

Chair's Letter

Dear Alumni:

I again send you my warm greetings together with news about some of the happenings since last year. I am pleased to note that my colleagues continue to be recognized for the excellence of their teaching and research. For example, Alec Ewald, who joined us in 2006, won UVM's Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Award for assistant professors. In research, and as detailed below, Professor Caroline Beer received the first Joan Smith Faculty Research Support Award to help defray the costs of her research in Mexico. And, thanks to so many of you who contribute generously to our Gift Fund, we have been able to support some of our students in their endeavors. I include a report from Katherine Nopper (Class of 2009) who attended a conference on Hannah Arendt, a philosopher about whom she is preparing an honors thesis. Another student, Madeleine Hall, was given funds to help defray the costs of a summer program in Arabic to further her studies in Middle Eastern politics. As always, I appreciate the emails and letters I receive from you from time to time.

George Moyser, Chair.

POLS GIFT FUND SUPPORTS STUDENT CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE....

Katherine Nopper (UVM '09) is a member of the Departmental Honors Program in Political Science. She is writing a Senior Honors Thesis on the political ideas of Hannah Arendt, an important twentieth-century thinker.

"During the last weekend of March, 2008, I was invited to participate in the annual Arendt Circle Meeting taking place at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. For two days professors and graduate students presented their papers and thoughts on the theories of Hannah Arendt. The presentations and conversation were incredibly enlightening and informative—it was a gem of an experience that has provided a wealth of inspiration for my senior thesis that will be focusing on Arendt's theory of judgment and responsibility. I owe great thanks to my thesis advisor, Professor Neal, for identifying this opportunity and writing a recommendation to the Arendt Circle organizers, as well as to the Political Science Department, whose (Gift Fund) scholarship covered my travel expenses and without which I wouldn't have been able to take part in this event."

Katherine Knopper, '09

PRE-LAW ADVISING RESOURCES NEEDED

Every year, the pre-law advisers in the Department of Political Science counsel numerous students who are considering law school. Aside from helping students determine whether law school is appropriate for their goals and then helping them navigate the application process, we often know little about where students go after they graduate. We are hoping to develop a list of Department alumni who have gone on to law school. This information will give us a better sense of where some of the Department's best students have matriculated and what they've gone on to do, and will also aid us in developing an alumni list of contacts for current and future students interested in law school. If you have gone on to law school after your time at UVM, please let us know where you went and what kind of work you are doing. In addition, if you are interested in being available as a resource to current and future students in the Department of Political Science who are thinking about law school, please let us know that as well.

Information and inquiries may be directed to:

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BOOKS, ARTICLES, CONFERENCES

Lisa Holmes' current research focuses on the politics of appointing federal court judges. She has recently completed a series of papers on how presidents use judicial nominees to court favor with their partisan supporters and interested groups. These papers have been published in recent issues of */Presidential Studies Quarterly/* and */American Politics Research/*. She was also asked to write a paper on the topic of "The Intersection of Personal Convictions and Federal Judicial Selection" for the American Judicature Society's fourth annual collaboration issue with the */Drake Law Review/*. At the 2008 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Professor Holmes participated on a roundtable panel on "The 2008 Elections and Judicial Selection" with some of the nation's leading scholars on judicial appointment politics. Professor Holmes will be using a sabbatical year to begin a new project on the implications of politicized appointment politics on the careers and attitudes of judicial nominees, as well as to complete papers on Senate delay of judicial nominees and the retirement decisions of federal court judges.

Anthony Gierzynski's recent publications include two he wrote in collaboration with UVM students: "'Instant Runoff Voting in Burlington's 2006 Mayoral Race,'" in *Campaigns and Elections*, April 2007 with students from

his 2006 "Vermont Legislative Research Shop" class (article can be found at <http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/intellispe/here/ce0507-special/>); and, "The New Guard: Entertainment Talk Shows and the Not-so-fake News," with Kensington Moore (class of 08) in *Voting in America*. A book chapter on his "Vermont Legislative Research Shop" class (coauthored with former UVM Political Science Prof. Tom Rice) is due out by the end of the year. Another book chapter, "The Promise and Futility of American Campaign Financing," in *Routledge Handbook of Political Management* is also due out this year. His campaign finance analysis as an expert witness played a role in the US Supreme Court decision *Randall v. Sorrell*, 2006 (his work was cited in the ruling and dissenting opinions). He is currently finishing up what would be his third book, with the working title *Prescriptions for a Healthier Democracy: Our Dying Elections and What We Can Do to Save Them*.

Gregory Gause completed a book manuscript on the international politics of the Persian Gulf at the beginning of the summer. It is now under review at an academic press. He testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in its hearings on Iraq (<http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/hearings/2008/hrg080403a.html>) on April 3, 2008. Over the summer he attended conferences in a number of hardship locations: Rome, the French Riviera (Menton was the town, just down the coast from Monaco), Gstaad and

London. He also attended a conference in Qatar, which in the summer is a hardship location. He will be on sabbatical in the spring semester 2009, on a Fulbright Scholarship in Kuwait, teaching at the American University of Kuwait and doing research.

Michele Commercio spent the past two summers in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) working on a new project concerning women and their pursuit of Islamic, rather than secular, education. It is puzzling that university students would



choose to study in Islamic universities when their societies reward degrees from secular institutions. Professor Commercio will conduct a survey of female university students this summer to generate hypotheses that might explain this choice. Professor Commercio has a forthcoming article on Russian political mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Latvia that will appear in *Political Science Quarterly*. In addition, her book on the Russian minority question in Central Asia and the Baltics will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Caroline Beer seen here visiting Chichen Itza during her summer research trip to Merida, Mexico. Professor Beer was awarded

the Joan Smith Award by the UVM College of Arts and Sciences. The award provides \$15,000 for research on a topic related to social justice. Professor



Beer is using the money to fund her research into the role of women in politics in Mexico. She is interested in whether women in positions of power act differently than men, and whether having more women in politics leads to more women-friendly policies. This summer she travelled to Merida, the state capital of Yucatan, Mexico, to interview female state legislators about their work in politics.

Patrick Neal has recently published two papers on political theory. "Is Public Reason Innocuous?" published in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (June, 2008) and "Is Public Reason Hostile to Religion?" to be published in a forthcoming collection of essays edited by Shaun Young entitled *The Legacy of John Rawls*. Professor Neal is working on a book on the subject of religion and liberal political theory. He participated in a symposium on Lucas Swaine's *The Liberal Conscience* at the 2007 New England Political Science Association Meetings in Boston.