

POLITICS AS YOU(SUAL)?

A Newsletter by the Political Science Department at the University of Michigan-Flint

WHAT IS POLITICAL THEORY?

By Jason Kosnoski

A quick story. On the last day of my first political theory class, my professor, who I simultaneously hated and loved, Professor Cowell, walked out on us. We were studying Friedrich Nietzsche, the irreverent and iconoclastic philosopher most famous for declaring, "God is Dead." After reading how Nietzsche thought seemingly praiseworthy moral guidelines such as "treat others as you would want to be treated yourself" and "share and share alike" were actually oppressive rules long ago established by the weak to hold down the strong, he looked at us and asked us, "What might this mean for us today, politically?" Only a few minutes had passed in the class, and we all geared up for a discussion, which, with Cowell, inevitably included provocative outbursts, eye-rolling, and hurt feelings. But then he just turned around, pressed a button on the television that none of us had even noticed until this point, and walked out. After a few minutes of staring at the blank screen and each other, our attention finally turned toward the TV, where a movie was beginning. All of a sudden, hippies, dozens of hippies, were dancing across the screen, in what seemed to be Central Park in New York City.

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Some of our proud Political Science graduates at the Spring 2006 Commencement. Left to right: Erica Vicari, Amira Vicari, Rebekah Sexton, Deborah Marston, and Cameo Paschal. Deborah Marston was a Maize and Blue Award Recipient.

RETURN OF THE LATIN AMERICAN 'LEFT'?

By Derwin Munroe

Over the last five years, voters in eight Latin American countries have selected a range of parties and presidents that have been classified as 'leftist'. Venezuela's Hugo Chavez is the most prominent and vocal indicator of this trend, but the current governments of Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil and Chile all testify to the breadth of the 'wave' of left voting in elections.

These governments are not all the same, and all reject old notions of what 'left' means in policy terms. Chavez is a close supporter of Fidel Castro and advocates 'socialism' but pursues foreign investment and community democracy. Morales of Bolivia seeks to re-nationalize the water and natural gas reserves of that country but encourages private enterprise and democracy. Lula in Brazil, Bachelet of Chile, and Kirchner in Argentina preside over parties that have 'left' histories but which offer more conventional economic policy. There never was a uniform 'left' in Latin America, but this is not the 'left' of yesteryear. Even Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega, recently re-elected president of Nicaragua, long ago abandoned any claim to represent the 'left', in the aftermath of scandal and compromise.

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After a few seconds of incomprehension the resident hippie of our class stood up, pointed, and yelled in the most definitive, clearest voice we had ever heard him utter, "Dudes, its Hair!!" And it was, the movie Hair. We watched for a while, wondering whether or not Cowell would come back, and trying to figure out what a dead German Philosopher had to do with a cheesy 70s musical. After a while, when it was pretty clear Cowell wasn't coming back, and the end of the class was approaching anyway, we all just walked out.

When I look back upon the last day of my first political theory class, I'm still not sure exactly what Cowell wanted us to do. Did he want us to equate the utter freedom of the people dancing with their long hair in the park with Nietzsche's questioning of pretty much everything? Did he want to test us and see how long it was before we would leave, and therefore demonstrate to us how we had internalized authority? Actually, the thing I think that he wanted to do was to make sure that we weren't sure what he was up to. He wanted us to leave us with a question that would keep gnawing at us for, perhaps, the rest of our college careers.

And it's this questioning, this desire to always seek out more knowledge and different possibilities that I think is the essence of political theory. In your American Government and Comparative Politics classes you learn how political institutions operate. In political theory classes you learn that there always might be a better way to think of the way political institutions operate. It gets us to ask nagging questions, like "Does it have to be that way?" "Is this truly what's best for the country?" "Why do things work like this?" In political theory you read dense philosophical texts, engaging historical stories, and it does this by not only having us question what we previously thought might be unquestionable, but by imagining different worlds. Or, to summarize, as Sheldon Wolin states, it provides us with "vision" and direction concerning not simply how the world is, but how the world ought to be.

So when you come out of a political theory class with more questions than you came in with, do two things. First of all, realize that your questions might be a good thing, and secondly, think to yourself, "Dudes, its Hair!"

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What has changed is how the US has responded, especially when compared to violent reactions in the past. The recent US response to the re-emergence of 'the left' has been a model of inconsistency. It opposed the successful Bolivian, Nicaraguan, and Ecuadorian candidates, and was complicit in the attempted overthrow of Chavez in Venezuela, is lukewarm but cooperative with the new presidents of Uruguay and Argentina, but friendly with the leaders of Chile and Brazil. Even when the US supported successful 'right wing' candidates in recent elections in Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, many observers pointed out that the US endorsement undermined the credibility of those candidates among voters.

Why this lack of focus? Several possible explanations exist for the inconsistent US responses. In the aftermath of 9-11 and the Iraq War, the US spent little time or effort in crafting a sustained policy to Latin America. A 'crisis-only' approach generally prevails in the making of US foreign policy: it is essentially reactive. The economic agenda that was a constant recipe for US-Latin America relations over the decades has also lost its allure: the governments that were most faithful to US-advocated policies (like Argentina) have been those with the deepest crises. The expansion of the global economy and the alternative export markets for Latin American products have also encouraged Latin American governments to pay less attention to US policy dictates. The conduct of US foreign policy has also cost the US by casting a shadow over its support for democracy in the hemisphere.

Latin American societies now see a major opportunity to craft new economic and foreign policies, ones that more clearly reflect the long-term desires of citizens. It may also be a chance to more closely connect citizens to the democratic process: even if the new 'left' governments fail to deliver on their election promises, Latin American voters can claim that they selected representatives who reflected their policy choices. New ideas about development and new global economic conditions are also opportunities for Latin America. Lack of US attention may be a chance for positive change, if the 'left' can deliver.

RETROSPECTIVE

2003 IRAQ TEACHING FORUM ON IRAQ FACULTY ACCURATE, WHITE HOUSE NOT

By Albert Price

On March 18, 2003, the UM-Flint Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, held a teaching forum on the pending invasion of Iraq. At that forum, faculty members, from: Political Science (Peggy Kahn, Derwin Munroe and Bill Meyer), Sociology/Anthropology/Criminal Justice (Larry Koch), History (Joseph Rahme) and Economics (Adam Lutzker), discussed their insights regarding a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq. Each presenter provided significant reasons as to why the invasion of Iraq was a particularly erroneous idea.

Nearly four years later, the faculty predictions of disaster in Iraq have been borne out while the Bush Administration's justifications for war have been demonstrated to be completely false. How could the faculty of UM-Flint have gotten the correct answer to this foreign policy issue while the President and Administration got it completely wrong? The answer is that the Bush Administration treated their desire to invade Iraq as a public relations issue while the faculty of UM-Flint treated it as an academic problem subject to evidence and reason.

For nearly a year prior to the invasion, the Bush Administration produced an unrelenting drumbeat hastening the country to war. Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) were one of the primary explanations given by the White House to justify the attack. Connection to the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon was suggested by innuendo from most White House officials. Finally, regime change to remove a Hitler-like tyrant was argued to be the only just course to help the Iraqi people.

This public relations campaign reached a crescendo prior to the mid-term elections in November, 2002, where Democrats were stampeded into voting to authorize the use of force in Iraq should the UN process fail to remove the threat of WMDs. The use of fear as a mobilization

technique worked very well, even if it had nothing to do with the objective reality of the world.

The faculty predicted that no WMDs would be found, there was no connection of Iraq to 9/11, the invasion had no exit strategy, high numbers of Iraqi civilians would be killed, a civil war between Shiites and Sunni adherents would follow, U.S. standing in the world would be severely damaged, and finally, the financial cost would be staggering. If the faculty at UM-Flint could accurately predict this outcome why then couldn't the Bush Administration? The answer is that the Bush Administration did not wish to use reason, evidence and logic to answer the question. Bush/Rove/Rumsfeld/Cheney & Co. wanted to invade Iraq and built an advertising program to accomplish the objective. Preying on the patriotic fervor after 9/11, the Bush public relations machine headed by Karl Rove set about using fear to mobilize irrational feelings to support the invasion.

The mistake of seeing the invasion of Iraq as a public relations problem is that reality will and eventually did intrude. The academic expertise available at UM-Flint is not unique in the level of insight available. The rest of the world saw the same thing but were powerless in the face of the irrational public relations campaign. There is a lesson in this approach to governance: public relations do not solve governmental problems. The same theme might reasonably be examined regarding Hurricane Katrina, Global Warming, Social Security Privatization, Free Trade, etc.

WHAT THE FACULTY ARE READING

Peggy Kahn

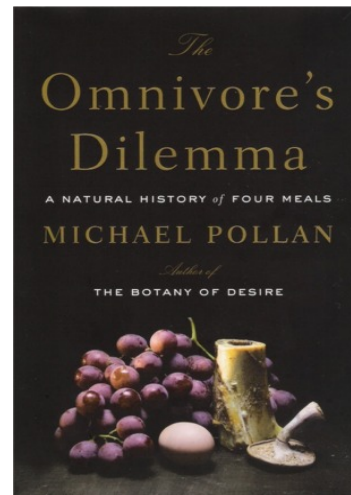
I have been reading a lot of fairly specialized literature on how the European Union works in general and in specific policy areas. But last year I read the Memoirs of Jean Monnet, an architect of the European Union whose roles in procurement for the Allies during World Wars I and II and as Deputy Secretary of the League of Nations gave him insights into the need for politics and political machinery that would go beyond the nation-state. The Politics of Sexual Harassment: A Comparative Study of the United States, the European Union and Germany raises the question of whether sexual harassment should be prohibited on the grounds that it is a form of sex discrimination based on gender inequality as in the U.S. or whether it should be illegal as a violation of workers' rights to dignity and as an exclusionary practice as in Europe. It also discusses the relationships among policy elites, social movements, and advocacy organizations, within and across nation-states and between member-states and European levels of governance. Issues of agricultural and food policy in the EU and globally are addressed in the interviews with Jose Bove and Francois Dufour, peasant farmer activists, in Food for the Future: Agriculture for a Global Age. (And for those with interests in American food chains and ways of eating, especially in view of the recent concerns about fast food and contaminated spinach, I highly recommend Michael Pollan's The Omnivore's Dilemma.)

There are some very engaging and informative new memoirs which help us understand everyday life, politics, and their connections around the world. Shirin Ebadi's Iran Awakening is a memoir from a recent Nobel Peace Prize winner, a Muslim feminist from Iran. The voice of Paul Rusesabagina's memoir, An Ordinary Man, is extraordinary and helps us understand his personal history, Rwandan culture, history and politics, and aspects of the genocide. These are likely to appear as assigned course texts in my POL 190 class next semester, possibly along with Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel Persepolis, about an Iranian childhood.

Finally, I spent a few stimulating weeks in

South Africa this summer. Having stood in a hospice at the bedside of many dying AIDS patients and talked with many people about the dimensions and nature of the AIDS crisis, I want to read Letting Them Die by Catherine Campbell. But meanwhile, I have started reading South African fiction that reflects the experience of the black and colored townships: Zakes Mda's Ways of Dying, quite amazing; Niq Mhlongo, Dog Eat Dog; and Tatamkhulu Afrika's The Innocents. Fugard's novel Tsotsi has been reissued, partly in connection with the South African film, but the novel is much better than the film. The novel is mainly about one character's inner life and the internalization of apartheid, written sparingly using an economy of time, space and character. The film presents itself as a post-apartheid commentary and is a bit Hollywood-ized. Most South Africans I've spoken with still think it is an excellent and worthwhile film, and are pleased that their story is being told cinematically.

I also continue to read Nadine Gordimer, though none of her more recent novels has captured me the way Burger's Daughter did at the time I read it. Still, her newest novel, Get A Life is intensely personal and political at the same time, and her previous novel, The Pickup, also managed to tap the prominent theme in contemporary South African politics of illegal immigration on the continent through the lives of her characters.



Albert Price

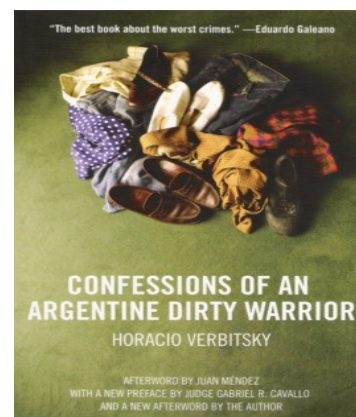
Over the past six months I have read two books that reflect on the origins of and current conflicts surrounding religion. The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason (2004) is an excellent book that describes the current state of fundamentalist religious thinking in the Christianity and Islam. The relationship of science and religion in the modern world is also a theme. In a similar vein, Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why (2005), by Bart Ehrman, is a fascinating academic examination of the history surrounding the thousands of versions of the Christian Bible. He painstakingly researched all known copies of the earliest versions of the works and found that political motivations as well as clerical errors led to profound changes throughout time.

In addition to reading, I have been viewing documentaries that have been very interesting. Out of the Past, a 2003 documentary, examines the controversy that erupted when a high school junior in Salt Lake City created a Gay-Straight Alliance as an after-school club. Eventually, the Salt Lake School Board voted to eliminate all non-academic clubs to avoid allowing the Gay-Straight Alliance to exist with school funding. Another documentary, Journey of Man, a 2003 PBS creation follows an investigation of DNA to demonstrate that all current humans on earth are descendants of common ancestors that migrated out of Africa. This is a fascinating piece of research concentrating on remote populations and follows markers on male chromosomes that essentially catalog mutations over time. Finally, The Ground Truth (2006) explores the war in Iraq from the perspective of the men and women who have been wounded in the conflict. It is a powerful witness to the suffering that has been visited on these young people and the emotional consequences on individuals who are placed in situations where killing is required.



Derwin Munroe

John Perkins' Confessions of an Economic Hit Man (2004) re-tells his experiences as an economic 'policy advisor' and consultant in developing countries in the 1970s-80s. He describes his main task as convincing foreign governments to become indebted to foreign corporations, to allow them to fall under US domination. While it sometimes reads like the confessions of a reluctant US secret agent, and questions of morality overshadows Perkins' actions, his story confirms similar accounts that have been available since the 1970s, and brings into sharp focus US relations with Saudi Arabia, for example. Horacio Verbitsky's Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior (2005) documents the interviews that Verbitsky, an Argentine journalist, had with one of the naval officers responsible for mass murder in the 1970s-80s. While he admits throwing tortured and drugged prisoners into the ocean from air force planes, by seeking to justify his actions he makes a strong case for the culpability of all of the military and the segment of Argentine society that knew of the atrocities but remained silent. Odd Arne Westad's The Global Cold War (2005) is a history of the legacy of the Cold War on regional conflicts around the globe. We are still entangled in the consequences of these conflicts in Africa, Afghanistan and the Middle East, and Westad's book carefully documents their origins by using many previously unavailable sources. Meghnad Desai's Marx's Revenge (2002) focuses on the distortion of Marx's ideas by the socialist and communist experiences in the twentieth century. He concludes that the Leninist variant quickly became corrupted, and the democratic socialist variant is now exhausted. The 'mature' Marx correctly predicted that capitalism was more resilient and adaptable, and that any broad transformation would require a fully global transition to capitalism.



ACADEMIC INTERNSHIP IN PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Who can take POL 390, the Internship in Public and Community Affairs?

- POL 390 is open to all majors in the University, as well as required of Political Science and Public Administration majors.
- Social Science majors in particular may want to take POL 390 as an elective that counts as an upper level course toward graduation.
- Students must have at least junior standing, with a 2.75 average in their major.

Why take POL 390?

- Students interested in having an undergraduate experience beyond the classroom can take the internship.
- It may be a way of developing civic engagement and citizenship competency and experience.
- It is a useful career exploration or development opportunity; it gives students opportunities to work with others in a structured employment setting in the public sector, perhaps in a field in which they would like a job in the future.

What exactly is the Internship in Public and Community Affairs?

- Students and the Internship Coordinator agree on an assignment to a public sector site (for example, local courts or legal offices; direct service organizations; advocacy organizations; offices of political representatives).
- The student works approximately 150 hours at the placement site for 3 credits or 300 hours for 6 credits.
- To receive academic credit, the student must also keep a journal and write an analytic paper about the internship, linking it to course work.
- The student has both an on-site supervisor and university Internship Coordinator; the Coordinator helps make and maintain the field placement and helps the student make connections between university study and the field experience.

For more information, please contact Tony Morolla, Internship Coordinator, Dept. of Political Science, 762-3470, mmorolla@umflint.edu.



Chapter Goals:

- **Academic Excellence**
- **Promote Political Action**
- **Participate in community service activities**

Pi Sigma Alpha, Alpha Tau Chapter was organized in March 2003, and has been active in organizing a range of activities on campus and in the community.

Current Chapter Officers: Randy Petrowski, president (rapetrow@umflint.edu); Leah Petts Vice President (lpetts@umflint.edu)

Fall 2006 Activities

The Fall 2006 PSA induction occurred in November. The next induction will occur during winter semester 2006: Get your applications in!

Some Recent PSA Activities:

- Co-sponsored visit by William Davis, Director of the United Nations Information Center
- Involvement in planning the UM-Flint Civic Engagement Fair
- Student Debt Day: collected stories on student debt
- Voter registration for the November 2006 elections
- Community service activities: Salem Housing project in Flint; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flint Bowling Challenge

Future PSA Members?

Would you like to join or to participate in the activities of Pi Sigma Alpha? Stop by the Political Science Department for more information on membership or getting involved.

NEW COURSE!!
POL 375
POLITICS OF AMERICAN LABOR



This is a course on the political environment shaping the US labor movement since the Great Depression. We will discuss the strategies (e.g. bargaining, strikes, reorganization, mobilization, legal action) that have been used to meet the legal, political and economic challenges presented by that environment. We will discuss federal laws to regulate the labor movement, and the tactics that unions have used to further their agenda in both the institutional realm and among the public at large. We will also consider the methods that employers have used to thwart the agenda of organized labor.

NEW COURSE!!
POL 349/549
POLITICS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



This is an on-line upper-level undergraduate and graduate course on the European Union. The European Union is the world's largest confederation of independent states, established under that name in 1992 by the Treaty on European Union; a complex regional organization, it is comprised of 25 member-states in Europe, which for some purposes pool their sovereignty and grant powers of governance to the EU. If considered a single unit, the European Union has the largest economy in the world, with a GDP of \$12.4 trillion (2005) and is expected

to grow further. Through its assistance and accession policies, it supports democracy and human rights throughout the world. The course explores the development, structure, policies and impacts of the European Union, understood as an on-going political, economic and social project. It will examine themes of the emerging single market and its governance; agriculture and environmental policy; social and cultural diversity and anti-discrimination policies; and external relations of the European Union. The course assumes student capacity to read and learn independently in the context of an on-line class and assumes some previous work in European history or politics.

The course combines different approaches to study of the EU, drawing upon the disciplines of history, sociology, geography, and comparative and international politics. The EU has a remarkable official website, and there are many other electronic sources of policy, academic and current affairs information on the EU. This course will build knowledge not only of the EU as an organization, but also of European society and politics and the society and politics of advanced industrial democracies. It also raises themes of globalization and internationalization of politics, economics and society. Teachers or prospective teachers are also encouraged to take the course, as the instructor has a special interest in K-12 social studies education and is working on a contracted book for grades 9-12 on the EU.

Winter 2007 Courses

Political Science/Public Administration

POL 120 American National Government & Politics

20599 01 T R 09:30AM-10:45AM STAFF
20666 02 T R 12:30PM-01:45PM 262 FH STAFF
22211 03 M W 04:00PM-05:15PM 354 FH STAFF

POL 190 Intro to Comparative Politics

22353 01 T R 11:00AM-12:15PM Kahn
22354 02 M W 05:30PM-06:45PM Munroe
22870 W1 Online Kahn

POL/PUB 301 Research Seminar in Politics & Policy

22097 01 M W 07:00PM-08:15PM Munroe

POL/PUB 316 Intro to Public Administration

22871 01 T R 04:00PM-05:15PM Laverty

POL 327/527 The American Presidency

22873 01 T R 11:00AM-12:15PM Laverty

POL 329/529 Civil Liberties & the Constitution

22868 01 M W 12:30PM-01:45PM Price

POL 340 African Politics

22730 W1 African Politics 3 Online Mpondi

POL 343 Conflict & Development in Southern Africa

22728 W1 Conflict & Dev in S Africa Online Mpondi

POL 344/544 Latin American Politics

22357 01 M W 02:00PM-03:15PM Munroe

POL 349/549 Politics of the European Union

22874 W1 Online Kahn

POL 375 Politics and American Labor

22875 01 T R 02:00PM-03:15PM Kosnoski

POL 390 Internship in Public Agencies

20637 99 Morolla

POL 391 Directed Reading in Political Science

20643 99 Munroe

POL 401 American Political Thought

22876 T R 05:30PM-06:45PM Kosnoski

POL/PUB 420 Law & Administrative Processes

22864 01 T R 05:30PM-06:45PM Price

POL 501 American Political Thought

22941 01 T R 05:30PM-06:45PM Kosnoski

POL 520 Law and Administrative Process

22865 01 T R 05:30PM-06:45PM Price

Master in Public Administration

PUB 519 Law & Administrative Processes

22866 01 T R 05:30PM-06:45PM Price

PUB 423/523 Acct Government & Non-Prof Org

21966 01 T 07:00PM-09:45PM O'Donnell

PUB 426/526 Staffing Public Sector Orgs

22363 01 T 07:00PM-09:45PM Morolla

PUB 432/532 Policing Contemporary Society

21648 01 T 07:00PM-09:45PM Litwin

PUB 438/538 Multicultural Educ:Conc & Stat

21162 01 T 05:30PM-08:15PM STAFF

PUB 477/577 Financial Management in HCR

20656 01 R 07:00PM-09:45PM Coffield

PUB 480/580 Quantitative Methods for Admin

22368 01 M W 05:30PM-06:45PM Schellenberg

PUB 487/587 Legal Issues in Health Care

20661 01 W 07:00PM-09:45PM Dedenbach

PUB 501 Administrative Org & Behavior

20543 01 W 07:00PM-09:45PM Hughes

PUB 502 Mgt. in Public & Non-Profit Organizations

20706 R 07:00PM-09:45PM Laverty

PUB 503 Personnel Issues

20707 01 M 07:00PM-09:45PM Morolla

PUB 506 Research Methods

21964 01 M 07:00PM-09:45PM Brock
20667 02 R 04:00PM-06:45PM Mulhorn

PUB 520 Resource Dev & Administration

22369 01 W 07:00PM-09:45PM Brown

PUB 589 Independent Study in Pub

22266 99 Price

PUB 590 Internship

20714 99 Morolla

PUB 595 Practicum in Applied Research

20673 99 Price