Caucus Countdown

“On the day of the Iowa caucus, my faith in the American people was vindicated. What you started here in Iowa has swept across the nation. So the people of Iowa I will always be grateful to all of you!” Barack Obama Campaign Speech, Des Moines, Iowa, October 31, 2008

The 2016 presidential election season is heating up in Iowa. It has been eight years since both the Democratic and Republican parties had contested races in Iowa. The Iowa caucuses matter because who wins and who loses in Iowa sends a signal to voters nationwide about which candidates are electable, setting the stage for America’s next president. In the small population state of Iowa, a few hundred thousand citizens play a tremendous role in picking the next president of the United States and weeding out the field of presidential hopefuls. Faculty, students, and alumni from our department have been actively involved in preparations for the 2016 Iowa Caucus, helping us learn more about the unique role that Iowa plays in the national primary process.

Why Iowa? The Caucus Rollercoaster

Research by Political Science faculty members seeks to understand the pros and cons of having Iowa voters go first in the primary season. In Why Iowa? (University of Chicago Press 2010), Professor Caroline Tolbert and former UI Professor David Redlawsk find that the change in mass media coverage candidates do in presidential primaries nation-wide. It is not winning the caucuses that matters, but doing better than expected by the media. Positive change gives candidates momentum as they move into New Hampshire and South Carolina and later nominating events. Momentum includes name recognition, standing in the polls, and campaign contributions. This could bode well for Carson and Rubio, but create problems for Bush and Trump.

In a recent (2015) self-published book, Riding the Caucus Rollercoaster, Professor Timothy Hagle focuses on the 2012 Republican caucuses in Iowa by analyzing the events that transpired two weeks prior to the caucus. The constantly changing dynamics of the race gave it a rollercoaster feel. Hagle argues that grassroots organization is critical for caucus success.

Professors Hagle and Tolbert participated in two Department sponsored public forums on the Iowa Caucuses in May and November this year. They were joined by Professor Covington, who discussed changes in campaign financing, Professor Redlawsk, who presented historical information about the Iowa caucuses, and Ph.D. student Kellen Gracey, who presented results from the latest Hawkeye Poll. Even though the field was pretty open in May, the participants agreed that finishing in the top three was imperative for candidates hoping to win their party’s nomination. Panelists at the November forum predicted a Clinton - Rubio race.

What do Iowans Say?
The Department of Political Science provides students with experience in conducting surveys through the Hawkeye Poll. The Hawkeye Poll was recently in the field to preview the 2016 Iowa caucuses.

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Nearly 70 students from five Political Science courses, including a specific Hawkeye Poll course taught by Ph.D. student Abigail Rury, collaborated with faculty and graduate students in the department to assemble a 15 minute survey on the presidential nomination process.

Students helped write questions as part of their coursework and did eight hours of calling in the Iowa Social Science Research Center’s call center from November 19-25. Students completed over 750 surveys with registered Iowans and likely caucus goers.

Topics focused on the upcoming Republican and Democratic caucuses with additional questions on gender and politics from Professor Osborn’s Women and Politics course and on immigration from Professor Rochas Immigration Politics course. The October 30th press release for the Hawkeye Poll matched professional polling firms by showing Hillary Clinton and Ben Carson as the leading candidates among those who have stopped by to cover the release, shooting video in the call center and interviewing students and Professor Boelhouke, faculty advisor to the Hawkeye Poll.

Learning More about the Iowa Caucuses

In January 2016, just one week before the February 1 Iowa caucus, one of the Department’s alumni, Matthew Whitaker, will be teaching a short course for undergraduates on the process. The College Democrats, College Republicans, and voters, and they provide information about candidates visiting members participate in mock caucuses, they help register Democrats and College Republicans to help get more students of how to be successful in the Iowa caucuses.

Mr. Whitaker’s course will review the history of the Iowa caucus, one of the Department’s alumni, Matthew Whitaker, who joined the Department this fall.

We are pleased to welcome two new faculty members, Elizabeth Menninga and Nicholas Martini, who joined the Department this fall.

Learning More about the Iowa Caucuses (Continued from cover)

Many Political Science students are involved with the College Democrats and College Republicans to help get more students involved in the Iowa caucuses. Professor Mitchell, Department Chair, spoke with Lauren Freeman (Political Science) and Rene Rocha (Health and Human Physiology) from the College Democrats. They noted that while their organization remains neutral by not endorsing a particular candidate, group members participate in mock caucuses, they help register voters, and they provide information about candidates visiting campus. The College Democrats, College Republicans, and Student Government are co-hosting an event later in the fall semester called “Hawk the Caucus”, which will give students a chance to learn about the caucuses through a mock caucus process.

It is wonderful to see everyone so engaged with the Iowa Caucuses. It is truly one of the most exciting times to live in Iowa, even when the Hawkeye football team is undefeated.

Healthy Politics

by Julie Pacheco

Health is a vital component of the human experience that affects nearly every aspect of our lives and the lives of those around us. Yet political scientists are just beginning to understand how health influences our political lives. In a recent paper published in Political Research Quarterly (with Jason Fletcher), I find that healthy people are more likely to vote and are more likely to identify with the Republican Party compared to their unhealthy counterparts. What’s more, these health disparities have significant political consequences with implications for the success of democracy. In a follow-up paper, I show that healthy citizens are better represented by their Congressional representatives compared to unhealthy citizens and that this is especially true for individuals who are affluent as well as when citizens are represented by Republicans. This suggests a cycle linking population health to politics such that increasing health disparities may produce increasing inequalities in policy representation, which in turn produces policies that may be detrimental to the unhealthy, which in turn creates even greater health disparities, and so on. Political clout is not just about wealth, but also health.

Vampire Hunting for Political Disorders

by John Nelson

Like witch hunting, vampire hunting has a long history of political significance. Recent anthropological research put some distance between the two practices, with vampire hunting linked to politics of late-modernization on the edges of western civilization. When it comes to politics, our popular culture, Hollywood provides occasional horror films about witches; but movies about vampires and their hunters are legion. So in fall 2015, John Nelson and some of his students have been viewing recent films to investigate how our culture uses conventions of vampire hunting to explore political troubles.

Vampires often evoke community disorders. To specify them and how they harm, we need to know the mythic politics of vampires; and earlier courses had examined those. We also need to tap the politics of vampire hunters, and this fall’s class added these. Some vampires are “shadows” of their hunters, for example, while others are super-predators that provide hunters with “peak experiences.”

Analyzing eight recent movies, students “hunted” disorders of sexism and patriarchy; play culture, slavery as a system, the insufficiency of modern states for resisting terrorism; political troubles from religious fundamentalism, plus seductions of mass society. Analyzing eight recent movies, students “hunted” disorders of sexism and patriarchy; play culture, slavery as a system, the insufficiency of modern states for resisting terrorism; political troubles from religious fundamentalism, plus seductions of mass society.

Who’s New?

Elizabeth Menninga joins the department as an assistant professor after earning her Ph.D. this year from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research uses social networks to study and understand international relations. She is also interested in international mediation and conflict resolution in civil wars. Her most recent publication develops a new measurement technique that estimates the level of connectivity in a social network. She applies this technique to the international system looking at how connectivity among countries influences the propensity for conflict in the international system.

Nicholas Martini

Nathanial Whitaker from the University of Iowa in 2012 and was an adjunct faculty at the University of Saint Thomas before coming back to Iowa. His research focuses on the intersection of interaction relations and political behavior. His current research explores the factors driving public opinion (e.g., ideology, beliefs, and religion) and how they shape preferences among foreign policy issues.

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Political Scientists... around the World

**Israel - Ron McMullen**

In May, my wife Jane and I found ourselves at a bus stop just outside the stone walls of Jerusalem’s Old City. We were waiting for a local Arab bus to take us the six miles to Bethlehem, which is under control of the Palestinian Authority, not Israel. Four young Israeli women were also at the bus stop, and I asked if they were fulfilling their national service obligation as police officers. They said they were. I remarked that they were about the age of my students at the University of Iowa, which began a friendly conversation about young people in America and Israel. When the bus came, Jane and I jumped on and found seats amid the Arab passengers. The four conscripts, suddenly broussque and businesslike, boarded the bus and conducted a curt check of identity papers of the Arab passengers. Everyone went from smiling to stern, instantly. Today, amid reports of mounting violence and security concerns in Jerusalem, I think curt check of identity papers of the Arab passengers.

**China - Wenfang Tang**

Wenfang Tang made several trips to Asia during the summer of 2015. He traveled to Beijing and conducted a telephone survey on public policy satisfaction in urban China at Peking University. He served as a keynote speaker at a workshop on comparative politics at Fudan University in Shanghai. He delivered another keynote speech on political culture research at Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu. Later, he attended the international advisory board meetings for the China Family Panel Survey at Peking University and the Chinese Labor Dynamics Survey at Sun Yat-Sen University. He ended his summer by delivering a paper on the Chinese Communist Party at the National University of Singapore.

**Russia & Ukraine - Vicki Claypool and Bill Reisinger**

Reisinger and Claypool traveled to Kyiv and Moscow in May to oversee the training of nearly 300 interviewers for surveys of the citizens of Russia and Ukraine on the frequency and circumstances of corrupt behavior such as bribe-taking. Both cities were enjoying beautiful weather, and evenings allowed time to visit major tourist sites. Their trip involved adventures including trying to coordinate the activities of two in-country research firms whose leaders want to have nothing to do with each other (given that Ukraine and Russia are at war) and going through Russian immigration and customs. Noteworthy, is that despite media reports to the contrary, Russia is strong and healthy and does not need a strongman Putin image to hold itself together. Claypool’s favorite part of the trip was going to a Russian pharmacy to get medicine for a bee sting that had turned into a swollen arm, and finding access to all sorts of wonderful steroids, without a prescription. Reisinger’s Russian language skills are excellent. Claypool’s language skills allowed her to minimally communicate in the bee-sting emergency.

**Austria - Fred Boehmke**

I spent a week in Vienna in June for the European Political Science Association’s annual meeting. The meeting was held in the spectacular Schönbrunn Palace, which was the imperial summer residence. The grounds feature hedge mazes and what claims to be the oldest zoo in the world. We also had a wonderful reception in the courtyard at the Rathaus (Town Hall) at the Governor’s invitation. Outside the conference I managed to visit one of the many heuriger to sample some local wine such as Grunerveltliner and caught a glimpse of the Lipprzenzer during an outdoor performance.

**France - Kelly Kadera**

Kelly Kadera spent a 2-week residency at the University of Toulouse in November 2014, giving a series of lectures on “The Causes, Consequences, and Management of Armed Conflict.” Her visit overlapped with Thanksgiving, and the MA students invited her to celebrate at a traditional cassoulet restaurant. The Christmas market was also set up in the main square, so she got to see various hand crafted goods and sample the barbe à papa (literally, papa’s beard, or, cotton candy). One weekend, Kelly visited the Giroud family in Colombiers. Their son Alex stayed with Kelly’s family during a 2013 student exchange program. The Girouds took her to the Canal du Midi, built in the 17th century to connect the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

According to Kelly, Toulouse is a fantastic place to visit, with lots of local flare. If you speak French, prepare yourself for the accent that adds a twang to the end of many words like vin, pain, and fit.

**Spain - Tracy Osborn**

This summer I traveled to San Sebastian, Spain, on the Atlantic coast. My coauthors and I are working on a project to understand how the public reacts to portrayals of male and female terrorists in different environments. San Sebastian is in the Basque country, an area with its own unique culture and language. The region experienced terrorist violence for many years in its effort to gain autonomy from Spain, but ETA, the main separatist group, declared a permanent ceasefire in 2011-2012. Although researching experiences with terrorism is a tough and emotional topic of study, we enjoyed spending time in this beautiful region and sampling their famous pintxos (tapas specific to the region) for dinner.

**Italy - Mike Lewis-Beck**

POLITICS AND PASTA IN CALABRIA

In September, I took the Red Arrow from Rome to Calabria, (a name appropriate for a ballad I wrote). The campus, built in 1960s Modern Mediterranean style, appears like the instep of the Italian boot. My purpose was to attend the Italian Political Science Association meetings at the University of Messina in Sicily.

Still, I found the people warm and generous, and they sure eat well, as the attached photograph attests.

Visit our website: clas.uiowa.edu/polisci
The Student Conference on US Affairs (SCUSA) held at West Point is the largest and most prestigious conference of its kind in the world. Each year, the department sponsors one or two of its top students to participate in the conference. This year, Junior Greg Windstedein and Senior Jenny Jeffery were chosen from a pool of other Political Science majors that wrote essays stating their interest in attending SCUSA.

The conference was first hosted at the Academy in 1948. Approximately 200 undergraduate students from over 125 colleges and universities worldwide attend SCUSA where the best and brightest come together to discuss current and emerging issues of national significance. The passions (SOC’20) and experiences of SCUSA interns motivate their peers to pursue a career in public service. Equally important, the four-day conference provides a solid foundation for building strong Civil-Military relationships.

Students attend panel discussions, hear from high-profile keynote speakers, and develop policy recommendations over the course of four roundtable sessions. The sessions cover regional and topical demographic issues and put delegates on the forefront of national issues, exposing them to complex problems facing leaders today. Delegates conclude the conference by submitting a policy recommendation to their peers, the best of which are published in the Undergraduate Journal of Social Sciences.

The humble, civil ethos of this department makes it a magical place to study. But my most memorable experience in the political science department occurred when a professor, part of the attractions that drew me to UI, helped me apply those skills in internships with the Hong Kong Legislative Council, professors in the department and in China. And the mentors I’ve found in the department have helped me measure the gaps between countries and factions through research opportunities with China’s governance and a class on the international political economy. Their technical skills to help bridge political differences. In courses on comparative politics – a seminar on Foreign Policy and International Relations – they showed me the possibilities and the modesty and wit: “When discussing my term, one could do no better than cite Suetonius’s comment on the Emperor Galba. ‘Everyone else is a slave, but he was made an excellent emperor, had he never become emperor.’

John has found the University of Iowa to be a great place to carry out research and teaching. He says that, “as a Professor, I have valued the freedom with which I’ve been able to write, the flexibility in their scheduling. I have been fortunate to work with good graduate students, too.” The special quality of the academic environment led him to express a concern for the education of good graduate students. “The special quality of the department, too.” The special quality of the academic environment led him to express a concern for the education of good graduate students.

I am an active member of the political science alumni board. I am currently one of its two Vice Presidents. I have participated in several interactive workshops, group, and one-on-one meetings with students considering a career in politics, international relations, or others interested in the topic. As a board member I support the outreach of department to alumni and its mission to provide unique and diverse educational opportunities.

I’ve been a member of the Political Science Alumni Advisory Board for two years and currently serve as one of its two Vice Presidents. During that time I’ve met with faculty and staff to learn more about the Department and new developments in undergraduate and graduate education. I’ve actively involved in the Board’s ongoing efforts to help the Department strengthen and expand its outstanding internship program which provides students with an opportunity to experience what they study in the real world, help the Department reach out to and reconnect with its alumni and friends, and raise money to support the Department’s work. When I’m on campus I enjoy meeting with and serving as a resource for students.
University of Iowa students have had valuable internship experiences at a number of sites throughout the world!

To learn more about supporting internships, and more... view the Department’s website -- clas.uiowa.edu/polisci

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