Busy summer and fall for faculty and students

The Political Science Department has plenty of faculty and student news to report this fall.

On the faculty side, the big news is the impending retirement of Dr. Lou Ortmayer, who will step down in May 2015, after 38 years of service to the department and college. Lou is currently on sabbatical this fall, but will offer one more semester’s worth of courses this spring before his well-deserved retirement. See our story (p. 7) on plans for two events we are scheduling this spring to celebrate his extraordinary contributions to the college.

We also have a new member of the department, Dr. Besir Ceka, who will fill the position vacated by Dr. Ortmayer.

The department is now heavily engaged in multi-disciplinary majors at the college: Shelley Rigger in Chinese Studies, Graham Bullock in Environmental Studies, Russell Crandall in Latin American Studies and Ken Menkhaus in the new Africana Studies major.

On the student side, the department continues to constitute the largest major at Davidson – we graduated 63 political science majors in 2014, and currently have a total of 69 senior and 60 junior declared majors. Our majors have been leaders on campus in student government and a wide variety of student activities and publications, pursued valuable internship experiences in Washington, DC (p. 3-5) and have explored the world through Dean Rusk grants and study abroad (p. 4-5). Their news is summed up below. Enjoy!

Chat series grow campus political science community

Political Science at Davidson is engaging students in new ways outside of the classroom. A new discussion series brings together faculty and students each semester for a structured conversation about a topic in contemporary political science, while biweekly “Summits” provide a casual forum for discourse.

Starting in 2013, the department began hosting public discussions between a member of the political science faculty and a visiting scholar. Not quite lectures, these “fireside chats” are a chance for students to gain in-depth knowledge on a topic and ask probing questions to be answered by the experts. What’s more, they’re open to the public, and have consistently drawn large audiences from the local community.

On Halloween night 2013, Dr. Susan Roberts sat down with Dr. Bruce Oppenheimer of Vanderbilt University to take a look at disfunctionality in Congress in a chat titled “Congress 2013: All Tricks, No Treats.” The department followed this up in the spring with a discussion of the ongoing conflict in Syria, led by Dr. Maren Milligan and Dr. Bassam Haddad of George Mason University.

Last month, two of Davidson’s own – Dr. Ken Menkhaus and Dr. Claire Metelits – led a spirited discussion of the Somali terrorist group Al Shabaab and the US response to terrorism in the Horn of Africa.

“It was a great event,” said Dr. Shelley Rigger. “We had very good turn-out, and Claire and Ken were spectacular. It was an incredibly meaty presentation, and the students’ questions afterward revealed their deep engagement with these issues.”

The discussions will continue in the spring, with a conversation between outgoing professor of European politics Dr. Lou Ortmayer and incoming professor of European politics Dr. Besir Ceka. They’ll be hosting a chat titled “European Politics: In with the New, Out with the Old.” The date is yet to be determined, but students and local alumni interested in the Eurozone should be sure to keep it on their radar.

A second chat series, hosted by students, brings together a small group of students and faculty every other Friday afternoon for a conversation about a political topic from that week’s headlines. Over drinks at the campus Summit Coffee, they’ve discussed topics including separatist movements, the Russian invasion of Crimea, campaign finance and the constitutionality of the ‘war on ISIS.’

“A lot of other departments have this kind of regular, informal get-together where students can learn and discuss in a casual setting,” said Lincoln Davidson ’15, who proposed the discussions, or “Summits.” “I saw a gap and thought we should fill it.

“In my view, they’ve been a great success,” Davidson said. “It’s a great opportunity to be able to continue learning and continue being a student of political science outside of the classroom. And I think it’s gone a long way towards making political science a community here on campus, and not just a major.”
Department welcomes new faculty

Besir Ceka
Teaching: International Organization and Introduction to International Politics

Dr. Ceka received his PhD in 2013 from UNC Chapel Hill. Prior to coming to Davidson, he was a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. Dr. Ceka teaches courses in international relations and comparative politics with a particular focus on European politics and international organizations. His research examines the causes and consequences of political trust and satisfaction with democracy in European states. He studies the factors that explain satisfaction with democracy and its main institutions and then explore the consequences of such evaluations for voting behavior.

Dr. Ceka is very excited to be at Davidson and to teach a variety of courses at a place that values teaching. This semester he is teaching International Organization and Introduction to International Politics. In the near future, he’ll be offering courses on European Politics, European Integration, and Methods and Statistics. Dr. Ceka is particularly excited about developing a new course on the Psychology of Political Leadership, which he hopes to offer next year. In this course, students will learn about psychological processes in political decision-making and explore issues such as the motivations and characteristics of good leaders.

Dr. Ceka is originally from Tetovo, Macedonia. He got his B.A. from Bates College and loves playing racquetball and soccer.

Nicole Bauer
Teaching: Introduction to American Politics and Gender & Politics

Before arriving in Davidson Dr. Bauer received her PhD from Indiana University. Her dissertation research identified how voters use gender stereotypes to evaluate female candidates. Feminine stereotypes characterize women as better suited for motherhood than political leadership, but these ideas do not always shape voter decision-making. Dr. Bauer’s research focuses on identifying the psychology behind how individuals think about politics, and she is particularly interested in how voters consider candidates from underrepresented populations. In her research she uses experiments and analyses of campaign communication, and she’s looking forward to collaborating with students on projects. Dr. Bauer’s research is published in Political Psychology, Political Behavior, and the International Journal of Press/Politics among other journals.

In addition to teaching Introduction to American Politics, Dr. Bauer teaches a class on Gender & Politics. In the spring, she’ll be teaching Public Opinion and a seminar in Political Psychology in addition to Introduction to American Politics. Before becoming a political scientist, Dr. Bauer lived in DC, where she worked as the Communication Director of a non-profit involved in the labor movement. Dr. Bauer is originally from Alaska, though she is a self-proclaimed “military brat” who has lived in many places. She’s very excited to add North Carolina to the list of states she’s called home.

Publishing opportunities for undergrads

Ever written a final paper for a class and wished there was some bigger purpose to it than just getting a grade? Publishing it is one way to ensure that someone beyond your professor looks at it — and hopefully learns something from it! Getting published as an undergrad isn’t easy, but there are a number of journals that are specifically for undergraduate papers. We’ve compiled a list of few such journals below. Check them out — it’s a lot better end to your hard work than lying in the bottom of your desk drawer!

Security and Intelligence Studies Journal – An international peer-reviewed publication containing the finest of undergraduate research on security, intelligence and terrorism - http://sisjournal.king.edu/


The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics – The official journal of the national political science honor society, this journal is specifically for students of political science - http://www.psajournal.org/

Penn Undergraduate Law Journal – A student-run research journal focused on evaluating domestic and international law from a variety of disciplinary perspectives - http://www.pulj.org/

The OSU Journal of Politics and International Affairs – A student-run journal that publishes papers written by undergraduate students in the areas of Political Science, International Studies, Economics, Public Affairs, Sociology and related fields. – http://osujpia.wordpress.com/
For 30 years Davidson's political science department has been inviting students to learn about governance from the heart of the fray in Washington, D.C. For eight weeks in the summer students on the Davidson in Washington (DIW) program are doubly immersed in life "inside the beltway." They find and engage in an internship in offices of politicians, think tanks, lobbyists, lawyers and other organizations. And two evenings each week the resident director leads them in a topical seminar. Past groups have tackled foreign policy, national security, democracy and religion, and the politics of urban place-making.

In this 30th anniversary year of DIW, students are tackling another contentious issue: same-sex marriage.

The concentration of diplomats, analysts, commentators and legislators in D.C. always provide a rich source of guest lecturers for the seminar. This summer's resident political science professor, Brian Shaw, has gathered another compelling list of experts to tutor the 21 students in his care. Shaw regularly teaches a Davidson course in "Family and Justice," and has reconfigured that into a course for this year's DIW symposium called "Politics, Families and the Law."

The course is focused on moral and legal arguments for and against same-sex marriage. Just one year ago the Supreme Court issued its Windsor decision striking down the core of the Defense of Marriage Act, which opened the way for about 20 judicial decisions at the district court level to strike down state marriage amendments.

Given such a controversial topic, there's plenty for students to consider.

Want to keep reading? Click here to view the rest of the article on the Davidson College website.
Summer adventures with Political Science students

When they’re not at school, Davidson students still keep themselves busy, traveling, researching and working at locations across the United States and around the world. Here’s what some of our Political Science majors got up to this summer!

Marcus Bailey ’15 interned for a financial technology firm in New York City this summer, analyzing on-the-run US Treasury trades between dealers and high frequency trading firms on the firm’s new electronic inter-dealer trading platform. He used the skills he first learned in Dr. O’Geeen’s Methods and Statistics course to analyze how economic and geopolitical events affected trading behavior and to predict how future economic events would impact the US Treasuries market. He also spent some time in Washington, where he saw the Declaration of Independence for the first time and unsuccessfully tried to convince congressional interns to give him a behind-the-scenes tour of the Capitol.

Rob Bain ’15 served as a brokerage intern for Cushman & Wakefield in their downtown San Francisco office. Since he had never previously been to the Bay Area, living in Berkeley and working on Market Street was an eye opening experience, both culturally and professionally. Although Rob was unable to quote rental prices without a real estate license, his daily responsibilities included contacting brokers, creating property tour books, and conducting market research. Following graduation, Rob plans on moving out West to begin a full-time career in commercial real estate.

Rashaun Bennett ’16 spent his summer in Washington, DC being a part of the Institute for Responsible Citizenship, a program for high achieving African-American males who are driven towards being the vanguards of their professions. Rashaun was one of eleven students in his class, chosen from a pool of around 500 students. Within the program he interned for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, where he was a Communications and State Advocacy intern. During his internship he worked on education policy and charter school effectiveness. Towards the end of the summer Rashaun participated in the Clinton International Summer School in Belfast, Northern Ireland. During his time in Northern Ireland he examined conflict resolution and social entrepreneurship.

Rahael Borchers ’15 interned this summer at Creative Associates International, an international development firm. She was part of their Local Governance & Civil Society team that designs and implements development projects in fragile states. Says Rahael, “We called our intern group the United Nations, and my Malagasi co-intern took me along to my first Madagascar Independence Day celebration, where I created quite a spectacle because of an extraordinarily spicy spoonful. I also got to turn 21 over the 4th of July weekend with family and dear friends!”

David Curtis ’15 spent a couple of weeks interning with the American Middle East Institute, where he had the opportunity to travel to Cairo, Egypt, and attend their first annual business conference that included many large American and Egyptian companies. Afterwards, he had the special opportunity to travel to Tehran, Iran to study Farsi at the University of Tehran for one month. Says David, “It was an amazing experience and I made many friends. I even had the privilege of staying with a host family.”

Lincoln Davidson ’15 presented a paper on the political activities of Taiwanese students at Mainland Chinese universities at the 20th annual conference of the North American Taiwan Studies Association. He also got to experience the intricacies of Chinese bureaucracy after being shunted from office to office and having his visa cancelled while trying to do research on rural economy in Guangdong Province, PRC. Ultimately, he spent two weeks in a village outside of Suzhou studying economic development and learning about shrimp farming. Lincoln also spent some time collecting petition signatures to help get the first independent Congressional candidate in PA’s 10th district on the ballot in November.

Caroline Ey ’15 spent the summer in Washington, DC as part of the Davidson in Washington program. While in DC, Caroline worked on Capitol Hill for the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, John Boehner. She was thrilled to work in such a dynamic and bustling office, and looks forward to spending more time in DC in the future.

Brett Fallon ’15 spent his summer interning at Silverman, McDonald & Friedman, a law firm in Wilmington, DE that specializes in personal injury. In addition to doing office work Brett shadowed one of the partners, Michael Silverman, as he went to court, mediations, and depositions. Brett also spent two weeks in Berkhamsted, England, a small town outside of London where he socialized with English university students and explored the countryside.

Chandler Gray ’15 interned with Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC) on Capitol Hill. Through close collaboration with the Senator and her staff, I attended briefings on various subjects, engaged in policy research on healthcare and education issues, as well as interacted with constituents through Capitol tours, daily phone calls, and mail. Additionally, Chandler participated in the Davidson in Washington program, where she was fortunate enough to listen as some of the country’s leading authorities on the same-sex marriage debate shared their views and opinions with the Davidson students.

Connor Kopchick ’15 spent this summer in Washington DC participating in the White House Office of Presidential Correspondence Summer Associate Program. As an associate, Connor analyzed incoming mail addressed to the President for policy responses and agency assistance. He also routinely answered White House Comment Line and noted constituents’
Students join Menkhaus on India program

The group studied international relations and met with alums throughout the region

Seventeen students, mostly political science majors, joined Dr. Ken Menkhaus on the Davidson Semester in India program last fall. The program had as its thematic focus politics and international relations, with course credits for South Asian Politics, Indian Ocean Relations, Sustainable Development in India and India Past and Present.

The group was based at Madras Christian College in Chennai in the south of India, but traveled extensively as part of the experience. In addition to visiting important cultural sites like the Taj Mahal, Varanasi and the Golden Temple, the group traveled to Trichy to study issues of development and the environment at Bishop Heber College; Kerala, to learn about the history of the Indian Ocean spice trade; and New Delhi, where the group spent two weeks in lectures from top political analysts and academics on Indian politics, development policies, and foreign policy.

As part of the program’s study of the Indian Ocean region, the group also spent ten days in Sri Lanka, including a bus trip to Jaffna to learn more about post-war reconstruction; four days in Oman, to explore the country’s long maritime history in Indian Ocean trade and migration; and five days in the United Arab Emirates, where the group learned about regional commerce and labor migration.

The trip relied heavily on the hospitality and guidance of Davidson political science alums living and working in the region. Special thanks go out to Brian Orland (’07, journalist) in New Delhi; Michael Cathey (’92, Deputy Consular Chief, U.S. Consulate Chennai) in Chennai; Laura Malenas (’92, Political-Economic Section Chief, U.S. Embassy Muscat), in Oman; and Vic Lindsay, (’04, Assistant Director of Student Activities, NYU-Abu Dhabi), in the UAE.

Davidson political science alum Quinn Libson ’13 served as assistant resident director on the program, and drew on her prior experience living in India to help guide the students as they learned about Indian culture and society.

A short film capturing some of the fun during the trip was produced by Shea Parikh ’16 and can be viewed on YouTube.

Shea Parikh ’16 interned at the Amani Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, a start-up social venture that aims to prepare next-generation talent with the skills they need to thrive in the social sector. Amani offers a wide variety of courses that mainly have to do with social entrepreneurship and how to manage your own social venture. Given the nature of a start-up, his work ranged from Evaluation and Monitoring for their Social Innovation course, to database and website management.

Pablo Zevallos ’16 interned at the Clinton Foundation in New York City. He worked in the Correspondence Department, drafting letters that helped maintain the personal, professional, and political relationships of former President Clinton. Pablo also vetted event message requests and drafted ones that were approved, in a custom the Department has kept since its White House days. In addition to his writing duties, Pablo joined other interns in hard and soft skill-building seminars and conversations with speakers, including former President Clinton, former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Chelsea Clinton.

Wade Leach ’16 interned in the Washington, DC office of Senator Richard Burr (R-NC). His main duties were giving Capitol tours, attending committee hearings, and communicating with constituents via phone, mail, and e-mail.

Parker Murphy ’15 worked directly with experienced trial attorneys at the District Attorney’s Office in Greenville, NC as a legal intern. He handled cases in traffic, domestic violence, assault, drug treatment, larceny, and juvenile courts. Parker also served as a telecommuting research intern for the Hudson Institute, researching national security policy topics like chemical warfare and chemical weapons policy.

Kurt Vidmer ’16 was in Washington D.C. interning with the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, which is a policy group that deals with recreational sportsmen’s and conservation legislation. He also participated in a political science class at George Washington University as part of the Davidson in Washington program.

Says Kurt, “My Washington D.C. summer experience exposed me to many different aspects of both the sportsmen’s community and American political system.”

Students visit the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar, India

Students visit the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar, India
Peter Ahrensford published two books over the past year. First, he co-translated a collection of plays by Sophocles, *The Theban Plays: Oedipus the Tyrant, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone* (Cornell University Press, 2014). Most recently he authored *Homer on the Gods and Virtue: Creating the Foundations of Classical Civilization* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) (see separate story). Dr. Ahrensford also recently gave a series of lectures on “The Contest between Achilles and David: Homer, the Bible, and the Question of Human Excellence,” at the University of Texas at Austin, Baylor University, the University of Dallas, and Concordia University in Montreal.

Graham Bullock was on sabbatical for the 2013-14 academic year. During that time, he presented new research on public opinion about climate change policies at the Policy Studies Organization’s Dupont Summit in Washington DC, the Political Science Department’s Behavior & Institutions Seminar Series at Duke University, and the Midwest Political Science Association’s Annual Meeting in Chicago. The work introduces the concept of “responsive accommodation,” and presents experimental evidence on the extent to which different audiences support carbon tax proposals that use this political communication strategy. Dr. Bullock also presented research on the organizational credibility and legitimacy of environmental certifications and sustainability ratings at the ISEAL Alliance’s Global Sustainability Standards Conference in London and the Nicholas School of the Environment’s Spring Seminar Series at Duke University. He also presented research on the assumptions and values that are embedded in product eco-labels at the Annual Conference of the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences (AESS) at Pace University in New York City.

Graham and his spouse Sally also had a baby boy, Jordan Theodore Bullock, on August 14. Congrats Graham and Sally!

Our newest department member, Besir Ceka, co-authored a piece, “The meaning of democracy changes for Europeans depending on their education status, income and national context,” in the LSE EUROPP Blog. 27 August 2014. Welcome Besir!

Adjunct professor Britta Crandall published a book review, “Chile Can Say No,” in Survival (April-May 2014). She also conducted research as a consultant to Freedom House, and authored several South American country papers in Freedom House’s annual Freedom of the World publication.

A highlight of Russell Crandall’s year was another edition of the annual Colombia Staff Ride in January 2014. This time the group visited the provincial city of Cali instead of Medellin, where they had gone one a few of the previous trips (see the writeup in the Davidson Journal, p. 36). Upon returning to campus, Crandall wrote an essay titled “Colombia’s Proven Drug War” for the American Interest magazine based on research the staff ride team conducted.

Says Crandall, “I’m currently enjoying my sabbatical that I’m using to research US involvement in El Salvador during its civil war in the 1980s. It’s classical cold war diplomatic history and I love it. The research is both exciting and daunting, as there are thousands of pages of recently declassified government documents. And that’s on top of the secondary sources: press accounts, three presidential libraries and oral interviews with former combatants, politicians and diplomats. It’s been a treat to have a number of student research assistants that started with Caroline McDermott, Francisco Morales and Hunter Williams in ’08 and currently Andrea Becerra, Pablo Zevallos, Drew Tucker and James Atkins. Related to the Salvador book project, senior major Paige Donnelly and I co-authored several essays including El Salvador’s Delicate Balance and The Fragile Victory.” Crandall’s latest piece on the war on drugs is slated to be in The American Interest, but a sneak preview can be found here.


Visiting professor Maren Milligan published an article in the APCG newsletter entitled "Fighting for the Right to Exist: Institutions, Identity, and Conflict in Jos, Nigeria," and co-authored (with Ken Menkhaus) an annotated bibliography on “Islamic Politics” for the African Studies collection in Oxford Bibliographies. Over the summer of 2014 she conducted fieldwork for a UN study in Tripoli, Lebanon. She also received a digital...
Professor honored with APSA service award

Dr. Ronald Schmidt, Visiting Professor of Political Science, was recently honored by the American Political Science Association (APSA) with the 2014 Goodnow Award, which recognizes distinguished service to the profession of political science. Dr. Schmidt was recognized for his “tireless institution-building efforts” and his contributions to APSA as a member of the editorial board for the American Political Science Review and president of the APSA Section on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics. Dr. Schmidt is Professor Emeritus of California State University, Long Beach and since 2013 has taught a class on Racial and Ethnic Politics at Davidson. Congratulations to Dr. Schmidt! (Click here to see Dr. Schmidt’s citation from APSA and here for coverage from DavidsonNews.net)

Spring events planned to celebrate Dr. Ortmayer

Mark your calendars for LalapaLOUza!

In spring 2015, the department will sponsor two events to celebrate the contributions of Dr. Lou Ortmayer, who is retiring at the end of this academic year after 38 years of inspirational service to the political science department and the college. The first LalapaLOUza event is slated for Friday, March 27; the second will be held Friday, June 5, during reunion weekend (June 5-7). Alums, current students, faculty, staff and friends are invited to both festivities. The March 27 celebration will include a panel presentation on Friday afternoon, showcasing a small selection of some of Dr. Ortmayer’s many distinguished former students. They will speak on aspects of their professional work or on topics in international politics. An evening reception will follow. More details on the events will follow, both on campus and in email communication with alums and colleagues. We hope to see many of your there to help honor Dr. Ortmayer and all he has done for two generations of Davidson College students.

Andrew O’Geen has a co-authored article accepted for publication: “The Nature of Legal Change on the U.S. Supreme Court: Jurisprudential Regimes Theory and its Alternatives,” in the American Journal of Political Science (forthcoming). He also presented co-authored papers at two conferences this year: ‘Legal Change and Constraint on the Supreme Court: The Case of Search and Seizure Law” (with Brandon L. Bartels) at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, and “Political Polarization and Judicial Authority” Southern Political Science Association Conference. The latter was co-authored with Dr. Aaron Houck ’02, who recently served as a visiting professor in the department. O’Geen and Pat Sellers were also awarded a Faculty Advancement Grant to support their curricular work on “Blended Learning in Statistics.”

Lou Ortmayer is on sabbatical for the fall 2014 semester. In addition to slowly sorting and discarding the famously high piles of papers in his office (he’ll have to vacate his office upon his retirement this summer, so this is a race against time), he took a trip to Europe in October.

Shelley Rigger’s well-received 2011 book Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse was reissued as a paperback last year, and this year was reprinted in Chinese (see separate story). Her edited volume Democratization in China, Korea and Southeast Asia? (with Lynn T. White III and Kate Zhou) was also published this year. She was recently appointed to be a non-resident Senior Fellow of the China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham, UK. In the spring, Shelley received the Matthews Travel Award, a prize given alternately to faculty and staff designed to support travel for personal growth. Her family is adamant that they will not be using the award to travel to Taiwan or mainland China. Shelley was also honored at the Fall 2014 Convocation as recipient of the Thomas Jefferson Award for outstanding service to the College. Congrats Shelley!

Susan Roberts provided commentary for the GOP U.S. Senate Primary Debate, among many other appearances throughout the year. More details about the GOP debate can be found here: http://www.davidson.edu/news/in-the-news/140423-gop-us-senate-debate


Pat Sellers continues to teach one course per year in the department, but has been pulled away for administrative duties at the College. Since July 1, 2014, his responsibilities have shifted from role as Associate Dean to Vice President for Strategic Partnerships. In this new role, he will be seeking out collaborations with foundations, corporations, and other new partners for Davidson, in hopes of creating new opportunities for students and faculty. Congrats Pat!

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Teaching the politics of art at an art school in Karachi, Pakistan, studying protest throughout the Middle East and working for the campaign of an independent Pakistani political candidate, Ayesha Omer ’09 has kept busy since she graduated, to say the least. We sat down with Ayesha to talk about what she’s been up to and how Davidson students can better prepare themselves for civic engagement after graduation.

What have you been doing since Davidson?
Right after I left Davidson, I went back to Pakistan, where I was teaching English, history and writing to seniors at a high school in Karachi. I did that for a year and then I went for a graduate degree at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. My degree was on art and public policy, and it was an incredibly radicalizing experience. We studied politics and used that study to form and use art. I was very interested in issues of personal hatred, Islamophobia, and protest, and I created performance art around it. One example was this performance piece that I worked on with an Israeli-American artist. We were both talking about issues of belonging and home, and the violence that colored our ideas of home and ideas of self, how we were processing that particular violence, and particularly how there’s this kind of nostalgic longing for this beautiful and in some ways unattainable sense of home.

At that time, the Arab Spring was happening, and my thesis was looking at how revolutions and people’s movements come about, and what are the dynamics of social and political organization, and how is it that people’s movements always reject the political foundations, and in that rejection how are they doing in fact create similar systems of governance and organizations that are hierarchical or hegemonic, how is it that people can come from very different backgrounds and come to be in solidarity.

That was my graduate degree, then I went back home and taught undergraduate courses at an art school in Karachi. I was part of a national election campaign for an independent candidate name Jibran Nasir. He was super progressive, very critical of political leadership and political parties. I started out with faith in the political system, but I feel like it turned fairly sour because towards the end of the campaign the candidate was very interested in self-publicity and self-promotion, and not too much on the issues that we all felt very deeply about.

Since then I’ve been working on the Hazara genocide, studying this incredible protest by the Hazara in response to the wave of terrorist attacks against them. In the protest they refused to bury their dead, and so they sat out on the streets with the dead bodies of their loved ones for days until the government came to that region in southwest Pakistan and entered negotiations with the religious and political leadership of Hazara. It was a really incredible protest, with pockets of protest appearing around Pakistan and the world, this incredible swarm of Shia-Sunni solidarity. Women actually started the protest, and around Pakistan there were so many women who participated, non-Muslims who participated, there were young and old and rich and poor, it was an incredible movement.

With my interest in the Arab Spring and Occupy, and now this incredible form of protest in Pakistan, I think there was this trajectory that I had been pursuing.

So anyway, I went and I conducted interviews with these women. Most of the victims of terrorism are men, so there’s a lot of women who are widows and have children and therefore what’s happening is that women are entering into decision-making in their communities in unprecedented ways. What I really want to study now – I’m doing a PhD at NYU now, in the Media, Culture and Communications program – and I’m interested in how violent terrorism is changing the way people tell stories about their communities, stories about violence, stories about loss of loved ones, and what those stories are doing to community foundations, to identity formation, to citizen-subject identity formation. I’m also interested in the visual culture around violence. One thing that’s not really studied is how in terrorist attacks, bodies are disturbed, they’re either mounded together or never found, so a lot of people who lose loved ones in terrorist attacks actually never find the body. And I think that kind of trauma has a particular significance, and it’s something that I want to explore further. I’ve been doing a lot of art as well around violence and freedom of expression and gender identity.

Within all these things you’ve been doing, what is it that you learned at Davidson that was helpful with that? What do you wish you could have learned or done at Davidson? Davidson’s campus culture is very polite, not very confrontational or activist – do you think the school could do more to prepare students to be involved in these kinds of things after they graduate?

Yeah, although I think Davidson has changed a lot, actually, since I left. I graduated in 2009. Davidson was a very hard time in my life, I think it was the hardest time in my life, because I was an international student, I was a woman, I was a Pakistani woman, on a largely white campus. During that time there was a lot of interest going around about why there’s all this anti-American sentiment, and I kid you not, in classes I would be pointed to as the person in the room who can represent all Muslims and all of this anti-American sentiment. So professors would do that, and I was young and not very political, but I think Davidson radicalized me, in the way it made me into a political category. You’re sitting in a classroom, and the professor asks you, “Ayesha, why don’t you tell everyone else about anti-Americanism?” And I’m thinking, “Ok, so everyone else in this room is going to think ‘she hates America.’” So I would just kind of talk a bit, but I didn’t want to do this. In some ways it’s the curse of being a minority. It was a very isolating experience.

In political science, I never really read Marx. The only time I ever read Marx in political science was in this class on international political economy with Crandall. In that class we read this small article by Marx. But no one ever talked about the left. In political theory I never read about the left. I felt like there was this incredible bias, and I think that’s at the heart of what you were referring to, this kind of conservatism, which doesn’t really encourage students to be politically active and to engage with global or national political issues. The work load was insane. What Davidson did prepare me for was the work I was going to do. It promotes itself in that way, right, because you’re going...
to be working like a dog, but hey, that's going to help you. And it kind of did, but what was really difficult was finding a community of people who could support some of my struggles.

**Do you think there's any way we can resist this conservatism in the classroom?**

I really think that professors should never point out the people of color in the classroom and expect them to speak for their community. I also think there needs to be more communities around getting students to actually talk about these issues; there needs to be space outside the classroom where learning happens. I think the curriculum could also be less US-centered. Political science is very US-centered, there's no perspective outside of the US. I never experienced the history of the people of color in the US, for instance, in my class on American politics. The perspectives of the other are completely missing from instruction and curricula, so I think even revising some of the curricula needs to happen, because those perspectives are so important to how we understand the world. That is something I would do. As a political science student, I would want that kind of thing – it's a problem of political science in general, that it's very US-centered and doesn't really open itself to alternative points of view.

For students, especially students of color or students who are international, you can't be afraid of calling out instances of discrimination. I think having more speakers who come from outside, and engaging in conversations and building communities outside of the classroom are few points that could help in some ways. The most important thing is to speak about issues that are disturbing.

Despite all this, there were professors at Davidson who were incredibly supportive, Dr. Rigger and Dr. Alexander in particular, and without them I wouldn't be getting a PhD at NYU. And there's already been a lot of change since I was at Davidson, for example, more people working on the Middle East integrated into the political science department.

**Department produces four new books**

Political science faculty have recently authored four new books to add to the departmental bookshelf.

Peter Ahrensdorf has led the burst of production with two books in 2014. His first (co-produced with Thomas Pangle) is a translation of a collection of plays by Sophocles, *The Theban Plays: Oedipus the Tyrant, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone* (Cornell University Press, 2014). Ahrensdorf and Pangle provide critical historical, mythic, and linguistic background information in the preface, in notes to the plays, and in an introduction. The book has received glowing reviews for its accurate and readable translation.

His most recent book was published in September -- *Homer on the Gods and Virtue: Creating the Foundations of Classical Civilization* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). In the book Ahrensdorf provides a fresh and provocative analysis of The Iliad and the Odyssey to explore Homer's perspectives on human excellence and the nature of the divine. The book argues that Homer elevates human virtue over reverence for the gods, celebrates the wisdom of the poet over the heroism of the warrior, and concludes that the courageously questioning Achilles is superior to Hector and Odysseus. Reviewers have praised it as a “challenging and persuasive” and as a “profound and moving book… gracefully written and intensely argued.”

Russell Crandall's latest book *America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror* (Cambridge University Press 2014) examines the long, complex experience of American involvement in irregular warfare from the American Revolution in 1776 through the present day. It has earned accolades from reviewers as an “extremely valuable history” and a “gracefully written… and valuable account of irregular warfare.” Crandall expresses his thanks to the many former students who worked on aspects of the research and writing of the book.

Shelley Rigger’s book *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Rowman and Littlefield 2011) garnered excellent reviews: “a must read;” “well-written and engaging;” “a splendid volume;” and “an excellent and well-researched cultural/political breakdown of Taiwanese society.” It sold so well that the publisher issued an updated paperback edition in 2013, and this year the book has been translated and re-published in Chinese.
Alumni news

Alums, apologies! We ran out of time to compile your latest news for this issue – but we promise to pack the next issue with a full account of all your news. Please send in updates – on new jobs, honors and awards, personal news – to us at PoliticalScienceNews@davidson.edu. We love hearing from you!

Thanks!

Many thanks to Prof. Ken Menkhaus and Lincoln Davidson ’15 for all the work they’ve put in to pulling this newsletter together!