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News and Views from the Political Science Department

WINTER 23

FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR:

Bradley D. Hays

The political science department has had numerous developments since our last newsletter. First, as many of you know, Prof. Thacker was selected to become the next president of Pitzer College. The department is thrilled for him and for Pitzer. When serving as the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Prof. Thacker helped guide the College through the challenges of COVID and played a major role in the development of the College's new general education curriculum. While Prof. Thacker moves on, his legacy will be with us for years to come.

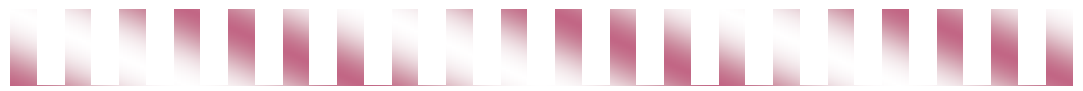
As we say goodbye to Prof. Thacker, we prepare to welcome Dr. Salil Benegal who will be the new Joseph Board Professor of Environmental Policy. Prof. Benegal will be joining us from DePauw University where he has established himself as an outstanding scholar and dedicated teacher. He will be offering classes on environmental politics and policy next year and contributing to the Environmental Science, Policy, and Engineering program. Keep an eye out for his classes when you register for fall classes this spring.

The department is pleased to be sending six students to the annual Pi Sigma Alpha national research conference in Washington DC. Harrison Berger, Avi Gajjar, Jackson Giammattei, Susie Andrews Salem, Jeremy Schmelkin, and Anna Zdunczyk will present their research and partic-

ipate in the conference. The conference draws members of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honors society, from around the world with some 100-175 papers expected to be presented. Prof. Wiest serves as the Pi Sigma Alpha faculty advisor and deserves credit for helping students pursue this opportunity.

With an eye toward the spring term, I want to spotlight three new courses and two updated offerings. Both PSC 244 *The Politics of Extraction in the Americas* (Prof. Seri) and PSC 337R *Homelessness: Biopolitical Economy of Housing* (Prof. Ahmed), will be offered for the first time this spring. Prof. Hislope will be offering a new theory seminar in the spring. And, Prof. Brown will be offering PSC 268 *Electoral Politics* and PSC 287 *The Contemporary Presidency*, which have both been updated substantially. Please see the course descriptions in the newsletter for more information on these classes.

Finally, I am thrilled to announce that Prof. Seri has been selected to serve as the next chair of the political science department. Prof. Seri is a model teacher-scholar and a dedicated member of the department. I know she will bring this same excellence to her stewardship of the department. Her term as chair will begin at the start of the 2023-24 academic year. When you see Prof. Seri, please congratulate her.



**Know a Union
Political Science
Alumnus that is
doing great
things?
Please refer
them to us to
be featured in
the next issue.**

For this newsletter we thought we'd change things up a bit and give many professors a chance to sound off. We asked for their recommendations for movie and tv shows. Here's what we got. Next time you are looking for something to good to watch, check out some of their suggestions:

Lori Marso recommends *The Lying Life of Adults* (Netflix). This series is an adaptation of pseudonymous Elena Ferrante's book by the same title. It's set in 1990s Naples, Italy, and brilliantly illustrates the feminist truth, "the personal is political," by showing what is at stake in the political strife between fascists and communists, as well as the personal and political lies adults tell, all from the perspective of a teen girl. It also manages to comment on how the creation of narrative, like the creation of the self is also, by necessity, a lie.

Guillermina Seri recommends *Argentina, 1985* (Amazon Prime), which won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film. The film is a common people, democratic epic of what it took to bring perpetrators responsible for setting up about 800 death camps and making tens of thousands of people disappear to face court. It's the story of the historic *Juicio a las Juntas* through the eyes of their protagonists. Moving and highly recommended!

Robert Hislope recommends *Before the Rain* (1994); directed by Milcho Manchevski. This film is a Macedonian story about the madness of ethnic politics and how easy it is for conflict to erupt when society fixates on group identities. The main character, Aleksandar, tries to live beyond the ethnic divide but is beaten back by the tribalists on each side. The violence that occurs is not interethnic, as one would suspect, but rather intra-ethnic. It's a good warning for us today that identity politics, rather than producing safety and protection for each group member, instead enforces homogeneity within and promises lethal consequences for those who seek liberation from the tribe.

Strom Thacker recommends *Madam Secretary* (Netflix). Despite the inevitable Hollywood-ization of the show, it captures a lot of the academic concepts well and portrays them fairly realistically. In my Introduction to Global Politics course, I use several short clips to bring a lot of these concepts to life.



Cliff Brown recommends *12 Years a Slave*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2013 (available on DVD in Shaffer Library). [Editor's Note: Prof. Brown is the co-author of an excellent biography of Solomon Northup, which is also recommended.]

Zoe Oxley recommends *Lupin* (Netflix). This series is a super suspenseful thriller about a thief on a quest to right a very personal wrong. It's also about long friendships and complex family dynamics and social injustices. And it's set in Paris.

Bradley Hays recommends *Mrs. America*, which is a mini-series that tells the story of the battle to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Cate Blanchett plays Phyllis Schlafly, who led the countermovement against the ERA, with remarkable subtlety and complexity. The series tells us much about the rise of cultural conservatism, how it fuels the contemporary Republican Party, and highlights the difficulties of progressive change in the United States.



Professors Cliff Brown and Zoe Oxley recently led a Constructive Engagement Event on “Representation and Dynamics in the New Congress” These events are great opportunities for students to expand upon what is learned in the classroom and to participate in meaningful discussion.

Spring 2023 Political Science Courses



Introductory

- PSC 111: Introduction to US Politics
(Wiest) MWF 10:30AM - 11:35AM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics
(Hislope) MWF 8:00AM - 9:05AM
- PSC 113: Introduction to Political Thought
(Marso) TTH 10:55AM - 12:40PM

Research Methods

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

Political Theory

- PSC 333: Twenty-first Century American
Political Thought
(Marso) TTH 1:55PM - 3:40PM
- PSC 337R: Homelessness: Biopolitical Economy
of Housing
(Ahmed) TTH 9:00AM -10:45AM
- PSC 339: Seminar: Political Theory: Political
Culture and Rock Music in the 1970's
(Hislope) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM

Comparative Politics

- PSC 244: The Politics of Extraction in the
Americas
(Seri) TTH 10:55AM - 12:40PM

International Politics

- PSC 351: Global Organized Crime
(Hislope) MWF 9:15AM - 12:50PM

U.S. Politics

- PSC 268: Electoral Politics
(Brown) MW 3:05PM - 4:45PM
- PSC 287: The Contemporary Presidency
(Brown) MWF 7:00PM -8:45PM

Internships

- PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships
(Oxley) Fri 3:00PM - 4:00PM

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR SPRING TERM

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 244 - THE POLITICS OF EXTRACTION IN THE AMERICAS

As the shrinking of the Amazon keeps making headlines, extractive activities including large-scale mining, logging, and agriculture are rapidly transforming the landscape of the Americas. This class surveys main extractive activities across the hemisphere, their output and political impact. While feeding expanding markets, extractivism has been linked to land grabs, forced displacement, conflicts, state and paramilitary violence, lobbying, corruption, and coups d'état. In exploring trends and cases, we will review concepts, theories, and alternatives to extractivism, including women and indigenous-led traditions of protecting different forms of life and Earth itself. By taking this course, students will develop informed perspectives regarding which extractive activities may be essential, and whether (and how) they can be done sustainably, as part of the quest to secure a livable future.

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR SPRING TERM (cont'd)

PSC 268 - ELECTORAL POLITICS

This course on the electoral process will focus on the topic of electoral reform -- how changes in the electoral process ("good or bad") would reshape that process in terms of fairness and in terms of potentially producing different outcomes. Topics to be discussed include: 1) Electoral College reform; 2) presidential nomination process reform; 3) canvassing process reform: access to the right to vote, the mechanics of balloting, the issue of voter fraud; 4) representational reform: voting systems (proportional systems, run-offs and ranking procedures), district structure and gerrymandering issues; 5) reform issues with messaging, advertising, social media, and information flows; 6) reform issues with presidential debates; 7) campaign finance reform; 8) the contribution of elections to political legitimacy.

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 287 - THE CONTEMPORARY PRESIDENCY

This course will examine the presidency as a policy-making, policy-implementing, and political institution in our polarized era, focusing on the Clinton through Biden presidencies. It will examine leadership skills and how presidential "assets" (personal, political, and professional) shape presidential conduct and success in office. It will also examine the institutions that have grown up around the presidency -- such as the

White House Staff, White House press corps, etc. In addition, we will examine the President's relationship to Congress and the public. We will spend disproportionate time on Trump's impact on the office -- politically, institutionally, and in terms of messaging -- and how Biden has reverted to more traditional presidential norms. In focusing on these five presidencies, we will occasionally draw on historical comparisons with other presidents going back to FDR. This will be an intense course at a historic moment in US presidential history.

PSC 333 – TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

An exploration of political thinking in regard to the multiple crises the United States faces in the 21st century. Potential topics include threats to democracy in the United States by right wing groups and White Supremacy; specific challenges of structural racism, gender inequity, police violence, guns; social movements such as Black Lives Matter, #metoo, the Sunrise Movement; and the historical meanings of individualism, diversity, freedom, imperialism, and Western expansion in the US.

PSC 337R– HOMELESSNESS: BIOPOLITICAL ECONOMY OF HOUSING

This course investigates homelessness from an interdisciplinary perspective, focusing on the political economy of housing and the sociology of inequality in the contemporary capitalist world. We will start by looking into the philosophy of dwelling and the critique of biopolitics (administration of life) per Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. Then, we will critically examine the ways in which homelessness is produced and reproduced through exploitative relations of class, gender-based discrimination, racism, and the oppressive exercise of political power.

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR SPRING TERM (Cont'd)

PSC 339 - SEMINAR: POLITICAL THEORY: POLITICAL CULTURE AND ROCK MUSIC IN THE 1970's

The 1970s was a remarkable decade of transition and turbulence. Stagflation, the oil crisis, the Fall of Saigon, détente, Watergate, Three Mile Island, the women's movement, left-wing terrorism, urban decay, the rising gay movement, and the looming dread of ecological disaster were just a few of the trendlines. The writer Tom Wolfe dubbed the 70's the "Me decade," by which he meant the transition away from 1960s communitarianism and New Deal-style politics and towards an individualist ethos of hedonism, self-realization, and personal freedom. Rock music, which was the dominant musical style, reflected and promoted this culture shift, emphasizing a libertine attitude and downplaying the social consciousness, egalitarianism, and anti-capitalist motifs that prevailed among the youth in the 60s. This course surveys the cultural, economic, and political landscape of the decade through the prism of rock music, which reached a zenith of aesthetic creativity, genre-expansion, and commercial success.

PSC 351 - GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME

This course will focus on the emergence of new transnational criminal networks in the age of globalization, and the sources and patterns of political corruption in a comparative perspective. Specific issues to be explored include: trafficking zones, weak states, economic underdevelopment, the western consumer demand for illegal commodities, international anti-corruption discourse, US drug policy, comparative analysis of mafia organizations, and how private money corrupts democracies.

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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****

ATTENTION SENIORS!!

SENIOR THESIS SUBMISSION INFORMATION



Seniors: If you are working on a Fall-Winter thesis, your finished work is due at the end of the term on **Friday, March 10, by noon**. Students will submit their final thesis via email to their PSC thesis advisor. Please ask your thesis advisor if they have a preferred electronic format (e.g. Word, PDF, Docs). If you are working on an ID thesis or a combined double major thesis and have two advisors, you should check with your second, non-PSC advisor for their submission requirements. If you are on track for honors, you will be contacted in the spring and given thesis-related instructions at that time. When you turn in your thesis, students also need to submit a completed senior thesis evaluation and email that completed form to Laurie McGill (mcgill@union.edu). Your final grade will not be submitted until Ms. McGill receives your evaluation. The evaluation and instructions will be sent to you via email on or before March 1st.

UPCOMING EVENTS

INFORMATIONAL MEETING PSC 277

Please come find out about Internship Opportunities

Friday, February 10th at 1:00PM in Lippman 101

PSC 277, Capital Region Political Internships, gives students the opportunity to complete an internship during the academic term.

Please email Prof. Oxley at oxley@union.edu if you would like to know more. And please do so soon! Enrollment in the course requires that you first have an internship secured. Prof. Oxley can help you with that.

Participating in an Internship experience is a great way to learn real world skills while earning your degree!

UPCOMING
EVENT

Please Join the Political Science Department
On Thursday, Feb 9th
At 5PM in the Nott
as Alumnus
Allyson Shortle '05
Returns to Union to speak
on the topic of Christian
Nationalism in American
Politics

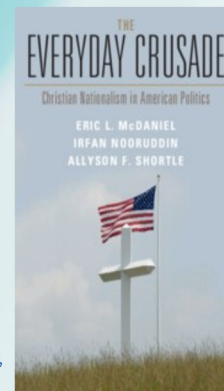
**The Everyday Crusade:
Christian Nationalism in
American Politics**



Allyson Shortle '05
Associate Professor of
Political Science
University of Oklahoma

**Thursday,
February 9th
5:00 pm
Nott Memorial**

Co-Sponsored
by the Political Science Department,
Religious Studies, American Studies
and the Minerva Program

**ATTENTION JUNIOR PSC MAJORS**

There will be a must-attend meeting on February 22nd at 5:00 PM regarding the senior thesis. Professor Hays will explain the requirements of the thesis and the process by which you will be matched with an advisor. Also, several current seniors will be in attendance to share their projects and give you a sense of the range of thesis projects that are possible. The meeting will be in 017 Lippman. Email reminders will be sent but mark your calendars and spread the word!

ΠΣΑ PI SIGMA ALPHA

The National Political Science Honor Society

Several Pi Sigma Alpha members applied for Student Conference Travel Grants. Each of the students pictured below was awarded \$500 toward their expenses to attend the Pi Sigma Alpha National Research Conference in Washington, DC. Congratulations!

Participating in an internship experience is a great way to learn real world skills while earning your degree!



Left: Jackson Giammattei, Jeremy Schmelkin, Right: Harrison Berger, Susie Andrews Saleem

*Think about
Connecting
With a Union
College
Alum
That is working
In a career
Similar to
Your interests.*

ALUMNI NEWS

As hopefully you are already aware the Political Science Department began a brand new LinkedIn Group. As of this writing we have 268 members, mostly Political Science Alumni. If you haven't joined and you have a LinkedIn Page, please do so. Scan the QR code on the opposite page if you have a LinkedIn account. If you don't have one yet, please consider making one as this is a great opportunity to connect with PSC Alumni to discuss relevant information to the field and form connections that might help with your career goals, etc. The career center will help students who feel they need assistance.

If you have ideas for questions or topics that you would like to see addressed on this page, please send an email to mcgilll@union.edu with your idea. We welcome and encourage student feedback. This page has been created for you, our students!

Of the questions that were posted on LinkedIn, the first asked alums to tell us what their advice was to current political science students and the second was what is one book on professional development that anyone in the group would recommend. We would love to see more student participation, so if you feel something is useful feel free to like or comment as you see fit!

Thoughts from the PSC LinkedIn Page

What is one book on professional development that you recommend?

Bargaining for Advantage by G. Robert Shell
John Cahill '02

How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie
Peter Durkin '16

Getting Things Done by David Allen and *Deep Work* by Cal Newport
Professor Hays

What is your advice to current political science students?

“Take advantage of the resources around you. Your classmates, the alumni network, and your professors, are all great sources of knowledge and advice - even long after you've left Union's campus.” Justin Lange '19

“Be open-minded to opportunity, even if it is something you may have never contemplated.” Andy Markowski '00

“You are your greatest advocate. The critical thinking and analytical skills you're honing as a PoliSci major may help you succeed once you've started a role, but getting your foot in the door/access to opportunities involves proactivity. Same goes for getting what you're worth in compensation or promotions. Networking and mentorship will net you additional advocates as you move through your career but you should be driving all of it.”

Nathalie Marte '12

Union College Political Science Majors/Minors & Alumni



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group



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Alumni & Faculty

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Group!

