

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

SKIDMORE COLLEGE
Government Department

Fall 2004

Letter From Department Chair Ron Seyb

Dear Government Majors and Minors:

The Government department continues to pursue its copyright infringement lawsuit against the John Kerry campaign for its appropriation (with one minor, insignificant change) of our department motto, "Bring the Learning On." We are confident of reaching an out-of-court settlement with the campaign some time in the near future that should provide us with sufficient funds to furnish with just the right balance of Stickley and Ethan Allen our nascent "Government Department Lounge" in the middle bay of the 3rd floor of Ladd. Should the settlement fail to meet our expectations, we plan on asking OMB to move all of our purchases from Huck Finn's Warehouse "off-budget."

The Department does plan to convert the broad swath of empty space in the middle bay into a lounge area where our majors, minors, and their entourages can relax, read magazines of public affairs, talk politics, consume snacks, and

find serenity. We are currently acquiring furniture from various charitable sources (i.e., our own homes) that will feature enough heart and pluck to more than make up for their aesthetic deficiencies. We

are also accumulating artwork to place on the walls that will run the gamut from agitprop to dada to crayon sketches of our first grade teachers.

Professor Bob Turner's return from sabbatical means that we will have for the first time since Opening Day, 1921 (when Sacco and Vanzetti threw out the first and the second pitches) our full roster of faculty back. The addition of our new department secretary, **Barbara McDonough**, in the off-season gives us reason to believe that we will be bringing home the hardware at the end of the teaching season in May.

Two of our faculty will be delivering new courses this spring that should generate some buzz on the blogs. **Professor Tim Burns** will be delivering for Honors Forum, "HF 203: Empowered Studentship," and **Professor Chris Whann** will be team teaching with Professor Gerald Erchak from the Department of

Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work the first International Affairs "Travel Seminar" entitled, "Chocolate and Gold: Politics and Culture in Ghana, West Africa." **Professor Burns** will also be offering a topics course for us this spring, "GO 351: Shakespeare's Political Wisdom."

The department is planning some special events in the spring, the most important of these being our planned "50th Anniversary Celebration" the weekend of April 9-10. This event will bring

back many former faculty members and alumni to celebrate 50 years of Government department highs and hijinks. The weekend will feature a series of events that we hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend. We think that such mixing of the generations will help all of us to appreciate that there really is nothing funny about peace, love, and understanding. I know that our alumni want to hear about your educational experiences, while I am sure that you wish to learn from them how to maximize your AARP benefits when the time comes.

Please do not hesitate to drop by during my office hours or make an appointment to chat if you have any questions about the Government major or minor. I can also explain to you what "margin of error" means, though I can be no help in distinguishing between a "likely voter" and a "loser slacker."

“All the Laws But One”

By Matt Bohenek, '05

Dean James F. Simon of the New York Law School delivered the annual Government Department Fiscus Lecture on Friday, October 15th to a capacity crowd in Davis Auditorium. *Dean Simon spoke about the clash between President Abraham Lincoln and Chief Justice Roger B. Taney during the Civil War. In 1861, John Merriman, a Maryland resident and*

Confederate loyalist was, arrested. He filed a petition with Chief Justice Taney for a writ of habeas corpus, which had been suspended by President Lincoln. The warden refused to deliver the writ, claiming that he took his orders from Lincoln and not from the Supreme Court. Dean Simon outlined Taney's argument that only the legislature could suspend the writ of habeas corpus, as the clause appears only in Article I of the Constitution and Lincoln's counterargument that the text itself does not specify that that power was specifically allotted to Congress. After breaking down this case and the tug-of-war that ensued between Taney and Lincoln, Simon noted the relevance of this case to other similar ones in recent history, most notably Justice Hugo Black's opinion in favor of Japanese-American internment in World War II and subsequent decisions involving the PATRIOT Act of 2001.

Dean Simon, a "nationally recognized scholar of constitutional law and award-winning author of six books on American history, law, and politics" was energetic, entertaining, and engaging. He spoke to an audience that was well over a hundred strong on a Friday night and comprised of students, faculty, and community members.

The Fiscus Lecture was inaugurated in 1991 by Skidmore's Department of Government to honor the late Ronald J. Fiscus, a Skidmore faculty member from 1980 to his death in 1990. Professor Fiscus was a constitutional law specialist and a key contributor to the development of a minor in law and society at Skidmore.

*Excerpts taken from

<http://www.nyls.edu/pages/401.asp> and
<http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/gov/lectures.html>*

Liberty: the Price of Safety?

By Kevin Wozniak '05

I have often heard lately, both in the media and from people I have spoken with, that the War on Terrorism and the safety of our nation is the most important issue in this election. Although I certainly agree that we must all be concerned with the safety of the United States, I feel that the extreme focus on the War on Terror is being used to blind us to a far more insidious and dangerous issue: the Federal Marriage Amendment and the debate over gay marriage.

Now I know what you're all thinking. How can I posit such a niche issue as the most important issue in this election? I freely and honestly admit that the FMA is a deeply personal issue to me because I am a gay man, and I understand that most Americans are only peripherally interested in the gay marriage debate, if they are interested at all. I cannot fault them; I am often guilty of apathy towards issues that do not directly concern me. However, I argue that the FMA does directly affect every American, GLBT and straight, whether you want to admit it or not.

I want you to think about the theoretical and ethical implications of the FMA. I want you to consider, for a moment, its relationship to the core values and beliefs of the United States. As Americans, we tenaciously cling to our civil liberties and our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our Founding Fathers fought and died for the right to have beliefs that were not perfectly compatible with the wishes of the British Crown. Today, the words "Equality Under Law" are carved in stone on the face of the Supreme Court of the United States, the third branch of our federal government and the interpreter of our laws. Equality: it is a value that we Americans believe in like no other.

However, through endorsing the FMA, the Bush Administration and members of the Republican Party have placed a very clear qualifier upon this value. They are saying, you will be given equality under law, but only as long as your values and your beliefs completely agree with ours. They feel threatened by the concept

of same-sex marriage, so they have attacked it as "abnormal" and a "threat to the very foundation of marriage." All of a sudden, because the heterosexual majority has been made a little uncomfortable, our government has made an attempt to legally prevent us GLBT citizens from pursuing liberty or happiness as we see fit.

I understand that we are a democracy and that the majority of Americans do not currently support same-sex marriage. I would argue tyranny of the majority, but for now, let us consider something a little more personal for all you red-blooded heterosexual Americans out there. The Bush Administration has clearly demonstrated its willingness to sacrifice civil liberties and the value of equality when it decides that your values are incompatible with its values. You do not feel threatened because you are not GLBT, but what is next? If the Bush Administration is so quick to go on the offensive when it is threatened, who is to say that tomorrow's "immoral" action might be something that you do? What if, as a radical example, they decide that smoking is immoral because it kills people through lung cancer (is it really all that much of a stretch given their pro-life stance against killing unborn babies?)? Would you be willing to give up your right to smoke because a handful of people in your government have passed value judgment upon something that is a very personal choice to you? When must the issue be personal enough for you to stand up and fight for the sanctity of your civil liberties and equality under law?

Bush may be dedicated to keeping us safe, but it is safety purely on his terms. If you disagree with his vision of a safe and moral America in the slightest, you are pushed to the margins. This is not the freedom our Founders fought for. This is not the America in which I wish to live, the America I believe in. I will end with one of my favorite quotes from James Madison:

I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by

gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and the sudden usurptions. Stem the tide now before it is too late or you may not recognize America tomorrow.

Voting at Skidmore

Sarah Kunz '06

If you haven't heard the word *election* in the past two months, then the ballot bearing donkey clearly missed your Afghan Mountain vacation home. Here at Skidmore the topic is hard to ignore. As early as last spring, members of the political clubs on campus began making plans to register students for the upcoming November election. The Skidmore Progressives, the Skidmore Democrats and the Skidmore Young Republican Assembly have worked in collaboration with Pi Sigma Alpha, the Student Government Association, and the Office of the Dean of Students to forward registration efforts. We found ourselves facing new challenges during this year's registration efforts but likewise found students, administrators and public officials more willing to help us facilitate the process.

Because the Skidmore Campus is a stand alone voting district (District 24), making sure that an adequate amount of

students are registered is crucial. Having at least 700 students registered on campus has been our goal for the past several years. The aforementioned number protects the geographical integrity of the district, preventing it from being added on to a neighboring district. At the time of last year's election, we had 902 students registered in Skidmore's district - including off-campus and Moore Hall students. However, newly clarified residency stipulations required that this year off campus and Moore Hall students had to change their registration to vote in their respective off campus district.

At the end of last year, off-campus voter information packets were created as a result of an independent study that Amelia Crane, Petria Fleming and myself completed with Professor Breslin. The packets were sent out to all off-campus and Moore Hall Students and included a registration form, a map of the local voting districts and polling locations. The primary challenge that we faced this fall was ensuring that new students were registered, and that all off campus students were properly reregistered. In order to inform new residents, we included a voter information sheet in the freshman orientation packets, and tabled at

the club fair. Additionally, we sent out several announcements educating off campus students of their need to reregister. Likewise, by the end of this week, off-campus students will receive yet another map and list of polling stations to ensure that they know where to vote on Election Day.

We have also been actively registering students to vote absentee - enabling them to request absentee ballots from their home state. Throughout the process, we have encouraged students to vote not only where they believe is most convenient - but where they feel a vested interest in the greater political community. Some students, who were formerly registered in Saratoga, have chosen to reregister at home because of important local elections or by virtue of their home state being a swing state.

All told, we delivered close to 300 registration forms to the Board of Elections before the October 8th deadline. We don't yet have final numbers on how many of those registrations were District 24 registrations, and how many of them were off campus registrations. Skidmore voters continue to be a contentious issue with many in-town officials. This year, however, we have seen a renewed commitment by

both the school administration, students and public officials to make the registration and voting process as uncontentious as possible. It is with this renewed optimism that we look ahead to November 2nd and we hope that all Skidmore students will exercise their right to vote - because as we have learned, that right is often more fragile than we would hope.

Making My Vote Not Count

By Rachel Neuman, '05

Watching Kerry speak at the Democratic National Convention this summer, I was temporarily inspired by the prospect of change. I had made no secret of my disapproval of George Bush. I wouldn't have voted for him four years ago, and during last year's primaries I repeated the mantra: "anybody but Bush." I wasn't thrilled with any of the Democratic candidates, but I liked John Kerry a lot more than Howard Dean, and I fully intended to support him. He appeared to have a chance of winning. He was pro-choice. I thought Edwards was a good choice for vice-president. Then, the Democratic National Convention did its job; it made me optimistic about Kerry, made me actually want to vote for him. Kerry impressed me, perhaps because my expectations were so low. Then I watched the Republican National Convention, which contained the same ideas and the same plans, disguised in different catch-phrases.

I consider myself an informed person. I am not unaware of the differences between George Bush and John Kerry. I just don't think their differences are substantial enough to make this election as important and monumental as

many claim. The debates, in which Bush and Kerry spouted their good intentions instead of answering straight forward policy questions have shown me how little I want to lend either man my support. I've found the more informed I become, the less I want to vote for Kerry's tax and spend 'liberalism' over Bush's spend and spend 'conservatism'.

It is very difficult for me to choose which candidate I think will do less damage to the country. Neither man represents my political convictions. Neither is talking about any kind of making any of the radical changes I think are necessary to solve many of the problems the country faces. On some level, I recognize that type of discourse is impossible in American politics; politics is not an expression of moral purity or utopian dreams. The system isn't about ideals, and it rarely elects great leaders; the system has become about picking which guy is less dangerous.

So, as much as I would love to unseat the incumbent, I'm not voting for John Kerry either. I'm "throwing my vote away" and voting for Michael Badnarik, the Libertarian Party candidate

Many would say my vote for Badnarik is an irresponsible choice, especially since New Jersey looks like it might be a swing state for the first time in years, and that if I don't vote for Kerry, I'm unintentionally lending my support to Bush. This isn't true. I am choosing not to give my support to either candidate. If Kerry can't win in New Jersey on his own merits, than he doesn't merit my vote in the first place.

Badnarik certainly isn't going to win the election; he probably won't get more than 1% of the votes in the country. But he is the candidate that best represents my political convictions, and I'm going to support him, even if it is only symbolically.

More information can be found about Michael Badnarik and the Libertarian Party at <http://badnarik.org> and <http://www.lp.org>.

Pi Sigma Alpha News

By Matt Bohenek, '05

Pi Sigma Alpha has been active in promoting this fall's presidential election, cosponsoring public showings of all three debates between President Bush and Senator Kerry, as well as the vice-presidential debate between Dick Cheney and John Edwards. Also, we are cosponsoring and coorganizing a student debate on the issue of welfare which the Social Work Club is pulling together. Pi Sigma Alpha looks forward to inducting a new group of members in November and also to bringing an outside speaker to address the student body in the spring. Stay tuned for more details!

Straw Poll of Government Students

In a recent unscientific poll of our government students the following results are reported:

<p>John Kerry 79% George W. Bush 21%</p>
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Faculty Corner

Professor Roy Ginsberg: *Professor Ginsberg is writing a 600-page textbook for Roman and Littlefield publishers, entitled **Demystifying European Union: The Enduring Logic of Regional Integration**. The text, designed for European and American undergraduate students who wish to understand the European Union from an interdisciplinary perspective, is based on Professor Ginsberg's course--**Political Economy of European Integration**. The book, which draws on perspectives from history, politics, law, and economics, will be published in 2006--in time for the 20th anniversary of the course's introduction at Skidmore and the 50th*

anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the constitutional basis for today's European Union. Professor Ginsberg hopes his textbook will reengage a new generation of young Europeans and Americans in the study of the European Union, which is important to publics on both sides of the Atlantic and to the future of the transatlantic relationship.

Professor Kate Graney: Professor Graney is currently trying to finish the revisions to a book manuscript about the renegotiation of federal relations between Moscow and two of Russia's ethnic republics, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. For better or for worse, current events keep intruding on the project -- Putin recently introduced a series of reforms that would curb the freedoms of the republics and threaten what little remnants of federalism remain in Russia. She hopes to have it finished by the end of the semester or the end of the year, whichever comes first! Please send your good vibes and karma her way, as she needs them to finish this project!

Professor Bob Turner: Professor Turner has been quite busy while on sabbatical this semester. He has finished and submitted two articles for publication. The first paper, "When Do States Pursue Redistributive Economic Development Policies? The Adoption and Implementation of State Enterprise Zone Programs," examines two questions. First, when do states adopt enterprise zones to benefit economically depressed regions? Second, when do states subvert the original redistributive intent of the enterprise zone legislation by increasing the number of enterprise zones? He wrote the second, "Yes in My Backyard! Why Do Rural Communities Use Prison Based Economic Development Strategies?" with Dave Thayer, class of 2004. Using a survey of local elected officials in the 28 rural counties of New York, we examine how their perceptions of economic conditions, the effectiveness of economic development policies, the economic and social

impact of prisons, and the political dynamics affected their communities' decision to pursue prison based economic development strategies. He is also working on three other projects:

"The Politics of Judicial Administration", with Professor Beau Breslin uses a unique dataset on the administrative policy choices of state chief justices to test various theories of judicial behavior. "Market Driven versus Government Driven Strategies for Manufacturing Revitalization" is a paper which examines how different public private partnership models affect who receives assistance or the effectiveness of assistance. "Enterprise Zones in Ohio: Who Benefits?" seeks to reorient the debate over state enterprise zones to the question of who the actual beneficiaries are instead of whether the program attracts investment and jobs. Also, keep your eyes open for a new summer class for 2005 entitled the "Adirondack Wilderness Experience," with Professor Turner and Kyle Nichols from Geosciences, which will examine the natural setting of the park, the environmental impact of humans on the park, the evolution of popular views of the wilderness, the attempts to balance development and preservation, the prospects for bio-regional level governance, and the major challenges to ecological, social, and economic success in the Adirondack Park. The emphasis of the course is on experiential learning and will involve various hikes and/or canoe trips into the wilderness itself.

Lastly, Professor Turner is also taking a pilates class in the Dance Department.

Alumni News

Evelyn Brensinger,'03, Government and International Affairs, is a research associate with the Stern Group in Washington, DC--

Paula Stern's international political and economic consulting firm.

Chris Constantian, '01, has passed the Foreign Service written exam and will take his orals in December. He is expected to finish his M. Phil. in International Relations (at St. Andrews) shortly

Tim Chase, '03, has been offered a 20-month teaching position with the American Academy of English in Poland and is applying for admission to graduate school.

Ronnie (Kovner) Tepp, '90, who gave birth to a baby girl last month, is head of legislative affairs for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International in Washington, DC.

Dan Disalvo, '98, completed his MA at Fordham. Dan went on to study American Politics at the University of Virginia. He is ABD and seems to be thriving in warmer climes. Dan is the Co author of an article in the current issue of PUBLIC INTEREST, "A New GOP?". Check it out online at <http://thepublicinterest.com>.

Christopher McGrath '99, is on leave from his NGO, Handgun-Free America, to work with the Kerry-Edwards campaign. He does advance work for the campaign--coordinates events/logistics for the Senator's visits to cities across the country. Chris has been on the road with the Senator since leaving his organization last summer.

The Department of Government Requirements for Earning Honors

The Department of Government recommends for department honors those students who have exhibited a serious and sustained commitment to the study of politics as demonstrated by meeting the following criteria:

- 1) Earning at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA

- 2) Earning at least a 3.5 GPA in their Government courses

- 3) Receiving a grade of at least an A- on a senior thesis

Description of the Senior Thesis

The Senior thesis is a year-long project that requires students to follow a carefully sequenced period of reading, writing, and revision culminating in a paper of at least 40 pages (10,000 words) that utilizes both primary and secondary sources to defend a clearly stated thesis.

The faculty expects that students undertaking thesis work will be well-prepared to address their chosen topic and conscientious about meeting all deadlines and fulfilling all requirements for completion of the thesis.

Guidelines for Completion of a Senior Thesis

1. Students interested in writing a senior thesis must seek during the spring semester of their junior year an appropriate Government department faculty member to act as their thesis director. Students who plan to study off-campus (e.g., in a Study Abroad Program or in the Washington Semester Program at American University) during the spring semester of their junior year must seek an appropriate thesis advisor during the fall semester of their junior year.

Students should formulate a specific research question and compile a preliminary bibliography prior to approaching a potential director and be able to provide evidence that they have done the course and preparatory work necessary to complete their proposed thesis.

Government faculty are not obligated to direct a senior thesis. A faculty member will decide whether to accept or reject a student's invitation to direct a thesis on the following bases:

- a.) The fit between the faculty member's specialization and interests and the student's topic.

b.) An assessment of the student's ability, commitment, and preparation for undertaking the proposed project.

2. Students enroll in "GO 371: Independent Study" for the fall semester of their senior year. Students consult with their thesis director during the first week of classes to establish a reading list and to set a schedule of meetings. A student's grade for GO 371 and eligibility to continue thesis work in the spring semester will be based on their response to the assigned readings, the quality of their written work, their preparation for the meetings with their thesis director, and their performance on the following required work:

a.) A 5-7 page thesis prospectus that presents the thesis and the research design.

b.) An annotated bibliography that includes both primary and secondary sources.

3. Students must meet with their thesis director prior to the conclusion of the fall semester to establish a schedule for the completion of different stages of the research and for the submission of various drafts of the thesis.

4. Students must receive a final grade of at least "B" in GO 371 and the permission of the department to enroll in "GO 375: Senior Thesis" during the spring semester.

5. Students begin drafting their senior thesis during Winter Break at the latest.

6. Students enroll in "GO 375: Senior Thesis" for the spring semester of their senior year. During the first week of classes, students meet with their director to identify a second reader. Students are encouraged to choose a second reader from among the Government department faculty. Students can, however, select a reader from another department on campus, provided that both the thesis director and the second reader endorse this decision.

7. Students who wish to have their thesis considered for department honors or for a Periclean Award must submit the final version of their work to their thesis director by April 10.

Senior Thesis Defense

1. Students will defend their thesis some time between April 12 and April 22. The thesis panel will include the following:

a) The thesis director

b) The second reader

c) A third reader from outside the college who is selected by the thesis director

If in any given year it is impossible to recruit a third reader from outside the college, then the thesis director may choose a third reader from another Skidmore department.

2. Students will be expected during the thesis defense to perform successfully the following:

a) Provide a summary of their research question, thesis, methodology, and findings

b) Provide cogent responses to questions posed by the members of the thesis panel

3. At the conclusion of the thesis defense, the members of the panel will convene to decide on the grade for the thesis. The final grade for the thesis will be determined by the panel's evaluation of the following:

a) The persuasiveness of the written argument

b) The quality of the writing

c) The performance during the thesis defense

4. The members of the panel will then meet with the student to convey the final grade for the thesis.

5. All students who complete a senior thesis must submit a clean (i.e., without either marginal or summary comments), graded, bound copy of their thesis to the department secretary by May 1.

Schedule for Completion of a Senior Thesis

Fall of Junior Year

1) Students who plan to study off-campus during the spring seek the approval of an appropriate Government department faculty member to direct their thesis

Spring of Junior Year

1) Develop thesis topic

2) Students in residence at the college seek the approval of an appropriate Government department faculty member to direct their thesis.

Fall of Senior Year

1) Apprise thesis director of intention to proceed with thesis work

2) Enroll in "GO 371: Independent Study"

3) Establish in consultation with thesis director a reading list and set a schedule for meetings

4) Complete thesis prospectus and annotated bibliography

5) Establish a research and writing schedule in consultation with thesis director

Winter Break of Senior Year

1) Begin drafting thesis

Spring of Senior Year

1) Apprise thesis director of intention to proceed with thesis work

2) Enroll in "GO 375: Senior Thesis"

3) Select second reader by the end of the first week of classes

4) Submit completed thesis to thesis director by April 10

5) Defend thesis during some time between April 12 and April 22

Spring 2005 Course Information

HF 203 Citizen Studentship

By Molly Appel, '07

Citizen Studentship is a completely student-run class. The students must decide what subject matter is most meaningful to them, and guide themselves towards learning it. The students must develop their own classroom dynamic and governing structure. The two T.A.'s and the professor act as advisors and references but do not hold the roles in which a traditional classroom setting places them. By the end, the students learn that they are capable of achieving far more

than what they originally believe is possible. They learn how they can work with a professor and teacher's assistants as equal members of a classroom, not as passive learners. Most importantly, the students learn what it means to take responsibility for themselves and for their own education.

GOV 351 Topics in Political Thought: Shakespeare's Political Wisdom

Spring 2005

Tues & Thurs 3:40-5:30

Instructor: Timothy Burns

This year the political theory topics course will be devoted to Shakespeare's political wisdom. At least since the time of Aristophanes and Plato, major themes of political theory have been explored through fiction rather than in treatises or tracts. Through a careful reading of five of Shakespeare's plays (*Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*) we will examine the following themes: the justice of a pre-emptive strike; justice in a republic; the pursuit of happiness in the private realm versus civic life; the longing for the noble or beautiful and its political consequences; religion, commerce, and the destruction of the political; the problematic rule of philosopher-kings; tyranny; the effect of Christian theology on political life.

HF 203 Studentship: By Students, For Students

Ready to revolutionize your education? Now you can, in the only course at Skidmore designed by Skidmore students. The course gives students the chance to break down traditional educational roles by experimenting with different structures of authority, thus offering an alternative method

of education that emphasizes participation and responsibility as a member of the academic community. Students will challenge each other, generating their own assignments for which they must think, speak, and write well. To this end, they will establish and employ means of assessing one another's performance and understanding of subject matter, which may include the writings of Locke, Rousseau, Bloom, Heidegger, government manifestos regarding education and society, and additional texts that students will bring to the table. The dynamic class structure regularly surprises students with

new challenges on both individual and group levels, and the course will culminate in the design and fulfillment of a class project that will help students to find their potential for making a meaningful contribution to the intellectual environment of the campus and the community at large.

REGISTRATION

for

SPRING 2005

begins

NOVEMBER 3rd

