



ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010



Political Science and International Relations
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Geneseo, NY 14454

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Political Science & International Relations Alumni Newsletter

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings! The Department of Political Science and International Relations wishes you a most Happy Holiday Season. As I write these words the first significant snowfall has blanketed upstate New York, signifying the arrival of winter and the end of the Fall semester. Students are finishing papers and studying for finals, faculty are either currently reading papers or will very soon grade papers and final exams. It is a testimony to the commitment and ability of the department's faculty that a number of significant accomplishments were made this past year in spite of the difficult budgetary environment. The department aims to provide students with a challenging academic experience, and to provide co-curricular activities that enrich their academic experience, and encourage them to make positive contributions to the world in the future.

The department's faculty remain engaged in scholarship, teaching, and service to Geneseo's students and the community. In this newsletter Professor Edward Drachman writes about a program he developed for Geneseo students' interested in working with Rochester inner city public school students. Professor Drachman has managed this program for several years; due to his compassion and skill—as well as that of the many Geneseo students who have participated in the program through the years—the program has remained healthy. This past year Professor Jeremy Grace became a Fellow at the SUNY--Center for International Development, working on projects that address voting problems in developing nations. Professor Robert Goeckel took a group of students to Moscow as part of a course on Russian Politics and History. Professor Victoria Farmer received a Drescher Award for the Spring 2011 semester; providing her with much needed time to continue research on the media in India. Professor Kenneth Deutsch's published two books in 2010: [The Dilemmas of American Conservatism](#), and [An Invitation to Political Thought](#) (the 2nd edition of a text co-written with Joe Fornieri'85). Professor Marilyn Klotz published [Influence of Community Resources, Professionalism and Attitudes Toward Poverty on the Generosity Of Poor Relief Benefits](#).

Our department secretary, Diane Lounsbury, was awarded one of three Geneseo Pride Awards given in recognition of personal commitment, dedication, and performance in support of SUNY Geneseo's mission and goals.

I am blessed to work with a remarkable faculty, staff, and capable students.

Jeffery Koch

Alumni remain involved with the department, visiting Geneseo to discuss their career trajectory, hosting or attending receptions for the Model U.N. club or the Political Affairs Club when they visit their area, allowing the Political Affairs Club to visit their workplace when the club visits Washington, D.C., providing financial contributions, and supporting student awards. The department is most thankful for their many contributions.

Department Doings

RESEARCH ON RACIAL/ETHNIC DISPARITIES OF COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES

During his sabbatical in spring 2009 Professor Ed Drachman began addressing the problem of persistent racial/ethnic disparities in college graduation rates. His primary goal was to find the main reasons for this gap and solutions for its amelioration. Most previous research has focused on increasing minority access to a college education, far less attention has been paid to why minorities in general graduate from college at a lower rate than their white counterparts.

In fall 2009 Professor Drachman teamed up with Professor Monica Schneider of the Psychology Department for an empirical study of the main causes of this graduation gap. They were assisted by Dr. Julie Rao, Director of Institutional Research at the College. Professors Drachman and Schneider wanted to find out which of the following factors correlated most highly with a student's graduation: the academic record of the individual student (as determined by his/her SAT scores) or that of his/her secondary school (as determined by that school's average SAT scores); and the SES of the individual student (as determined by his/her family's financial contribution for college as listed on the financial aid form and possible reception of a PELL Grant) or that of his/her secondary school (determined by the percentage of students at that school receiving free/reduced lunch).

A very important and exciting aspect of this research is that both Professors Drachman and Schneider are utilizing student research assistants. Last year Political Science major **Alex Fadel '10**, working closely with several Psychology majors, provided invaluable research assistance. This year, Political Science majors **Humza Arshad '11** and **Taimur Gibson '12** will work on this research project, along with students from the Psychology Department. Last year this research project focused on the graduation record of Geneseo students; this year it is comparing Geneseo's graduation statistics with those of another college in the region that has students of similar academic preparation.

Professors Drachman and Schneider plan to present their findings at professional conferences before publishing their findings. They anticipate that their research will be useful for high school counselors, college admissions officers, education reformers and the public as a whole. President Obama has underscored the importance of raising college graduation rates, so this research should help policymakers determine how to proceed.

GENESEO STUDENT VOLUNTEER TUTORING PROGRAM

For the past eight years Geneseo students have volunteered to drive to Rochester to help at-risk students in an after school tutorial program established and directed by Professor Ed Drachman. Because this program, which is open to all Geneseo students, is housed in the Department of Political Science and International Relations most of the tutors are either Political Science or International Relations majors.

This tutoring program began with Geneseo students working with the Puerto Rican Youth Development (PRYD) center. Three years ago they began helping youngsters in the Friendship Children's Center, also located in Rochester. Students from kindergarten through grade seven in schools go to this Center after school. Every semester about twelve Geneseo students go to Friendship one afternoon a week. Volunteers start by helping the kids with their homework. When homework is done our volunteers play games with the children like checkers or monopoly, work on puzzles, read stories together, and on nice afternoons engage in outside recreation activities. Last year, Geneseo students took the wonderful initiative of buying athletic equipment that they donated to the Center. Professor Drachman visits the Geneseo students at the Center and meets with them periodically to discuss the tutoring program. (...continued on next page...)



This volunteer tutoring program has been a “win-win” experience. The Rochester youngsters are always excited to see the Geneseo students, who in turn are gratified by the opportunity to offer service. The Friendship Center director and staff consistently praise our student volunteers and are very grateful for their help. Although this program is not intended as a career path, a few student volunteers have decided to work with young children after graduation from Geneseo, either through Teach for America or graduate programs in urban education.



facebook

Facebook aficionados may want to join the “The Official Geneseo PLSC/IR Students and Alums Group.”

PARTICIPATION IN SCUSA

Alexandra Koptsev '11

The 62nd annual Student Conference on United States Affairs (SCUSA) was an incredible experience. The four-day conference was held at the West Point Military Academy, in attendance were university students from the U.S. and as well as abroad; students from American and foreign military academies and standard colleges and universities participated; moreover, reporters and military personnel of varying ranks also attended. The theme of this year’s conference was ‘U.S. Hegemony in the 21st Century: Limits of U.S. Force and Power’. The conference



was structured such that delegates were divided into discussion groups, each focusing on specific issues. My group focused on ‘Insurgency, Terrorism and Internationalized Internal Conflict.’ Between discussion sessions, conference members gathered for plenary sessions to listen to notable speakers. All plenary sessions emphasized the limits of U.S. power, particularly its financial resources. Also frequently discussed was the limited political will of the American electorate; we noted that Americans must soon make painful choices about their international and domestic policy priorities. Each discussion group analyzed current U.S. policy towards a particular international issue; then produced a two-page policy proposal for submission to the U.S. State Department. At the conclusion of the conference, each group presented their proposals and a humorous skit.

I found SCUSA to be one of the best experiences of my life, academically and socially. The collective intellect of SCUSA was astounding; not only did the conference bring together some of the brightest people in the United States, but it facilitated an exchange of ideas and perspectives on a level that was both challenging and fulfilling. One of the most appealing aspects of SCUSA was the diversity of opinions that were present; this was the first time I was able to participate in a discussion of a salient political issue where viewpoints encompassed a wide range of civilian, academic, and military perspectives—no perspective was left out. The experience of creating a policy proposal provided an excellent test of my analytic and expository skills.

A LETTER FROM TURKEY

Robert Viglietta '12

I am currently ten weeks into my nine month study-abroad experience at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey. The standard question I am asked by Turks is, "Why Turkey?" I usually give some stock answer about the important alliance between the United States and Turkey. This makes them feel good that I think Turkey is important, it makes sense because I am studying Political Science, and it usually doesn't prompt a follow-up question. Follow-up questions mean they start using Turkish words I haven't learned yet. My stock answer provides a partial explanation as to why I came to Turkey. Studying abroad my junior year has always been in my plans; Turkey was a unique destination that would expose me to a part of the world not usually experienced by my peers. That is definitely apparent to me now, being one of two Americans at my university – the only American by the end of this semester. As I become more enmeshed in Turkish society, I find myself thinking more like a Political Science major; I continually make comparisons between the United States and Turkey with respect to their politics and culture. I find myself questioning many aspects of American politics and society, and expect myself to return the United States a more engaged and critical citizen. I can tell that this study abroad experience will be one of the best experiences of my life. Not just because I meet new and interesting people from all around the world every day, or because I am trying new foods, visiting amazing places, or gaining an appreciation for the liberties we have in the United States. I expect to return to the United States more balanced, focused, and aware of what is truly important to me.



Fall 2010 Speakers

Due to the generosity of our alumni, the department is able to sponsor numerous speakers

September 29th | Hocine Fetni, University of Pennsylvania:
"Law and Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa"

October 6th | Kathryn Lavelle, Case Western Reserve:
"The U.S. Congress and the International Monetary Fund: Seeking Influence through the Legislative Process."

October 20th | John White, Catholic University:
"Barack Obama's America: How New Conceptions of Race, Family, and Religion Ended the Reagan Era."

November 10th | Audrey Kurth Cronin, National War College:
"How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns."



David Della Rocca '93 talks with students about his career in Washington DC

Professor Kurth discusses the issues surrounding terrorism with students at a recent college hour lecture



POLITICAL AFFAIRS CLUB TRIP TO WASHINGTON, DC

Professor Jeffrey W. Koch



Kristin Graham-Koehler'91 and Professor Koch (left) with Political Affairs Club members at the reception

From October 14th to October 18th 2010 fifteen students and I visited Washington, D.C. as part of the Political Affairs Club's trip to Washington. Our first stop in D.C. was an excellent tour of the House of Representatives, hosted by **Mr. Robert Fischer'86**. Bob Fischer is Assistant Manager, Democratic Floor Services. He was able to take us to the gallery, onto the floor (the House at that time was in recess, providing us with tremendous access), and to the Sergeant at Arms office. In addition to allowing us to view the facilities, Mr. Fischer also discussed a number of rules, norms, and procedures practiced in the contemporary House of Representatives.

Immediately after the tour of the House of Representatives, the students and I attended a reception at the law firm of Sidley-Austin on K Street that included numerous Geneseo alumni. This reception was most graciously hosted by **Kristin Graham-Koehler'91** (above). The next morning, October 15th, we visited the law firm of Latham and Watkins. **David Della Rocca'93** (previous page) discussed his career in law, his law school experience, some of his most memorable experiences at Geneseo, and the types of law practiced at Latham and Watkins. Next on our agenda was a tour of the White House, kindly arranged by **Jackie Norris'92**. We then hiked up Constitution Avenue to meet with **Thomas Lankford'85** at the government relations firm of Van Scoyoc Associates Inc. Mr. Lankford discussed his career path, as well as the lobbying practices at Van Scoyoc Associates. Next door to the building where Tom Lankford works is the Department of Labor, our next stop. At the Department of Labor we were met by three Geneseo Political Science graduates: **Constance Christakos'83**, **Stephanie Fichter'99**, and **Mike Trupo'04** (right) "CC", Stephanie, and Mike recounted their career paths, experiences at Geneseo, and the goals and aims of the Department of Labor, as well as some of the employment opportunities in the federal government. It was much fun to be Political Science alums working at the same place, each very successful. Our final visit of the day was to the Office of Justice Programs, where we were met by **Maureen Henneberg'88**. Ms. Henneberg talked about recent initiatives at the Office of Justice Programs, her time at Geneseo and her career path. Maureen is married to **Robert Henneberg**, a 1988 Geneseo graduate. On our final day in D.C. the students and I visited some of our nation's museums and monuments.



Alumni Liz Allen '06 catches up with Professor Koch at the reception



Alumni Stephanie Fichter'99, Mike Trupo'04, and Constance Christakos'83 met with students at the Department of Labor

Alumni Spotlight

ALUMNI WINS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING INTERNSHIP AS A VOLUNTEER

Rebecca Cogan'10 received the 2010 Greater Rochester Student Standout Award for her contributions to Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County. Ms. Cogan developed the contact for her internship when she went to a Geneseo alumni event in Rochester, New York, in April 2010. At that reception she met **Linda Kostin'85** (with whom she is pictured), the pro bono coordinator for the seventh judicial district who works with the Volunteer Legal Services Project (VSLP).



All of the clientele for VLSP are living 100% to 200% below the poverty line. For these individuals, Ms. Cogan worked with VLSP personnel to provide the following services: host educational seminars for people needing divorces that cannot afford representation, clinics on debt collection, a wills writing clinic for those with terminal illness, work one-on-one with clients filing for divorce due to domestic violence, handle non-parent custody cases and attempt to find private representation for those who have been fired and denied their unemployment. Rebecca Cogan also conducted the vast majority of the intake interviews for the unemployment cases towards the end of her internship.

With regard to her internship experience, Rebecca Cogan stated:

"It was an amazing experience to get to work directly with the client on my own and it really opened my eyes to the tremendous lack of support given to those without the legal means to secure representation. Without organizations like VLSP, these people would have nowhere to go, which is a thought that doesn't inspire much hope. The people at VLSP were truly remarkable. It is a firm of nine women who did anything in their power to introduce me to someone of importance or tell me about a job they thought I might find interesting. Within one week of being at VLSP, there was a picture of me smiling with Chief Judge Lippman in the Daily Record, after I received the opportunity to meet him and introduce myself after a talk he gave next door to VLSP. I also had tremendous opportunities for networking, which I took full advantage of, because so many lawyers come through the office as we match them with clients that they take on pro bono. I have been able to pick the brains of these generous attorneys as well, which has given me great insight to what the legal field is like in Rochester at the current moment. I thought that was very exciting! VLSP encouraged a total learning atmosphere and always encouraged me to ask questions, whether it was just us talking or right in the middle of a client interview. I will always appreciate that they never thought any question was dumb (although some in all likelihood probably were) and were incredibly patient with me as I learned the ropes."

Rebecca Cogan graduated from Geneseo in 2010, she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa; she was also a member of the Sigma Kappa sorority. During her senior year she worked with Professor Jeremy Grace on a project on electoral reform in Francophone Africa. At Geneseo, Ms. Cogan was involved with Amnesty International; she also worked on projects for the American Cancer Society and the American Diabetes Association. Ms. Cogan hails from Ontario, Wayne County, where she participated in volunteer activities for the KidStart preschool and Fairport Baptist Homes Caring Ministries.

Rebecca Cogan also said that "Just a small act of kindness can have enormous implications, not only will you learn about the challenges that fellow Rochesterians face, but volunteering will also open your eyes to your own strengths and weaknesses and inspire personal growth. Choosing to get involved in community service can mean working outside one's comfort zone, but the benefits are worth it. Volunteer activities do not have to be monumental to make an impact."



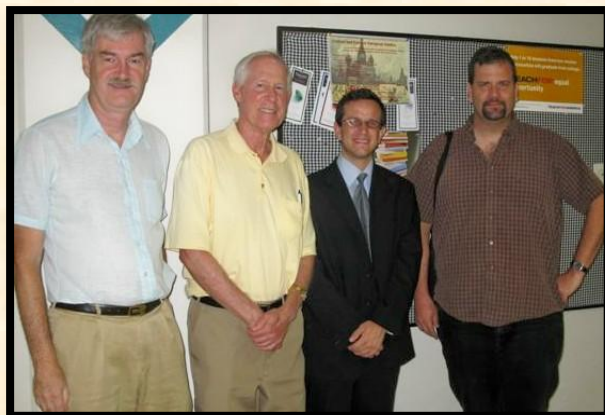
Mr. Johnson talks to current students about their future careers

ALUMNI UPDATE: PETER JOHNSON '02

This past August **Peter Johnson'02** returned to Geneseo to talk with Political Science and International Relations majors about graduate school and career opportunities. On a steamy late August afternoon, Welles 128 was filled with students who came to listen to Peter. Peter Johnson is a 2002 graduate of SUNY Geneseo who double majored in International Relations and Economics. Immediately after graduating from Geneseo, Peter worked in several private sector positions in the Rochester area for two years. In May 2004, he departed for Santiago de Chile; spending 11 months there, mostly teaching

English. In August 2005 Peter Johnson then departed for Bologna, Italy, beginning the first year of his Masters program at the Johns Hopkins University Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). At SAIS, Peter focused on International Finance, Emerging Markets, and Latin American Regional Studies. Following the first year of the program, he spent three months as a Summer Associate in a credit risk management unit with Citigroup's operations in Mexico City; from there he moved to Washington, D.C. to complete the second year of graduate school. After receiving his Masters degree, he remained in the D.C. area, working for four months for the economic development consulting firm J.E. Austin Associates, then spent two years as a financial analyst at Standard & Poor's, building models of European structured finance transactions. In January 2010, Peter left the D.C. area to move to Tunis, Tunisia, serving as a consultant with the African Development Bank. Peter has traveled to more than 20 countries, developed fluency in Spanish, and studied Portuguese, Italian and French. Peter recently passed the U.S. Foreign Service exam, thereby enhancing his career opportunities.

Peter Johnson began his matriculation at Geneseo as a Political Science major; however, as his interest in International Affairs grew, he then switched to the relatively new International Relations major. Peter cites courses he took with Professors Drachman, Goeckel, Grace, and Jo Kirk as drawing him more deeply into International Relations. As Peter began to contemplate what he might do following Geneseo, he talked with Jeremy Grace, who recommended that he apply to Johns Hopkins, a program he was unaware of before Professor Grace told him about it. The Johns Hopkins program helped Peter immensely, further developing his substantive knowledge and enhancing his career connections. The interdisciplinary nature of Johns Hopkins' program—in International Relations and International Economics—appealed to him in the same way the interdisciplinary nature of the International Relations program at Geneseo did.



Professor Goeckel, Professor Drachman, Mr. Johnson, Professor Grace

At Geneseo Peter Johnson was a member of Political Affairs Club for two years, serving as president for one year. Peter was a student senator in the Geneseo College Senate for one semester, and for all but one semester of his time at Geneseo he was a GOLD Leader Mentor. Not shying away from student activities, he was also president of Phi Beta Lambda Business Club, Vice President of International Business Club, Treasurer of Golden Key International Honour Society, a member of Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, and was a member of the Geneseo Progressive Coalition. Peter was inducted into the International Relations Honor Society in his junior year; as a senior Peter received the award for most outstanding student in International Relations.

Spring 2011 Events

January 27th through January 30th | Model U.N. trip to McGill University

February 17th through February 20th | Model U.N. trip to Harvard University

February 23rd | Roemer Lecture by Dr. Norman Neureiter: "Science and U.S. Foreign Policy"

March 2011 | Panel presentation from Geneseo alumni on careers in the Legal Field

April 12th | G.R.E.A.T. Day (presentations of student research)

April 15th | Senior/Honors Dinner at the Big Tree Inn

April | Upstate New York Eurosims



A Thanks to Our Donors

Special thanks to those donors who specified the Political Science and International Relations departments as the recipients of their donations.

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