Student research interest unprecedented

For students who want to either learn more about a topic or who are interested in pursuing their own research questions beyond the classroom the Department of Political Science encourages students to pursue independent research opportunities. During the 2009-2010 academic year, 36 independent research projects were completed, a record for one academic year. Twelve political science faculty directed/mentored these varied research projects helping these students navigate the research process and providing feedback.

Independent studies are one semester projects that often emerge from particular interests students have in pursuing a deeper understanding of an issue or area. This past year 18 students wrote independent study papers ranging from healthcare reform, to poverty to immigration and international topics such as southern Africa and Turkey.

The bachelor’s essay is a two semester in-depth independent research opportunity that allows students to follow through on a set of research questions to a multi-chapter finished product. Students get the chance to do their own independent research as well as design and execute a research project. Students apply the methodological tools they gained through classes and often focus on questions that emerged out of classroom papers or independent study projects. This past year 18 students wrote bachelor’s essays on topics such as poverty in Appalachia, rape in war, gentrification, and the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

Dr. Curtis who has supervised numerous independent projects feels that “the work that students do in both independent studies and bachelor’s essays allows students to do what they usually only read about. Students get the chance to pick an area of interest, a faculty supervisor, a research question and a method for answering that question. The independence of these projects is both daunting and rewarding for students. I love working with bachelor’s essay students who really engage with their question and use their research to pursue questions that have evolved through a student’s experiences here in class or from studying abroad or from an internship.”

Carter Foxgrover’s bachelor’s essay, “Temporal Dynamics of Interest Group Activity 1998-2007” added to the literature on U.S. federal lobbying activity by challenging the claim that business lobbying interests are increasing. His data collected on the lobby activities of different types of organizations (eg. healthcare, trade associations, corporations) complicate our understanding of special interests in Washington. Carter received a MAYS grant in support of his research conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tim LaPira. He presented his research at the Midwest Political Science Association’s Annual Meeting in Chicago. The department and a $250 grant funded his travel.

“Independent research provides an integrative learning experience you can’t get in a classroom setting. It offers an opportunity for a student and faculty member to work together in a one on one setting and learn from a joint endeavor.” said Dr. Liu.

New Faculty to join department

Two new faculty are joining the political science department.

Erin McAdams earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from Ohio State University. McAdams teaching and research interests include American politics, voting behavior, political parties, public opinion, campaigns and elections and research methods. (Erin McAdams pictured left)

Dr. Mary Desjeans will teach in the department for the next two years as part of the CIA’s Scholar in residence program. Desjeans has been with the CIA for nearly 30 years. She hopes that her background will enable her to provide students with a vibrant sense of the role of intelligence in supporting US national security. (Mary Desjeans pictured right)
POLS 2009-2010 Theme Recap: Political Imagination: Creative Solutions to Contemporary Dilemmas

Political Imagination: Creative Solutions to Contemporary Dilemmas served as this year’s theme for Department of Political Science events. Dr. Mark Umbreit, professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work and founder of Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking, presented at the Political Science Convocation of Majors on February 17, 2010. Dr. Umbreit is a practicing mediator and author of four books and more than 100 articles in the field of mediation and restorative justice.

Dr. Umbreit’s Convocation presentation

“Restorative Justice in the 21st Century: A Social Movement in the Global Community” provided insight on how the restorative justice movement offers an alternative to the conventional jail punishment for crime.

“This approach engages those who are harmed, wrongdoers, and their affected communities in search of mutually beneficial solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships,” said Dr. Umbreit.

Restorative Justice methods include victim-offender mediation and family group conferencing.

Student Highlights

Political science major Zachary Hanson received a critical language scholarship from the U.S. State Department to study Russian in Russia for ten weeks during the 2010 summer.

Political Science major Caroline Horres received a Boren scholarship to study Arabic in Jordan during summer and fall 2010.

C of C for Urban Agriculture was recently established by students with the goal of furthering social and environmental justice and sustainability. The organization seeks to provide fresh, organic, local produce to the community.

At right, Dan Ritter (2010) and Adrian Barry (political science senior), designers and gardeners of the 114 Wentworth Courtyard Garden.

Alumni Highlights

Caroline Burns (2010) was awarded a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to study at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda while completing an intensive service project.

Casey Brazell (2007) is attending Harvard University, working towards a Masters degree and PhD in American Civilization/ American History.


Stephanie (Leonard) Eames (1995) is Special Counsel with Nexen Pruet’s Banking & Finance Group in Charleston, SC. She was a member of the team responsible for procuring incentives for the Boeing company.

Helen Rosko and Kelsi Ward (2010) joined the Peace Corp. Helen is a water extension/sanitation agent in Bamako, Mali and Kelsi is a Youth Development Facilitator in Peru.

Brianna Kurtz (2008) is a regional advisor for OSAC on Africa.

Mary Neal Lempesis (2003) works as an Assistant Solicitor, 14th Judicial Circuit court in Beaufort, SC.

Jonathan Marcantel (1999) serves as Assistant Dean for Assessment & Assistant Professor of Law at Lincoln Memorial University’s Duncan School of Law in Knoxville, TN.

Billie Jean Murray (2000) is a tenure track professor at Villanova University.

Kathryn “Kaylee” Rogers (2008) will attend UCLA starting in fall 2010 to pursue a Ph.D. in Political Science.

Charles “Bud” Ferrillo (1972) was named 2010 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year by the College of Charleston Alumni Association.
Faculty News

Dr. Helen Delfeld was awarded a competitive faculty research stipend in support of research in southeast Asia over the summer.

Dr. Lynne Ford won the Distinguished Service Award for her dedicated service to the college. She will take a leave of absence from the department to serve as the Associate Provost for Curriculum and Academic Administration and Interim Associate Vice President for the Academic experience.

Dr. Doug Friedman was honored for his ten years of work with the Instituto de Filosofía in Cuba.

Dr. Kea Gorden has accepted a tenure track assistant professor position in the department.

Dr. David Mann and Dr. Jack Parson retired at the end of June after more than 30 years of service.

Dr. Earl Kline, co-founder of the political science department who taught at the college from 1970-1993 passed away on July 11, 2010 at the age of 88.

Dr. Tim LaPira resigned and has taken a position at James Madison University.

Professor Kendra Stewart’s Reading list

Non-fiction

Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser – What started out as the most read article in Rolling Stone magazine turns into an interesting and controversial book on the negative impact the fast food industry has had on US food policy. It’s a fascinating read that is sure to influence the way you think about what you eat.

Plagues and Peoples by William McNeill – A fresh and challenging outlook on the history of the world that is hard to put down. The author integrates ecology and demographics with politics and culture and provides a powerful and enlightening argument.

Puppies and Statistics by Joel Best – (and More Damned Lies and Statistics) Best looks critically at how statistics are used to confuse public issues. This book is an easy and interesting read that makes you a better consumer of information (and something I always assign in POLS 251!).

Fiction

South of Broad by Pat Conroy – How can you live in Charleston and not pick up Conroy’s new book about our beautiful city. The typical beautiful Conroy prose with characters such as a Judge Alexander and Eduardo Galeano.

Alumni Spotlight: Ben Evans

After graduating from the College of Charleston in 1994, Ben Evans earned a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University. From there, he took a job as a reporter at the Durham Herald-Sun/ Chapel Hill Herald newspaper in North Carolina. He started out in the Orange County bureau, covering just about everything (police, courts, politics).

After about a year, Ben moved to the Durham office, where he covered Durham County government and later City Hall. In Durham, he got to see at close range how things work in government. After about six years in North Carolina, he took a job covering energy legislation for the Congressional Quarterly in Washington. He stayed at CQ for about two years before moving to the Associated Press in 2006.

Ben is a reporter for The Associated Press’ Washington bureau covering Southern politics. He also covers race issues and the Congressional Black Caucus. He enjoys his job which allows him to see first-hand how Washington works and allows him to try to hold powerful politicians accountable for their decisions.
Attend an event
The Department of Political Science 2010-2011 theme is Consumption and Survival: The Politics of Everyday Living. We are planning the POLS Convocation of Majors. Check the Political Science website at www.polisci.cofc.edu for updates. On November 4, the fall Geography lecture will feature Dr. Deborah G. Martin, Geography professor at Clark University who will talk about “Law and Geography.”

Provide an internship opportunity for current students or volunteer to be a guest speaker.

Volunteer as a Career Mentor
Students often have questions about certain careers and are interested in ideas on how to go about finding their first job. If you would like to volunteer as a career mentor, please get in touch with us or join the C of C Alumni Career Mentor Network online. The information and support you can provide is invaluable to our current students!

Join the C of C Alumni Online Community and see what your classmates are up to.

Contact Erin Blevins at blevinse@cofc.edu to volunteer or provide photos/updates. We want to hear from you!

You can donate ONLINE directly to one of these funds:

**Political Science Fund (R307)**
Support Student Awards and Student/Faculty events such as best paper awards and special learning opportunities.

**William V. Moore Memorial Fund in Political Science (R531)**
Support programs such as the William V. Moore Student Research Conference being held in April 2011. Advanced high school and undergraduate students at public colleges and secondary schools will have a chance to present research to peers and College of Charleston Faculty.

**William V. Moore Endowed Scholarship in Political Science (E544)**
Provides a renewable scholarship to a political science student who demonstrates a commitment to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians.

Donate Online
To make an online donation to one of these funds, visit http://giving.cofc.edu, select “Online Giving” on right hand side of page, select “Other” in the designation section and indicate which one you want to contribute to in the comments section:

**Political Science Fund (R307)**
**William V. Moore Memorial Fund in Political Science (R531)**
**William V. Moore Endowed Scholarship in Political Science (E544)**

Please contact Phil Jos, Chair, Department of Political Science with any questions about the funds at josp@cofc.edu.

Stay Connected

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