

POLITICAL SCIENCE

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY / DECEMBER 2012 / ISSUE 8

NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY SARAH GIANNI AND JESSE DOGGENDORF

What is Political Science?

-Specialists in **comparative politics** analyze power dynamics in communities, states, and regions throughout the world.

-Specialists in **international relations** focus on the power relationships between countries and between citizens and organizations of different countries.

-Specialists in **American politics** look at the exercise of power domestically, through American institutions and processes ranging from the state to social movements.

-**Political theorists** address fundamental normative and explanatory assumptions, such as the nature and purpose of the state; who should have power and why; and what would constitute a good society.

Newsletter

Editor: Erika Brown

Faculty Editor: Ruth Groff

A University is a place
of light, of liberty, and
of learning
- Benjamin Disraeli



In recent months, our University has faced considerable tumult, including “no confidence” votes cast by student and faculty governing bodies. Letters and power points have been issued from both sides of the divide, and discussions, led by the faculty and Student Government, have been held. The students at SLU have realized that their university is more than solely the beauty of buildings, the size of the endowment, and the metrics by which it is measured. This is more than simply an issue of tenure and disgruntled faculty. It is an issue of just rule in shared power, an issue of educational worth, and an issue of what this university needs.



We, as students, have been alienated in the past as well as the present by Father Biondi's administration. A prime example is last year's desk worker scandal, where the administration decided, without consulting the students, that Whelan Security was no longer needed and that the desks would be manned by students throughout the night. Decisions directly related to student's well being, such as being forced to put work before our education, should have student input. The faculty has realized this, and we hope that in the future students will become more involved in the decision-making process. Thus, shared governance has become an important aspect of this struggle, apparently endorsed by all except the administration.

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Political Science Club

Fall 2012 Events

With the ushering in of a new executive board and one of the first SGA budgets in years, we have sought to build up the club with the support of students and faculty. This semester has already seen a remarkable turnaround with our event attendance. We have really shined as a club during this election cycle. Most of our events have been tailored to address issues surrounding the presidential election and we continue to gain momentum. Look for great things to come from the Political Science Club!

-Katy Rasmussen, President

Student & Faculty Meet n' Greet



Political Science Club hosted a meet n' greet on September 14th at Humphrey's for students and faculty to get to know each other better outside of the classroom setting.



As pictured clockwise: Dr. Kenneth Warren, Dr. Jean-Robert Leguey-Feilleux, E-board members Katy Rasmussen and Erika Brown, Dr. Wynne Moskop, Dr. Ruth Groff, and Amber Knight, and Kellen Gracey, Dr. Christopher Witko and Dr. Leguey-Feilleux.



2012 Election: The Issues Matter



Dr. Nadia Brown

spoke on race and how it affects approval ratings of politicians and voter turnout. As we witnessed with the election, as Dr. Brown predicted, the outcome of the election greatly depended on the enthusiasm of minority voting blocs..

Dr. J.D. Bowen

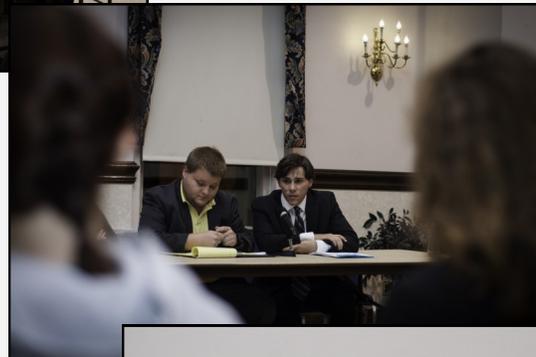
spoke on international influences on the 2012 election. Unlike the role of race in this election, international issues have flown under the radar and not been as prevalent an issue as in past elections.



Neglected Issues Debate

College Democrats & College Republicans

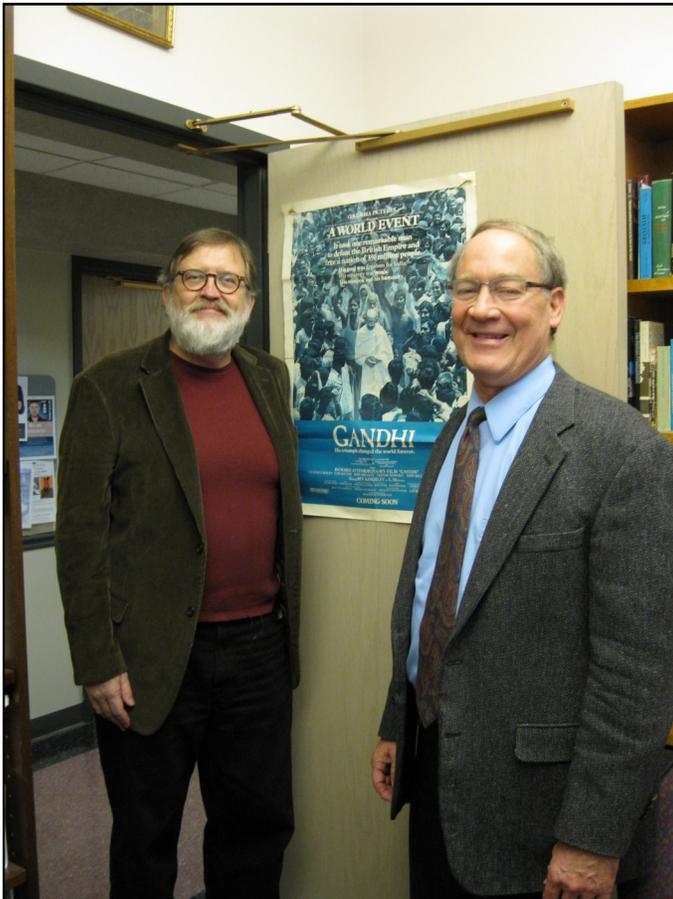
Students from both groups spoke on topics often disregarded in the presidential and vice presidential debates, such as: failure of public schools, environmental issues, insufficiencies in the criminal justice system, and political polarization and apathy.



Asian Studies

With approximately 60 percent of the world's population and the attendant economic and political influence, Asia's and particularly China's global importance is evident. This implies more and more career opportunities in law, business, government, journalism, arts, and education for those students who have a background in Asian Studies. The Asian Studies Minor provides an opportunity for SLU undergraduates to add a multidisciplinary degree option in the geography, history, business, economics, politics, and culture of Asia.

The Asian Studies Minor is a 21 hour cooperative program involving several departments. The minor also requires 30 hours of community service in the Asian community.



Dr. Robert Strikwerda, professor who teaches an Asian Studies course, and Dr. Tim Lomperis, coordinator of the Asian Studies Minor

POLS 393:01 – A Hands on Experience by Sean Keaveny

As a student peruses the assortment of interesting and diverse Political Science classes SLU offers, courses beginning with the words “Special Topics” can be passed by for the association with these classes; very specific, very thorough, and very demanding. While these aren't necessarily negative characteristics, many students may opt for the interesting classes that seem more traditional and familiar. I, like seven other students, stepped out of our comfort zone by enrolling in Dr. Robert Strikwerda's course titled Reacting to the Past. As no students in class had taken a course of this sort, we were all curious to see how engaged we would become with the material. By the time we had run through our two scenarios, we were knowledgeable of both the historic actualities and the broader political/cultural climate that was fostered by our individual adopting of “game characters” and understanding the information utilizing their unique perspectives and achieving personal goals to assure a good grade.

With Dr. Strikwerda speaking infrequently, the students were placed in roles and settings that would facilitate informative and passionate dialogue. Our first game cast each student as key figures in the succession crisis of Wanli Emperor in the early 17th century. Groups quickly formed and characters became impassioned with the issue: Should the Emperor (a student) appoint his first born son to the throne as is customary or should the Emperor disregard the precedent set by those before him and choose his favorite, third son to take up the emperorship? As students, we were forced to think critically of the arguments that could be made to sway the Emperor.

Characters began to grow very real as students sought outside information and historical context to legitimize their main arguments, which directly impacted many of the goals of individual characters. We were exposed to different ideas that would not have been gleaned from lectures of Chinese history; politics were played out in the room and we were the politicians, illuminating an understanding of the power dynamics and distribution of 17th century China and beyond.

With midterms came a new scenario with new challenges. We moved ahead in history to the tail end of World War II and focused in on an intense and violent conflict that is lesser known due to the relative destruction of Europe. The independence of India from Britain and the partition of India was our scenario and, as characters, we were pitted against each other with multiple characters who had historically sought to dominate other characters in the game. The true conflict came not in India's separation from Britain, but in the aftermath. Many Indians sought to institute Hindu-controlled government as it represented the majority of Indian life and culture, while other Indians (Muslims, Sikhs) sought to break away from a Hindi-centric culture and form their own communities with their own values. As representatives for each of these groups involved, students became very involved with the materials available and very vocal in our conference. Dr. Strikwerda's utilization of Facebook as a medium for public ideas and responses to one another outside of class. The attention to detail and sporadic injection of "game-changers" kept the characters constantly moving, thinking of how to resolve crisis before negotiations break

down. The mood was often tense in class and we all agreed that our concerns for the issues genuinely followed us home from class. Personally I can remember my relationship with a good friend from class being quite awkward as our goals and viewpoints on the matter of the Indian partition caused serious arguments in class. This, again, illustrates a unique and refreshing characteristic of this class: students are driven to care by involvement and activity, not forced to care through simply lectures and tests. While the Wanli Emperor game yielded mostly historically accurate results, the India partition scenario left us with a Pakistan nearly twice the size of the actual state and a fundamental clause was written into the constitution that forced cooperation from these countries who are so interwoven. This class showed how, with the proper amount of respect, diligence, and compromise in international relations, much conflict in the world may be avoided.

Overall, I found myself both challenged by the course but excited at the prospect of going to our conference with a new argument, prospective legislation, or stinging quips that would further the serious conversation. Much of my knowledge of history in these regions would not have been possible without the tangible exercise of re-enacting the events and noting how even one idea can change the course history. With a small class we were at times limited by our possible character roles, but even amongst 8 students the conversation rarely lulled and we left the class with a collective sense of accomplishment through an active and unconventional learning environment. And we celebrated with a fine Indian meal at the House of India restaurant.

Reacting to the Past: Asia POLS
393:01 (26394) will be offered
again this spring at TR 2:15 – 3:30.
No prerequisite courses required.
Roles allotted partly on
past experience.

Thoughts from an ... *Americanist*

by Dr. Jason Windett

On November 6th, millions of Americans will go to the polls in what many are calling an historic election between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. Much discussion of the presidential election has focused on women's issues, the gender gap in voting for the two candidates, and which candidate would represent women's interests better. A question few have been asking, however, is "where are the women candidates?" Who better to represent the interests of women than women, right?

This year does in fact have the prospect of being a monumental election cycle: for the first time in nearly two decades, a woman may not be elected as a United States Governor. A single, lone hope remains to continue the near 18-year streak of electing a woman to a governor's mansion. Maggie Hassan, a Democrat, is in a close contest in the toss-up state of New Hampshire. Ms. Hassan's place as the sole woman candidate is exceptional for contemporary American politics, as this is only the second time in 30 years when less than two women have won their respective party's nomination. Moreover, 2013 could be the first time since Ann Richards left the Texas Governor's mansion that a Democratic woman does not hold a governorship, as Bev Perdue (D-NC) and Christine Gregoire (D-WA) will end their terms in office. The remaining four female governors are all Republicans (Jan Brewer of Arizona, Susanna Martinez of New Mexico, Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, and Nikki Haley of South Carolina).

The Governor's mansion is not the only state-level institution that is seeing a decline in women's representation. Following the 2010 elections, the percentage of women serving in state legislatures declined for the first time since the 1960s—dropping from 24.3% to 23.7%.

Although it is unclear whether women will lose seats in state legislatures, the fact remains that fewer female candidates are running in this election cycle than in 2010.

All is not lost, however, in terms of increasing women's voice in government. A record high number of women won party nominations for the United States Senate and House of Representatives. 18 women are competing in 15 Senate races, while 163 women are competing across the country for seats in the House.

So what does it all mean? Why should we care about the fact that women's representation has essentially stagnated during the 2000s, even after so much progress was made in the 1980s and 1990s? What are the political implications of the reality that the United States is nestled between Slovakia and Turkmenistan as the 80th ranked nation with respect to the proportion of women's representation in elective office?

It matters for many reasons. Among them, many female citizens continue to experience discrimination in their social, economic, and political lives. When women are in positions of power, they are more likely to bring these issues of inequality into the political dialogue. In addition, studies have demonstrated that women tend to have different political agendas, they vote differently from men, and they generally have a wider constituency base than most male politicians. Women are also more likely to work across the aisle to form consensus and pass public policies. In the current political environment, which is marked by polarization and stalemate, having more women in executive and legislative positions could be one of our strongest national assets.

Not Business As Usual, cont.



The biggest question raised by students currently is the value of our education. As Liz Ramsey, one of the operators of the SLU Students for No Confidence Facebook Page, says, "I've invested a lot of time and money in SLU [and] I think the direction the leadership is going jeopardizes the integrity of SLU." It has become clear to her, and many other students, that the "climate of fear" at SLU is detrimental to our education. This, along with our declining ranking, has become the main issue of concern to students.

Students have not been impressed with Father Biondi's treatment of the evidence provided by students and faculty to support their claims. Becky Killian, a leader of the Student Government ad-hoc committee on the present crisis said: "Father Biondi's letters did not adequately address my concerns as an informed student for a number of reasons. Number one, because the information that Father Biondi offered in his 'retort' was obviously cherry-picked and failed to utilize any form of comparison between ourselves and our peer institutions. Second, the response was condescending and only furthered my belief that any attempt at a future professional relationship with Father Biondi would be a waste of energy." Silence is no longer an option for the student body. Andrew McLaughlin, another one of the leaders of the Student Government ad-hoc committee, acknowledges the need for action:



"At this point, the students have realized that no amount of facts and figures will move the mountains ahead of us. More than anything it is our actions and our decisions that will define us and what we accomplish. It is essential for students and faculty to emphasize this to the Board. Their actions will define how they are viewed by the community, by the city, and by the country. No amount of words or promises will satisfy the growing tide that has arisen, and above all they must be conscious of the necessity of their action. The time is now, the decision is clear. There can be no mistaking the need for leadership."

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Major Faculty Achievements - Highlights

Grants:

Dr. Chris Witko (along with two collaborators) has won a \$192,000 grant from the Russell Sage Foundation to study why Americans have tolerated rising inequality over the past few decades.

Articles:

Dr. Nadia Brown has just published four articles related to her work on race and politics.

Books:

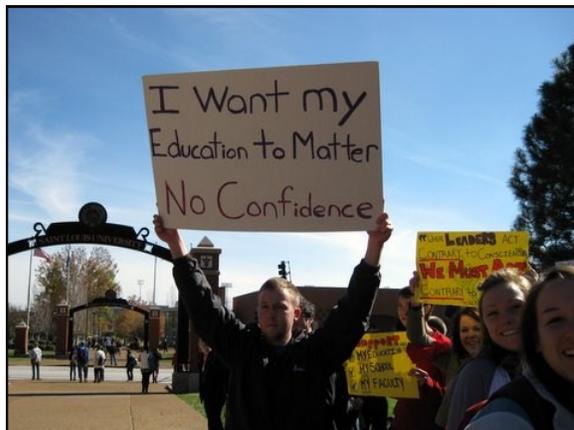
Dr. Ruth Groff has just published two books, *Ontology Revisited: Metaphysics in Social and Political Philosophy* (Routledge, 2012) and [co-edited with John Greco], *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy: The New Aristotelianism* (Routledge, 2012).

Awards:

Dr. Matthew Hall's book, *The Nature of Supreme Court Power* (Cambridge, 2011) won the C. Herman Pritchett Award for best book on law and courts from the American Political Science Association.

Not Business As Usual, cont.

Shoulder to shoulder, we must show the administration that we care about the direction in which the institution is being taken. We must work to restore our University as a place of learning, liberty, and light. Let us continue together, faculty and students, in the pursuit of truth, for the sake of this University's future.



**Join us outside of the SLU Board of Trustees Meeting
South side of DuBourg Hall — Saturday, December 15, 8-9 a.m.**