

# POLITICAL SCIENCE NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020



## BLACK LIVES MATTER IN THE CLASSROOM, FALL 2020

I have tried to be especially intentional about including work that centers questions of race and racism this fall as the nation grapples – yet again – with routine extrajudicial violence against BIPOC people, and African Americans, in particular. With stay home orders and social distancing in place, more white Americans than usual were paying attention to the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd and watching, or participating in, the protests and marches around the world that followed. I live about a mile from Cup Foods where George Floyd died; my kids rode their elementary school bus by it every day and, like everyone else, we joked about it being Cup Foods – not CUB FOODS. My son plays baseball for the Powderhorn Park and Rec team. Powderhorn is adjacent to my neighborhood, and certainly a part of my world, as were the swarms of helicopters overhead



Professor Jill Locke

and military armored cars that used Kingfield, where I live, as their home base this summer.

All of this is to say that I came into the fall semester knowing both that I wanted to process, in the classroom, BLM protests and the violence that triggered them. I knew that our students would want to see these realities represented in the syllabus and class discussion. We could not be talking about political science and studying law, government, and political movements (among other things) without talking about racism and violence and their relationship to state power.

I did not radically change the readings and assignments, but I did shift some framing and emphasis. Beyond introducing race as a concept, or educating students about BLM, I also wanted to connect the policing we see in George Floyd's case with immigrant detention – to think about “policing” in a broad, transnational way. To that end, in POL 160, we have examined US citizenship requirements through the lenses of the landmark *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), the Civil War Amendments, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898). In POL/GWS 285, we are studying the federal government's place in the civil rights movement alongside community organizers and popular movements that center the role of Black and Latinx women, in particular.

This semester has so far been very energizing for me. I cannot speak for the students, but I see incredible curiosity and engagement as they show up for class. Our students are amazing – ready to ask hard questions of themselves, each other, our communities, and the world. They are also ready to lead through difficult times. I found in the spring semester it was quite difficult to get nuanced discussions about racism and xenophobia going once we went to distance learning and Zoom. There is still no substitute for in-person learning but we are finding our stride, getting through it together with that signature Gustie style.

*Dr. Jill Locke teaches a range of courses in the history of political thought, democratic theory, and feminist theory and is currently Director of the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies program. Professor Locke can often be found out for a long run with Piper, her hyperactive dog, or curled up with Piper and a page-turner novel.*

## THAT AFTERNOON IN LAFAYETTE SQUARE

June 1. I had to Google it. Frankly, 6/1 just isn't a memorable day. But that day, I was there in Lafayette Square as the State cleared me, my friends, and my community out of a public space so President Trump could hold up a Bible. It was the first day I participated in protests following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police, one of nearly a dozen summer days I spent in Lafayette Square. Having learned the 'Protest Rules of the Road' from my best friend from freshman seminar (who marched with me in 2018 at the March For Our Lives), I felt prepared for anything. Masks: Check. Purell: Check. Number on my arms: Check. Phone off with disabled location services: Yep. The decision to go was simple. I'm a white, middle-class, college graduate who needed to put words to action. As a student at Gustavus, I frequently wore the flag, painted my face, and embraced “making my life count.” Gustavus prepared me for moments like this, and I've always believed Gusties step up. I am, however, ashamed that it took me as long as it did to step up, and I know many of us have reflected upon that fact over these past few months. But I was there, and anyone who claims the tear gas/pepper spray was 'fake news' is lying.

Though the protest itself is now one for the history books, two separate but related events that day burn me longer than any tear gas could. Along the square (H St. NW), groups were organized with water, masks, and saline solution in the event of tear gas. Carry milk? Too challenging; saline works just as

BE SOCIAL WITH US!



## THE STUDENT VIEW

**Paige Patterson '21**, a senior Political Science; Spanish; and Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies major (yes, a triple major!) and Political Science Department Assistant is one of about 20 students writing a senior thesis this fall.

Her project explores three generations of women's advocacy groups in an effort to better understand how interest groups survive and thrive over long periods of time. Paige finds that literature on interest group survival and success suggests that women's interest groups must incorporate intersectionality, hybridity, coalition building, and/or niche issue focuses in order to be influential in the contemporary political environment. Her study evaluates the extent to which the League of Women Voters, the National Organization for Women, and Women's March Inc. incorporates these tactics into their methodology and identity.

Through analyzing the online presence of each organization, Paige concludes that the more women's interest groups embrace intersectionality, hybridity, coalition building, and/or niche issue focuses, the greater likelihood they have of successful political mobilization. Furthermore, she argues that younger women's interest groups demonstrate a greater capacity to embrace these tactical strategies than older, more traditional groups, signifying that younger groups are more equipped for the modern political environment whereas older women's interest groups must adapt in order to survive in the competitive interest group market.



Mark Meier at a protest in Washington, D.C.

well. The idea that ordinary citizens exercising their first amendment rights should be prepared for pain and suffering at the hands of the State is - to put it mildly - shocking. Certainly not a beacon of democracy. But that night, as the nation went to sleep, the State chose to buzz helicopters ~1000 ft. above the city and my house. For more than five hours (during a lockdown), residents like myself were terrified. Because DC, my home, has limited self-government in the best of times, and no control in a federal emergency declaration, police forces could fly around. And around. And around. They were “looking for individuals breaking curfew.” Mhmm. That sort of terror is exactly how millions of children across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) grow up every day. For them, it doesn't stop at 3 a.m. It's every day, and it's something that's stuck with me since June 1.

**Mark Meier '17** is a DC-based communications professional with *The Assistance Fund (TAF)*, a charitable patient assistance organization. He is a **PROUD Gustie!**



FLASHBACK: Gustavus students in *Inauguration Politics* attend the first inauguration of President Barack Obama in January 2009.

## GOOD NEWS!

Congratulations to **Amber Hanson Glaeser '10**, winner of the Gustavus First Decade Award. Amber holds an MBA from Northwestern University and is the director for public policy at Minnesota Farm Bureau.

The Gustavus Voter Engagement Team, including political science majors **Sara Kasel '21**, **Ben Menke '22** and **Christopher Ortiz '22**, won first place in the Democracy Shark Tank competition hosted by LeadMN for their comprehensive plan for voter engagement this fall. This plan includes strategies for: increasing both voter registration and voter turnout rates, educating students about the democratic process, opportunities and barriers, and committing to Gustavus' ethos of civic engagement.

**Mikka McCracken '09** was named to the Gustavus Board of Trustees. Mikka is Executive for Innovation and Director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Innovation Lab.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RACISM?

In order to better educate ourselves and understand the issues that face BIPOC communities, many Gusties have taken it upon themselves to read books, articles, and op-eds; watch documentaries, movies, and shows; and listen to podcasts and the voices of their communities. Here is a short list of some of the educational resources that our political science students and faculty have found to be specifically powerful and influential in shaping their new conceptions on racial justice.

### Films:

- *13th*
- *Immigration Nation*
- *King Leopold's Ghosts*
- *Just Mercy* (the book is great too!)

### Books:

- *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine
- *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead
- *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua
- *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo
- *Slavery by Another Name* by Douglas Blackmon
- *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota* edited by Sun Yung Shin
- *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby

### Podcasts:

- *In the Dark*, Season 2
- *Code Switch* by NPR

## WHAT IF?

Few students have even read the Gustavus Mission Statement before they commit to living here for the next four years of their life. You know, the Gustavus Mission Statement, which aspires Gustavus "...to be a community of persons from diverse backgrounds who respect and affirm the dignity of all people." How nice. Yet we must be doing something right, as visitors to Gustavus often comment on how welcoming our community is. Current students and alumni overwhelmingly proclaim the same, so it is likely not just a façade nor is it merely Minnesota nice. The Gustavus community has become more diverse over the past decades in all ways of diversity, yet we still fall short of those idealistic goals of consistent mutual respect and dignity. But what if the Mission Statement were the exact opposite? What if there were policies in place in this community that intentionally contradicted those principles of respect and dignity, or intentionally excluded certain groups from enjoying the benefits of this community? What kind of student would want to come here? You wouldn't, since you have options to live and to thrive elsewhere.

Now imagine a world where you had virtually no options of where to live and to thrive, and you were not living in a community where people feel empowered to effect change nor do they expect to be respected by those who are. You instead lived in one of many apartments constructed to house masses of marginalized people, mostly all impoverished and non-white. "How could anything ever go wrong?" the hopefuls wondered. "But what are the alternatives?" their proponents replied. Decades after entire city blocks were dominated by what we now call the projects, we have seen what could go wrong. Neuroscientists have demonstrated how poverty creates stress and danger creates trauma, both inhibitors in the mental development and physical wellbeing of their residents—the first especially for the young and the second especially for the elderly. It then stands to reason why children in these conditions perform poorly in school. This is not new news, yet that insidious human destruction continues. Smaller scale housing discrimination of poor, mostly non-white people exists on a lower scale

and in different ways in almost every municipality in the US, even in supposedly progressive cities like San Francisco. Whether historically it was redlining or racial covenants, or contemporarily exclusionary zoning, or a plethora of other ways to exclude people from becoming part of a community in all senses of the word, politics can be cruel and, with their authority, governments can be even more so. That is the essence of systemic racism.

*Dr. Richard Leitch has been a member of the Political Science Department at Gustavus since 1996. He teaches courses in International Relations, Comparative Politics, Asian Politics, Environmental Politics, and the Politics of Poverty.*



Professor Richard Leitch

## TEACHING DURING COVID: A BRIEF UPDATE

The Political Science Department offered classes in a variety of formats this fall: some met in person, others were fully online, and others met in a hybrid format with some days online and others in person. January term and spring classes will also be offered in a variety of formats. Both students and faculty have shown resilience and resourcefulness in adapting to the challenges facing us.

# A STUDENT VIEW [PAIGE PATTERSON '21]

As another semester of discussions, essays, and readings comes to a close, Gusties are preparing to return home and decompress from what has been one of the most unique semesters in Gustavus's history. Not only have students navigated challenges brought on by online learning and pandemic-related anxieties, but they have also experienced a monumental U.S. election that followed a season of incredible political tensions around the nation. Now, with the onset of a new President and Congress in January, the United States faces an opportunity to refocus and recommit itself to the needs of the U.S. population, beginning a new chapter in our history. Similar to reflecting on what we may have learned in our classes over the course of this last semester, the new year gives us pause to reflect on what we would like to learn going forward, and new political representation allows us to reflect on what we value in our political system.

For many Gusties, these reflections on our nation, our communities, and ourselves intersect at the issue of racial justice. As one of the most pressing issues that has continuously impacted the U.S., the challenges that impact our BIPOC populations demand discourse, deliberation, and progress forward. Gusties have proven themselves committed to addressing these issues, and here, some of our political science students and faculty have shared how they

plan to better educate themselves and support our BIPOC community. Highest on the list, along with reading books or articles and attending protests, Gusties prioritized listening to the experiences of BIPOC family, friends, and neighbors. Acknowledging that addressing racial justice requires both personal and community involvement in order to be adequately confronted, Gusties have worked to challenge their own preconceptions through collective dialogues both inside and outside of the classroom.

Gustavus itself as an institution also holds an important role in promoting racial justice and fighting against racism. Members of the Gustavus community have expressed both hope and apprehension for how the school addresses the issue, noting that "It's been interesting to see how Gustavus has adapted to the rising calls for racial justice, considering the school's somewhat negative history on the topic, but I definitely think needed steps are being taken right now." Rest assured, Gusties are committed to holding each other and the administration accountable for ensuring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the best of our ability. As one member writes, "There are many issues of racial justice, but as an institution of higher learning, systemic inequalities in our educational systems in the US might concern us. I hope this is a place where students learn to listen and how to make constructive change. In that light, is there anything we can't do?"

