

POLITICAL SCIENCE NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020



CONGRESS IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

After graduating from Gustavus, I moved to Washington, DC and have been here since. I've worked in Congress for five years now, and have seen government shutdowns, major legislative accomplishments, and party leadership change in Congress and the White House. Nothing compares to this unprecedented time.

You wouldn't think Congress is the most technologically savvy organization. The transition to remote work was by no means smooth, and many procedures of Congress were incredibly antiquated. However, secure remote work and even things like Microsoft Teams were already enabled on the larger House of Representatives network. I was able to hit the ground running when social distancing recommendations went into effect and offices began to close.

Congressional offices don't always receive the most cordial of communications. Surprisingly, not everyone is pleased with what Congress does or does not do. Regardless of party or office, calls like this can be expect-

ed. Each office also has casework staff – individuals dedicated to helping district residents with receiving federal benefits, ensuring veterans receive timely medical attention, and assisting with other federal issues.

Under coronavirus, some of the old calls still come in, but now the entire office is, in some form or another, casework staff. Recently passed legislation has made funds available for tens of millions of individuals and millions of small businesses. Every day, we assist even

the smallest of operations with getting an Economic Injury Disaster Loan, contact a community bank and the Small Businesses Administration to make sure employees can receive pay under the Paycheck Protection Program while they abide by the stay at



home order, and contact the state to make sure their unemployment insurance program is distributing benefits to those that have lost their job.

Congress may not be doing its normal business, but we are busier than ever. There were previous plans and goals, timelines to introduce legislation, and other policy objectives. Those have all taken a backseat to making sure we help everyone get through this time as best we can.

Days start at a regular time, but often go till midnight or later. When you're able to work from anywhere and have nowhere to go, you can end up working much longer. There also isn't a lack of people needing help right now. I find myself taking breaks by going back and doing research on other policy areas I had planned to pursue before all this happened.

As is many people's new normal, we go from Zoom, to GoToMeeting, to merged phone calls that only successfully connect after the third try. We used to be able to give each other impromptu calls; now it better be scheduled because we're already on the phone. The Governor hosts regular calls with the delegation, committees of jurisdiction host agency regulators to get frequent updates, and we do everything we can to relay information and resources to Minnesotans.

In the end, I count myself lucky. I'm a homebody, so this time of isolation isn't affecting me as much as some. I'm thankful to have a job where it's possible to work from home, let alone a job at all right now. I'm grateful to be in a position where our first job responsibility is to do everything we can to help. We hear from a lot of people who are struggling, and the sheer amount can make anyone despondent. But we hear a lot of hope from people too, and it's a very real feeling when we help someone get the money they need to get by right now, or help someone return home from a cruise or from abroad. Advancing legislative priorities is an important part of these positions, but public service always comes first.

Landon Zinda '07 serves as Legislative Director for Representative Tom Emmer (R-MN)



An empty Old Main. On Friday, March 13, Gustavus President Becky Bergman announced the suspension of in-person classes and the move to distance learning, following a two week "spring break" to allow faculty to prepare for the transition. A few days later, based on recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health, President Bergman extended the period of distance learning through the end of the spring semester. The College community pulled together to prepare for this new challenge. Students were required to move off campus, and only those unable to return home or find safe accommodations elsewhere were allowed to remain in campus housing for the duration of the semester. All employees were asked to work from home if possible.

BE SOCIAL WITH US!



THE STUDENT VIEW

My name is **Reine Ndayisaba**, and I'm a junior studying political science with a minor in economics. I was born and raised in Kigali, Rwanda. I had never heard of Gustavus until my dad mentioned it to me. He also had heard it from a friend whose son was a sophomore at Gustavus. After visiting the Gustavus website and talking to both my dad's friend and his son, I decided to apply. Although I had received admission letters from some of the other schools I had applied to, the liberal arts curriculum, the small class sizes, and the various extracurricular activities made choose Gustavus.

My life at Gustavus has been filled with unforgettable moments and memories. As the end of the spring semester approaches, it's hard to believe how fast things have changed in the past few months. The first month and a half of the semester was everything I anticipated, studying a lot and some great events. That quickly changed after the school announced that it would switch to online classes for the rest of the semester. As I read the email detailing the transition, so many questions crossed my mind. Should I stay on campus? Should I go home? Following a long video call with my parents, I decided to fly back to Rwanda. A few hours after buying my flight ticket that would depart Saturday, March 21st, the government of Rwanda announced that all commercial flights would be suspend-



Reine Ndayisaba '21 at the 2020 Gustavus Day at the Capitol

ed beginning March 21st at midnight. That day was extremely stressful for me. Luckily, I was able to get a seat on a flight that would reach in Rwanda at 7 pm on Friday, March 20th, few hours before the airport closed.

Today, having to attend classes from my room and for my last class of the day to end anywhere between 6:20 pm and 11:20 pm due to the 7-hour difference, has become the new normal. Getting used to this new format wasn't easy. Like the rest of the professors and students, I faced several challenges including making a routine and staying motivated. But I also had to adjust to the time difference and ensure that I had reliable internet connection. Even though this semester hasn't been an easy ride, I'm grateful for the amazing professors and the rest of the Gustavus employees who are doing their best to make the rest of the semester as smooth as possible.

2020 POLITICAL SCIENCE WRITING AWARD

The Political Science Department sponsors an annual competition to recognize outstanding writing produced by students in political science courses. Students are invited to submit their best work from the previous year, and a panel of political science faculty select two papers to recognize. Congratulations to the winners of the 2020 Political Science Writing Award:

Andrea "Onnie" Brodkorb, Senior political science major for "Black Tires Matter: Why Congressional Oversight is Needed to Protect Consent Decrees" an Op-Ed written in U.S. Public Policy in spring 2019.

and

Nathan Baring, Sophomore political science and biology major for "Subsurface Influence?: The Implications of Campaign Finance for Roll Call Votes on Climate Change Legislation" a Research proposal written in Anayzing Politics in fall 2019.



Nick Nigro in the rotunda of the Minnesota Capitol

COVID AT THE STATEHOUSE

On Friday, March 13, my co-workers and I made guesses about what day the state legislature would shut down. Most of us were guessing around the Easter break. We knew that there was lots of work to be done, and the legislature has a bad habit of being slow to react. We were all wrong, of course, and I wasn't in the office for the next 6 weeks.

I work in the Chief Clerk's Office in the Minnesota House of Representatives. It's a nonpartisan office responsible for keeping track of the procedural side of lawmaking. Our office handles everything from advising members on parliamentary procedure, to helping the public, to preparing procedural documents. The latter is the bulk of my work.

Between March 13 and May 6, the House has met in session 9 times. The state constitution mandates that the legislature adjourn for the year on May 18. In a normal year, that deadline means a frantic April and May, frequently with the full House convening every day for long hours.

Coronavirus and the economic fallout has consumed the legislature's normal agenda. Most of the expected political fights have been set aside in favor of bipartisan bills directly dealing with the pandemic. This is partly because of the immediate needs and partly because of physical accommodations. Minnesota has 201 state legislators making social distancing in the capitol near impossible. So the House has permitted representatives to call in. While much safer, it brings proceedings to a crawl. Votes normally done electronically in the chamber are now done by calling each representative's name and waiting for their response, a 10 minute process when things are moving smoothly.

As for myself, most of my work is digital so I've moved to telecommuting. I traded my suits in for a bathrobe and sweatpants. I watch the proceedings on Youtube while updating the bills and documents I'm responsible for. The world outside has gotten more stressful, but in a weird twist of fate, my own work has gotten more relaxing.

It's hard to point to past experiences and credit them for preparing me for a time like this, but early on, I remarked to my fellow Gusties that this felt a lot like J-Term. Total responsibility for my own time and lots of tv binging. But now as my work increases before the legislature adjourns for the year, it's felt more like those stretches of days between classes and finals where my productivity and success is entirely based on my own focus and work ethic.

Nick Nigro '14 serves as Administrative Assistant in the Chief Clerk's Office in the Minnesota House of Representatives



The Political Science Department inducted twelve new members into the Pi Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national honor society in political science.

Congratulations to...

Nathan Baring, Monali Bhakta, Chelsea Boyden, Amanda Braun, Maryn Cella, Susan Cook, Sophia Gottlick, Amanda Jensen, Christiana Nelson, Nicholas Summers, Grace Worwa, and Joshua Petersen

Congratulations to **Ellie Anderson**, junior political science and psychological sciences major, and winner of the 2020 Christenson Scholarship. The Christenson Scholarship is awarded annually to a junior political science major judged exemplary in the excellence, depth, and imagination of their academic performance in political science and who has a demonstrated interest in public service.



The Christenson scholarship was established in 2000 by Kathryn Kidd Christenson, whose involvement with the College includes service as an associate in development and public affairs and as an instructor in English, women's studies, and political

science, in memory of her husband, Ronald, founder of the College's political science department, and their son, Rolf.

ADVENTURES IN TEACHING

Professor **Mimi Gerstbauer**, Raymond and Florence Sponberg Professor of Ethics in Political Science, Peace Studies, LALACS, and African Studies



This spring, I am teaching at Kansai Gaidai University in Japan. I teach "Politics of Reconciliation" and a class on "International Diplomacy", using all Asian case studies for both.

My first week teaching I learned that none of my Japanese students had chosen my courses. They were assigned to them, and most of them had no background in political science. They were headed toward careers in business or hospitality industries like airlines and hotel. For many of the "Diplomacy" students, my class was their first in English. Despite major course

adjustments, there were a lot of blank stares those first few sessions.

The other class was a lively and talkative mix of more advanced Japanese students, slated to study abroad next year, and students from China, Europe, and North America, some of whom were very knowledgeable in the course topic. Some of the best moments in classes are the informal times pre and post class: celebrating with Maimu that she was going to San Diego and laughing with Kaho when Ty from Canada told her that her study abroad assignment - Regina University - is in the middle of nowhere in the prairies of Saskatchewan. "You couldn't find a place more different than Osaka!"

That moment turned out to be our last, as the university went on-line in March. I was loving my time in Japan, but dreaded reading the news each day as it looked less likely that my husband and 3 kids would be able to join me. All the sights were closing and travel was increasingly risky. Now, the highlight of my days - meeting with my students - was gone.

COVID 19 will not be the last time something completely disruptive affects my plans or yours. For me, this particular disruption joins a pattern. In college, my 6 month study term in Nicaragua was interrupted by a car accident in which I broke my back. In 2015, my 6 month Fulbright in Poland began with my son

hospitalized with pneumonia for 10 days. Now this for Japan?

I returned to the US on March 9. My 2nd grader wrote a haiku about going to Osaka that hangs on my fridge. He had been looking forward to this for a long time. That is a huge loss for me, but as I connect with my students in the wee hours of the morning 2x a week, my biggest sorrow is that I did not get to know them better. Maybe I can find a reason to visit Regina next year. Will Kaho even be able to go...?



Mimi's Diplomacy class at Kansai Gaidai University

Professor **Kate Knutson**

Once upon a time, before COVID-19, one of my favorite parts of teaching was leading field trips. I love giving students the opportunity to see government in action and to talk with people who work in government and politics because it gives them a new perspective when reading the news of the day and helps them envision possible career paths. I was fortunate to take three groups of Gusties to the Minnesota Capitol in the first few months of 2020.

The January Term Minnesota Politics and Government class sat in on an oral argument in the Minnesota Court of Appeals before touring the Capitol building and meeting with Gustavus alumni including **Sophie Leininger '18** (Office of the Governor), **Nate Long '16** (Office of the Governor), Representative **Samantha Vang '16**, **Joey Wiley '16** (Senate Republican Caucus), **Will Waggoner '16** (Senate Republican Caucus), **Nick Nigro '14** (Chief Clerk's Office, MN House), **Laura Danielson '09** (MN Department of Human Rights), Representative **Nels Pierson '95**, **Craig Gustafson '91** (Department of Transportation), and Commissioner **Margaret Anderson Kelliher '90** (Department of Transportation).



Students in Minnesota Politics and Government meet with Rep. Nels Pierson on the floor of the MN House

The spring Child Welfare Policy class participated in an advocacy event with the group Safe Passage for Children in March, meeting with their elected officials to talk about proposed changes to child protection policies.



Students in Child Welfare Policy meet with Senator Nick Frentz in the lobby of the Senate chamber to discuss a legislative proposal.

The spring Public Policy class participated in the annual Gustavus Day at the Capitol with the Minnesota Private Colleges Council to advocate for the Minnesota State Grant, a program that provides need-based funding for education to college students. Sophomore political science major **Emily Falk** testified before the Senate Higher Education Finance and Policy committee, using testimony she prepared as part of a class writing assignment. And in the afternoon, over 20 alumni with careers in politics and government joined the group for a reception and networking event.



Alumni Update

John Bussey '09 is the Chief of Events and Corporate Relations at Loppet Foundation

Since graduating from Gustavus I have spent time working in youth development in Chile, guiding wilderness trips in the American West, studying intercultural conflict at the University of Minnesota, running a YMCA overnight camp in Wisconsin, and teaching at the University of Wisconsin River Falls. I am now the Chief of Events with Minneapolis' Loppet Foundation where the big project on our table right now is hosting 2020 FIS Cross Country Ski World Cup Finals.

Beyond professional obligations, over the past decade I've put a good bit of work into non-partisan political activism. I've helped a good friend run his campaign for Minnesota House, started a political action committee focused on electoral reform (New Moose), and supported the work of FairVote MN.

I think the tie that binds much of the above together, that definitely traces some of its origins to time spent with Richard Leitch, Mimi Gerstbauer and Chris Gilbert, is a commitment to transparent, equitable and efficient decision-making in diverse groups. In "Horizon," Barry Lopez makes the comment that the primary project of our time is to help strangers get along with one another. I couldn't agree more, and it's a concept that echoes through contexts from local to international. To my eye, the important challenges we face each day do not go unsolved because of a lack of creativity with regard to what solutions could exist, they go unsolved because of a lack of commitment to group decision-making that acknowledges, celebrates, and capitalizes on differences of perspective. To the degree that this perspective is a positive and effective one the Political Science community at Gustavus absolutely deserves appreciation and acknowledgement.

HIGH ACHIEVERS

Nationally Competitive Scholarship Winners & Nominees

Amelia Espinosa – Fulbright Scholarship Semi-finalist
The Fulbright Fellowship Program is the largest U.S. exchange program that offers research, study and teaching opportunities in over 140 countries for students and recent graduates.

Chelsea Boyden – Truman Nominee
The Truman Foundation supports the development of young professionals by funding a graduate degree in public service and policy.

Samantha Raghu – Gilman Scholarship
Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the Gilman Program Scholarships enable students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad, providing them with skills critical to our national security and economic prosperity.

Nathan Baring – Udall Scholarship
The Udall scholarship recognizes sophomores and juniors who excel in leadership, public service, and commitment to the environment or Native American nations.

Monali Bhakta – Minnesota Campus Compact President's Award for Civic Engagement
This award is given to an individual student or a student organization that models a deep commitment to civic responsibility and leadership evidenced by initiative, innovative, and collaborative approaches to addressing public issues, effective community building, and integration of civic engagement into the college experience.



The Student Senate Cabinet was filled with POL majors this year

Gustavus Awards and Honors

Inducted into the Guild of St. Ansgar to recognize the overall achievements—scholarship, leadership, and participation in extracurricular activities— of graduating seniors:

Amelia Espinosa
Patrick Meadows
Monali Bhakta

Inducted into the Guild of St. Lucia to honor women who have achieved academic success, displayed leadership qualities, and provided service to the College:

Amanda Braun
Chelsea Boyden

Winners of the Magnuson Award, established to recognize the significant contributions that individual students and student groups make to campus life:

Monali Bhakta
Amelia Espinosa
Amanda Jensen

Winner of the Ovanlig Award, awarded to a junior or senior who has demonstrated leadership in raising campus awareness of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender rights and concerns:

Amanda Braun

Winner of the Schwalm-Brostrom Leadership Award, recognizing a current Gustavus sophomore, junior, or senior who in their voluntary and community service for the benefit of those outside the Gustavus campus, “models an understanding of vocation and leadership embodied in creative, innovative, and extraordinary efforts or new initiatives that respond to the needs of society”:

Lucio Gonzalez

Named an Albert G. Swanson Scholar, awarded to the senior student or students (as determined by credits) with the highest cumulative GPA following the previous spring semester:

Emma Jones

Professor **Jill Locke** used the online Getty Challenge trend to inspire a creative assignment in her Political and Legal Thinking courses: Create a Getty Challenge piece with art on a theme related to Marx. Write a 2-3 sentence paragraph explaining relationship between your art and Marx.



The Getty image I chose that I think relates to Emma Goldman's Victims of Morality is a photograph from 1952 in New York City titled “Love and Marriage” by Dorothea Lange. When I was looking for pictures of mothers, prostitutes, and the ‘victims of morality’, almost every picture depicted a woman that was described as sensual and beautiful and a representation of motherhood, as if that was the only thing important about these women. I thought Goldman would have hated this as these pictures only created assumptions and stereotypes. So when I came across this image, I thought the anonymity of the couple creates somewhat of a mystery of their story. While Goldman clearly advocates against the victimization of women in whatever role they may be, I think this picture shows that while this couple may be holding hands and in love out in public, no one knows how they are really feeling or what their lives are like at home.

Jenna Wyum '23, Student in POL 160

Special thanks to our 2019-2020 Political Science Department Assistants, **Patrick Meadows '20** and **Emma Jones '20**, who helped move this alumni newsletter from dream to reality!



The name of this painting is “The Penitent Magdalene” by Titian. This painting relates to Emma Gold-

man’s writings because of its relation to religion and women. Mary was a close follower of Jesus and in this painting, she is repenting her sins which implies that she has not been morally upright. Goldman would say that the religion is shaming her and forcing her to conform to the morals of society. In addition, she is often misattributed to be a prostitute, and is overall just given a very sex-charged nature most-likely due to her status as a woman. All of these things spark a resemblance to Goldman’s argument that morality is suppressing and shaming the sexual nature of women. I used the PRPT book in place of the bible because it is basically the bible of our class. **Dylan Berg ‘22**, Student in POL 160

GRADUATING SENIORS

The College officially announced plans to postpone the 2020 spring commencement ceremony until a later date, but we still want to recognize the seniors who will complete their degree requirements this spring.

We asked the Seniors graduating with a degree in Political Science to share some of their favorite memories from their time at Gustavus



Monali with Secretary of State, Steve Simon

de-stress with all Poli-Sci friends (students and faculty) as we wound down to the end of the semester. I’m going to miss those casual conversations where we gathered and chatted on about our lives. Hopefully, I can come back to snag some holiday cookies as a Gustavus Alumni (and Chris’ brownies too)!

Monali Bhakta: My favorite memory in the Political Science Department is the Annual Cookie Bake-Off. Not only are my professors exceptional at teaching, but they also have a talent for baking! Those delicious cookies were definitely needed when finals were approaching. It was an enjoyable and relaxing time to just

Amelia Espinosa: One of my favorite memories in the Gustavus Political Science Department was in POL244: Model United Nations. We were doing a security council simulation about a crisis in Syria and trying to pass a resolution. The whole class hour was spent trying to negotiate a solution. When it was time to vote everyone before me went around and supported the resolution. I, as the second to last vote, the representative of China, and an ally to Syria at the time, vetoed the resolution. Muahaha!

Justin Hrubby: The Political Olympics was definitely one of my highlights! Chris Gilbert’s famous brownies and our senior sem trip to Patricks are also a great memories!





Amanda Jensen: My favorite memories were getting out of a 4:30 class in the spring and walking to the arb to hammock under the evening sun!

Amanda in front of Old Main

countless classes challenged us academically, physically, and socially. Most of all, I appreciated the opportunity to travel abroad this J-Term to study Art and Architecture for 3 1/2 weeks in Italy - a once in a lifetime experience I will never forget. Thank you to my parents, family, friends, and professors (especially Chris) for encouraging me and supporting me in all that I do. Appreciate you all.

Quinn Peterson: When I got the Hiram Manville scholarship without applying for it...or knowing about it...still not entirely sure how that happened, but thanks to whoever made it happen!

Patrick Meadows: Getting to study abroad in Sweden and learn about a different country's political system and way of life. The country was amazing and I wouldn't have gotten such an amazing opportunity anywhere else.



Patrick in Skansen Park in Stockholm

Christiana Nelson: some of my favorite memories occurred when I was sitting in the Gustie Den, attempting to do homework, and having friends pop in unexpectedly. We could sit and talk for hours, and it was always really enjoyable!

Josh Petersen: I am most grateful for the friends I've made, the places I've traveled, and the memories we've shared. My time on the hill allowed me to meet some of the most special individuals in my life - Henry, Alic, Shane, and so many others. Over the four years we shared,



Carl-Erik visiting the IKEA museum in Sweden

WE ALSO RECOGNIZE...

Onnie Brodkorb
Jerry Calengor
Kennedy Chapman
Yasmine Dismuke
Shane Ellanson
Owen Ellingson
Lucio Gonzalez
Evan Jasnoch
Emma Jones

Sam Kast
Emma Lundquist
Alex Perez
Will Ristow
Koen Schneidawind
Derga Selemon
Graham Smith
Robert Walker-Moreno
Connor Winter



We usually celebrate our seniors with cake, but this year it will be virtual cake.