

## FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR BRADLEY HAYS

Dear PSC Community,

I hope your summer was filled with new experiences, opportunities, and challenges and that you are enjoying the start of autumn.

The department welcomes two new professors this year. Dr. Sara Wiest, visiting assistant professor, joins us after completing her Ph.D. at Purdue University in 2018 and teaching in their political science department in the past academic year. Her areas of specialty are American politics, public policy, and research methods. Also joining the department as a visiting assistant professor is Dr. Saladdin Ahmed. Prof. Ahmed spent last year teaching at Siena College and has also taught at Whitman College, Mardin Artuklu University (Turkey), and the University of Duhok in the Kurdish region of Iraq. His fields are political theory and international relations. We are truly fortunate to have scholar-teachers with established track records of excellence in their fields. Please welcome both professors to the department when you see them.

I plan to use this space to highlight faculty, student, and alumni accomplishments whenever I can. And what a great year to start doing this! This past year, Prof. Cidam was awarded tenure and promoted to the rank of associate professor. Her paper entitled "Rousseau's Disastrous Utopias? On the Interchangeability of Political Theory, Pedagogy and Art," was awarded the APSA Foundations of Political Theory's 2019 Best Paper Award. Prof. Marso was announced as the inaugural winner of Union College's Stillman Award for Research. (She previously won the Stillman Award for Teaching.) Prof. Marso also continued her service on the American Political Science Association Council. Based on my reading of the Council's membership, she is one of only two members of

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### 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\*\***

the Council from a liberal arts college. Prof. Dallas served as the American Political Science Association division co-chair for the Politics of Communist and Former Communist Countries section. Prof. Oxley begins her service as the president-elect of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honors society. And, to indulge in a moment of self-promotion, my book, *States in American Constitutionalism: Interpretation, Authority, and Politics* (Routledge) was published in late spring. This

is truly a remarkable list and it is only a few of the many accomplishments by the political science faculty. I feel truly fortunate to be a part of this department and I hope you take every opportunity to learn and engage with such a remarkable group of scholars and leaders in their fields.

Our alumni and current students are also achieving notable accomplishments. Here are just a few: Henry Scherck ('16) will start at the University of Pennsylvania School of Law after receiving his Master of Science from the London School of Economics. Brad Karp ('83), chairman of Paul, Weiss, Rifkin, Wharton, and Garrison, was appointed to Union's Board of Trustees. Also joining the Board is Brian Huang ('21) who was elected to serve as one of Union's two student trustees. Brian will join Ruchi Raval ('20) who enters her final year on the Board.

I want to spotlight a few new offerings this winter term. Prof. Ahmed will be teaching PSC 238: Fascism and Neofascism. And Prof. Marso will be offering a new seminar, PSC 339: Political Theory, entitled Feminist Futures. Please see the course descriptions near the end of the newsletter for more details.

Finally, if you've stopped by the political science office this fall, you've noticed that Carol Fortsch has been out of the office. Carol was diagnosed with a serious medical condition in early September and has spent much more time in the hospital than she would like. The good news is that she is improving and working her way back to better health. If you've spent any time with Carol, you know the tenacity of her will and this will surely aid her in the recovery process. We miss her and are eager for her recovery.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

Professor Oxley will host a meeting on PSC 277, Capital Region Political Internships, **Wednesday, October 16, 1:15-1:45 in Lippman 100**. All those interested or planning to enroll should attend.

## We Must Not Let This Century Become a Second Edition of the Last

By Professor Saladdin Ahmed

As a critical theorist, I tend to search for the abstract in life and life in all that is abstract. When I reflect on contemporary social movements, for example, I situate them within a continual line of struggle that goes back to ancient history. One of the manifestations of that struggle has been the enduring conflict between mentalities that gravitate towards the prototype of an antagonistic tribe and those that operate on the grounds of a more universal, which is to say broader and more inclusive, world.

Fascism, in all its explicit and implicit forms, is one example of a tribalist way of imagining and engaging with the world, and it emerged a century ago on waves of nationalist fervor. For the next 36 years, nationalistically mobilized masses as well as artists, intellectuals, philosophers, professors, and university students joined various fascist movements across the European continent. While it is relatively easy for us to point to the evils committed by these fascist movements of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – most notably in the case of the Holocaust – the more critical task is not to be part of today's forces of exclusion.

It is now widely acknowledged that what made the fascist reign in Europe possible was the silent or indifferent majority that may not have been happy about the fascist rise to power but did little to stop it. That said, the other half of the historical truth is that fascism never enjoyed a day without resistance. There are always those in whose conscience and will the most promising parts of humanity persist.

My personal struggle against exclusionary movements throughout my adult life, in whatever part of the world I have been, has been shaped by one basic principle: to stand with the

vulnerable, the silenced, and the marginalized. I seek to uncover the nuances of fascism and align myself with, to quote Walter Benjamin, “the hopeless ones.” As citizens of democracies, it is crucial for us to learn about various ways in which oppressive systems have been resisted by the marginalized in regions all around the world.

There is, however, a gulf between the notion of “helping” and the urge to “stand with.” To cross from one side of that gulf to the other, we must first recognize that we are not inherently in the position of being able to help those on the margins. In fact, the marginalized will always have much more to offer those in positions of relative privilege than the privileged could offer them. One need not look far to see that humanity owes much of its progress to those who have been most excluded, as in the case of the civil rights movement in the United States.

Solidarity with “the hopeless ones” is the way out of the historical cycles of violence, alienation, and unfreedom. By the same token, standing by passively will only further deplete our historical and planetary mode of perception, making us regress deeper into the dark neuroses of chauvinism. Every wall, while excluding the out-groups, imprisons those inside, pushing us further into tribalism, making us less free, and saturating our being with more fear.

Let us instead march with “the hopeless ones” away from the century of holocausts, to a future without walls, to a world where poetry is no longer impossible (per Adorno).

## ALUMNI INTERVIEW

### Kelly Williams '86

*What is your current professional title?*

Chief Executive Officer,  
The Williams Legacy  
Foundation



Prior title: Global Head and Managing Director,  
The Customized Fund Investment Group

*What does the work involve?*

The Williams Legacy Foundation focuses its philanthropy on supporting fellowship. By this, we mean supporting programs and initiatives that bring people of disparate backgrounds and points of view together in constructive ways. In particular, we are focused on combating the epidemic of loneliness that plagues our country. Our work has funded soup kitchens, baby pantries, the Union College Constructive Engagement Forum, among others.

In my prior life, I founded an alternative investment firm in 1999 that focused on providing customized investment portfolio to large institutional investors. We managed over \$30 billion of assets for our clients in the areas of private equity, real estate and infrastructure. I sold the business in 2014 and I stepped away in January of 2019.

*How did your time at Union prepare you for your current position and/or, more broadly, your career?*

My time at Union was really the cornerstone for my career. The opportunity that I had to work closely with peers and professors in an encouraging environment really allowed me to hone the skill that I think is my secret weapon, which is problem solving. Union College

teaches students how to think creatively about problem solving and bring tools and perspectives from many different disciplines to arrive at a solution. The most transformational experience for me was my term abroad to Japan led by Don Thurston. We were the first class to go to Japan, and the experience gave me an extraordinary amount of confidence, knowing that I could navigate my way through a country where I didn't look like anyone and didn't speak the language. It also gave me a great appreciation of the importance of embracing diversity, which has been an important part of my life's work.

*What is your fondest recollection of majoring in Political Science?*

I have many fond recollections of my time in the Political Science department, since I also had the honor of being a research assistant in the department. My favorite, however, is a memory of Professor Charles Gatti, with whom I took an international affairs class. He stopped me in the Political Sciences office one day when I was working and said, "Ms. Williams, how is it that you have the highest grade in my class and yet have never spoken a word? We have a guest speaker coming and I expect you to ask a question." Well, I went to the library and got the most recent copies of the Council on Foreign Affairs journals and researched an intelligent question to ask. I was so intimidated to speak up, yet I knew my stuff and Professor Gatti really pushed me to not be afraid and contribute to the discourse. Those who know me now would never believe that I had a fear of speaking up, but I always credit Professor Gatti for encouraging me.

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

My advice would be that students should keep in mind that the best careers are never linear. If you spend all of your time trying to prepare yourself for a career, you miss out on learning about the things that make you interesting, and you won't develop perspectives that allow you to pivot when things change. I was a Political Science/Math major, but my favorite course in college was Medieval Art and Architecture. Being a well rounded person, having exposure to lots of topics, interacting with people who have different points of view and taking the time to understand those points (you don't have to agree with them) makes you a much more fun and interesting person to be around, and it makes you a great problem solver, which at the end of the day is what every job is about. And although I spent my career in law and finance, today I am the Vice Chair of the Board of Commissioners of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, so those art courses came in handy!

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

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

## FALL 2019 POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSES

### Introductory

- PSC 111: Intro to American Politics  
(Wiest) MWF 8:00-9:05AM
- PSC 112: Intro to Global Politics  
(Siegel) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM
- PSC 113: Intro to Political Theory  
(Seri) MWF 9:15-10:20AM

### Political Theory

- PSC 238: Fascism and Neofascism  
(Ahmed) MWF 10:30-11:35AM
- PSC 330: Enlightenment  
(Ahmed) MW 3:05-4:45PM
- PSC 339: Seminar in Political Theory  
(Marso) Th 1:55-4:45PM

### Comparative Politics

- PSC 213 Contemporary China  
(Dallas) TTh 1:55-3:40PM
- PSC 247: Human (In)Security  
(Seri) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM
- PSC 346R: Technologies in Society  
(Dallas) TTh 10:55AM-12:40

### International Politics

- PSC 350: Theories of International Politics  
(Brown) TTh 7:00-8:45PM

### US Politics

- PSC 269R: Media and Politics  
(Oxley) TTh 9:00-10:45AM
- PSC 370: Constitutional Law  
(Hays) TTh 10:55AM-12:40PM

### Internships

- PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships  
(Oxley)

### Methods

- PSC 220: Social Data Analysis  
(Wiest) MWF 1:50-2:55PM

## UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WINTER TERM

### **PSC 213 - Contemporary China: Politics, Economy and Society**

A survey course on the politics of the People's Republic of China, with an emphasis on state-society relations. After briefly introducing the Republican and state socialist eras, the heart of the course provides a historical and topical overview of the contemporary political and economic reforms in China. It explores topics in Chinese domestic politics, such as policy-making, center-local relations, inequality, rural transformation, industrialization, village elections, the rule of law and contentious politics, in addition to China's relationship with the outside world, including its integration into the international economy, the environment, energy and foreign policy.

### **PSC 220 - Social Data Analysis**

Introduction to the research process in political science with an emphasis on the analysis of social science data. Focus on the utility of quantitative data and statistical techniques to answer research questions about the political world.

### **PSC 238: Fascism and Neofascism**

This course is an interdisciplinary critical study of fascism in its various historical, geographic, secular, and religious forms. It aims to enhance students' abilities to critically assess and diagnose fascist ideologies, discourses, movements, tendencies, politics, and policies in whatever context they may appear and at whatever level they may operate. Although not a formal prerequisite, general background knowledge of the political history of the 20th century will prove helpful. Moreover, students will be expected to follow both national and international news relevant to the course and should be prepared to engage with a wide range of readings from different disciplines.

### **PSC 247 - Human (In)Security in a Comparative Perspective**

With a focus on "the daily lives of ordinary people", the recent tradition of Human Security redefines safety as "freedom from fear and freedom from want." At the interface of security, development, and Human Rights grounding democratization, Human Security adopts the perspective of the common citizen, calling for collaboration between states and international and grassroots organizations to prevent and eliminate obstacles undermining people's autonomy, rights, and development. This course aims, first, to provide students with a solid conceptual and applied knowledge of Human Security. Second, by learning about the deep-seated conditions that hinder people's safety from fear and from want, students will gain a thicker perspective on the structural challenges for peace and democracy around the world through the eyes of the people on the ground.

### **PSC 269R - Media and Politics**

Major trends in U.S. media, politics, and political communication. The focus is on media treatment of politics as well as effects of media on the public, across various types of media sources. These will include the traditional news media, partisan media sources, entertainment shows that address politics, and social media. The larger context is the role of media in a democratic society.

### **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 330 - Enlightenment and Its Discontents**

Is there a politics to the "age of reason?" This course focuses on enlightenment thought and its critics, in the modern as well as the contemporary era. We will inquire about the role of reason in setting the terms of citizenship, including how the citizen should behave. Is reason a male attribute? Does passion and/or religion play a role in reasonable thinking? The historical span of this course will generally cover the 17th to the 19th centuries and show how we have come to think about politics the way we do today.

### **PSC 339 - Seminar in Political Theory: Feminist Futures**

Linking freedom with struggles against all forms of sexual, racist, class, climate, colonial, and imperial violence, we will think about realism and fantasy in feminist futures. As strong forces try to turn back the clock on hard won victories for gender and racial equality, reproductive freedom, and freedom from violence, how can feminist imaginings motivate and guide us? In addition to readings in feminist political theory that map the realist/fantasy tension and help us think about problems and possibilities for resistance, we explore the ways feminist futures are imagined in popular and avant-garde visual culture, and see how women and girls are leading the way.

### **PSC 346R - Technologies in Society: Power, Politics and Economy 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, including China today.

### **PSC 350 - Theories of International Politics**

In-depth investigation and evaluation of the major perspectives on world politics. Mainstream theories will be compared and contrasted to critical/alternative paradigms. Special attention is given to modes of theory evaluation.

### **PSC 370 - Constitutional Law**

An examination of the Constitutional tradition in the United States, focusing upon the structure and powers of the federal government. Topics and themes include the power of the courts to interpret the laws and the Constitution, the power of the federal government and the significance of "states' rights," federal government intervention in matters of "commerce" or economics, and the nature and expansion of executive power, especially in the area of national security. The course proceeds mainly through close examination of Supreme Court cases, considered in their historical, political, and legal context

#### **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 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.

#### **REMEMBER!**

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

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