

## FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR MICHELE ANGRIST

Dear Political Science Students,

I hope this newsletter finds you well, deep into fall coursework and enjoying the crisp (cold?) weather. After a quiet summer on campus, faculty are always glad to see students return and to experience the way in which you energize the campus. To let you know what your professors were up to this past summer while you were away, this newsletter features short summaries of the research and scholarship projects we were engaged in.

I am delighted to report that, during the summer, we were notified that our chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha (PSA), the national Political Science honor society, was awarded a "Best Chapter" award in recognition of the rich array of programming and activities it presided over last year. Congratulations are due to Professor Seri, who mentors our PSA chapter so diligently, and to last year's co-presidents (now graduated, alas), Davis Cutter and Julia Hotz.

Also, the department has been working to overhaul and improve its website on the Union College domain. More improvements will be made this year, but for now, I especially draw your attention to the "FAQ" section. There, you can find helpful information regarding departmental requirements, Pi Sigma Alpha, internship opportunities, the senior thesis, and more. Ever wonder what subfield a certain course counts as? You can find out in the "Courses and Programs" section, which features lists of courses by subfield. You can find the website at <http://muse.union.edu/politicalscience/>.

Finally, in response to feedback from Political Science alums, the department is working to do more for students in the domain of career planning and advice. To that end, our goal is to host an event every fall and winter trimester, focusing each term on a different type of career path open to students who have majored in Political Science. As noted in the text box on this page, this fall's event, sponsored jointly by the Political Science department and the Pre-Law Society, focuses on law school. I hope to see many of you there!

## Mark Your Calendars!

Pathways from Political Science:  
SHOULD I CONSIDER LAW SCHOOL?

Come hear from and ask questions of a panel of faculty, students, alumni, and admissions staff from Albany Law School about what it takes to get into law school, what law school is like, and the many types of careers that law school can prepare you for.

Thursday October 22, 6-7 pm, Karp 105  
Reception to Follow

Hors D'oeuvres and Beverages Will Be  
Served at 5:45

## ATTENTION SENIORS

### Requirements for Graduating with Honors in Political Science

- GPA of 3.30 or better in PS as well as cumulatively (3.5 in PS beginning with Class of 2017.)
- Completion of a PS seminar with an A- or better. If you do not attain an A- in the seminar, you may still be eligible for honors if your PS GPA is 3.50 or higher (3.7 in PS beginning with Class of 2017.) Either way, you must complete a seminar.
- At least three PS course grades of A- or better [not including thesis courses].
- A grade of A- or higher on the senior project.
- Delivery of an oral (not poster) presentation on your senior project at the Steinmetz symposium.

**\*\*ID majors must meet the requirements for honors in both departments\*\***

## PROFESSORS SOUND OFF

### Democracy: A Reversal of the Wave? – Professor Seri

Electronic communications and social media make extraordinary things possible. Stories going “viral” on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other outlets allow citizens, in a matter of hours, to organize and make demands on their governments regarding abuses, as others mobilize in their support around the world. Millions can now express solidarity and organize in a myriad ways to help bring food, shelter, or medical attention to victims of natural disasters or despotic governments. On this, its bright side, social media has become “home to civil society” and it has been likened to a “new public square” hosting debates and new movements and ideas.<sup>1</sup>

But as we also have learned in recent years, the same technologies make possible for states and corporations to insidiously penetrate and manipulate our lives. On its darker side, technology can help control “the way in which people see, how they hear, what they see,” as Judith Butler notes.<sup>1</sup> Immersed in a constant, 24/7 flow of excitement, bright colors, and information, it seems challenging for us to assess the overall trends. Politically, at least, the trends are concerning.

Concern is starting to spread among researchers as they identify what may be the beginning of a reverse wave of democratization. The concept of “wave” was made popular in the early 1990s by Samuel Huntington, who noted a trend for regime changes to concentrate in time and for political and institutional changes to spill over other societies. Manifesting this dynamics, since 1974, the Third Wave of Democratization inaugurated the most extensive and faster transformation of governments into democracies on record. Until then, democracy had been only episodic or limited to wealthy or otherwise privileged males of dominant ethnic groups within societies. No question then democratization raised great hopes and expectations in what was perceived as a revolutionary achievement.

### The Union Banner

The Banner is Union College’s student Political Newsletter. Every other week The Banner publishes five articles to be printed and dispersed throughout campus as well as published online (at [www.muse.union.edu/banner](http://www.muse.union.edu/banner)). The articles are contributed by students, providing a platform to express opinions regarding political theories, current events, and issues.

Email articles to [unionbanner@union.edu](mailto:unionbanner@union.edu) to contribute.

It is this much celebrated democratizing, global trend that is at risk. Support for democracy around the world is at its lowest in the last 25 years. While more leaders show their disdain for democratic values and rights, fundamental tenets of democratic life, including freedom of expression and being afforded basic protections of law such as a fair trial are under threat. Intensified state surveillance, media and internet censorship, and the criminalization of online activities are rising, often as part of “anti-terrorist” laws, not just in authoritarian regimes but also in established democracies.

The loss of democracy and rights has a dramatic impact on people’s lives. Estimated to surpass 60 million, refugees, stateless populations, and the internally displaced are just one of the outcomes of “authoritarian misrule.”<sup>1</sup> Also slavery has reached an all-time record high, with over 36 million enslaved people around the world, as Nobel peace prize Kailash Satyarthi and many others have denounced.<sup>1</sup>

The loss of democracy may be subtle. Rather than through military coups as in the past, democracies are now hollowing out. One main way in which democratic polities are eroded is through the spread and passive acceptance of illegal, extralegal, or unlawful state acts. Criminal acts such as torture and extrajudicial killings, as well as policies that may not be technically illegal, but that also undermine the

rights and guarantees that define the ethical, ontological foundation of democracy, keep undermining the democratic horizon and contribute to the said reversal of the wave.

We must protect the traits that make a democratic polity sound and vibrant, and resist any governmental actions that undermine them, both at home and abroad. If communications and social media make extraordinary things possible, they should allow us ordinary citizens to make rights and political action in our democratic polities thrive.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Marc A., Lee Rainie, Ben Shneiderman and Itai Himelboim, "Mapping Twitter Topic Networks: From Polarized Crowds to Community Clusters," *Pew Research Center*, February 20, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Judith. *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and violence* (London, New York: Verso, 2006), p xx.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, "Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time since World War II" *UNHCR Report Press Releases*, June 20, 2014  
<[www.unhcr.org/53999cf46.html](http://www.unhcr.org/53999cf46.html)>.

<sup>4</sup> Goldsmith, Belinda, "Nobel peace laureate Satyarthi says failure to end slavery is global sin," <[in.reuters.com/article/2014/11/19/women-conference-satyarthi-idINKCN0J312U20141119](http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/11/19/women-conference-satyarthi-idINKCN0J312U20141119)>

## **WHAT PROFESSORS DID LAST SUMMER!**

### **Professor Seri:**

This past summer, after moving into a new home, I devoted most of my time to writing a couple of conference papers and to revising a couple of articles for submission. The summer ended with travel through California, on the stunning Route 1, and with a wonderful APSA conference in San Francisco.

### **Professor Angrist:**

For the past several years I have been building my

scholarly and teaching competencies in Sub-Saharan African politics. This summer I began some focused reading around the issue of gaps between boys' and girls' educational attainments in West African countries, many of which have Muslim majorities and all of which have substantial Muslim populations. Compared to the continent as a whole, the literacy and primary school enrollment gap between males and females is statistically significantly larger in West Africa. What explains this? West African countries have quite weak states, and have experienced a lot of civil war in recent decades. Both of these might explain some aspects of educational attainment gaps by gender. But by many measures West African countries do not stand out from the rest of the continent in these respects. Islam is thought to be a religion that prescribes a more restrictive role for women than for men – could the fact that the region is heavily Muslim explain gender gaps? I still am working through the evidence, but the preliminary answer is yes -- though not in a direct or formulaic way. France and Britain introduced Western forms of education in West Africa in the late 1800s, often (initially at least) via the work of Christian missionaries. Yet by then much of West Africa had been Muslim for centuries, and had developed indigenous Qur'anic and other types of Islamic schools that instructed students in Arabic. Thus, Western- and/or missionary-introduced schooling was rejected by many communities because it represented a threat to a strongly-held identity. Globally, communities often make girls and women the standard bearers for community honor and identity, so families may have allowed their boys to attend the new schools over the long run for the employment opportunities modern schooling opened up – while keeping their girls home to preserve community identity and norms.

### **Professor Dallas:**

This summer, I attended three academic conferences where I delivered four papers. The first conference was in Seoul, South Korea for a conference devoted to East Asian regionalization with parallels with the European Union. The most

pronounced difference between the two regions is that the EU is far more institutionally organized by governments and so has a powerful formal or legal structure, while East Asia is more organized from the 'bottom-up' by social groups and companies. While I visited, the MERS virus had hit the country, and so Seoul felt like a ghost town! The President of South Korea (the daughter of a prior military dictator) was being criticized for not doing enough and some estimated that Korea's GDP might be 2% lower because of the virus. In fact, very few people died (around 15), so it was quite minor, but because it hit the national and international news, everyone stayed in their houses and did nothing! ... I had the city to myself. Then, I attended a conference at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) called "The Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics" (SASE) which is organized by economic sociologists, but really attracts scholars across every social science (and social studies!). It is quite a fascinating mix of people and a real melding of ideas across disciplines. Finally, I attended the American Political Science Association (APSA) conference in San Francisco, which is the big annual meeting for political scientists. At APSA, I am most interested in how political scientists think about and conduct research on companies or "firms." My two papers address this issue in different ways. Feel free to contact me if you want to learn more!

#### **Professor Hays:**

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, our second daughter, Adrianna Lorraine Hays, was born so I spent much of the summer acclimating to life with two kids, which is surprisingly different than life with one. Through hours of dedicated attention, I became an expert on swings, slides, and Frozen. (Don't get me started on why Anna doesn't receive a more prominent place in Disney's marketing.) When I wasn't engaged in such intellectually enriching activities, I was completing a book project and starting new projects on Supreme Court oral arguments (with

Nick Webb of the Computer Science department) and how standards created by the policy-making wing of the federal judiciary (i.e. the Judicial Conference) constrain Congress's Article III authority. I also attended Union's Board of Trustees retreat and started my first book, which is a noir-inspired novel about the disappearance of young Mexican-American man during the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles. (The latter was written while I pushed my eldest daughter on the swings. Seriously.)

#### **Professor Hislope:**

I had a fabulous time teaching AOP (for the fourth year in a row) students for the AOP class "Introduction to Political Science." So many bright, interesting, engaged, new students coming our way! I also continued to work on the music & politics book manuscript, which focuses on the repression of music in American history.

#### **Professor Oxley:**

My summer was spent revising my book for a new edition (Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, co-authored with Prof. Rosie Clawson of Purdue University). The book is an overview of public opinion in America, focusing on the content of Americans' opinions as well as the sources and implications of those opinions. We also devote quite a bit of attention to democratic theory, tying empirical research findings to normative theories. The chapters that I revised covered topics such as political socialization, ideology, partisanship, polarization, attitude stability, public support for civil liberties, trust in government, and the relationship between public opinion and public policy.

#### **Professor Marso:**

Energized by my experience teaching Feminist Film during the Winter term, I spent part of my summer revising an article that grew out of conversations with my students in that class. The article is called "Perverse Protests: Simone de

Beauvoir on Pleasure and Danger, Resistance and Female Violence in Film" and will be published this coming year (2016) in SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. I am really excited about this, as SIGNS is the best journal for interdisciplinary feminist writing in the country. I also worked on two edited collections, one called *Gender, Power, and Politics in the Films of Lars von Trier*, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2016, and the other *Fifty Key Feminist Thinkers* which will be published by Routledge in 2016. And finally, I completed a draft of my manuscript on Simone de Beauvoir's political thought. It was a busy summer.

### **PSC Major Foreign Experience Requirement**

All PSC majors, including ID-PSC majors, need to fulfill the foreign experience requirement. There are two ways to fulfill this requirement:

1. Complete a three-course language sequence (only two courses are required if the sequence is begun beyond the first introductory course in the language).
2. Complete a full-length term abroad (miniterms do not qualify).

Please plan carefully to fulfill this requirement: for many languages, the introductory course is only offered in the Fall Term, so you cannot necessarily begin your language study any time in the year.

## **Winter 2016 POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSES**

### **Introductory**

- PSC111: Introduction to American Politics  
(Dell'Aera) MWF 11:45AM - 12:50PM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics  
(Hislope) MWF 8:00 - 9:05AM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics  
(Hislope) MWF 9:15 - 10:20AM
- PSC 113: Introduction to Political Theory  
(Seri) MWF 10:30 - 11:35AM

### **Political Theory**

- PSC 235: African American Political Thought  
(Marso) TTh 1:55 - 3:40PM
- PSC 334: Democracy in a Globalizing World  
(Cidam) MWF 1:50 - 2:55PM
- PSC 339: Seminar in Political Theory  
(Marso) TTh 10:55AM - 12:40PM

### **Comparative Politics**

- PSC 249: Middle East Politics  
(Lobe) TTh 9:00 - 10:45AM
- PSC 344R: Unlawful Governance in Democracies  
(Seri) MW 3:05 - 4:45PM

### **International Politics**

- PSC 256: Model United Nations  
(Angrist) W 1:50 - 4:40PM
- PSC 353R: Terrorism and Torture  
(Angrist) MWF 9:15 - 10:20AM

### **U.S. Politics**

- PSC 159: Presidential Nomination Politics  
(Brown/Oxley) TTh 1:55 - 3:40PM
- PSC 266: Women & Politics  
(Oxley) TTh 9:00 - 10:45AM
- PSC 273: Supreme Court & Judicial Politics  
(Hays) TTh 10:55AM - 12:40PM

### **Internships**

- PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships  
(Brown)

## UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR FALL TERM

### **PSC 159: Presidential Nomination Politics**

This course will consist of an in-depth examination of the presidential candidate nomination process. Sustained attention will be placed on the candidates and events of the 2016 Democratic and Republican nomination contests. These two contests will be placed within broader historical, legal, and conceptual contexts. By the end of the course, students should have a detailed understanding of how candidates run for their party's nomination, why the winning candidates win, the voter decision-making process, and the electoral roles of various actors, including the media, financial donors, and campaign consultants. Throughout the course, students will evaluate the nomination process and discuss possible reforms.

### **PSC 235: African American Political Thought**

This course will introduce students to the critical and constructive dimensions of African American political thought. We will assess the claims that Black Americans have made on the polity, how they define themselves, and how they have sought to redefine the basic terms of American public life.

### **PSC 249: Middle East Politics**

This course is designed to introduce students to the essential political history and dynamics of the Middle East in the 20th century. Students will study the processes through which the states of the contemporary Middle East emerged; the types of political regimes that have evolved in these states; the origins and evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict; the relationships between Islam and politics; and debates regarding U.S. foreign policy toward the region.

### **PSC 256: Model United Nations**

This course prepares students to participate in the National Model United Nations (NMUN), the largest UN simulation in the world. The NMUN program provides students a better understanding of the inner working of the United Nations. Course goals are to develop research, writing, public speaking, and diplomatic skills amongst students as

## **PSC Major Research Requirement**

All PSC majors are required to take two research-focused courses:

- An R course (the R indicates that the course is research-intensive)
- Either a 2<sup>nd</sup> R course, a seminar, or a research methods course (PSC 220, 222 or 223)

[Note: Normally, students must have a GPA of at least 3.0 to gain entrance into a seminar.]

PSC Interdepartmental (ID) majors must take one R course to fulfill the research requirement. Students are strongly recommended to complete this requirement before the end of their junior year, as preparation for their senior thesis.

they confront a myriad of global public policy challenges. At the simulation, students and faculty from five continents work feverishly to propose resolutions addressing regional conflicts, peacekeeping, human rights, women and children, economic and social development, and the environment. Students are permitted to take PSC 256 multiple times for credit, but this course can only count once toward a PSC major, ID major or minor. PSC 256 cannot be taken pass/fail.

### **PSC 266: Women and Politics**

The political, social, and economic circumstances of women in the U.S. Topics include history of women's rights, feminism, women as political actors (voters, candidates, and government officials). Issues including work, reproductive rights, violence against women and poverty are covered. Special attention to the role of minority women.

### **PSC 273: The Supreme Court & Judicial Politics**

An investigation of the judicial branch of government in the U.S. that focuses on the role of

judges, the functioning of courts, and leading contemporary controversies in the judicial system. Among the primary concerns of this course are the structure of the American Judiciary, judicial selection process, how cases originate and move through the judicial system, how judges think about and reach decisions in the cases, and the role law plays in society. In exploring these topics many actual Supreme Court cases are dissected, focusing on such issues as: gay rights, pornography, rights of disabled citizens, the rights of those accused of crimes, and free speech over the Internet, to name only a few areas.

### **PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships**

This class enables students to become politically active and/or gain political experience by working for elected officials, government agencies, election campaigns, interest groups, non-profit organizations, lobby firms, etc. Students draw on their internship experience and related academic work to reach a better understanding of the complexities and dynamics of politics at the state or local level. Students are permitted to enroll in this course twice, although the course will count toward the Political Science major only once.

### **PSC 334: Democracy in a Globalizing World**

Until the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, or perhaps even later, many people thought of democracy as a problematic form of politics, characterized by ignorance, instability, and violence, rather than an ideal to strive for. Things have changed drastically since then. Today there is an almost universal consensus that democracy is the only legitimate and the best form of government possible. What is remarkable about this shift in the evaluation of “democracy,” however, is that as the perceived value of democracy has increased, the meaning of the term has become less and less clear. Is democracy merely a method of choosing our rulers by means of competitive elections, or is it something more? Is it a constitutional form of government that guarantees a set of rights, or a fleeting revolutionary moment? Instead of giving up on

“democracy” in the face of these multiple interpretations, in this course we will critically engage with each one of them in their fully articulated forms. To do so, we will examine competing theories of democracy and analyze how, and to what effect, these different accounts address the problems of democratic politics. The goal of this critical examination is not to choose one particular formulation over the other, or to come up with a “true” understanding of democracy but rather to find ways to rethink “democracy” as a meaningful political concept which can help us to describe, evaluate and criticize our current political institutions and practices.

The course consists of four main sections. The first part of the class (Part I), which focuses on the writings of Plato and Aristotle, will take us to the intellectual roots of our contemporary understanding(s) of democracy and citizenship. This detour through classical texts, which are critical of democracy, is necessary not only because it provides the groundwork for the rest of our course, but also because it helps to break our relationship of familiarity with, and unquestioned belief in, democracy as the best possible form of government. In the second section (Part II), we will turn our attention to the current debates in contemporary democratic theory and examine three competing theories of democracy --i.e. “electoral” (Schumpeter), “deliberative” (Habermas), and “radical” (Wolin) democracy—by paying particular attention to the meaning and significance of citizenship in each of them respectively. The third section (Part III) addresses the perennial problems of democracy, namely the issue of citizens’ alleged lack of interest in politics, the tension between social inequality and political equality, the fear of the tyranny of majority, and finally the role of violence in domestic popular movements and post-colonial struggles. In the fourth and most extensive section of our class (Part IV), we will explore the ways in which “globalization” challenges our conventional understanding(s) of democracy –significantly limiting our capacity to act as democratic citizens in certain respects while surprisingly enabling in others- and invites

us to rethink democracy in face of the present world-wide conditions.

**PSC 339: Seminar in Political Theory:  
Reading Classical Female Figures**

This course explores readings of female figures appearing in classical texts who subsequently reappear and are reinterpreted repeatedly into the present. Our primary figures will include Cassandra (Homer's *Illiad*, Aeschylus *Agamemnon*, and Euripides, *Trojan Women*), Medea (Euripides), and Antigone (Sophocles). We will, however, begin and end the term by reading *The Bacchae* by Euripides. *The Bacchae* takes tragedy to the extreme, forcing us to contemplate issues of finitude, kinship, religion, mothers, state power, nature, sexuality, and attempts to rein in ecstatic excess (by women, by slaves) via reason and law. After reading each classical text (or excerpts from them) we will jump forward in each section to interpret how classical female figures are continually reinvented and reinserted into new narratives and new histories with vastly varying implications. Our focus will be on reading practices: how do we understand what is at stake in how female figures are painted as powerful, passive, manipulative, cunning, or sympathetic, or eclipsed or erased? How are our readings informed by our own times and political sympathies? This will be a course with diverse "texts" with theory, literature, and film as the primary sources.

**PSC 344: Unlawful Governance in Democracies**

When and how do democratic governments founded upon popular sovereignty and the rule of law go against their own laws in the treatment of citizens? This class scrutinizes the persistence, modalities, and rationale of unlawful state action in democracies in a comparative perspective, considering the period opened by the beginning of the last "wave of democratization" since the mid-1970s. We will examine trends regarding extralegal actions in both "established" and "newer" democracies, to

then explore legitimizing arguments and instances of citizen resistance to state unlawfulness. We will assess responses to state unlawful actions, including prosecution for corruption and human rights violations along the lines of the rising paradigm of state crime.

**PSC 353: Terrorism and Torture**

This course considers the definition(s) and history of terrorism, as well as its causes and manifestations in the contemporary era. Next, strategies for combating terrorism will be explored - with a major focus on the so-called "war on terror" the U.S. has been engaged in since 2001. A particularly controversial aspect of U.S. actions in the past decade has been the use of torture against detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and other locations. The course will therefore consider a broad-ranging literature on torture - from its history, to the conditions under which it is used in the contemporary era, to questions regarding whether or not torture is effective (and for what purpose).