

Faculty and students in the Department of Political Science at the University of Vermont are interested in keeping in touch with our alumni and informing them of current developments within the department. In this newsletter, we focus on some of the recent activities of faculty and students involved in public law scholarship.

Public Law in the Department of Political Science at UVM

The public law corner of the Department of Political Science has undergone a number of changes in recent years. I joined the UVM faculty in 2002, just after Howard Ball retired from the department. Phil Cooper's departure soon after that, coupled with the departures or retirements of other colleagues with interests and expertise in law, required a rebuilding period. Alec Ewald joined our faculty in 2006, helping to add to our public law course offerings, particularly in the area of civil rights. He has made an immediate and positive contribution to our department, both in terms of his research and his teaching. Alec was awarded the prestigious Kroepsch-Maurice Award for teaching excellence in 2008. This past year, we were fortunate to have Ellen Andersen join us. Ellen holds a joint appointment in the Women's and Gender Studies Program, and has offered courses in civil liberties, comparative LGBT politics, and sex and politics. Although our core public law faculty would be new to many of the department's alumni, it is exciting to once again be in a department with an unusually large and strong public law contingent.

While we were in the process of rebuilding our public law personnel, we had two adjunct professors join us on a part-time basis. Bageshree Blasius came to us in 2006, initially to teach courses in civil liberties. Since then, she has also taught the introductory course in American Politics, and has redeveloped our long-absent and important course on the American Civil Rights Movement. In 2007, Alison Arms began teaching a newly developed course on Individual Rights and the War on Terror. Alison is, like me, a department alumna, and her course has been a popular and timely addition to our curriculum.

In addition to those of us who teach primarily in the public law area, the Department of Political Science has a number of faculty members with research interests in legal areas. Garrison Nelson is currently working on a book analyzing the history of Supreme Court appointments. Peter VonDoepp's most recent research examines the politics of judicial development in new southern African democracies. Caroline Beer recently published an article on judicial performance and the rule of law in Mexico. Alex Zakaras' recent work includes a piece advocating for the restriction of corporate political speech. As this short and likely incomplete summary indicates, our students have access to faculty with research and teaching interests in a wide variety of legal areas from a number of different perspectives within the political science discipline.

Although the public law faculty has changed since I arrived in 2002, what has not changed is our students' interest in law and legal careers. In particular, students are interested in law school. This year, we will have department graduates enrolling at a number of law schools, including the University of Connecticut, George Mason, the University of Maryland, Suffolk University, Vermont Law School, and the University of Washington. I am pleased to have an opportunity to be in touch with our alumni, and hope to keep you up to date on any speakers or events of interest to you in the coming years. We have been delighted by our alumni's interest in our pre-law advising program and in assisting our students. Please feel free to contact me (Lisa.M.Holmes@uvm.edu) with any questions or suggestions, or to update your contact information.

*Lisa Holmes
Associate Professor
And Pre-law Advisor*

From the Student Perspective.....

I discovered my passion for law during the fall semester of my junior year when I took two constitutional law classes and I began to utilize every opportunity to pursue the study of law at UVM. The political science department and in particular the pre-law advising program, distinguishes itself from other similar programs throughout the nation because of the vast opportunities presented to students as well as the dedication of the faculty in assisting students with their respected interests.

The political science department offers many courses that focus on particular legal subjects and all of these courses are beneficial to students interested in the study of law. Had I never taken Professor Holmes' Constitutional Law class in the spring semester of my junior year, I never would have discovered my passion for law. Furthermore, the pre-law advising program and the Law and Politics Club are excellent resources to learn more about law. Professors are able to guide students through every aspect of preparing for law school - advice was always readily available about undergraduate courses, the LSAT, the law school application and admission process and internships. My advisors assisted me in securing my internship at the Chittenden County Public Defenders Office and coordinated my senior honors thesis, which analyzed legal issues concerning same-sex parents.

Aside from the resources that were available through the University, the city of Burlington offers many opportunities to students interested in law. The Vermont Superior and District Courts are both located in downtown Burlington, offering students a chance to learn more about state criminal and civil procedure. In addition, the Federal District Court for the District of Vermont is also downtown, which allows students to

learn about federal law. Internships are plentiful not only in the criminal justice system, such as the PD's or State's Attorney Office, but also for state and national lawmakers. There are a plethora of opportunities available to students interested in law at UVM, and my best recommendation to students is to be proactive and unveil all the potential internships and jobs that are accessible. While many opportunities may be available to students in Burlington, that is certainly not the limit. Returning to my home state, I completed an internship in the summer before my senior year in the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General and in the summer before law school I am serving as a judicial intern for a Massachusetts Superior Court Judge.

Having graduated from the University of Vermont I can say that I am more than pleased with the political science department and the pre-law advising program. Professors are always available and eager to assist students. Furthermore I realized that just because I wasn't in a law class didn't mean that I couldn't incorporate the study of law into the respected subject matter. For example, in my senior year I wrote a paper for a Russian Art and Architecture course that compared the neoclassical design of the Russian Senate Building (a judicial body) to the United States Supreme Court in Washington D.C. My favorite location to study on campus was in fact in the political science department and I would often find myself cracking political jokes with faculty and students. The political science department was the determining factor that resulted in my decision to attend the University of Vermont, and the pre-law advising program substantially contributed to my course of study, securing of internships and ultimately to my decision to attend Suffolk University Law School in the fall of 2009.

Andrew Boyd was the 2009 recipient of the Departmental Prize for American Politics.

Pre-Law Advisors....

Ellen Andersen, Associate Professor

Professor Andersen specializes in American politics and public law. She is particularly interested in how individuals and social movements try to use the law to effect social change. One of her current research projects focuses on the politics of same-sex marriage. Another looks at the multi-movement activism. Her book, *Out of the Closets and into the Courts: Legal Opportunity Structure and Gay Rights Litigation*, was published by the University of Michigan Press in 2005. An updated paperback version came out in 2006. Her work has also appeared in the *American Journal of Political Science* and *Political Behavior*.

Alec Ewald, Assistant Professor

Voting rights are at the center of my research interests, and over the years that's taken me into two pretty different places. First, I continue to write about felony disenfranchisement laws, and have recently started studying similar sanctions imposed on people with criminal convictions. Second, after the election of 2000 I was among those newly alerted to the importance of the many practical aspects of the voting process - registration, ballot types, polling-place selection, and so on - that can influence not just our affective experience of voting but also outcomes. So, voting rights have gotten me into studying one part of the criminal-justice world, and also into election administration.

This year has seen the culmination of a couple of long-term projects. I co-edited *Criminal Disenfranchisement in an International Perspective*, now out from Cambridge University Press. We were fortunate to be able to bring together authors from a variety of

countries and disciplines (including some attorneys and advocates), and the book aims to contribute to the study of comparative constitutionalism as well as the study of voting rights proper. Also coming out this year is *The Way We Vote: The Local Dimension of American Suffrage*, which should be published in June or July (Vanderbilt University Press). This book outlines the historical construction of our unusual, locally-administered election system, then explores what it means for American popular sovereignty and equality.

In the last several months I've been finishing a study of recent changes in state disenfranchisement laws, writing a mostly-theoretical paper exploring the way collateral-consequences policies pursue both regulatory and punitive goals, and undertaking an empirical assessment of why different states have such different collateral-consequences policies. I feel very lucky to have two outstanding public-law colleagues among my many mentors here at UVM.

Lisa Holmes, Associate Professor

My research specializes in judicial selection politics at both the state and federal levels. In recent years, I have worked on projects examining how the presence of senior status judges influences the decision-making of federal circuit courts, the ability of governors to appoint interim replacements in states that typically elect their judges, and how recent presidents have used their nominees to the lower federal courts to appeal to their partisan supporters. I have published recent articles on judicial appointment politics in a variety of journals, including *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *American Politics Research*, and *Drake Law Review*. I have been fortunate to spend the past year on sabbatical, beginning a new long-term project examining whether increased politicization in the lower federal court appointment process has negatively

affected the careers of nominees, or made potential appointees less enthusiastic about the prospect of nomination. For this project, I am spending the summer examining how nominees to the federal circuit courts are covered in their home-state newspapers for a paper that will be presented at the upcoming Conference of the American Political Science Association in Toronto.

The recent nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court and the Court's recent ruling on campaign expenditures and judicial recusal are the sorts of events that continue to fuel my interest in the selection of state and federal court judges. These are also the kinds of events that I particularly enjoy discussing with students. After a year away from the classroom, I am looking forward to teaching in the fall. The Sotomayor nomination and the *Caperton v. Massey* decision will both be added to my syllabi next year, although of course I haven't yet figured out what will be eliminated to make room for them. I am also looking forward to working closely with Professors Ewald and Andersen in continuing to offer a well-rounded curriculum in public law and to provide assistance to our students interested in legal careers.