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News and Views from the Political Science Department

FALL 23

FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR:

Guillermina Seri

Dear Political Science community,

With the start of my first term as department chair, I would like to welcome our students back and invite everyone to take a look at our classes, activities, and events. I also want to offer a warm welcome to Prof. Salil Benegal, the Joseph Board Assistant Professor of Environmental Policy, who is joining us as an expert in US politics and environmental studies, a timely subject for political scientists to embrace. Prof. Benegal's arrival seems even timelier as President Biden has announced the historic creation of the American Climate Corps. The initiative will train 20 thousand youths in skills to address different challenges surrounding climate change, from advancing renewable energy to restoring wetlands. No doubt, our changing planet demands the mobilization of all resources, solidarity, and intellect, and I trust that you will contribute to this or other forthcoming opportunities with insight, research, and technical expertise.

I cannot thank Prof. Brad Hays, our previous chair enough for the extraordinary generosity with his time, support, wisdom, and resources that he shared to help the chair transition run smoothly. Prof. Hays has been a terrific department chair, who led Political Science for four years with a welcoming and friendly demeanor that made the task look effortless (hint: it's not). With initiatives including the Faculty Colloquium, the

Polisci alumni network, or the Student Liaison Committee, he leaves big shoes to fill.

You may already know the wonderful Laurie McGill, our Political Science Administrative Assistant and Instagram and people wizard. She is an exceptional, enthusiastic, and supportive co-worker and collaborator, and we are so lucky to have Laurie with us.

On the faculty front, I want to recognize Çiğdem Çıdam for her promotion to Full Professor and Zoe Oxley for being distinguished as the William D. Williams Professor of Political Science. This summer, Lori Marso, the Doris Zemurray Stone Professor of Modern Literary and Historical Studies, published a review article of the film "Barbie" in the Los Angeles Review of Books. Her piece, entitled "Feeling Like a Barbie: On Greta Gerwig and Chantal Akerman," is a truly fantastic essay. In fact, the Student Liaison Committee, together with Women's Union Club, decided to make the discussion of Lori's essay their first event of the year. I want to thank the organizers, Kyle, Mel, and Jeremy, as well as Ayah and Tsewang, for the initiative.

You all will soon hear more from the Student Liaison Committee, Pi Sigma Alpha, and others. And there are more events! In mid-October, we will be honored to host the prestigious conference of the Association for Political Theory on our campus. I want

(Chair's remarks cont'd)

to thank Prof. Marso and Prof. Çidam for their work in making things happen.

In the meantime, you will find a splendid offer of courses for the winter term. Interested in exploring films as they relate to the law or to feminism? Intrigued to learn about women and politics? What about gaining a better understanding of China or the role of technology?

Alternatively, you may consider immersing yourselves in learning about environmental politics around the globe. Or to revisit Enlightenment ideas and legacies, get acquainted to US traditions of foreign policy, or... What about understanding the relations between mathematics and democracy? If any of this sounds too theoretical, perhaps you may consider a Capital Region internship.

Have an excellent Fall term!

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

Professor Sound Off

By Professor Mark Dallas

Civilian-military technologies and the new era of technology controls in US-China relations

Globalization is in reverse. The open, rules-based liberal economic order is increasingly being threatened by geopolitics and nationalism. While COVID-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have contributed, the central driver is the intensifying conflict between the US and China – two countries with systemic economic and geopolitical importance. While the US-China tariff war has temporarily stabilized, the conflict over leading-edge technologies, such as advanced semiconductors, 5G telecommunications, artificial intelligence and high-performance computing, has consistently intensified, given the centrality of these technologies to future economic and military power.

A central problem today is that the line between civilian and military technologies is blurring and converging (called 'dual-use' technologies) in ways dissimilar to the past when civilian and military usages of technologies like nuclear or aerospace could be more easily delineated. Today, most people may not think of an advanced semiconductor as a weapon, but they are increasingly central to weapons systems and they are critical tools in the development of weapons, including nuclear weapons. Similarly with artificial intelligence (AI). Of course, there are great potential dangers from AI which need to be debated and regulated through norms, rules and laws. However, the technology will also spawn tremendous benefits to humanity, from healthcare to disaster relief to agriculture and beyond. But, in the military realm, a new arms race is heating up between China and the US over how to incorporate AI into weapons systems, which is making the entire AI industry a concern for national security.

Furthermore, for-profit commercial firms, such as Google, Microsoft and Nvidia in the US or Alibaba, Tencent and Huawei in China, are now the central innovators of these dual-use technologies. In addition, due to the deepening of global value chains (i.e. supply chains), the technologies of commercial firms are deeply interdependent, meaning that one firm's technology is unusable without the technologies of many other firms. Previously, it was almost exclusively military contractors (e.g. Raytheon, Lockheed Martin) who were the lead firms in military technologies and their major suppliers were also frequently military-centric which created a clearer lines between military and civilian technologies and made controlling technology easier, to ensure foreign adversaries and rivals did not gain access to advanced military technologies.

These factors raise a central conundrum: where do governments draw the line in controlling technologies to achieve their national security goals, without undermining the companies, the value chains and the benefits of these same technologies. Keep in mind that civilian usages of emerging technologies *also* need to be regulated, but this is a separate topic beyond this article.

The US has largely answered this by drawing from institutions and policies developed during the Cold War. However, given the contemporary complexity of global value chains and their inter-firm interdependencies, these Cold War-era policies are now interacting with a very different and global business organizational structure. Most believe that a new American strategy of 'weaponizing' technology interdependence against China began with the Trump administration's Section 301 Report in March 2018. Since then, the central American policy tool has been the imposition of export controls and sanctions on Chinese firms that cut them off from American finance and technology. Since October 2022, this has escalated to unprecedented coun-

try-wide controls on China's advanced information-communication technologies (ICTs), including leading-edge semiconductors, high-performance computing and artificial intelligence.

The combination of Cold War-era policies and contemporary globalization makes for a very different dynamic. Previously, during the Cold War, sanctions relied on *asymmetric* interdependence (unequal resource dependency between two countries). However, many argue that economic networks, like finance and communication, have ushered in a new era of economic statecraft. Today, countries whose firms occupy the center of economic *networks* can unilaterally conduct 'connectivity wars' or 'weaponize interdependence.'

Altogether, the complexities of rapidly emerging technologies, the global organization of businesses, the blurring of military and civilian technologies and the evolving US-China relationship are raising profound questions that will shape our collective futures. Can emerging technologies be governed under international regimes to avoid new arms races? Will the US and China disengage and create competing economic blocs, or will they be able to continue to cooperate on basic science and beyond? Will the US and China compete in weaponizing the global economy for their national security goals, or will globalization remain largely in-tact? What will the effects of these possible pathways be for other countries in Europe, Latin America, Africa and elsewhere? Together with Union research students, we are collecting data and developing conceptual frameworks to better understand how these complex factors interact.

1 Export controls (which traditionally limited military technologies *broadly* and without termination) and sanctions (which traditionally punished *specific* actors or actions in order to achieve a change in behavior) are increasingly blurring, especially in the case of Chinese entities.



ALUMNI INTERVIEW

Sam Fein '12



What is your current professional title?
Albany County Legislator

What does the work involve?

I represent a district of about 8,000 people in the Albany County Legislature, located entirely within the City of Albany. My job is to engage with the community, listen to the concerns and needs of the people, and then translate these concerns into legislation to improve people's lives. I represent an underserved community, which creates a unique set of challenges. The community I represent struggles with high rates of poverty, limited access to resources and opportunities, and a history of racially discriminatory policies such as redlining. I have a strong record of fighting for economic and social justice.

On a day-to-day basis, my job involves attending legislative meetings, reviewing proposed bills and policies, attending community meetings and events, and collaborating with fellow lawmakers to draft legislation. I regularly attend community gatherings and events to stay closely connected with the pulse of my district. I

frequently meet with constituents, listen to their concerns, and hold regular town hall meetings.

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

Union College provides a rigorous academic experience that has been vital in my current role. The emphasis on liberal arts gave me a strong foundation in critical thinking, a skillset that has proven invaluable in navigating the complexities of public service. While the true value of this education might not be immediately apparent during your time at school, it becomes increasingly evident post-graduation.

What is your fondest recollection of majoring in Political Science?

One of my fondest memories was participating in the Term in Washington, DC program. During the program, I had the opportunity to intern for Congressman Barney Frank. This experience allowed me to immerse myself in the inner workings of a legislative body, sparking my passion for working on legislation and ultimately inspiring my journey to run for office and serve as a legislator myself.

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

Follow your passion. Many of us study political science because we believe in the potential of government to create positive change in people's lives. It may be a bit of a struggle to find your first job, but don't be discouraged. If you remain dedicated and work towards it, you'll eventually reach your goals. Don't be afraid to take risks, be confident in your abilities, and utilize the connections you make at Union and beyond.

WINTER 2024 Political Science Courses



Introductory

- PSC 111: Introduction to US Politics
(Hays) MWF 9:15AM-10:20AM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics
(Hislope) TTH 10:55AM -12:40PM
- PSC 113: Introduction to Political Thought
(Seri) MWF 10:30AM-11:35AM

Political Theory

- PSC 330: Enlightenment and Its Discontents
(Cidam) MW 3:05PM-4:45PM
- PSC 434: Feminist Film
(Marso) T 1:55PM-4:40PM

Comparative Politics

- PSC 213: Contemporary China
(Dallas) TTH 1:55PM-3:40PM
- PSC 242: Comparative Climate Change
(Benegal) TTH 9-10:45AM
- PSC 346: Technologies in Society
(Dallas) TTH 7:00PM-8:45PM

International Politics

- PSC 359: Seminar: Intelligence Failures
(Brown) TTH 1:55PM-3:40PM

U.S. Politics

- PSC 176: Mathematics and Democracy
(Oxley) MWF 3:05PM – 4:10PM
- PSC 266: Women and Politics
(Oxley) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM
- PSC 364R: Law and Film
(Hays) MWF 1:50PM-2:55PM

Internships

- PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships
(Hays) Fri 3:15PM -4:15PM

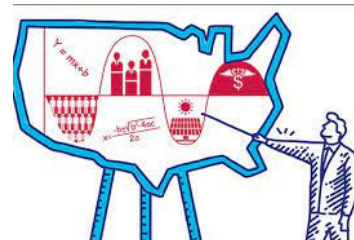
UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WINTER TERM

PSC 176 MATH AND DEMOCRACY

In this course, we will assess democracy through multiple perspectives, most centrally through mathematics. In particular, we will ask ourselves essential questions such as: How can we measure and quantify democracy? How can quantitative methods enable us to analyze the concepts of fairness and bias, and also, what are their limitations? How can (and should) math play a vital role in upholding the essential democratic tenets of access, participation, and human rights? Throughout the course, we will use mathematical notation and terminology to represent real-world issues.

PSC 213 CONTEMPORARY CHINA

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.



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

PSC 242 COMPARATIVE CLIMATE CHANGE

This year we have seen historic temperature records and heatwaves across the globe, the impacts of wildfires around the country and locally, and periods of drought and extreme storms in different areas. These have been attributed to or amplified by anthropogenic climate change, which is one of the biggest challenges facing society in the 21st century. This course examines why climate change is such a “wicked problem”, and why it is so difficult to address effectively. The barriers to addressing climate change are not just technical and scientific, but also political and social. Thinking about a future where we as a society mitigate the worst impacts of climate change this century, and adapt to other impacts entails navigating different political systems around the world and balancing various geopolitical and economic interests. Through this course, we will examine how these factors shape or constrain efforts to address climate change in Western Europe, the United States, China, India, and other parts of the world. We will also examine how climate change is impacting human life and security in these countries and other parts of the world, and how it may amplify existing inequalities and other crises.

PSC 266 WOMEN AND POLITICS

The political, social, and economic circumstances of women in the U.S. Topics include the history of women's rights, feminism, and 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 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 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 346 TECHNOLOGIES IN SOCIETY

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 359 SEMINAR: INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

This seminar will examine in depth a set of important intelligence failures as case studies to illustrate the various different ways in which such failures can take place. Case studies will include: Pearl Harbor, Stalin's prior misreading of Hitler in 1941, allied deception measures in World War II (including Normandy) that produced German intelligence failures, failure to discover the Soviet missiles in Cuba earlier (preceding the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Tet Offensive, the fall of the Shah, the attack on Kuwait prior to Gulf I, Nine-Eleven, Weapons of Mass Destruction prior to Gulf II, the Afghan government collapse of 2021.

PSC 364R LAW AND FILM

This course uses the medium of film as a springboard to introduce and explore concepts in legal theory, American legal culture, and the exercise of public and private power through the legal system. Specific topics of discussion include law as morality, higher versus positive law, law and gender, and the heroic lawyer mythology.

PSC 434 FEMINIST FILM

Using 10 films as our texts we will examine the role of women in society, the diversity of women's lives, the impact of gender roles in various cultural contexts, the possibility of alternative sexualities and ways of living, and whether we can say what constitutes a feminist film. The course is focused on discussion of, and writing about the films but includes analysis of feminist political theory and feminist film theory to provide tools for better interpretation.



PSC MAJOR RESEARCH REQUIREMENT

PSC Majors are required to take two research-focused courses:

- An R course (the R indicates the course id research-intensive)
- Either a 2nd R course, a seminar, or a research methods course (PSC 220 or 223)

UPCOMING EVENTS /IMPORTANT DATES

Mark your calendar!

Wednesday, October 4th at 5PM—feeling like a Barbie Olin 115

**Tuesday, October 10th –PCS 277 Information Session 12:50PM,
Lippman 101**

**Thursday, October 12th-Saturday, October 14th -Association for
Political Theory Conference* taking place at Union Campus**

***The panels and events are for paid participants, however several of our
PSC students will be volunteering at registration and if there is room in a
panel you may stop in and check it out. (See Article Below)**



**Union College to host the Association for Political Theory
Annual Conference 2023**

On Oct 12-14, the Association for Political Theory's annual conference will be held at Union College. APT was founded in 2000 to bring together scholars, across the nation and from abroad, to hold a conference discussing issues centered on political theory and philosophy but extending across the disciplines of the Humanities and Social Sciences. This year's conference is hosted by Professors Çıdam, Marso, and Seri (with huge assistance from Laurie McGill) and features three days of multiple panels with papers delivered by 230 scholars. You can join for a panel or two if you'd like, without paying registration. Please, look at the program (in the political science main office) and email profs Marso, Çıdam, or Seri your panel selections.

**INTERESTED IN GAINING
WORK EXPERIENCE FOR CREDIT?**

ENROLL IN PSC 277!

PSC 277, *The Capital District Internship Program*, gives students the opportunity to complete an internship during the academic year.

If interested, come to the following **INFORMATION SESSION:**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10 at 12:50 PM in 101 Lippman

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This event may have
already happened...if so,
we hope you participated
and enjoyed it! Brought
to you by the Political
Science Liaison
Committee!

*A message from
The Political Science
Student Liaison
Committee*

Fellow Political Science Students,

We are the student liaison committee, composed of political science students from the sophomore, junior, and senior classes here at Union. We help to plan and coordinate campus programming such as guest speakers and faculty research presentations, in addition to a few other initiatives that we are currently working on and are super excited to share with you all soon! Our goal, above all, is to help make the department more responsive to its students, and to ensure that students are provided enriching engagement on issues in the field of politics and political science both in and outside of the classroom. So, if you ever see us around campus, be sure to say hello and feel free to share with us your ideas about the department!

Your Friends,

Jeremy Schmelkin, Kyle Patlove, & Melaine De La Cruz

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

“Feeling Like
a Barbie”:

On
Greta Gerwig and
Chantal Akerman

A discussion on Professor Marso's (Political Science) review of the film, recently published in the "Los Angeles Review of Books."

When: Wednesday, October
4th at 5PM | Olin 115

Sponsors: The Political Science
Department & Women's Union



See you there!

Political Science

Scan here to Join
the PSC LinkedIn
Group!



Union College
Political Science
Majors/Minors & Alumni



to join our new



Union College (NY) Political Science
Department Connection - Student,
Alumni & Faculty

if you have a LinkedIn page please join
our community!

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



The PSC dept. kicked off the Fall 23 term by participating in the major minor fair for the class of 2027 and for other students new to the college!
It was great to meet so many new faces that day!