Biberman asks Mr. Archival what he thinks the future of non-violent resistance looks like. She emphasizes that many of the students in attendance have some interest in changing our world for the better. Mr. Archival's response is straightforward: have a vision for your life. He implores us not to underestimate ourselves, urging us to make ambitious plans and stick to them. Otherwise, he tells us, we would be as travelers walking in a forest with no direction. I contemplated my own life's direction as I left the auditorium—later that night I would consider it again but over dinner.

In the soft light of Forno Bistro, I had the distinct honor of discussing nonviolence with Mr. Archival in a much more personal setting. Eventually, our discussion turned to nonviolence at Skidmore. That week, the student body underwent a major reckoning with the failure of Skidmore's Title IX procedures when a survivor of sexual assault was suspended for speaking about her experience on social media. Suffice it to say that nonviolent resistance was on my mind as we talked. Looking back on the conversation, I felt as though I had an epiphany about how nonviolence should be implemented. For years I had seen nonviolence a way to make a symbolic show of support for a certain cause. I had believed its tactic to be one of intimidating one's opponent into capitulating in the face of an apparently overwhelming opposition. However, my time with Mr. Archival changed that perception

entirely. I realized that, while there is certainly a beneficial "aesthetic" to nonviolence, that aesthetic symbolism is not the primary function of nonviolence. Instead, a nonviolent movement succeeds like any other resistance movement: it inflicts costs on one's opponent that eventually become too much to bear and the opponent gives in. Unlike armed resistance though, strategic nonviolence accomplishes this without killing or injuring—it attacks the sin, not the sinner. As I drove back to my apartment, I started reframing my way of thinking away from skipping class and gathering on the green and towards sit-ins, reliance on the press, and obstructions to convenience.

As I continue to make my way through college and my life beyond, my afternoon and evening with Mr. Archival will stay with me in memory. I gained a new appreciation for the historical precedent of strategic nonviolence that day, and with it a better understanding of how to be strategically nonviolent.



EXPLOREMORE PL

PHOEBE MARWILL '24



The Political Science Department hosted its ExploreMore program on February 23 in the Center in Case Center. This was the first in person ExploreMore in two years so it was very exciting event for everyone! Professor Turner was able to present to both current majors and potential future majors about all pf the amazing things that the department has to offer ranging

from the amazing professors and interesting classes to just some of the successful alumni and other resources available to students. Professors Breslin, Seyb, Biberman, Ocakli, Balogun, and Graney were also able to tell students about their research and teaching interests as well as share a few fun facts. As well, Professors Balogun, Ocakli, and Biberman were able to bring their children who were absolutely one of the night's hits!

ExploreMore finished off with raffles to downtown restaurants such as Uncommon Grounds, Putnam Market, and Saratoga Coffee Traders in addition to a few super special prizes. These special prizes were exclusive to the Political Science Department. They included sailing with Professor Mann on his boat, an acrostic poem by Professor Graney, an email by Professor Seyb, and a personalized portrait by Professor Biberman. Overall, ExploreMore was a huge hit and everyone was so excited to be back together in person. The department was even able to take a new picture for its LinkedIn Page!

PEN AMERICA FREE EXPRESSION ESSAY COMPETITION

PEN America invites students to write essays on any issue related to free expression in the U.S. or abroad at a length 2,500 words for the college level.

All submissions must be received on or before **April 15th at 11:59pm ET**.

Students can submit something they already have written as long as it fits within the free expression topic parameters. A total of \$15K in prizes with the top prize being \$4,000, \$3,000 and \$2000 for the top 3 winning essays. The winning essays will also be posted on PEN America's website and promoted on our social media channels. More info can be found [here!](#)

If anyone has any questions, they can feel free to reach out and email me! **Peris Tushabe '21** ptushabe@pen.org

ALUMNI UPDATES

Maria Bideiwy



With all of the stress that comes with being a college student, it can be relatively easy to forget that we weren't the first group of Skidmore Political Science majors to grace Ladd Hall. Whether it's holding back tears of frustration during all-nighters at the library, or fidgeting in our seats during our last Political Science class of the week, there was an alumnus or alumna who was in the same vulnerable position before us. While this doesn't take away from the pressure we feel on a daily basis, it does provide a form of comfort knowing we have a community to turn to when our academic endeavors feel unachievable.

My name is Maria Bideiwy—I'm a sophomore Political Science major who also sobs in the bathroom of Ladd Hall and curses John Locke for making his Second Treatise so complicated. Throughout the past weeks, I've had the opportunity to interview a few of Skidmore's Political Science alumni, taking note of how they made the most of their time in the major and what paths they took after graduation. I was expectedly intimidated by the task originally (What if I sound silly on the phone? Or worse—what if they tell my advisor how silly I sounded on the phone?) but my anxieties were calmed immediately after I held the first interview. We often forget that alumni are regular people too, that they're not so distant from current students, and that we're all connected by Skidmore's robust community. Every alum I interviewed encouraged me to keep in contact with them, and were more than willing to have a conversation about their time in the Political Science Department. They were in our shoes once and have an indispensable vault of advice for students in the major. What's my advice as a current major? Read these inter-

Isaac Bardin, Class of 2020

What are you up to? How is it going?

I am a regional organizing director for the Arizona Democratic Party's coordinated campaign, which is an arm of the state's party that's essentially the big field operation. We are electing Democrats up and down the ballot—right now that mostly looks like being Mark Kelly for Senate's field team, because he's an incumbent and we're only allowed to support incumbents. My job as the regional organizing director is to hire field organizers, who are entry level campaign staff who are responsible for managing our volunteers. I'm also hiring full-time staff at the moment, as well as opening our first campaign office in Tucson, Arizona. It's a really cool, but very difficult and really fast-paced job. You can move around the country a lot, and you spend a lot of time bonding with staff. This is now my fourth campaign cycle in the last year and a half since I've graduated, and I've found that overall, it's a very intense, but rewarding thing to do when you're young.



What do you like about your current job?

My favorite part about my current job is that I work on the part of campaigns that actually connect with people. I just love the amount of people I get to interact with and really be moved by their experiences and stories. It's also incredibly moving to see so many volunteers spend hours of their time on issues, and it's just a very heartwarming experience. Their dedication is inspiring, and it really builds such a strong sense of community. My work is very human, with so much emotion involved, and it's genuinely a wholesome experience to see the same volunteers coming back every week and keeping updated with their lives. I feel so lucky to be a part of work that is so human and touching—we all come together to do this work and it's such an incredible thing to be a part of.

How did the Political Science major prepare you for your current path?

It wasn't until after graduating that I really realized the value in everything I've learned from being a Political Science major. The Political Science department actually got me my first internship in local Saratoga politics, an experience that led me to where I am now. I worked as a field intern, going door-to-door and making calls to potential voters. At the time, I didn't even realize this could be a real career path after college. I didn't know that people worked on elections continually and that I could move around from campaign to campaign. Without my previous experience, I wouldn't be in the position that I am today. So much of the knowledge I've gotten from my professors and political science classes about elections, specifically shout-out to Professor Mann, has been an indispensable help as well. Professor Mann's media and elections class taught me so much that I draw on every day, and is incredibly applicable to the campaigns I work on now.

What lessons or advice do you have for current Political Science majors?

My number one piece of advice for current Political Science majors is to get into fieldwork after college. It's really hard work, with long hours, but it's such a good experience that teaches you how to handle many responsibilities at once. I also highly advise you to reach out to alumni in any way you can, using LinkedIn for example. I never really reached out to alumni during my time at Skidmore, and looking back, it would've been so helpful to have a base of support in graduates that have faced the same issues I faced then. Alumni can help you figure out what you'd potentially want to do, from informational chats to learning about different fields of political work. Everyone is so willing to help each other, and I wish I took advantage of that earlier on. I'd also recommend that current Political Science majors take classes from a lot of different subjects, and to take interesting classes just to learn. It's so helpful to have a wide base of knowledge to pull from in your future careers. Lastly, and this is mostly for freshmen, join as many clubs as you can!

Any specific class, skills, or experiences you recommend?

Again, I highly recommend getting into field work either during college or right after you graduate. I also remember taking a lot of amazing political science classes, like Media and Elections with Professor Mann, Presidential Nominations with Professor Mann, and Environmental Politics with Professor Turner. Outside of the Political Science department, I think everyone should take MB107, even if you're not interested in business, just because there are so many important skills and lessons I've learned from that class that apply outside of the business world.

ALUMNI UPDATES



Raina Bretan, Class of 2010

What are you up to? How is it going?

I am working as a manager in the Global Financial Crimes department of PayPal, and working remotely indefinitely it seems. At first, working from home seemed like an unbearable task for an unfettered extrovert, but I'm making it work through endless TEAMS and Zoom video calls. Having my son home (a 1.5-year-old pit bull rescue) has helped, even though he refuses to speak to me in English despite my greater efforts.

What do you like about your job?

I love using preventative lawyering skills to thwart criminal efforts to launder money, human or drug traffic, or finance terrorism through PayPal's payment rails. My current position involves vetting any new product launches for potential risks of the above-mentioned crimes. The work is compelling, as we often launch a product and see near real-time results and impact (for example: offering the ability to buy or sell crypto on Venmo).

How did the Political Science major prepare you for your current path?

Being a Government major at Skidmore prepared me to learn how to not be intimidated by routine problem solving in law school. I went to law school unintimidated by the amount of reading, issue spotting, and writing I had to do. Beyond that, it taught me how to pivot when my career demanded it. I started off out of law school at a real estate firm that I knew would put me in an early grave if I stayed. I had to be ready to completely change career trajectories when I moved into regulatory compliance in big banking shortly after. I never felt intimidated by the change because I knew my background—solid skills in analysis and writing—would translate to any practice area. Thanks Bob Turner!

What lessons or advice do you have for current Political Science majors?

I graduated from Skidmore with confidence that I wanted to practice immigration law. In a tough job market when I graduated, I wound up in real estate law, eventually practiced regulatory compliance at the Bank of Tokyo, and now, I currently fight global financial crime at PayPal. My advice is never to allow your expectations for what your life should be interfere with the life you have. Had I not learned up front that I hated real estate practice, I never would have ended up hitting the jackpot in my current role. Therefore, rather than just taking courses to further your purported interests at the time, make sure you soak in all the classes that interest you and that spark a real passion for real world skills that can translate across practice areas.

Ben Polsky, Class of 2015

What are you up to now? How is it going?

I am currently a Program Manager at Meta (formerly Facebook) Connectivity where I work to connect the under-connected to the internet.



What do you like about your current job?

I like that in my job, if I do it right, I can make a real, tangible impact in people's lives by enabling them access to a critical component of modern life—the internet.

How did the Political Science major prepare you for your current path?

I think the license the Political Science major gives to students to think expansively about big problems was really helpful as I navigated my career. More than any specific skill, I look back at all the mentorships and friendships I formed with the professors in the department as the most meaningful part of my Skidmore Political Science Major experience. Special shout out to Professor Biberman who helped me secure my first job at the Atlantic Council after graduating!



Kenneth Hardy, Class of 2001

What are you up to now? How is it going?

I am currently Program Director for the Public Safety and Legal Counsel Division at the National Governor's Association. It is going well and I enjoy my work.

What do you like about your job?

I enjoy it because it is heavily policy focused with just enough politics mixed in to keep it interesting and engaging. It is also fulfilling because governors must look at a bigger picture than most elected leaders and take their whole states interests into account when making decisions. So even though I focus on public safety issues when we examine a policy we must ask, how will this affect a state labor pool, welfare system, education system. I enjoy that broad view of things and the need to consider everyone's best interests.

How did the Political Science major prepare you for your current path?

The Government Department (when I was there) and the History Department as well, prepared me to take the holistic approach to issues and look at them both through a focused lens but also in the broader societal perspective. I can still remember Professor Seyb in his course on the Great Society saying look at how LBJ handled the specific politics of a bill but also think about how it was affecting the broader culture. Or Professor Breslin helping us break down Marbury v. Madison not only as a court case but as a foundation for a legal system a young country was building as it went along. This ability to take an issue and look at it in numerous ways has been invaluable in my career.

What lessons or advice do you have for current Political Science majors?

Take an internship and study abroad. Internships provide a good practical experience to supplement theory and tie things to the real world. Studying abroad teaches you to see things in an entirely different perspective. Finally, unless you absolutely know you want to work at a law firm, be a public defender or prosecutor, be a judge, or teach law, DO NOT go to law school. I think too many people go because they don't know what else to do. It's an expensive way to find out. You're better off going to work on a campaign or in a state or congressional office.

MY INTERVIEW WITH SERITA LEWIS'21

By Anissa Joseph '22

Tell me a bit about your time at Skidmore

I was a political science major, and an economics minor since I knew I that I wanted to work in public policy. When I was at Skidmore I was in the music department a lot. I had a job as an office assistant there for most of my years. I played the clarinet and was in orchestra for all four years, did private lessons, and I was in a chamber group performance. I had a radio station on WSPN, and I used to go to Lively Lucy's on Thursday nights.



What have you been doing since you graduated from Skidmore?

I'm currently getting my Master's in Public Policy at the University of Chicago - it's a two-year program. It's very fast paced; First quarter, I took stats, econ, microeconomics, and analytical politics, which is like a game theory class plus outside world kind of theory. It has a lot of political theory in it, but it's also kind of econometric in the way that has game theory. And now I'm taking the second sequence of all of those courses. So, I'm in the second part of stats, which is just a bunch of regressions, replicating data-- stuff like that. And then for economics it is econ for the government with budgeting ideas and how to maximize government budgets. And then the second part of the analytical politics is more game theory, but relating more to government institutions, for example, studying how decentralization or centralization could work better, given a certain level of externality or how much a public good being given to one other place is hurting somebody else.

How is it going? Are you enjoying the program?

Honestly, it wasn't a too bad of an adjustment, it was [only] a little hard because things move really fast. There are multiple assignments due every week, for instance this weekend I had an op ed and another assignment due on Friday, and then two assignments plus a quiz due on Sunday. So, it's a lot, but it feels doable.

Do you have any advice for political science majors at Skidmore interested in pursuing a similar path?

I'll say this if you major in political science and you want to do something like public policy, or even research related, you really need --I hate to say it because nobody wants to hear it— to take statistics it is really, really helpful. It's really important! I started to come to it, appreciating it for what it is. Overall, University of Chicago is a very technical school, it's a big adjustment and if you do political science, and public policy, you should take economics courses. A lot of economics!

Is there a class that's particularly engaging for you and why?

I guess the most interesting class I have right now is analytical politics, and it's engaging, because they'll actually discuss issues related to everyday life. For instance, we talked about Ukraine the other day. And a lot of the teachers are international so they have really different perspectives on things. It's very interesting. You know, they were talking a lot about it. People were coming up with very, very good points. Critiquing the US people, critiquing everybody left and right, there's good discourse here. And I was impressed. I was like, "How do you talk about this without getting emotional?"

I like it also because we'll talk about game theory, and then bring up a law-- like the other day, we were talking about the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and were looking at regression of it, and saying how hard it was to disentangle the civil rights movements and the impact of that on the Voting Rights Act, and how that has impacted voting overall. Which one had the more powerful effect, the act or the Civil Rights Movement? I appreciate that. We get to talk about these things in depth.

How did the Political Science major prepare you for your current path?

It made me a really good writer. When I came in the Skidmore, I couldn't write well. I went to a really bad High School where they didn't teach us how to write anything other than an English paper. So, I'll say that it helped me get the writing skills together. Then my thesis really helped a lot. It helped me understand how to do survey research.

What other courses or experiences helped prepare you?

I really felt like econ helped me. It is a very conservative field, for what I'm trying to do-- work in the government one day, hopefully as a budget or policy analyst-- it's good to have those skills.

Is there anything you wish you had done during your time at Skidmore?

I wish I had been more conscientious and tried to find Black professors because I was just like, "Oh, this class sounds good. Let me take it." But like, I ended up with a not very diverse pool of professors.

What lessons or advice do you have for current majors? What classes skills or experiences should they try to have before graduating?

Take statistics! Challenge yourself and take the econ stats, because it's really hard. It'll teach you pretty much everything you need to know. If I hadn't taken it, I would be very lost, especially in the area of public policy. Also, the best thing to do is get experience, get internships, because those experiences will give you the steppingstones you need and make for really good references if you plan to work full time or if you want to apply to graduate school.

I also liked the writing classes that I took. I took a class with Dr. Biberman-Ocakli, The Politics of Modern South Asia. It was so good plus she really helped me learn to write -- so take that class! I also really liked State and Local Politics with Bob Turner. That was one of my most interesting and favorite classes. Try to take classes that are interesting but will also teach you the skills you need to pursue your interests.

DON'T TOUCH MY DEPARTMENT A.K.A. DON'T TEMPT ME TO FIND A JOKE ABOUT MAKING LADD GREAT AGAIN

Jared Schwartz '20



I ran into Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli in Ladd in the Spring of 2019, pretty much completely by chance. I spent most of my time in Ladd. Between the work tables, Spa, and Ladd 203 seminar room, there was barely any reason to leave. We struck up a conversation about Indian domestic politics (with which I had a passing familiarity) and international relations in general (about which I had strong opinions and little knowledge). Thus began the most fruitful academic and professional partnership I ever had. Yelena and I wrote and published articles in *Foreign Policy*, *East Asia Forum*, *New Atlanticist*, co-authored an academic paper, and are finalists for a Marshall Foundation prize for another essay we prepared together. Over the difficult pandemic years, we had countless phone conversations and exchanged countless texts, keeping in contact over everything from confrontations in the South China Sea to the current situation in Ukraine. I am currently applying to join the U.S. State Department, largely as a result of Yelena's mentorship.

It might be hard to believe, but I have never taken a single class with Professor Biberman. In fact, I didn't even know that International Relations was something in which I could be interested until we began talking, debating, and collaborating. I thought that the bruising state house campaigns on which I cut my political teeth were to become my future, not realizing that another type of politics could really capture my imagination. This is the essence of academics, or the "life of the mind," that guides so much of liberal education. Growth happens when we get outside our comfort zone, as cliché as that sounds. Sometimes this means picking up an unfamiliar book or taking a new class. Sometimes it means having chance conversations in a shared hallway.

If the Political Science Department was not so centrally located, it's doubtful that Professor Biberman and I would have met, much less co-authored our numerous articles and papers. Our "chance" collaboration was a direct result of the space in which the Political Science Department is located. For the sake of the future generations of students like me, I hope the Department stays in Ladd.

Democracy Matters is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to involving students in politics and civic engagement. Here in our Skidmore chapter, we meet every Tuesday at 7pm in Ladd 307 to discuss current events and how we can contribute. Most recently, we held a tabling event in Case Center on both student debt and the invasion of Ukraine. We've also tabled for farmworker's rights and paths to immigration for farmworkers. We are supporting Saratoga BLM's events, planning to attend City Council meetings later this semester, and getting involved in the Saratoga School Board elections. Izzy Kroeger '24

You can find us on Skidsync to get involved and take action in your community!

PL TOPICS COURSES ~~ FALL 2022

PL 251 B New World Disorder

Kate Graney 3 credits

Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine has been described as definitively "ending the post-Cold War world order" and marking "the return of history". But the rules-based international order constructed after the end of the Second World War began showing its weakness and vulnerability far earlier. In this class, we examine: the roots of the post-WW2 international order; its consolidation and evolution during the Cold War Era (including the challenges to it from the non-aligned state and NIEO movement); the reconfiguration of that order after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; and more recent challenges to that order. We will look both at the "high politics" of theory and statecraft and the "low politics" of global citizen protest, and will try to understand what the possibilities are for making some type of order out of this moment of global disorder.

PL 351B: Republic & Empire: Machiavelli's & Shakespeare's Romes

Natalie Taylor 4 credits

This course draws on the wisdom of two of western political philosophy's greatest thinkers, Niccoló Machiavelli and William Shakespeare to contemplate the nature of a republic and of an empire. By examining Machiavelli's political treatise, *The Discourses on Livy*, and Shakespeare's "Roman plays", we will consider the Roman Republic's gradual move toward Empire and its eventual decline. Like all great works of philosophy and literature, Machiavelli's and Shakespeare's treatise and plays provide perennial insights into the necessary conditions of self-rule, the ambitions of rulers, and the corruption of both the people and their leaders. The study of these two thinkers will also allow the class to enter into the "quarrel between philosophy and poetry."

PL 365: Democratic Erosion

Feryaz Ocakli 4 credits

This course addresses the causes, symptoms, and consequences of democratic erosion. Over the course of the semester, students gain theoretical, empirical, and historical context to help them understand the processes of democratic backsliding.

Democratic Erosion is a cross-university collaborative course that aims to help students critically and systematically evaluate the risks to democracy both here and abroad through the lens of theory, history, and social science. Faculty at over a dozen universities will teach elements from the same syllabus at the same time. Students at all participating universities and colleges will collaborate on a number of assignments, and are expected to engage not only with their own classmates, but also with students at other institutions. Our goal is to treat the threat of democratic erosion as an empirical question. Is American democracy under threat? What about democracy in other parts of the world? If democracy is indeed under threat, what can we do about it? This course aims to help answer these questions.

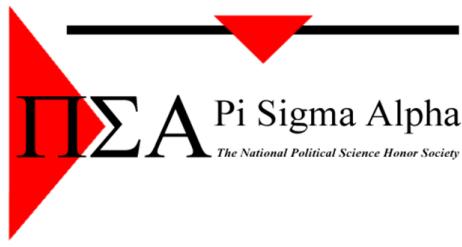
PL 367: Politics and Policy of Inequality

Bob Turner 4 credits

While Americans claim to cherish the ideals of political equality and democratically responsive government, the United States currently has the highest level of income inequality in the industrial world. This course will explore different aspects of economic inequality, the different ways of measuring it, the implications for Americans' lives, and how they relate to social and political justice. We will focus on why our political institutions seem to be so unresponsive to the increase in inequality and what it says about the nature of our democratic system. We also examine how different public policies shape and refract inequality's social and political effects. Prerequisite: PL 101 or permission of the instructor.

FALL 2022 — WHAT COUNTS FOR WHAT?

AMERICAN POLITICS	POLITICAL THEORY	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	COMPARATIVE POLITICS
PL 222: State and Local Politics (BT)	PL 204: Classical Political Thought (FT)	PL 251B: New World Disorder (KG)	PL 209: Latin American Puzzle (TBA)
PL 252: Psychology of Politics (RS)	PL 351B: (NT) Republic & Empire: Machiavelli's & Shakespeare's Romes	PL 340: International Human Rights Regime (KG)	PL 239: Middle Eastern Politics (FO)
PL 334: United States Presidency (RS)		PL 346: Politics of Modern Warfare (YBO)	PL 348: Politics of Modern South Asia (YBO)
PL 335: Election Research (CM)			PL 365: Democratic Erosion (FO)
PL 367: Politics and Policy			



Founded in 1920, Pi Sigma Alpha receives into membership students in political science and related disciplines who have outstanding records of scholarship, high academic integrity, and academic distinction.

TAU GAMMA is the Skidmore College chapter name

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