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The Department of Politics & International Relations *Newsletter*

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Welcome

Welcome to our publication — a biannual (Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter) newsletter dedicated to keeping you informed on all things related to the Politics and International Relations Department. Within this publication, you'll get access to student success stories, faculty highlights, guest speakers and events, program news, and more.

From Our Department Chair



As the academic year gains momentum, we're excited to share happenings in the Politics and IR Department. Every four years, we look forward to the excitement of election season on campus and this fall, we held several engaging election chats in the department, fostering thoughtful discussions around key issues shaping our country and our world. We are also thrilled to welcome two one-year visiting professors, Kristen Morrow and Kathrin Reed, who have joined us with fresh perspectives and exciting new courses.

Our community continues to shine with the celebration of recent faculty publications, and we've been inspired by the insights shared by our exciting guest speakers. This includes political theorist Melvin Rogers, who joined us to discuss the place of James Baldwin in African-American political thought. Additionally, we kicked off the semester with a lively welcome social, bringing together our returning and new majors in a vibrant show of community.

As we close out the fall semester, we are wishing you all a peaceful new year and are looking forward to exciting things to come in the spring!

Annie Karreth, Associate Professor of Politics, Department Chair

legislation and wrote bill summaries and recommendations for the Congressman. “Writing summaries for actual legislation was a lot of pressure, as the legislative team relied on them to guide their advice to the Congressman. However, the more I improved my writing, the more responsibilities I was entrusted with,” Jessica explains.

Additionally, Jessica conducted research on pressing issues like environmental policy, healthcare, and international affairs. “I did research both to write summaries and to craft responses for constituents. This was my favorite part of the job. I would listen to voicemails, read emails, and learn about the concerns of constituents. Then, I would work with the legislative team to respond, explaining what the congressman was doing to address their issues and support their views. Since I live in the district, it felt especially rewarding to directly support my community,” she says.

During her time on Capitol Hill, Jessica formed strong relationships with both the administrative and legislative staff, who offered valuable advice on graduating, post-graduate plans, and career opportunities on the Hill. She remains in contact with them to this day.

Jessica advises students seeking internships to approach the experience with an open mind. “I started my internship with a negative mindset, thinking it would be going to be boring domestic politics, and political bickering. However, I ended up loving the work in domestic policy and gained a newfound appreciation for what the House of Representatives does. I even enjoyed tasks like giving tours, which I never expected. It also opened my eyes to career paths I hadn’t considered, such as working for research think tanks or consulting firms. Overall, the internship was incredible, and I’m grateful to Congressman LaLota and his office for everything they taught me.”



Internship Spotlight: Connor Rancher

During Connor’s (Politics, 2026) time at Pennsylvania State Representative Greg Scott’s office, he had a wealth of experiences that deepened his understanding of how policymakers serve their constituents. Whether it was assisting at the front desk, interacting with constituents in their neighborhoods, or visiting Harrisburg to observe the workings of the General Assembly, each experience shaped Connor’s view of local and state officials.

Connor shares, “Being a policymaker involves more than attending high-profile events or posing for photos after signing a bill into law. It requires long hours, early mornings, and a deep commitment to understanding the needs of the district.” Connor continues, “Policymakers must figure out how to meet those needs, coordinating with policy researchers, constituent services staff (like me and my colleagues), and other elected officials.”



Throughout Connor’s internship, Representative Scott encouraged Connor to do his best work, emphasizing thoroughness and dedication. He also connected Connor with key figures who have navigated the same path he plans to take, such as Parliamentarian David Brogan and Ursinus alumnus Representative Tim Brennan.

A significant part of Connor’s role involved sorting through constituent emails, advocating for various pieces of legislation, and addressing community concerns. “One notable example was during the debate on HB 2394, a bill aimed at increasing funding for underfunded public schools across the state. Initially, the residents of Norristown strongly supported the bill, but opposition quickly grew. This was a pivotal experience for me, as it highlighted how even well-intentioned, beneficial bills can face significant resistance from certain groups within a community,” notes Connor.

Connor also joined the team in going door-to-door, distributing pamphlets with information about the services his office provides, as well as other helpful resources. While the summer heat made the physical task challenging, Connor found door-knocking to be rewarding, as it allowed him to see where many of the constituents lived. This firsthand experience connected the policy issues Connor read about to the real-world needs of the people. Connor says, “I learned that constituents in different areas, such as the suburban communities of Conshohocken and the urban neighborhoods of Norristown, can have very different views on policy issues. This distinction, which I had studied at Ursinus, became much more vivid when I saw how close these communities are yet how differing their perspectives can be,” explained Connor.

Connor’s internship with Representative Scott has solidified his desire to serve people, no matter the challenges. Whether in legislative policy or law, Connor aims to be a leader who prioritizes the well-being of others, just as Representative Scott does. Connor encourages students to seek out experiences that challenge their assumptions and broaden their understanding. Connor says, “Even if you think you know about a particular issue—such as homelessness or climate change—volunteering or interning in relevant fields can expose you to new perspectives and insights. These experiences will help you grow and may even guide you toward discovering what truly matters in your professional and personal life.”

Alumni Spotlight: Paul Cottam

Paul Cottam serves as Senior Policy Advisor at the U.K. Mission to the United Nations, where his responsibilities include overseeing UN reform and management, providing advice on peacekeeping, and negotiating on behalf of the U.K. in the General Assembly’s Fifth Committee.

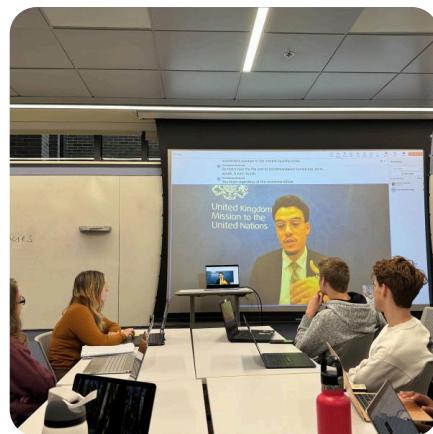
Recently, the UK Mission welcomed a number of high-ranking officials, including Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, and UN Minister Lord Ray Collins. During this period, Paul had the unique opportunity to meet U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, with whom he was “desk neighbors” at the UN’s first-ever G20 meeting.

Paul has now turned his focus towards negotiations in the General Assembly’s 5th Committee, where he



will negotiate to enhance the UN's financial rules and regulations in accordance with the UK's values & interests.

Despite his demanding role, Paul made time to connect with Ursinus students preparing for the upcoming National Model United Nations (NMUN) conference in April. Having attended the NMUN conference twice, Paul shared valuable insights on serving as a delegate at the UN. He also offered a glimpse into his personal journey—from playing college basketball at Ursinus to discovering his passion for politics and international relations, ultimately leading him to the UK Mission to the United Nations through his work at the British Embassy in Washington.



Guest Speakers & Events

Throughout the academic year, our department hosts guest speakers for students, faculty, staff, and the community to address a variety of important issues. Events this semester included:



Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, and Freedom of Speech: Navigating the Post-10/7 Landscape

Samantha Harris of Allen Harris Law, a prominent attorney specializing in student and faculty rights, discussed with Professor of Politics Jonathan Marks, how colleges and universities have handled the protests, as well as the charges of antisemitism they have attracted, and how they should be handling them.



James Baldwin, History, Responsibility, and Atonement

Melvin Rogers, a Professor of Political Science at Brown University and an award-winning writer and speaker, discussed writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin and his continuing legacy in America. The presentation navigated through Baldwin's interrogation of identity, history, and the ethical pillars of responsibility, forgiveness, redemption, and atonement, drawing a sharp contrast to the attitudes of evasion present in the era's discourse.



Election chats

Politics faculty spoke with students about important issues around the 2024 election, providing non-partisan background information before opening up discussion. Topics included foreign policy & migration, healthcare & reproductive rights, the Constitution, the Supreme Court, civil rights, election rules, the economy, taxes & inequality.

Voter Responses to Social Democratic Ideological Moderation after the Third Way.

Dr. Johannes Karreth contributed a chapter to the open-access book *Beyond Social Democracy The Transformation of the Left in Emerging Knowledge Societies* published by Cambridge University Press.

Dr. Becky Evans contributed two chapters to the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies: The Ethics of Torture: Definitions, History, and Institutions*, and *The Ethics of Torture in the Context of the War on Terror*.

'We Have Never Been Woke' Review: A Symbolic Ideology

Dr. Jonathan Marks penned a piece for the Wall Street Journal.

Dr. Annie Karreth and Dr. Johannes Karreth presented on their new project: *How Coups Shape Africans' Views on Political Participation*, co-authored with Dr. Mwita Chacha of the University of Birmingham, at the 2024 American Political Science Association's Annual Meeting.

Dr. Jonathan Marks was one of three invited to present to senior leadership and faculty at Rhodes College regarding free speech and academic freedom.

