

December  
2008

SUNY GENESSEO  
Fall Alumni Newsletter



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Department hosts a variety of fall events on Geneseo campus, including Panel on Iraq, Career Night, Annual Dinner and more.

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We would like to extend our gratitude to those who have supported our department.

## Political Science and International Relations Alumni Newsletter

Another fall semester at Geneseo...

As this newsletter goes out, Upstate New York recently completed a glorious autumn. The fall foliage, at its peak, glistened under the bright, fall sun. For sure, the fall foliage portends colder days ahead, but at least on this occasion, I find it beneficial to not think too far into the future in order to enjoy the present. It has been a tough year at Geneseo due to budget cuts for SUNY imposed by the state of New York. Nevertheless, there is much good news to report. The Department of Political Science and International

Relations continues to flourish. There are currently 190 Political Science majors and 206 International Relations majors; the number of majors we advise is higher than what I reported last year, which was then an all-time high. Political Science courses are packed.

For the 2008-2009 academic year Robert Lacey is a visiting professor of political science at Geneseo, allowing the department to offer a few more courses. Professor Lacey received his Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, specializing in Political



Theory and American Politics. For the Fall 2008 semester he is teaching courses on Presidential Politics, Major Political Philosophers, and Introduction to American Politics. During the Spring of 2009 he will teach a course on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Critical Thinkers, Democracy and Inequality, and Introduction to American Politics. Our alumni have again figured



Above: Jeff Fisher, Juan Cole, Edward Drachman, William Gohlman, and Jeremy Grace, participate in campus discussion on Iraq.

## Iraq Mini Conference

Generous alumni gift provides campus discussion - several hundred attend.

Campus panel includes Jeff Fisher and Juan Cole in discussion on the current political situation in Iraq.

prominently in the Political Science and International Relations programs. The department has been able to host a number of lectures on the Geneseo campus, support student research and student participation in a number of co-curricular activities, and we continue to develop programs to enhance interactions between faculty and students. While we have made progress in adding opportunities for such interactions, the growing number of students who major in political science and international relations has made the job more challenging. Interactions between Geneseo alums and current students occur more frequently; in some cases department students have travelled far to meet with alums, while others have come to Geneseo.

### Panel on Iraq, Campus Discussion

On October 15<sup>th</sup> the Department presented a Mini-Conference on the contemporary situation in Iraq and Iran to the Geneseo community. The conference was made possible by a \$4000.00 gift to the department from **Roger Brown '71**. Participants in the conference included Jeff Fisher, who, as Director for the Center for Transitional and Post-Conflict Governance at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, led the effort to plan and manage Iraq's elections, and Professor Juan R. I. Cole, the Richard P. Mitchell Distinguished University Professor of History at the University of Michigan. Professor Cole has written extensively about Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and South Asia. He has given numerous media and press interviews on the War on Terrorism since September 11, 2001, as well as concerning the Iraq War. He has a regular column at Salon.com.

The department hosted a luncheon for the presenters prior to the conference, providing students and faculty an opportunity to interact with participants and each other. The Iraq Mini Conference was grand, attended by several hundred students and covered in the local media. The event was a tremendous success for the entire Geneseo community. We are most thankful to **Mr. Brown** for supporting this event.



Later that day, Juan Cole also gave the Geneseo Roemer Lecture on "Iran, Iraq, and the Shiite Crescent."

# Recent Events

*PoliSci / IR Department hosts a variety of valuable and fun events both on and off campus.*



## Legal Careers Night

On March 10, 2008 four Political Science alumni returned to Geneseo to participate in a Legal Affairs Career night. Pictured below are **Peter Weishaar '92**, **Cathy Tobin '96**, **Erica De Renzo '01**, and **David Case '99**. These Geneseo Political Science graduates are practicing attorneys in the Rochester area.

Approximately 40-50 Geneseo students who aspire to a career in law attended the session. The students enjoyed hearing about the challenges of law school and the various career paths of the Geneseo alums. Current Geneseo students find it useful and inspiring to learn of the success of Geneseo graduates.

The department appreciates the alums who graciously gave of their time by giving a presentation and meeting informally with students following their presentations. I enjoyed the opportunity to have dinner with Peter, Cathy, Erica, and David, and learning more about where their paths have led them.



Pictured: David Case '99, Cathy Tobin '96, Erica DeRenzo '01, Peter Weishaar '92

## 2008 Senior/Honors Dinner

The 2008 Senior/Honors Dinner was held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Villa on the Green. A special guest at this year's dinner was James Campbell, President-Elect of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Honors society for Political Science majors. Twenty-three Political Science majors were admitted to Pi Sigma Alpha, the honors society for Political Science majors, and four International Relations majors were admitted to Sigma Iota Rho, the national Honors Society for International Relations majors.

**Kseniya Popov '08** and **Ari Renoni '08** received the award for Outstanding Senior(s) in International Relations, **Marie Puccio '08** (currently a Ph.D. student in Political Science at the University of Michigan) received the award for Outstanding Political Science Senior.

**Sean Atwood '07** was recognized for his Outstanding Internship at the United Nations Association of Rochester, and **Katie Freeman '08** received the Rose Aalent award for outstanding student who double majored in International Relations and a Foreign Language. **Diana Snyder '08**, currently a student at Boston University Law School, received the Legal Studies Award.

Also, **Fiona Murray '09**, **Dean McGee '09**, **Brendan Quinn '08**, and **Michael Case '08** shared the Ed (Dr. J) Janosik Leadership award. Finally, **David Murphy '09** received the Ambassador Apartments award for Outstanding Junior in International Relations.

## Other Fall Events

On September 3<sup>rd</sup> the Department hosted its annual pizza party, an occasion to welcome our students upon their return to Geneseo before the pressure of the semester begins.

On September 24<sup>th</sup> Gerald Rosenberg of the University of Chicago Department of Political Science and School of Law delivered a lecture on "The American Courts and Gay Marriage." Prior to his talk, the department hosted a luncheon for Professor Rosenberg, providing another opportunity for faculty and students to interact.

On October 29<sup>th</sup> Professor Jeffrey Stonecash of Syracuse University delivered his analysis of the 2008 Presidential election. These events, supported by alumni contributions, enhance the intellectual offerings of our program, providing unique opportunities for the students.



## Trip to Washington D.C.

### Political Affairs Club trip to Washington, D.C.

On October 4, 2008 fifteen Geneseo students and I left Upstate New York for a trip to Washington, D.C. The trip was inspired by the excursions taken by **Professor Janosik** in the 1970s and 1980s. Rumor has it that to transport students, Professor Janosik used his own car (a BMW!!) and the President's car! Many alumni tell me how much they enjoyed those trips. In Washington, the students and I visited the monuments, Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian, and Georgetown. We also visited several government / political / private organizations, all trips arranged, in some way, by Geneseo alumni.

On Monday morning our first journey was to Development Finance International, where CEO **Diane Willkens '74** greeted us, providing the students with coffee, orange juice, and bagels, and talked with us about Development Finance International's activities and her own career path. We visited the Democratic National Committee at the invitation of **Kristen Morgante '01** to hear from the Executive Director, Tom MacMahon (her husband). At the Security and Exchange Commission we received a presentation by **Michele Barto '96**, at Van Scyoc Associates, a government affairs firm. **Thomas Lankford '85** talked to the students about his career and Van Scyoc Associates.

**Kristin Graham-Koehler '91** arranged for some of the students to observe one hour of oral argument before the Supreme Court for the second case of the year. She also arranged for us to receive a great tour of the Supreme Court by one of the Court's librarians. Ms. Graham-Koehler also allowed us to visit the Sidley Austin law firm where she works. After departing from Washington D.C. on October 7 we stopped in Fort Mead, Maryland, to tour the National Security Agency's museum.

### Model U.N.

This past year Model U.N. received the President's Award for its outstanding work. The organization is run largely by students, with Political Science faculty mentoring and assisting. The club provides a great opportunity for students to develop leadership skills, presents an informal setting for faculty and students to interact, and complements the curriculum in Political Science and International Relations. In addition to covering the expenses of the faculty member who accompanies the club on trips, the department has covered the costs of the students' travel. Last year the club participated in simulations at McGill University, Harvard University, Canisius College, and Georgetown University. The department and students plan to attend the same exercises this year. I am deeply impressed by the commitment and hard work of the students and faculty who make this organization work.



Model United Nations Club

## Jackie (Dycke) Norris '92

Jackie Norris has been selected to serve as Chief of Staff for the incoming first lady Michele Obama. Jackie graduated from Geneseo in 1992 with a major in Political Science.

After graduating from Geneseo she began working for Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, for whom she had interned as an undergraduate.

## Laura Clay '11

Laura Clay worked with Professor Rebecca Root on a paper on the extent of public opinion can be trusted as an effective measure for good governance, specifically focusing on Fujimori's presidency in Peru.

Ms. Clay's research was presented at the 2008 Northeast Political Science Association's annual meeting in Boston, Massachusetts in November. Her work was supported by a fellowship created by **Constance Christakos '83**. Her trip to Boston was supported by alumni contributions.

## James (Max) Duhe '09

### & Dean McGee '09

James and Dean attended the 2008 Student Conference on U.S. Affairs at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. The theme of this year's conference was "Measuring Progress and Defining New Challenges." The expenses for their trip were underwritten by alumni contributions.

## UPCOMING EVENTS – 2009

January 29 – February 1	Model UN attends McGill University, Montreal, Quebec
February 4	Peter Katzenstein, Walter S. Carpenter Professor at Cornell University and current President of the American Political Science Association, will speak on International Affairs.
February 12 – 15	Model UN attends Harvard Model UN in Boston, MA
March 5	Political Science Honor Society (Pi Sigma Alpha) to host alumni career night.
April 1	Timothy Smeeding, Director of Institute of Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, will speak on Economic Inequality.
April 2 - 5	Model UN will participate in EU Simulation at Canisius College
April 24	"Alumni Leaders in a Global Society" panel
April 30	Annual Senior / Honors Awards Dinner – The Big Tree Inn

The department's website is continuing to undergo significant revision, with the most important change being the addition of an alumni wiki. Please visit us online at [www.polisci.geneseo.edu](http://www.polisci.geneseo.edu) and join other Political Science and International Relations alumni who have provided information about themselves. Directions for its use are provided through our website.



Eileen Finneran and daughter Fiona Murray share their mutual Geneseo ties.

## Like Mother, Like Daughter

Eileen Finneran and Fiona Murray share a tie to the Political Science Department at Geneseo. Eileen Finneran graduated from SUNY Geneseo with a B.A. in Political Science in 1979; then began work as a Legal Assistant for two law firms in New York City. Eventually she moved to the Albany Region with husband Bill Murray, working for the Albany Housing Coalition as an advisor and advocate for low-income individuals. Eileen's public service experience includes working as the campaign coordinator for Cliff Wilson's Congressional campaign in 1984; serving as a Legislative Assistant for the Office of Clifford Wilson; and working as a Legislative Aide for the Office of Eric Vitaliano, former Chairman of the NYS Assembly Committee on Government Employees from 1985-1988.

In 2005 Eileen managed the successful campaign of Valerie Keehn for Mayor of Saratoga Springs, and then served as Deputy Mayor. This past fall, Eileen served as the Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety in Saratoga Springs and ran for a position on the Saratoga Springs Democratic Committee, with a slate of candidates referred to as the "Democrats for Change." A mother of three daughters, Eileen resides in Saratoga Springs with her husband, Bill Murray.

Eileen's daughter, **Fiona Murray '09**, has not only followed her mother by attending Geneseo and majoring in political science, but also by practicing a high level of political activism. Fiona has worked on many campaigns, is a member of the Livingston County Democratic Committee and the Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace, and has been involved in efforts to register Geneseo students for elections. Fiona Murray's extraordinary activism earned her the 2008 Edward Janosik Leadership award.

Eileen Finneran attributes her commitment to public service to the Political Science professors at Geneseo. Fiona recollects her mother telling her numerous stories about **Dr. "J" (Ed Janosik)** and how he was the best Professor she ever had at Geneseo, and how much he inspired her and her peers

to pursue a career in politics. Eileen recalls that **Dr. Kenneth Deutsch** advised her to first work as a legal assistant before jumping right into law school, and how that was one of the best decisions she ever made.

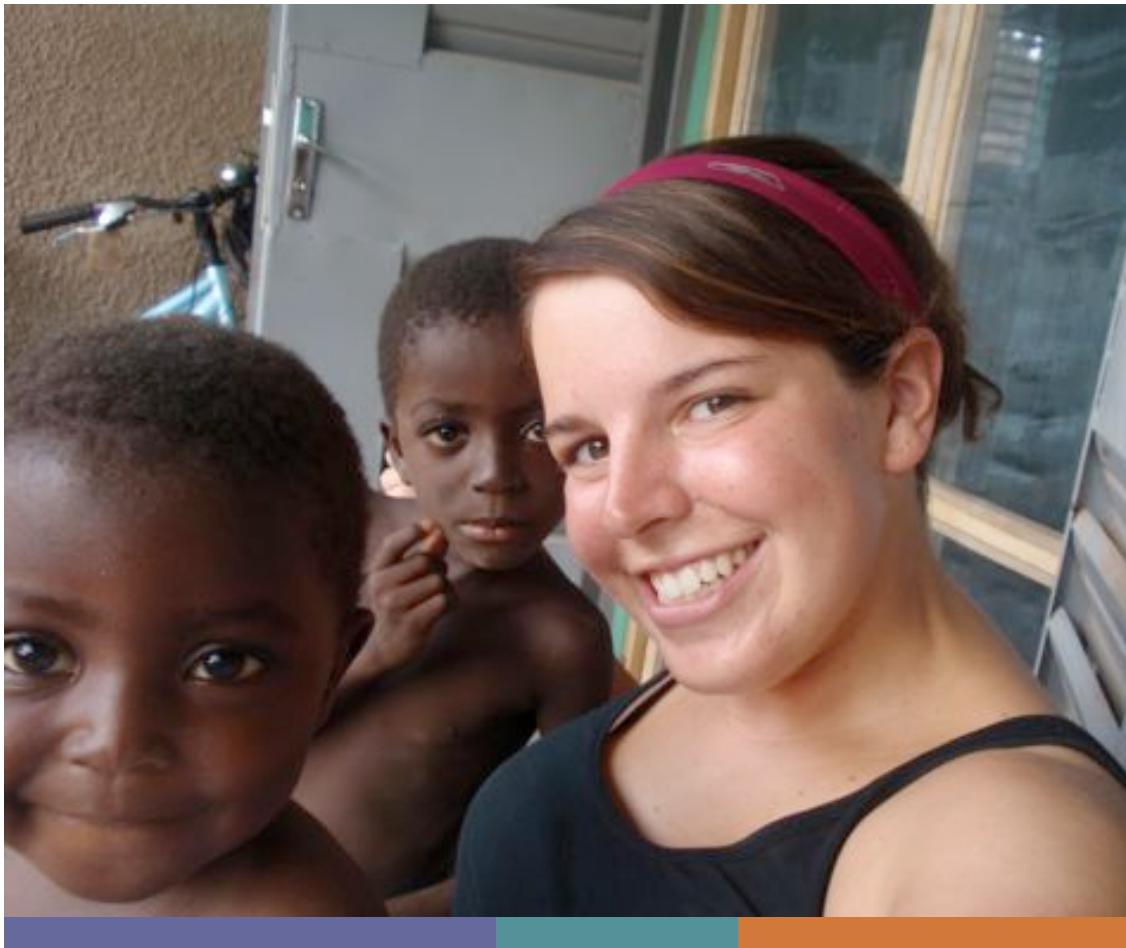
## Like Father, Like Son

**Robert Rasmussen Sr. '88** and **Robert Rasmussen, Jr. '09** also share a tie to the Geneseo Political Science Department. Robert Rasmussen Sr. graduated from Geneseo in 1988 as a Political Science major with a commission as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry in the regular Army. His military career has taken him to various assignments across the continental United States, as well as Alaska, Foreign Area Officer training, and two combat tours in Afghanistan. He holds a Master of Arts in National Security Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School (2000) in Monterey, California. His has served in various leadership positions including: Rifle Platoon Leader, Battalion S-1, and Company Executive Officer; Battalion S-1, Mechanized Rifle Company Commander, and Battalion S-4, Battalion Executive Officer, and Division Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3. He currently serves as the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Operations, Plans, and Security) for the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has twenty years of service in the Army, and will retire at the end of May 2009 at his current rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In October Robert delivered a lecture at Geneseo on the terrorist challenges the next president will confront and spoke in **Professor Jeremy Grace's** class.

Robert Rasmussen Sr.'s son Robert Rasmussen, Jr. (Raz) '09 began studying at Geneseo during the Fall of 2006, double majoring in International Relations and Geography, taking many courses in political science. Both father and son share a strong interest in international relations, and both have taken classes from **Professor Robert Goeckel**. Robert Rasmussen Jr. is active in Model U.N. and the International Relations Club.



Pictured: Robert Rasmussen in Ghanzi Province, Afghanistan



## **Letter from Burkina Faso: Geneseo graduate writes about her first few months in the Peace Corps**

Following my sophomore year at Geneseo, I heard a former Peace Corps speak in my French class. Though I had only recently declared an International Relations major, I wanted to work in the developing world. After graduation, and now 100 percent sure that I wanted to work in development, I applied to the Peace Corps. The application process is a long one full of interviews, vaccinations, blood tests, and short essay questions. After six months of proving I was healthy and ready to go, I received an invitation to work as a math teacher in Burkina Faso, a Fran

Burkina cophone country about the size of Colorado in West Africa. Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world but with some of the kindest people. I arrived in June 2008, trained for eleven weeks in a provincial capital, Ouahigouya, and lived in my assigned site for three months. I then moved to Loumana, a remote village of about 3000 people spread over seven kilometers. Though

classes at the local middle school (or college as they call it here) are large (one class contains 120 kids!), the students are motivated and—mostly—well-behaved. I often work with young girls through a girls' club, trying to improve their self esteem and teaching them "life skills" (ie: washing your hands with soap before and after dinner, staying HIV free, etc). I also work with Moringa, a tree that has amazing qualities and whose leaves are loaded with nutrients that kids need but rarely get here.

Life can be tough at times - no toilets, no electricity, unbearable heat, riding in crowded and uncomfortable bush taxis for 4 hours to go only 50 miles, etc - but obstacles are easily overcome and my neighbors and village have been especially kind and welcoming. After studying the developing world at Geneseo, it is really interesting to actually live in it. Though I've only been here for a few months, I've already learned so much and look forward to the next 21 months that I have to go.

-Jennifer O'Meara  
Class of 2007

## More Polisci/IR Alumni... Where are they now?



Above: Thomas Lankford '85 speaking to Political Science and International Relations Students



Above: Diane Willkens '74 speaking to Political Science and International Relations students in October at DFI.

### Diane Willkens '74

Upon graduation from Geneseo in 1974, **Diane Willkens** moved to Washington, D.C. to pursue a law degree, afterwards settling into a career in international law and business. In 1992 Diane set off on her own to begin Development Finance International (DFI) in Bethesda, Maryland.

DFI began as a small two person firm, operating out of Diane's basement. Since 1992 DFI has expanded considerably, with offices in Manila, Tunis, and Brussels. DFI focuses on firms that want to expand into the developing world. Ms. Willkens has advised numerous national trade promotion agencies, international trade associations, U.S. Government agencies, and multilateral organizations. Over the past few years Ms. Willkens has led a coalition of U.S. and European industry groups to ensure that the reform of procurement systems of the multilateral development banks support a system that is fair, transparent, and competitive. Ms. Willkens recently completed 3 years of service on the U.S. Export-Import Bank Advisory Committee.

In addition to majoring in Political Science at Geneseo, Ms. Willkens played on the volleyball team. Diane is pictured above, speaking to Political Science and International Relations students in October 2008 at DFI.

### Alexis Henshaw '01

During the 2007/2008 academic year **Alexis Henshaw '01** taught Political Science courses at SUNY Geneseo. Following her graduation from Geneseo Alexis attended the University of North Carolina, receiving a Masters in Political Science. She then returned to the Rochester area, and taught classes in Political Theory and West European Politics. She recently moved to Tucson, Arizona, enrolling in the Ph.D. Program in Political Science at the University of Arizona.

# Alumni Contributions

Many Department events and activities would not be possible without the generous contributions of our alumni. The following events were supported by alumni contributions: Welcome Back Pizza Party, Senior Honors Thesis Program, lectures by Professors Karen Beckwith, James Campbell, Kelly Greenhill, Matt Cleary, Gerald Rosenberg, and Jeffrey Stonecash, the Iraq Day Conference, Publication of the Political Realm (a journal recognizing outstanding work in Political Science courses); Model U.N. activities, the Political Affairs Club trips to Washington, D.C., the Senior/Honors Dinner, honors theses program, student participation at a conference at West Point, awards to students in recognition of outstanding achievement, faculty research, and student research.

Below are the names of alumni who have designated that their contributions be restricted to the Department of Political Science and International Relations. Thank you for enhancing the quality of the academic program Geneseo offers Political Science and International Relations students.

*Please support the Department of Political Science and International Relations. When you give to Geneseo, specify that your contribution goes to the Political Science or International Relations Department General Fund.*

Courtney Abrams '05	Donna Elliott '86	Robert & Maureen Rude '74
Robert Anna '68	Ellen Fishbein '03	David Russell '87
Craig Arrighetti '87	Erik Goergen '02	David Salmone '84
Michele Barto '97	Andrew & Candice Healy '95	Thomas Shanahan '74
Barbara Bilodeau '86	Scott Hinman '00	Frederick Shellard '85
Thomas Brandt '89	Molly Irvin-Peter '79	George Speedy '71
Jeffrey & Deborah Boyce '88	Kristin Graham-Koehler '91	Gregory Stoneberg '04
Mr. & Mrs. Roger Brown '74	Eddie Lee '76	Brian Sprague '94
Thomas Catchpole '72	Kellyann O'Mara-Convertini '91	Lt. Jennifer Strazza-Flynn '95
Constance Christakos '86	John & Stacy Pekarik '98	Mr. and Mrs. Volino
Jeff Clarke '74	John Petrella '85	Edwin Yuen '99

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

Special thanks to Derek Stenclik '09 for the Fall Alumni Newsletter design.



## *Alumni Newsletter – Fall 2008*

To conserve on funds and reduce our “carbon footprint” we plan to send the newsletter out via email. If you have not done so already, please send your email address to [polisci@geneseo.edu](mailto:polisci@geneseo.edu).

### **Political Science and International Relations**

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