Alumni News Wire

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2016 Issue
A Message From the Chair

Dr. Kenneth L. Grasso
Welcome to the first issue of Texas State’s Political Science Alumni News Wire!

What would become the Texas State Political Science Program began as a few courses in “Civics” and later in “Government” taught under the auspices of the Department of History. In the late 1960s, an independent Department of Government was created which became the Department of Political Science in 1970 offering both a B.A. and M.A. degree in Political Science. (In the course of 1970s, the department’s Political Science Program was joined by a Master’s in Public Administration Program and a Lawyer’s Assistant Program, and later a Master’s in Legal Studies Program.)

From these humble beginnings, a rather substantial political science program has gradually gown up. According to most recent figures available to us, almost 450 Texas State students are pursuing a B.A. in political science, while another 40 are pursuing an M.A. Our political science program is currently home to seventeen tenured and tenure-track faculty, as well as seven full-time lecturers. (These numbers don’t even take into account the undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the public administration and legal studies programs housed in the department.)

One of the things we’d like to start doing better is staying in touch with our large and ever-growing list of alumni. Hence, the debut of this annual newsletter. Its purpose is to keep our alumni abreast of both what our faculty and students are up to and what events are happening on campus that might be of interest to them. Reconnect with us and see what Discourse in Democracy events are upcoming by visiting our website at http://www.polisci.txstate.edu.

Discourse in Democracy

Since June 2014, Dr. Don Inbody has directed our department’s most important and long-standing initiative, Discourse in Democracy (DiD). DiD seeks to expand student learning through a series of lectures, panel discussions, film showings, seminars, and other events. Each semester it sponsors activities that promote direct student engagement with members of our faculty as well as with prominent academics from around the country, public officials and community leaders. DiD events are designed to foster discussion and the exchange of ideas and interests. In the course of the 2015-2016 academic year alone, DiD has sponsored nine seminars, five lectures, five panel discussions, and four film showings, and brought to campus a wide array of guest speakers including Dr. Greg Weiner (Assumption College), Dr. J. Budziszewski (University of Texas at Austin), Dr. Alfred Brophy (University of North Carolina School Law), Judge David Gaultney, (formerly of Texas’ Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals), and Mr. Matt Boehner (Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program). Confirmed speakers for the 2016-2017 academic year include Admiral Bobby Inman, former director of the National Security Agency, and Judge Nelva Gonzalez-Ramos of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

Dr. Greg Weiner with a student

Above: Dr. J. Budziszewski at DiD lecture event
Model International Institutions Competition Team Update

2015 MOAS Competitions

The department’s Model Organization of American States (MOAS) Competition Team offers students an invaluable opportunity to study parliamentary debate, as well as the economic, political, and security issues facing the world today. 2015 was a great year for our team. In late March, under the direction of Prof. Ben Arnold, twelve Texas State students flew to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Washington, D.C. Model Organization of American States (WMOAS) where they represented the Republic of Panama. At the WMOAS, Domonique Gray-Berroa acted as Vice-Chair of the Model. Also, we are happy to report that Marissa Roman was elected as Secretary General (the Model’s highest elected office) of the next WMOAS in 2016.

In November, we sent a delegation of thirty-seven students to participate in the Eugene Scassa Mock Organization of American States (ESMOAS) competition at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette where they represented the nations of Argentina, Colombia, Honduras, and Guatemala. Texas State students brought home numerous awards and honors. The highlights included Tara Dees winning Distinguished Ambassador (2nd Place Overall for an individual award) and Team Argentina winning the Distinguished Delegation (2nd Overall team award).

Other MOAS News

Starting with the 2016-2017 academic year, the Model Organization of American States (MOAS) will become the Model International Institutions Competition Team. While continuing our long-standing involvement in the ESMOAS regional competition in the fall, our students will also be heading to Cambridge, Massachusetts each spring to participate in Harvard’s National Model United Nations Competition.

Texas State has been selected to host the Eugene Scassa Mock Organization of American States (ESMOAS) competition for 2016 and 2017. This three day event will bring to campus hundreds of students from universities across the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. This is a great honor for the university and the Department of Political Science and is a testimony to the success of the Model International Institutions Competition team.

Distinguished Alumni

On Friday, November 6th, two distinguished alumni of the department were on campus to receive “Distinguished Alumni Awards”: Oliver del Cid, and Nelva Gonzales Ramos. Since graduating from Texas State in 1995, del Cid has had an extraordinarily successful career in Belize’s diplomatic service and currently serves as Belize’s ambassador to Mexico. Nelva Gonzales Ramos (Class of ’87) is a judge on the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas. Del Cid and Judge Ramos spent the morning in the department where they talked to undergraduate classes and attended a reception for faculty (including a number of their old professors) and graduate students. They received their awards from President Trauth that evening at the university’s annual Alumni Gala.
Paul DeHart co-edited and contributed the introduction and a chapter entitled “Political Philosophy After the Fall of Classical, Epistemic Foundationalism,” to the book *Reason, Revelation, and the Civic Order: Political Philosophy and the Claims of Faith*. DeHart received the The Presidential Distinction Award for Excellence in Scholarly/Creative Activities for 2015.

Bill DeSoto and Hassan Tajalli published “College Students and Alcohol Use: A Test of Social Learning, Strain, and Acculturation Theories” in *World Medical and Health Policy* and “Do International Studies Students Have a Broader Global Awareness than Other College Students?” in the *Journal of Political Science and Education*.


Bob Gorman published the article, “Revising the Axial Age Hypothesis: Supplying Missing Links in Jaspers’ Account” in the *Catholic Social Science Review*. Dr. Gorman was also named an Honorary Professor of International Studies.

Ken Grasso contributed a chapter, “From Articles of Peace to Kulturkampf: The HHS Mandate and the

**Recent Faculty Publications and Awards**

**Our New Building**

In the summer of 2012, the department moved into the 3rd and 4th floors of one of the campus’ newest buildings, The Undergraduate Academic Center. A Leeds Silver Certified building (in recognition of its innovative design and its reduced impact on the ecosystem), the UAC is centrally located on the south side of campus, just south of the Evans Liberal Arts Building and west of Nueces. The three story building’s most identifying feature is a large arch that separates the classrooms on the west side from the department offices on the east side. In addition to classrooms, the departmental office, and faculty offices, the department’s facilities include the Liberal Arts Computer Lab (housing 50 Dell PC’s and 20 IMAC computers, 4 duplex printers, 2 color duplex printers and 2 high quality scanners available to students), a Moot Courtroom (featuring a judge’s bench, witness box, and customized technology that closely resembles the technology being used today in courtrooms across the country) and a teaching computer lab (featuring 32 Dell workstations). The departmental office is in Suite 355. Drop by if you’re ever in the area and see our new facility.

**Alpha Chi Favorite Professor Award Winners**

- Julz Decker
- William DeSoto
- Robert Gorman
- Kenneth Grasso
- Ted Hindson
- Arnold Leder
- Sherri Mora
Problem of Religious Pluralism in America,” to The Crisis of Religious Liberty edited by Stephen Krason (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers); and published “Catholicism and the Great Political Problem of Our Time: Tocqueville, Vatican II, and the Problem of Limited Government in the Age of Democracy” in the Catholic Social Science Review. He was also named Administrator of the Year for 2015 by the International Studies Program.


**Paul Kens** published “Revision of the Progressive Era Continues” in the Tulsa Law Review. He was also interviewed on CSPAN’s Landmark Cases about the Supreme Court’s decision in Lochner v. New York, and quoted in Esquire about the same case.

**Sherri Mora** and co-author published a textbook, the 2nd edition of The State of Texas: Government, Politics, and Policy (McGraw Hill) and received two awards: The College of Liberal Arts Achievement Award for Excellence in Service and the Foundation of Excellence Award.

**Ken Ward**’s review of Louis Seidman’s book On Constitutional Disobedience was published in the Law and Politics Book Review.


**Hyun Yun** contributed the chapter “Political Science Is to Do beyond Political Science” in editor, Kishor Vaidya’s, Political Science for the Curious: Why Study Political Science (The Curious Academic Publishing) and contributed two chapters to John Hendricks’ and Dan Schill’s volume, Presidential Campaigning and Social Media (Oxford University Press): “The Spirals of Newly Transcending Political Voices: Social Media Purify the Atmosphere of Political Dialogues in Cyberspace”; and “Whose States are Winning?: The Adoption and Consequences of Social Media in Political Communication in the American States.” The latter chapter was co-authored with Cynthia Opheim and Emily Hanks.
S. Colleen Tennent was named 2015 LBJ Outstanding Senior Student Award Recipient from the Texas State Alumni Association. Miss Tennent was a senior, majoring in Political Science and minoring in Military Science. She graduated in May 2015 Summa cum Laude. As a student, her primary involvement at Texas State included student government and ROTC. She earned the 2014-15 Liberal Arts Award for Academic Excellence, graduated from the Military Leadership Development and Achievement Course, is a member of Alpha Chi Honor Fraternity and is the recipient of an Academic Achievement Army ROTC Scholarship.

The LBJ Museum of San Marcos

The LBJ Museum of San Marcos, located on the square, opened its doors on December 6th, 2006 with a program and reception that included Texas State President Denise Trauth, Luci Johnson, daughter of LBJ, and many elected public officials. Long–time faculty member, Dr. Ed Mihalkanin was involved from the get go. Having played a key role in the fundraising and building renovation that the museum needed to get off the ground. Dr. Mihalkanin was one of the museum’s founding officers and since January 2012 has served as its president.

Over the last few years, the museum has partnered with the Department of Political Science to sponsor numerous events including lectures by Larry Temple of the LBJ Foundation (commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Higher Education Act of 1965), David Schaefer of the National Park Service, Oliver del Cid (Belize’s ambassador to Mexico), and H.W. Brand of the University of Texas at Austin, as well as showings of the speech President Johnson delivered before signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a newsreel about the act.

Inklings

One of the department’s long-standing traditions consists in regular gatherings at which a faculty member or graduate student briefly shares some of his or her current research (or his or her expertise on some topic in the headlines) with the other members of the department. Organized by Dr. Arny Leder, the short presentations are followed by discussion. Reflecting the diverse interests of faculty members, recent topics have included the Citizens United case, the Syrian refugee crisis, the conflict in Ukraine, electoral realignment and Shari’a law. These meetings are named “Inklings” in honor of the group of intellectuals who met weekly at Oxford University in the early and mid-twentieth century to read aloud and discuss their works in progress. Members of the original Inklings included J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

Political Science Major is named the 2015 LBJ Outstanding Senior Student Award Recipient

Dr. Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Notre Dame in the summer of 2013, with a primary specialization in Political Theory and a secondary specialization in American Politics. Dr. Menchaca-Bagnulo is a native of the south-central Texas region and a 2004 graduate of Canyon High School and 2008 graduate of Trinity University in San Antonio. She has served appointments as a James Madison Program William E. Simon Postdoctoral Fellow in Religion and Public Life at Princeton University, as a Resident Fellow in the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership at the US Naval Academy, and most recently, as the Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in Western and American Political Thought in the Tocqueville Program at Furman University. Her research interests lie in the Western Civic Republic tradition, particularly as represented in the thought of St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and James Madison. She is also interested in Constitutional theory and the American presidency. Dr. Menchaca-Bagnulo is extremely excited to be joining the faculty of Texas State in Fall 2016 and to be serving the south-central Texas region.
Dr. Michael J. Faber joined the department as an assistant professor in the fall of 2014. He teaches courses in American political institutions, with particular focus on the presidency. His research interests include congressional elections, presidential rhetoric, political theory, and American political development. His published work focuses on the debates over the ratification of the Constitution. He is the author of Our Federalist Constitution: The Founder’s Expectations and Contemporary Government (Scholarly Publishing, 2010). His articles and reviews have appeared in a variety of journals including American Political Thought, Perspectives on Politics, and Politics and Policy. He received his B.A. in Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences program at Northwestern University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from Indiana University in 2006 and 2008, respectively. He was a postdoctoral fellow at Duke University, and has taught at a number of institutions including DePauw University and Augustana College.

Recent Graduate Focus

Karim Ouardi graduated with a Master of Arts in Political Science from Texas State University in May 2014. He first attended Texas State University as an undergraduate transfer from Morocco majoring in finance. After working for a few years in the private sector, he returned to school to get a graduate degree, this time in political science. Karim says that he “spent two amazing and productive years. I had the privilege to study under some of the finest professors who readily provided mentorship and support throughout my stay in the program. The courses offered by the program not only contributed to my scholarly growth; they also helped me prepare for the next step in my academic career.” Currently, Karim is completing a PhD. in political science at the University of Houston. He received a very competitive support package that includes, among other things, a Doctoral Student Tuition Fellowship, a teaching assistantship, as well as the Presidential Fellowship. The latter is offered by the university to recruit highly-qualified Ph.D. students. His research is in political theory, and focuses mainly on the American founding, Ancient and Medieval political thought, and Islamic political thought. Because he was able to transfer courses that he had taken at the political science department at Texas State University, he is eligible to take his comprehensive examinations a semester earlier than expected.

Alexandra Manning graduated with a Master of Arts in Political Science with a minor in Public Administration from Texas State University in 2011. Before beginning her graduate studies, Alexandra completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Journalism with a minor in Rangeland Ecology and Management from Texas A&M University in 2006. Alexandra began working at Natural Resources Solutions in 2011, where she is currently the Vice President. Alexandra has stated: “My area of expertise is in the policy and technical arena and I spend much of my time collaborating with federal and state agencies. On a daily basis, I engage policy issues with these agencies and my degree has assisted me in having an understanding of both the inter-workings of government administration as well as the broader policy issues that drive the decision-making process of these agencies.” Her work has been essential in many NRS projects, including the Texas Conservation Plan for the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard, the Fort Hood Recovery Credit System and development of a conservation strategy for the American Burying Beetle and the Lesser Prairie Chicken. Alexandra is an accomplished writer and editor of policy documents, a skilled policy analyst and advisor as well as a valued professional resource for her colleagues.
The Poli Sci Film Series: Still Going Strong at 20!

Since its inception in the spring of 1996, the Political Science Film Series has sought to bring to the student community a variety of politically and socially oriented films, both motion pictures and documentaries. Directed by Professor Rick Henderson, the series has sponsored showings of more than fifty films including Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, State of the Union, Guilty by Suspicion, Good Night and Good Luck, The Inside Man, The Contender, Primary Colors, V for Vendetta, Dr. Strangelove, and Frost/Nixon. In 2015-2016, the series has included Frank Capra’s classic, State of the Union and John Sayles’ iconic Texas film, Lone Star (1996).

Program Updates

New Emphasis for the MA Political Science Program!

The Master of Arts in Political Science program is excited to announce a new “fully distant” emphasis for social science teachers. Currently, there is high demand for masters degree teachers in American Government dual credit courses taught in high school, as well as in community colleges. In order to meet this demand, program faculty developed an exclusively online social science teachers’ emphasis. This emphasis consists of 36 hours taught entirely online by Texas State graduate faculty. Upon completion of prescribed coursework, students teach two college level classes either at Texas State or at a cooperating community college in the student’s geographic area. Admission and enrollment in this emphasis is limited to 20 students per term.

Internships

The Political Science internship program is designed to give students a “hands-on” experience in the workplace. When finished, students will increase knowledge of the professional workplace, develop marketable skills, and gain valuable contacts with professionals in the field who can provide support during and after their academic career.

This spring we have over ten interns participating in the program – ranging from the Texas Senate to the U.S. House of Representatives. Most students work 150 hours and stay within the San Marcos-Austin corridor, which provides them the opportunity to balance school and the internship during the semester.

We are continuously looking for quality internships for our students. If your organization or agency would like to participate in our program and join our list of internship partners, please contact Dr. Cecilia Castillo at cr09@txstate.edu for more information.

Prefix Change

Beginning fall 2016, the Master of Arts in Political Science program will employ a new prefix, PS. At long last, students will be able to distinguish MA course electives from other graduate courses offered by the Department of Political Science that are currently all listed under the prefix, POSI.

Political Science Degrees Prepare Students for Careers

A 2015 survey by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) revealed that employers value graduates capable of applying knowledge and skills in real-world settings, engaging in critical thinking, communicating effectively both verbally and in writing, making ethical decisions, and working well in teams. In the Political Science Department at Texas State University, the core objectives of our program hit that mark.

The process of program assessment and the evaluation of student learning is the cornerstone for ensuring quality in education. We strive to insure that all our students excel in critical thinking, evidence exceptional verbal and written communication skills, perform collaboratively, and engage in ethical decision-making.
Upcoming Discourse in Democracy Events

Constitution Day Lecture & Events
Thursday, September 15, 2016
Guest Speaker: Dr. William E. Forbath, Associate Dean for Research and Lloyd M. Bentson Chair in Law, University of Texas School of Law
Topic: The Anti-Oligarchy Constitution
9:30 – 10:50am Seminar I – UAC 310
2:00 – 3:20pm Seminar II – Comal 116
7:00 – 8:30pm Lecture – Alkek 250

Lecture Series Event
Thursday, September 22, 2016
Guest Speaker: Julie Mason
Julie Mason is a veteran journalist with experience covering Presidential campaigns and the White House. She now hosts an afternoon journalist talk-show on Sirius/XM POTUS Channel 124.
Topic: The Press and Presidential Politics
2:00 - 3:15pm Seminar – UAC
7:00 - 8:30 pm Lecture – Alkek 250

Lecture Series Event
Monday, October 3, 2016
Guest Speaker: Dr. Daron Shaw
Topic: The 2016 Election. With the upcoming Presidential election in November, the parties have selected their candidates after a lively primary-caucus season. Dr. Shaw will discuss the dynamics of the Electoral College and the current state of polling in the United States and Texas.

Lecture Series Event
Tuesday, October 11, 2016
Guest Speaker: Judge Nelva Gonzales-Ramos
A Federal District Judge and alumna of the Texas State University Political Science Department, join Judge Ramos and learn about the American judiciary and the role of the Federal Courts.
Topic: The American Judiciary
12:30 – 1:50pm Seminar 1 – UAC 382
3:30 – 4:30pm Seminar 2 – UAC 382
7:00 – 8:30pm Lecture – Alkek 250

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