



The Squire's Scuttlebutt



MGA's Political Science Newsletter

Dispatch from the Department Chair

Dr. Christopher Lawrence

Welcome again to our departmental newsletter! Exciting things continue to be afoot in the Department of Political Science, and we're glad to be sharing some of them with you in this newsletter.

Over the past year we've been working closely with our colleagues in the Department of Psychology and Criminal Justice to develop what we hope will be MGA's second doctoral program, a doctorate in public safety administration and management, pending approval from the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents and our regional accreditor, SACS COC. If the program is approved as anticipated, we anticipate hiring additional faculty in support of the program that will also be able to contribute to our undergraduate degree programs, and several of our faculty will be teaching core courses in the program, as well. Dr. John Hall,



Dr. Watson and Dr. Lawrence represented the Department of Political Science at MGA's Fall 2022 Open House. (Image Credit: Annie Watson)

associate professor of political science, was selected to serve as the program coordinator for the doctoral program, which we are hoping to be able to launch sometime in 2024.

We're also continuing to make progress in integrating the interdisciplinary studies program into our department; in the fall, we'll be launching an updated BS in interdisciplinary studies degree program with stronger connections to skills applicable in the public and

non-profit sectors, including requiring coursework in public administration and conflict negotiation and resolution. We've also worked to better align the curriculum with current course offerings across the university to give students better opportunities to connect the core of the degree with their chosen focus areas.

That's not to suggest we've forgotten about political science! We've

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Feathers in Faculty Caps

Our faculty have been hard at work! Catch up with their teaching, research, & service.

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hosted several discussion events this year on current political developments in the local, state, national, and international spheres, with more to come in April and this fall. You can watch archived recordings of these events on our department's YouTube channel, now accessible at the URL <https://youtube.com/@MGAPolSci>. Speaking of social media, please also follow our updates on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn for news of upcoming events.

We're also delighted that we'll be hosting a Fulbright scholar in residence from Ukraine's National Defense University for the 2023-24 academic year, thanks in large part to the hard work of Dr. Thomas Matyók and MGA's former provost fellow for international programs, Dr. Laura Thomason. As you'll see in their updates in this newsletter, our faculty also continue to pursue their teaching and scholarly interests

and otherwise contribute to the life of the university and the communities we serve. We're also happy to hear and share what our growing band of alumni, recent graduates, and current students are doing.

We are also pleased to honor two outstanding recent graduates from our department. December 2022 graduate Elijah Stinehelfer has been designated as the recipient of the 2022-23 academic year award for outstanding academic excellence in the political science degree program, while August 2022 graduate Brandon Parish received the academic year award for outstanding academic excellence in the interdisciplinary studies (B.S.) degree program. Both Eli and Brandon will have been honored at MGA's annual honors convocation by the time you read this newsletter.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not

thank Dr. Annie Watson for her continued leadership in compiling and editing the departmental newsletter; without her dedication and hard work, this publication would not be in your (figurative, if not literal) hands to read.

We welcome your feedback on this issue and would love to hear your updates for publication in our next issue in fall 2023. Your newsletter contributions can be sent to Dr. Watson at annie.watson@mga.edu, while you can contact me at christopher.lawrence@mga.edu. Here's to a happy and prosperous conclusion to the academic year!



Dr. Lawrence (far right) represents MGA at the American Political Science Association's Teaching & Learning Conference in Baltimore in February 2023. (Photo Credit: Christopher Lawrence)

Feathers in Faculty Caps

In the fall semester of 2022, **Mrs. Grace Adams-Square**, assistant professor of political science, piloted a full-session Area B class, teaching Perspectives on Diversity (under the guidance of Dr. Eric Sun and Dr. Rod McRae). In August, along with Dr. Lawrence and Dr. Caverly, she participated in Freshman Convocation, in which the faculty members introduced themselves, discussed majoring in political science, and promoted voting in the upcoming election. Adams-Square continued to serve as the editor of

the MGA student veterans' newsletter *Esprit De Corps*; the December 2022 edition highlighted collaborations among the 5 MGA campuses, including student veterans' participation in Wreaths Across America to remember and honor fallen heroes by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies. She also served on the Greek Life Expansion committee and participated in the Social Justice Leadership Webinar Series.



Dr. Matt Caverly, lecturer of political science, participated as a panelist in the department's fall 2022 discussions and assessments of the mid-term elections. He also was a panelist in the spring of 2023's discussion relative to the Russo-Ukrainian War. In his military life, Caverly transferred to a new unit and began work as the Plans Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) for the Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF). He also graduated from a first responder course put on by the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMHSA), which dealt with the interface between field and operational elements during disaster responses. Between fall 2022 and spring 2023, Caverly graduated from two military professional development courses. In the first, he gained basic instructorship certification. In the second, he received personal improvement training through the Franklin-Covey Course, "The 7 Habits for Highly Effective People." Finally, in his personal life, he took a short family vacation to the Yucatan and saw the wonders of the Mayan pyramids in Mexico and Belize.



Dr. Jim Decker, professor of political science, created a new course—LGBTQ Politics—which he is teaching in the spring 2023 semester. Also, he organized a guest lecture entitled "On the Frontlines: A Plaintiff in the Fight for Marriage Equality" with Don Diaz-Johnston. Diaz-Johnston will be speaking on the Macon campus in April 2023 about his involvement in the Florida courts.



Dr. John Hall, associate professor of political science, presented original research on the effect of digital news summaries on student learning outcomes in POLS 1101 at the Georgia Political Science Association Conference. He also served as a discussant for four policy discussions (midterm elections summary, the war in Ukraine, and midterm elections preview). And he had two students in POLS 4898 (Research Practicum) and POLS 4900 (Capstone Seminar) present original research at academic conferences.



Dr. Christopher N. Lawrence, associate professor of political science, is finishing up his eleventh year at MGA and fourth year as chair of the Department of Political Science. In September, he represented the university at the annual meeting for advisors for Pi Sigma Alpha at the American Political Science Association conference in Montréal, Québec, Canada. He also served as the section organizer for the Information Technology and Politics section at the 2023 Southern Political Science Association conference in January and presented a co-authored paper on student recruitment and retention with Dr. Bobbi Gentry of Bridgewater College (Va.) at the APSA Conference on Teaching and Learning in February in Baltimore. He was recently reappointed to another term on the editorial board of the *Journal of Political Science Education* and will be promoted to the rank of professor on July 1st.



This is El Capital, the largest known Mayan pyramid in Belize. (Photo Credit: Matt Caverly)



Members of the MGA community, including Dr. Watson and Mrs. Adams-Square (not shown), participated in MGA's Fall 2022 Day of Service by volunteering at Stepping Stone in Dublin, GA. (Image Credit: Hannah Thomas)



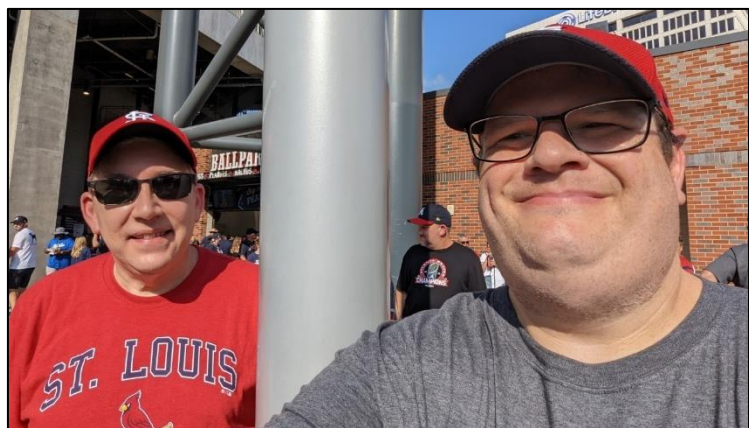
Dr. Lina Tuschling, part-time instructor in the Political Science department, published two co-authored articles in recent months. The first article is entitled "[Growing inter-cultural empathy in the foreign language classroom: the case study methodology](#)" and was published in *Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*. The second article, "['Why do they laugh at me?' Stereotypes and Prejudices Experienced by Immigrant Youth](#)," was published in the *Journal of Belonging, Identity, Language and Diversity*. In addition to teaching at MGA, Dr. Tuschling is also the Monitoring and Evaluation lead for the USAID-funded project "Hope for a Better Future: Building Collaborative Resilience for Youth in Liberia." The project launch in February was a success, and Dr. Tuschling looks forward to her first monitoring visit in the field later this year. A summary of the product launch can

be found [here](#).



Dr. Annie Watson, assistant professor of political science, served as a panelist for the department's panel on the Supreme Court and a facilitator for the Human Rights Measurement Initiative's Data and Measurement Summit. She also volunteered at Stepping Stone Child Advocacy and Sexual Assault Center for MGA's Day of Service and as a head judge for the local FIRST

LEGO League tournament. She (as lead author) and colleagues at the University of Georgia and the University of Missouri-St. Louis finalized a chapter on measuring human rights for the forthcoming second edition of *Research Methods in Human Rights: A Handbook*. With colleagues at Save the Children International and Ithaca College, she wrote a post for political science blog *The Loop*, titled, "[Children's rights are at risk \(but there's more to the story\)](#)."



Dr. Decker and Dr. Lawrence attend the Braves/Cardinals game in Atlanta in July 2022. (Image Credit: Christopher Lawrence)

The Scoop on Our Students

Noah Copeland (Political Science major) recently served as a panelist at the 2023 Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Undergraduate Conference. He will graduate in the spring semester of 2023.



Elijah Stinehelfer (Political Science major) was given the opportunity to present his research at the Georgia Political Science Association Conference in November of 2022 and was invited to submit his research for consideration to the GPSA journal *Questions in Politics*. He graduated from MGA in December of 2022 and will begin a PhD program in the fall semester of 2023.



This semester marks the halfway point for **Allison Thompson's** bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on Education. This is exciting because as a non-traditional student (full-time wife, caregiver, mom, student, and paraprofessional), her college path has taken a little longer—but will be well worth it. To anyone struggling, she urges you to keep going, keep digging, and not give up!



Dr. Watson (center) celebrates with new Political Science graduates Elijah Stinehelfer (left) and Hannah Theriault (right). (Image Credit: Hannah Theriault)



Dr. Watson, Dr. Decker, and Dr. Lawrence represent the Department of Political Science at MGA's Fall 2022 Commencement. (Image Credit: Rebecca Nees)



Mayor of Warner Robins, the Honorable LaRhonda Patrick, visits Mrs. Adams-Square's American Government class for Constitution Day celebration. (Image Credit: Grace Adams-Square)

American Government Class Hosts Mayor Patrick for Constitution Day

Mrs. Grace Adams-Square

If you take an American Government class with Mrs. Adams-Square in the fall semester, it is guaranteed that there will be some form of Constitution Day celebration in September—and this semester was no exception!

On Tuesday, September 20th, the Honorable Mayor LaRhonda Patrick of Warner Robins visited Adams-Square's American Government class to speak to the students. Mayor Patrick was welcomed by MGA President Dr.

Christopher Blake and introduced by MGA Artist in Residence Charles Richardson. The students were then able to participate in a question-and-answer session.

To prepare, the students all conducted research on Constitution Day, which they then presented in class. Seayra Biggs researched the history of Constitution Day. Jaden Gatliff and Caleb Gutshall researched the history of Warner Robin's politics. Jeffrey Taylor and Justin Greene researched problems currently facing Warner Robins, with a focus on housing. Victoria Harrison researched Mayor Patrick's campaign, including issues and campaign theme.

The Cochran campus was able to

celebrate Constitution Day with the help of Dr. Corey Guyton, Director of Student Engagement. MGA Student Services Coordinator Ashley Thompson also ensured that all Warner Robins students received a pocket Constitution book.



*Dr. Christopher Blake, president of MGA, and the Honorable LaRhonda Patrick, mayor of Warner Robins
(Photo Credit: Grace Adams-Square)*

Federal Guidance and State Response to Cyberbullying Policy

Mrs. Grace Adams-Square

Although social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter are very popular, they have increasingly become the locus of harmful social behaviors, such as cyberbullying

(Das et al., 2019; Giordano, 2021). Targeted victimization has increasingly moved from in-person to digital platforms, reaching users regardless of geographic constraints (Das et al., 2020).

Hinduja and Patchin (2017) conducted a nationwide study of 5,707 teenagers between ages 12 and 17 and found that 33.8% of participants had experienced

cyberbullying, 22.5% of participants had observed nasty comments about them online, 20% of participants had experienced rumors online, 12.2% of participants had received online threats, 10.3% of participants had experienced their identity being compromised online, and 7.1% of participants had experienced the creation of webpages using their images with the intent to embarrass or tarnish their reputations (Hinduja et al. 2017).

In the United States, all three levels of government engage in putting education into effect (Dye, 2008), with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) as the central actor. Yet, the ED expressly states that “education is primarily a State and local responsibility in the United States” (ED, 2021).

Currently, there are no federal laws that directly address cyberbullying, although in some cases, it overlaps with discriminatory harassment, which is covered under federal civil rights laws (StopBullying.gov; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2017). Unfortunately, this leaves the creation of cyberbullying policies to the states, who have enacted inconsistent definitions of cyberbullying.

Although the ED (2011) has provided a set of legislative recommendations on this matter to states, enactment and enforcement remain varied.



From the Editor

Many thanks to all who contributed to the newsletter! If you would like to be included in future issues of the newsletter, email your submission to annie.watson@mga.edu.

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