

FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR MICHELE ANGRIST

Greetings to our Majors, Minors, and Fall Term Students!

Hopefully everyone is well and in the swing of fall term classes and activities. For those of you who are new to the college and to the department, please check out our website, at <https://muse.union.edu/politicalscience>. Here you can learn more about our faculty members, the courses we offer, and special curricular opportunities such as the Term in Washington D.C., Model United Nations, and the Capital Region Political Internships course. Note the FAQ page, which contains answers to common student queries.

Each term we distribute this newsletter during “advising season” to highlight upcoming Political Science course offerings (course titles, classifications, and descriptions follow). In addition, each term a member of the department faculty “sounds off” about an issue on her or his mind. We often feature “mini-interviews” with Political Science alums that focus on the types of careers our students go on to, and how the skills they honed as Political Science majors are serving them beyond Union. If you’re a major, the newsletter also highlights key requirements, deadlines, special events, etc. – so take a look!

Finally, this fall we are thrilled to welcome to campus Professor Joshua Plencner. Professor Plencner earned his Ph.D. at the University of Oregon and previously taught at Drexel University. He will be teaching U.S. Politics courses focused on race and public policy.

Enjoy the term ☺

Requirements for Graduating with Honors in Political Science

--GPA of 3.50 or better in PSC, as well as 3.30 cumulatively

--Completion of a PSC 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 PSC GPA is 3.70 or higher.] Either way, you must complete a seminar.

--At least three PSC 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****

Remember!

The political science website has lots of useful information for majors and prospective majors

<http://muse.union.edu/politicalscience/>

PROFESSOR SOUNDS OFF

Blockbuster Feminisms by Professor Marso

Wonder Woman, directed by Patty Jenkins, was one of this summer’s biggest surprise hits. It was enormously successful at the box office with both critics and moviegoers in awe of its fabulous female superhero role model played by Gal Godot. Many women said on blog posts and in reviews that they were moved to tears to see Diana and her sister warriors (including the glorious character Antiope, played by Robin Wright) on the Amazon island of Themyscira.

These women are powerful, confident, peace-loving, athletic, and in charge. Caroline Framke's comment in *Vox* is typical: "After watching movie after movie where men saved the day with a well-timed punch while women cleaned up the mess around the edges, *Wonder Woman* is a goddamn revelation."¹

Wonder Woman was not without its detractors and controversies, however. Israeli actress Gal Godot served two years of compulsory service in the Israeli Defense Forces during the 2006 war when the IDF fought against Hezbollah-allied forces in Lebanon. The conflict killed more than one thousand Lebanese and one million were removed from their homes.² This painful recent history was stirred by casting Gal Godot as the star of her own *Wonder Woman* movie, resulting in the film's ban in Lebanon. Gadot's vocal support of the IDF has garnered additional negative attention beyond Lebanon. Media outlets have seized on the fact that in 2014, Gadot posted to Facebook: "I am sending my love and prayers to my fellow Israeli citizens," "Especially to all the boys and girls who are risking their lives protecting my country against the horrific acts conducted by Hamas, who are hiding like cowards behind women and children... We shall overcome!!! Shabbat Shalom!"³ In a review published in *Aljazeera*, Hamid Dabashi, the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, provocatively writes: "Suppose you are a father or a mother living in Gaza, and like any other parent from Florida to Oregon you wish for your daughters to have a positive role model - then what? You hear there is this amazing Hollywood blockbuster championing the cause of a young female superhero. Could an Israeli soldier who learned her martial arts skills by helping drop bombs on your brothers and sisters, maiming and murdering them, be perceived as an Amazonian princess who is here to save the world?"⁴ Dabashi's question upends any naïve wish that *Wonder Woman* could be a superhero for *all* young girls.

Jessica Bennett ignores the fact that Gal Godot can't possibly be a superhero to girls in Gaza when in the *New York Times* she appreciatively cites

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. In addition, there is now a third, student-proposed option for fulfilling this requirement. See the PSC website for details.

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 2nd R course, a seminar, or a research methods course (PSC 220 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.

Stacy L. Smith, a communications professor at the University of Southern California, whose research focuses on diversity in media: “Anytime we see women in powerful roles on-screen it challenges narrowly defined and antiquated views of leadership . . .” “Whether women are serving as C.E.O.s or, in the case of Wonder Woman, striding across ‘No Man’s Land’ and taking enemy fire, it broadens our notions of who a leader can be and the traits they exemplify.”⁵

But what kind of a leader is this? What kind of feminism does Wonder Woman signify? I greatly enjoyed the movie, and in particular I loved watching Diana grow up on her all-woman, peaceful island paradise, learning to fight for justice and equality (only, though, when absolutely necessary) at the heels of Antiope. The first part of the film depicts a powerful group of woman warriors, working together, preserving their better world, and hoping to never fight again. Other than situating her story in the midst of World War I rather than the aftermath of World War II, the film’s vision is true to the Wonder Woman origin story as historian Jill Lepore recounts:

“In Amazonia, women ruled and all was well.” Alas, that didn’t last: men conquered and made women slaves. The Amazons escaped, sailing across the ocean to an uncharted island where they lived in peace for centuries until, one day, Captain Steve Trevor, a U.S. Army officer, crashed his plane there. “A man!” Princess Diana cries when she finds him. “A man on Paradise Island!” After rescuing him, she flies him in her invisible plane to “America, the last citadel of democracy, and of equal rights for women!”⁶

The fact that in the movie the world is saved by an American soldier allied with an actress who was an IDF soldier should give us pause. But this is to read beyond the movie. Taking the film on its narrative merits alone, we might still worry that Wonder

Woman leaves her Amazonian sisters, experiences sex for the first time with the American soldier (might she not have had sex with other women on the island? why do we end up in a heterosexual romance yet again?), naively believes that killing one bad man/god will bring world peace (she is subsequently schooled by two man-splainers, the American soldier and the god of war, that this is unfortunately not the case), and is not at all averse to killing lots of people. Is this the path to bringing down patriarchy? Can one woman-warrior save us all? And save us from what? And from whom?

Let’s consider another Hollywood fantasy from this summer, *Guardians of the Galaxy Part 2*, and another from two summers ago, *Mad Max: Fury Road*. In *Guardians of the Galaxy Part 2*, we get a ragtag group of weirdos who stumble, quite literally, into their roles as saviors of the galaxy. Gathered together are Peter Quill (Chris Pratt) who has cheekily named himself Starlord, Rocket (a raccoon thief voiced by Bradley Cooper), Gamora (Zoe Saldana), the one woman in the bunch and the only green-skinned one, Groot (a baby tree voiced by Vin Diesel), and Drax (Dave Bautista), a tough guy with a soft heart. In some ways, their group is a cliché, but at the same time it’s the best kind of feminist fantasy possible, one that reminds me of the pleasures of watching *Stranger Things* on Netflix last year. Like in *Stranger Things* where a bunch of bullied queer kids and the excluded, seemingly crazy, members of the community are all proved right and join together in solidarity, in the *Guardians of the Galaxy* franchise, women join with others, others like trees and animals and even men who fight against injustice, inequality, discrimination, and who all have good hearts. And not only do the marginalized come together; they add another woman along the way (Gamora’s sister Nebula, played by Karen Gillen). It turns out that the seemingly cruel Nebula all along just wanted her sister to welcome her to the fold. In this film, sororal and queer solidarity wins over patriarchy.

Likewise in 2015's summer blockbuster, *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Here we get a combination of *Wonder Woman* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, with stunning results for feminist politics. Furiosa's (Charlize Theron) superhero skills exceed *Wonder Woman*'s by a long shot. Like in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, Furiosa needs others (and in this case, other women) to rescue the world from an even more dark, foreboding, and explicit vision of patriarchal excess where women are reduced to their roles as child-bearers or for sex. Like our queer friends depicted in *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Stranger Things*, Furiosa is a heroine for the 21st century. She joins with others to seek justice and restore peace for the disempowered, rather than garner power for superheroes or first world nation-states. She, and they, are the kind of bad-ass feminist collective we need so badly today.

In spite of its emphasis on female power and possibility, we might say *Wonder Woman* offers a realist, or at least very sobering, perspective. The movie opens and ends with Diana receiving a photo from Bruce Wayne (Batman) as she works at her desk. At this point Diana is not dressed as *Wonder Woman* nor as an Amazon, but as a high powered, expensively clad executive. Importantly, she is alone. She is isolated from her sisters, having left her home out of curiosity and responsibility. Although she has friends in the superhero community, she has lost the love of her life. In too many ways she fulfils the patriarchal demand that if a woman does have power or possibility, she must be isolated and remain unattached. Where is *Wonder Woman*'s gang of weirdos? To make Diana's story more like Furiosa's, she could return to Themyscira and gather her sister-forces, or lead her superhero friends into advancing feminist futures. This is the task of a feminist superhero.

In Spring 2018, Professor Marso will be teaching a Political Theory seminar called "Feminist Futures in the Trump Years." Following the themes of this short essay, the course will explore realism and fantasy in feminist futures imagined under the threat

and the reality of the Trump presidency. As strong forces try to turn back the clock on hard won victories for gender and racial equality, full franchisement, reproductive freedom, and freedom from violence, what can feminist imaginings show us about this renewed call for struggle? In addition to reading several recent books in feminist political theory that map the realist/fantasy tension and help us think about problems and possibilities for feminist resistance, we will also explore the ways the feminist future is imagined in recent popular visual culture that might include the following: Hulu's adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *A Handmaid's Tale*, Netflix's adaptation of Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick*, *Wonder Woman*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and a new graphic novel of Octavia Butler's *Kindred*.

¹ Caroline Framke, "Wonder Woman isn't just the superhero Hollywood needs. She's the one exhausted feminists deserve."

<https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/6/7/15740804/wonder-woman-amazons-feminist>

² Max Bearak, "Lebanon bans 'Wonder Woman' in protest against Israeli actress Gal Godot." *Washington Post*, 1 June, 2017:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/06/01/lebanon-bans-wonder-woman-in-protest-against-israeli-actress-gal-gudot/?utm_term=.02aef6fbae04

³ Cited in Hamid Dabashi, "Watching Wonder Woman in Gaza." *Aljazeera*. 10 June. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/06/watching-woman-gaza-170610082618366.html>.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Jessica Bennett, "If Wonder Woman Can Do It, She Can Too." *New York Times*, 5 June: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/opinion/wonder-woman-movie.html>

⁶ Jill Lepore, "The Last Amazon," *New Yorker*, 22 September, 2014: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/22/last-amazon>

ALUMNI INTERVIEW

Karena Cronin



What is your current professional title?

I've just moved back to The United States with my family, after living in Johannesburg, South Africa for the last 10 years. I am thus currently the Chief of Staff of our big move. However, previously, I was a Business Development Manager with Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa (CAFSA), an organization which promotes philanthropy. The organization is part of a global alliance, comprising seven offices worldwide including CAF America headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia.

What does the work involve?

My role was to support the organization's sustainability by positioning it as a thought leader in the philanthropy space. This involved co-creating and managing a national initiative focused on strengthening corporate employee volunteering in support of South Africa's development called *Beyond Painting Classrooms*, writing and research on various dimensions of philanthropy (e.g. cross-border giving and employee community involvement) as well as organizing numerous learning forums which supported the civil society sector. Additionally, I managed a number of social development projects, including two US supported grant programs which provided skills to economically disadvantaged youth to enable them to earn a livelihood.

How did your time at Union prepare you for your current position?

At Union, I came to see my world, American society, and international relations through the lens of power. Professor Lori Marso's classes on political theory were particularly instructive about how power is allocated according to gender, race,

class and nationality. While at Union, apart campus life, I also had the opportunity to learn about power from experiences such as interning in Washington DC and studying abroad in Brazil. My understanding of *power and privilege*, along with solid skills in writing and critical thinking have helped me to navigate a career focused on strengthening civic engagement and human rights. At Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa, it provided me with the necessary foundation to manage the organization's research portfolio, keeping in mind the power dynamics which permeate philanthropy. My grounding in political philosophy at Union has also helped me navigate diverse working environments in South Africa, Europe and the United States.

What is your fondest recollection of majoring in Political Science?

The professors in the department were all so passionate about their areas of expertise, and committed to cultivating curious and thoughtful minds. I will be forever grateful for the time and energy they expended in developing their syllabi, answering my questions, improving my writing, and thinking with me – not for me - about political and social issues that I was passionate about.

What advice would you have for current majors for life after Union?

As a graduate of Union College, you will have many career options. While this can be daunting, know that it is also an extreme privilege. Remember that there is wealth in your social networks, and as you start the marathon of your career, stay close to the issues and ideas that excited you while studying Political Science at Union. Finally, as someone who recently left South Africa, I just have to say that you should check out Trevor Noah. Even if you don't agree with him, he is providing fresh analysis of American politics and bringing to the fore an international perspective!

Winter 2018 POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSES

Introductory

- PSC 111: Introduction to American Politics
(Plencner) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics
(Lobe) MWF 9:15-10:20 AM
- PSC 113: Introduction to Political Theory
(Marso) MWF 8:00-9:05AM

Research Methods

- PSC 223: Critical Comparisons in Politics
(Hislope) TTh 10:55AM-12:40PM

Political Theory

- PSC 232: Violence and Politics
(Cidam) TTh 9:00-10:45AM
- PSC 330R: Enlightenment and Its Discontents
(Brown) TTh 1:55-3:40PM

Comparative Politics

- PSC 249: Middle East Politics
(Angrist) MWF 1:50-2:55PM
- PSC 346R: Technologies: Power, Politics and Society across Industrial Revolutions
(Dallas) MW 3:05-4:45PM

International Politics

- PSC 256: Model United Nations
(Seri) Th 1:55-4:45PM
- PSC 258: Strategies of World War II
(Brown) TTh 7:00-8:45PM

U.S. Politics

- PSC 262: Race & U.S. Politics
(Plencner) MW 3:05-4:45PM
- PSC 369: Seminar in U.S. Politics: Partisanship in the United States
(Oxley) TTh 10:55AM-12:40PM
- PSC 371: Civil Rights & Civil Liberties
(Hays) TTh 9:00-10:45AM

Internships

- PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships
(Oxley)

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WINTER TERM

PSC 223: Critical Comparisons in Politics

What does a convincing explanation in political science look like? This course will focus on how to make good comparative explanations in political science. We will explore how to do this by studying and applying key concepts, such as culture, social movements, elites, institutions, hegemony, and the state. This course will help prepare students for writing the senior thesis.

PSC 232: Violence and Politics

What is the relationship between violence and politics? Is politics a continuation of violent struggle through other means? Or is there a fundamental difference between the two? What is the relationship between legal order and violence? What is the role of violence in resisting different forms oppression? Can the use of violence ever be morally justifiable? If so, when and why? This political theory course aims to inquire into these challenging questions by studying the theoretical debates on the relationship between violence and politics with a special emphasis on questions related to the relationship between legal order, constitution of the state, and the use of violence both in support of, and in opposition to, the existing order. During the course of the term, we will focus on debates surrounding different forms of violence in embedded in our legal systems, look at examples of resistance movements, assess different arguments made in defense of nonviolent and violent methods of resistance, analyze different conceptions of civil disobedience, and grapple with the question of how representations of violence affect our judgments about its legitimacy and/or justification.

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 and 21st centuries. 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 relationships between Islam and politics; the Arab Spring and its aftermath; and sectarianism.

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 they confront at myriad of global public policy challenges. At the simulation, students and faculty from five continents work 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. **Note:** PSC 256 cannot be taken pass / fail.

PSC 258: Strategies of World War II

This course will examine the interplay between military and political strategies that shaped the course of World War II, with special attention to the European Theater. It is designed to illustrate the nature of strategic thinking, its relationship to tactical thinking, and its real-world constraints. Special attention will be given to the British decision to continue fighting after the French surrender, the Battle of Britain, Hitler's decision to invade Russia, the allied decision to invade North Africa, and the planning for Normandy.

PSC 262: Race & U.S. Politics

This course is designed as a broad introduction to the role of race in US politics, from the founding of the American republic through the present day. Though fundamentally concerned with politics, political processes, and governing institutions, the course examines questions regarding race, ethnicity, and power that routinely cross disciplinary boundaries. By drawing on readings from political science, history, policy and legal

studies, as well as popular culture, mainstream media, and documentary films, students will situate and account for race within what mid-20th century American writer James Baldwin once described as “the story of America”—which he cautioned “is not a very pretty story.” By engaging with the politics of race expansively, and wrestling with ideas that represent a variety of political commitments and perspectives, the goal of the course is for students to develop a nuanced picture of how Americans have understood race in the past, how racial meaning has shifted through law and policy discourses over time, and how the defense of, accommodation for, and struggle against racial and ethnic oppression is fundamentally constitutive of the American political experience

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. Prerequisite(s): Sophomore standing and permission of the instructor. Note: This course does not count towards the PSC portion of an ID major.

PSC 330R: Enlightenment and Its Discontents

Enlightenment philosophy, arguably, is the single most important intellectual contributor to modern political values, and its influence in shaping European and American political history is enormous. Yet today many Enlightenment values are under attack from Left and Right. This course will examine in detail a set of seminal Enlightenment thinkers, including Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Kant, Smith, Wollstonecraft, and Franklin, assessing the cogency of their arguments and their relevance to

our contemporary concepts of politics, government, the state, and especially political legitimacy.

PSC 346R: Technologies: Power, Politics and Society across Industrial Revolutions

With the advent of the internet, robotics, Big Data, artificial intelligence and machine learning, we are already well into a Third (some say 'Fourth') Industrial Revolution. If history is any guide, this industrial revolution is transforming society, politics and culture in ways both overt and subtle. Further, as it diffuses, it will not be replicated identically across time and space. This course compares the first, second and third industrial revolutions – selectively focusing on the advent of factories/machines, mass production and information technologies, respectively. For each revolution, the course asks three questions 1) how value is created, 2) who controls and benefits from the new modes of production and consumption, and 3) how it transforms and is transformed by its social and political contexts. Second, it explores variation across different national political economies, most prominently in the advanced countries of England, the US, Europe and Japan, with selective comparisons to other developing countries

PSC 369: Seminar in US Politics: Partisanship

For many Americans, partisanship is one of their most salient of political identities. In this seminar we will explore the sources of party identification, the reasons why some citizens choose to identify as independent of a party, and the consequences of viewing the world through a partisan lens, such as the biased processing of new information and polarization. Our focus will extend beyond members of the public to include topics such as the origins of the contemporary Democratic and Republican parties and challenges facing both parties. We will also devote significant attention to whether and when the two main parties have attempted to incorporate members of politically marginalized groups (e.g., women, racial and ethnic minorities, young voters).

PSC 371: Civil Rights & Civil Liberties

Considers the protections afforded to individual rights and liberties by the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Topics include freedom of speech and assembly, the right to privacy, religious freedom, equal protection and discrimination, and the due process rights of those accused of crimes. The course proceeds mainly through close examination of Supreme Court cases, considered in their political, historical and legal context.