WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings! Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Department of Political Science & Geography Newsletter. In the newsletter, we want to keep you informed of the activities of our twenty-three faculty members and hundreds of majors in political science and geography, as well as alert you to some of the exciting events the Department is hosting.

As important as what is going on here on campus, though, it is just as important for us to reach out to ask how you, our alumni, are doing. To us, our roles as faculty and mentor doesn't end when you leave campus. We are here to provide help and guidance to our alums whether you graduated last year, last decade, or last century! So, with all of this in mind, please send us an update about where you are and what you are doing today. We will feature alums in our ‘Alumni Spotlight’ section of future newsletters.

Dr. Jonathan Leib
Professor of Geography
Chair, Department of Political Science & Geography
REMEMBERING STEVE YETIV

Steve Yetiv, Old Dominion University’s Louis I. Jaffe Professor of International Relations, died March 21 2018 at the age of 53. Yetiv’s widely respected expertise on the global oil industry made him a popular interview subject for major media outlets around the world.

Yetiv was a prolific author. He wrote a number of books, including “Myths of the Oil Boom: American National Security in the Global Energy Market.” That earned him a guest spot on a 2015 British Broadcasting Corporation newscast. His last book, “Challenged Hegemony: The United States, China and Russia in the Persian Gulf,” which he co-wrote with long-time collaborator Katerina Oskarsson, who received her doctorate from ODU, was published this year.

Yetiv received the U.S. Secretary of State’s Open Forum Distinguished Public Service Award, the Choice Outstanding Academic Book awards and Virginia’s highest honor for professors, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia’s Outstanding Faculty Award.

Jonathan Leib, chair of the Department of Political Science and Geography, said Yetiv “was that rare individual - a world-class scholar, outstanding teacher and mentor - and a great person.” He was a “pillar” in the Graduate Program in International Studies, said Regina Karp, director of the program.

“His colleagues and students enjoyed his enthusiasm for research and teaching, his kind and easy manner, and his humor,” she said. “He leaves an extraordinary hole in all our lives. His legacy is profound and precious.”

Austin Jersild, chair of the Department of History, said Yetiv loved to work. “Steve had the rare ability to ask questions against the grain, always exploring problems and assumptions in new ways,” he said. “He was endlessly curious about people and their motivations.”

CONGRATULATIONS MR. MAYOR

Political Science Alum elected in Norfolk Virginia

In May 2016, State Sen. Kenny Alexander became not only the first African-American mayor of Norfolk, but also the first Old Dominion University graduate elected to the post. Alexander received 16,352 votes, or 52 percent of the total. He led the runner up by 27 percent of the vote.

Alexander graduated in 1990 with a bachelor’s degree in political science from Old Dominion. “Kenny is a longtime friend of mine and a tremendous advocate for his alma mater while in Richmond,” said Old Dominion University President John R. Broderick. “I had a chance to talk with him last night and offer congratulations on behalf of the Monarch family.”

In a candidate debate April 13 hosted by the University’s Student Government Association, Alexander celebrated his Old Dominion roots, saying it was “good to be home.”

From article by Brendan O’Hallarn odu.edu/news/2016/5/alexander_mayor

KAUFMAN AWARD WINNER, 2018

Kleopatra Moditsi, double major in Political Science and International Studies, was selected from a group of top Old Dominion University students as the 2018 Kaufman Award winner. The honor includes a $10,000 prize, and it is awarded to ODU seniors “who have exerted an exceptional and constructive influence on the university, its students or the community by demonstrating the highest qualities of leadership and service.”

Moditsi earned consideration for this distinctive student award because of her outstanding academic achievements. Moditsi is a 4.0 GPA student and a member of the Honors College. The Kaufman Award is not her first accomplishment at ODU. She also received the Phi Kappa Phi Outstanding Junior Award (2016-17) as well as the Award for Academic Excellence: First Year Scholar (2014-15). Moditsi also served as President of the Global Monarch Club and as Secretary General of the Model United Nations Society.

HOLOCAUST LANDSCAPES
France and Poland

Geography faculty member Dr. Tom Chapman led a group of ODU students to study the historical geographies of the Holocaust in France and Poland. Key themes of the trip involved examining how these sites and landscapes are remembered in these two countries, in terms of both how they were constructed in the past and how they are experienced today.

Their first stop was Paris, where they visited various sites used by the Nazis and their French Vichy collaborators to contain and deport Parisian Jews to concentration camps in the East. Other sites of remembrance memorializing French victims of the Holocaust were also visited. Students also got a chance to wander about Paris’ Jewish Quarter to explore Parisian Jewish life both past and present. And of course, no visit to the city of light would be complete without seeing Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and other famous iconographic symbols of the Parisian landscape.

Students then moved on to southern Poland to explore key Holocaust sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Plaszow, and other places that bore witness to the horrors of Nazi-occupied Poland. They wrapped up the trip with some free time to explore the castles, medieval churches, and public squares in the beautiful city of Krakow. Dr. Chapman is teaching a new course this Fall, “Geographies of the Holocaust”, and he plans to offer a similar, expanded study abroad experience to Poland next May.

MAPATHON!!!

In the occasion of officially opening our new Spatial Analytics Instructional Lab (SAIL) and in the run-up to Geography Awareness Week and GIS-day 2018, we organized our first Mapathon. Mapathons are community-based, coordinated mapping events held around the world. Volunteers contribute to open source mapping tools, such as OpenStreetMap. For our first Mapathon, we chose to work with Missing Maps, a project founded by the Red Cross, Doctors without Borders (MSF), and the Humanitarian Open Street Map team. The Missing Maps project aims to map the most vulnerable places in the world that are affected by humanitarian crises: disease epidemiics; conflict; natural disasters; poverty; environmental crises and so on. As requested by the American Red Cross.

Mapathon participants mapped settlements, roads, houses, and other features in an area in Niger State, Nigeria. Currently, MSF teams are working there to respond to a variety of different health needs. These include emergency response to disease outbreaks across the area. Our maps will assist these and other emergency teams with epidemiological analysis, disease surveillance, and logistical planning. In total, we organized three two-hour sessions for which participation was free and open to the public. This is the first of what hopefully becomes a new tradition of yearly Mapathons at ODU.

“AUT MAPS WILL ASSIST EMERGENCY TEAMS WITH EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS, DISEASE SURVEILLANCE, AND LOGISTICAL PLANNING.”
A WELCOME TO OUR NEW FACULTY!

Dr. Matthew DiLorenzo is a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Political Science and the Graduate Program in International Studies. Dr. DiLorenzo received a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University in 2016, and a Master’s in Political Science from the University of New Hampshire. His research interests revolve around foreign aid, domestic politics and international conflict, and international institutions and alliances. Matt comes to us from William & Mary, where he was a Research Analyst and Adjunct Lecturer of Government.

Dr. Saltuk Karahan is a Visiting Lecturer in Political Science with teaching responsibilities in the University’s Cybersecurity Program. Dr. Karahan earned a Ph.D. in International Studies from ODU in 2015, and has two Master’s degrees: one from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and the other from the Army War College in Istanbul, Turkey. Most recently, Dr. Karahan was a Visiting Scholar at VMASC, and was Executive Assistant for NATO’s Allied Command Transformation, where he managed, guided, and coordinated the work of program managers in NATO’s cybersecurity, strategic communication, and innovation programs.

Dr. Federica Bono is a Lecturer in Geography and GIS Lab Manager. Dr. Bono received her Ph.D. in Geography 2018 from the University of Leuven in Belgium, and holds a Master’s in Geography from the University of Leuven and a Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Her research interests revolve around the informal economy and food, with much of her recent research taking place in Cuba. Federica comes to us from Christopher Newport University where she was a Visiting Scholar and Geography instructor.
DON'T BET AGAINST DEMOCRACY

By Matthew Hall, Assistant Director, Graduate Program in International Studies

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY and the valued institutions that uphold it are under attack. That is the pessimistic conventional wisdom of progressives and scholars alike.

For many, Trump poses a unique threat to America itself. At the core of their fear is the realization that American democracy — and its norms and institutions — are fragile, strong only until the first authoritarian gives them a solid push.

For the pessimists, a confluence of factors has weakened our institutions: an increasingly reactionary Republican Party shielded from public opinion by structural political advantages such as gerrymandered districts and the Electoral College; a polarized political atmosphere with citizens split into “echo chambers”; and a corporate media that cares more about clicks than truth.

Put these together and you have a uniquely American recipe for the next democracy to backslide into illiberalism, as has occurred in Turkey or Venezuela.

Forgive me my optimism in difficult times, but allow me to dissent. Rather than suddenly discovering that our democratic institutions are deceptively weak, I suspect we are in the process of learning precisely the opposite: American democracy can take a punch.

The best example is Trumpcare, which died an early, humiliating death. Our judicial system forced a rewrite of Trump’s draconian immigration executive order. All the gerrymandering and voting rights setbacks in the world will not save the Republican Party from large losses if the Trump administration continues down its self-destructive path.

Modern Republican principles and platform remain, for the most part, unpopular, appealing largely to a demographically shrinking constituency. The GOP’s most important and consistent goal in the past few decades has been to lower the tax burden on the wealthy. This goal — fervently believed and advocated — polls terribly. Yet it remains at the top of the party’s to-do list. Combine this substantive unpopularity with a flailing administration, and a very real correction at the polls becomes increasingly likely.

Trump’s administration is completely incompetent. These are the Keystone Kops of budding authoritarians. This should not be surprising, nor expected to improve any more than Trump himself, who seems incapable of restraint or effective management. He has surrounded himself with people inexperienced in public policy and has left hundreds of key executive spots unfilled. The administration continues to leak like the Titanic. His presidency has suffered as a result. What should have been a honeymoon for Trump and the GOP looks more like the morning after an inebriated Vegas marriage.

Trump’s scandals are only going to grow. Trump’s conflict of interests, combined with his complete indifference toward them, suggest that he will soon unseat Andrew Jackson, the man who gave us the Spoils System, as the most corrupt president ever. Additionally, the Russian scandal is almost certain to expand. What was at first treated by journalists as an evidence-thin distraction has become a full-blown, legitimate story that threatens to drain this administration’s legitimacy, if not bring it down in full.

Trump represents a real danger to our democratic institutions. But the United States isn’t Venezuela. It’s a fully developed democracy, which will prove to be more valuable than current conventional wisdom assumes. In a battle between Donald Trump and democracy, my money’s on America.

CHANGING PARTY DEMOGRAPHICS

By Joshua Zingher

With the 2020 presidential election cycle approaching rapidly, Democrats are considering how to improve their poor showings in 2014 and 2016. The party has been debating — sometimes heatedly — how to do this. Which voters should they target? How should Democrats target them?

But here’s what’s clear: White voters have been fleeing the Democratic Party, and that’s a big reason Democrats are looking to rebound from back-to-back losses.

Whites have slowly but consistently moved away from the Democratic Party. These recent losses are on top of Democrats’ losses among Southern

Bill Clinton won 49 percent of the white two-party vote in 1996. Al Gore won 43 percent in 2000. John F. Kerry won 41 percent in 2004. Barack Obama won a slightly larger share in 2008, but then dropped to only 39 percent in his 2012 reelection bid. Hillary Clinton got the same percentage as Obama.

Obama was able to mask the Democratic Party's weakness among whites by prompting record-high turnout among African Americans, as well as strong turnout from other Democratic-leaning minority groups. Hillary Clinton was unable to generate the same level of enthusiasm from racial and ethnic minorities.

My new research helps explain how Democrats got to this point. I utilized survey data from the American National Election Study that spanned 1972 to 2012 and the General Social Survey that spanned 1983 to 2014 to see how the predictors of white vote choice had changed. I found that white voters' shift toward the Republican Party has been driven by two factors.

The first factor is that growing elite polarization has caused the electorate to "sort" along ideological lines.

On the elite level, Republicans are conservatives and Democrats are liberals. The parties are clearly divided ideologically, and there is no overlap between the two. This is quite different from previous eras, when Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans looked quite different from the rest of their parties.

Voters have an easier time deciding which party best matches their own position when the party positions are highly polarized. As a result, liberals have increasingly become Democrats, and conservatives have become Republicans.

This sorting process has hurt the Democratic Party among whites (especially in the South and Midwest), as there were historically more conservative white Democrats than liberal white Republicans. For Democrats, the increase in support among formerly Republican white liberals has not made up for the loss of white conservatives.

The second factor is that demographic changes have decreased the ratio of whites to nonwhites in the electorate. The electorate was 29 percent nonwhite in 2016. This is up from 11 percent in 1976 and 19 percent in 2000.

This is politically important because the average white voter is more economically conservative and more socially liberal on issues such as abortion, gay rights and so on than the average nonwhite voter. (This varies by education level, as I'll discuss below.)

As the ratio of nonwhites to whites has increased, an increasing proportion of whites are now "right of center" on economic issues and "left of center" on social issues. The growth of the nonwhite population has pulled the overall median away from the median white citizen's position — on both social and economic issues.

Taking advantage of these demographic changes, the Democratic Party has courted and won more votes from ethnic and racial minority groups. However, at the same time, in response to these demographic changes, more whites have shifted rightward on economic issues.

I built an index that combines individuals' positions on a number of survey items and reduces their answers to one summary measure of economic liberalism. I found that 58 percent of whites were to the right of the median in 1972 — but that had become 65 percent in 2016.

I used the American National Election Study data to show that many whites view the Democratic Party as moving further away from their own positions. This is true both when whites are asked to assess the positions of the parties generally and on a variety of specific issues such as government-sponsored health care and the government's role in providing employment.

My research suggests this combination of political "sorting" and changing white perceptions of the Democratic Party has resulted in an almost eight-point swing in white vote choice. That lines up well with actual vote returns. White votes were split between the two parties about 50-50 in the 1970s — but in elections since 2000, that has become closer to 60-40 in favor of the Republican Party.

Democrats might be gaining more votes from Latinos, Asians and other emerging demographic groups, but they are losing whites as a result. Furthermore, the demographics of the white voters who are likely to support Democrats are different from the white voters who supported the Democratic Party in previous decades.

Most notably, while the Democratic Party is winning a lower percentage of whites overall, a greater proportion of college-educated whites are voting for Democrats. Attitudes on social issues in particular have become stronger predictors of voting behavior in recent elections; economic attitudes have become more important, too, but were already quite a strong predictor to start with.

The Democratic Party is increasingly a coalition of professional-class whites and members of ethnic and racial minority groups. Overall, the Democratic Party has made inroads among socially liberal whites while losing social and economic conservatives.

These changes have altered the Democratic Party's prospects in presidential elections. While Democrats might be winning more college-educated whites, members of that group often live in states that are already heavily tilted toward Democrats. Whites without college degrees make up a large proportion of voters in many critical swing states in the Upper Midwest — the very states Trump was able to flip from blue to red in 2016.

Thus the Democratic Party is not simply winning a lower proportion of white voters; the whites who are getting more likely to vote for Democrats are less helpful in carrying the electoral college. The decrease in white support for the Democratic Party is one of the most important trends in U.S. politics. This shift in white voting behavior is the result of changes of the parties' positions and the country's demographics.


Joshua N. Zingher is an assistant professor of political science at Old Dominion University whose research focuses on mass political behavior, elections and representation.
NEW DATA ON CLIMATE CHANGE

By Michael Allen

ON THURSDAY, NASA released its 2017 global climate summary. The analysis concluded that 2017 was the second-warmest year on record since 1880, behind only 2016. Globally averaged temperatures were 1.62 degrees Fahrenheit (0.90 degrees Celsius) warmer than the 1951 to 1980 mean.

In a separate analysis, NOAA concluded that 2017 was the third-warmest on record. The minor differences are attributed to the methodologies used. I wish I could report that this is new and surprising, but 2017 is just another data point in a long-term climate record that indicates significant warming attributed to the release of heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide.

The last time global monthly temperatures were below the 20th century average was February 1985. According to local records from the National Weather Service, Norfolk experienced 22 new daily temperature records in 2017. These included two prolonged warm periods from April 28 to May 1 and from October 8 to 11 where temperatures did not dip below 70 and 74 degrees Fahrenheit, respectively.

The year also will be remembered for nutritionists’ conclusions? This is the overwhelming conclusion of experts. Yes, you may find someone who suggests bacon is part of a well-balanced diet, but does this invalidate all other nutritionists’ conclusions?

Expect the best, prepare for the worst. Adapting to the consequences — developing green infrastructure, rezoning and strengthening community resilience — is important. But we must also mitigate the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and stabilizing levels of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere. The two must be inseparable.

In the recent “Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2017 Interim Report,” authors showed that mitigation investment and precautionary planning can save the nation $6 in future disaster costs for every $1 spent. The challenges we face are not unsolvable, and many strategies exist.

Increased public awareness and an engaged populace can push for action. Investment in renewable energy can reduce energy costs. Let us be forward-thinking, not backward-walking. Let us #ActOnClimate.

Dr. Michael Allen is an assistant professor of geography and a climate scientist at Old Dominion University. Originally published in Virginian Pilot https://pilotonline.com/opinion/columnist/guest/article_98a7dae6-33c6-583d-a7b2-16914a221f3.html
CONSIDER ODU FOR GRADUATE STUDIES!

ODU’s Graduate Program in International Studies (GPIS) is proud of its dynamic and diverse student body. Our students come from diverse backgrounds. Many already have an M.A. (if entering a Doctoral program) or a B.A. (if entering an M.A. program), but students’ educational backgrounds are rich and varied. GPIS students have held previous degrees in the fields of Economics; History; Political Science; Linguistics; Geography; Sociology; Business Management; Foreign Languages; Communications; Literature; Creative Writing; and many more! GPIS students also come to ODU from within the U.S. as well as from all over the world. Many of our current students and alumni are doing exciting things in the Academic, Private, Government and Non-Profit sectors to name a few. No matter from where or what background you come to GPIS, you can be assured that you will leave with a world-class education and opportunities to work in many different fields.

Another graduate option on campus is the Master of Arts in Humanities. Geography majors may be particularly interested in the available concentration in Cultural and Human Geography. And stay tuned as we are hopeful that the department will soon begin offering a Masters program in Geography and GIS.

Finally, the School of Public Service offers Master of Public Administration (MPA), and a Ph.D. in Public Administration and Policy (PAAP). The MPA program is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), the national certifying organization for public administration programs.

EVENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Congressional and State Elections Panel

On November 1st, 2018. Topics: Analysis of early voting results · Discussion of candidates, issues, and campaigns · election projections · Election institutions and processes · Trade and China.

GIS Day

Friday, Nov 16th, 2018. As usual a number of professional talks in geospatial technologies will be scheduled followed by a panel discussion of career in geospatial technologies, and student poster/map competitions (both graduate and undergraduate levels). Door prizes will be drawn as well. The event is open to the public with students & faculty, and local/regional GIS professionals as main audiences. Free parking is available to all the guests. The GIS Day webpage can be accessed here: https://www.odu.edu/pols-geog/geography/certificates/gis-certificate/gis-day/. Sponsored by ODU (our department and SGA), Hampton Roads GIS User Group, City of Norfolk, and Virginia Space Grant Consortium

Marc and Connie Jacobson Raoul Wallenberg
Humanitarian Speaker Bryan Stevenson

On March 19, 2019, ODU will welcome Bryan Stevenson to campus as part of the President’s lecture series. Stevenson is a graduate of Harvard Law School and founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, which seeks to eliminate injustice and mass incarceration. Earlier this year, the Equal Justice Initiative opened the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, which documents slavery, lynching and discrimination in the United States. Stevenson and his staff members have won relief or release for more than 125 prisoners on death row. Stevenson also is a law professor at New York University and author of “Just Mercy.” Nobel Peace Prize recipient Desmond Tutu has called him America’s young Nelson Mandela. Stevenson has received a MacArthur Foundation “genius grant” and was named one of Time’s 100 Most Influential People in 2015.