



The Squire's Scuttlebutt



MGA's Political Science Newsletter

Dispatch from the Department Chair

Dr. Christopher Lawrence

Welcome to our newsletter for the Fall 2023 semester! Another academic year has started at MGA, and there are lots of new and recent developments to share with you in these pages.

Looking back at the past academic year, we had a lot of exciting highlights. In conjunction with Dr. James Decker's LGBT Politics course, we hosted a well-attended lecture on the Macon campus by Mr. Don Diaz Johnston, who was one of the plaintiffs in the same-sex marriage equality cases in Florida in 2015.

We also hosted several online discussion events on current domestic and global events, which you can watch on our department's YouTube channel, [@MGAPolSci](#). We will be hosting more events this year, both in-person and online; I encourage you to follow our updates on various platforms and join our groups on Facebook and LinkedIn to stay informed.



(From left to right) Elijah Stincheller, Noah Copeland, and Dr. Christopher Lawrence at the Spring 2023 Pi Sigma Alpha initiation (Photo Credit: Julie Lester)

In the 2023-2024 academic year, we had seven students complete their political science degrees, continuing a four-year trend of growth in the program, while eleven students completed the interdisciplinary studies (B.S.) degree.

In January, we'll be launching the university's new Doctor of Science in Public Safety degree program. The DSPS is MGA's second doctoral program and the first one to be housed in the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences;

it will also be the first doctoral program at the university to bring together faculty from multiple departments, with courses being taught by faculty in both political science and criminal justice. I'd like to thank our faculty and staff, particularly Dr. John Hall and Dr. Annie Watson, who served on the DSPS curriculum committee, for their commitment to this project over the past year.

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Catch up with our faculty.

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Catch up with our students.

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Review a more detailed report on recent faculty engagement.

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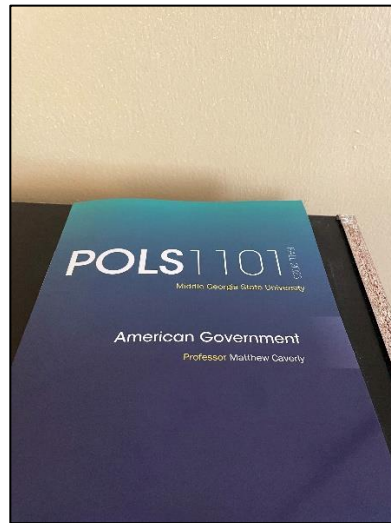
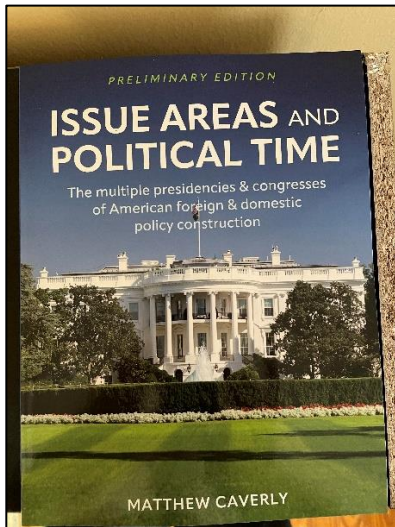
The DSPS degree is an online, cohort-based degree designed for professionals who are leading or who aspire to lead public safety-related organizations in fields such as corrections, fire protection, emergency management, homeland security, law enforcement, and policing, with a secondary emphasis on training prospective faculty to teach students in these areas.

Prospective students who may be interested in this degree are encouraged to contact MGA's Office of Graduate Studies at 478-929-6865 for additional information; applications for the initial cohort, which will start classes in January

2024, are due by November 15th.

This year our department is delighted to be hosting a Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Yuriy Loboda, from the National Defense University of Ukraine. Dr. Loboda will be working on scholarly projects this academic year, as well as collaboratively teaching with Dr. Thomas Matyók in several courses this year and participating in events as part of International Education Week (presenting on "The Endless 20th Century" on Monday, November 13th at 12:30 p.m. in the Macon campus library) and the Undergraduate Academic Conference in April.

Thanks again to Dr. Watson for her dedication to editing and producing this newsletter for our stakeholders. We welcome your feedback on this issue and also would welcome your updates for publication in our next issue in the spring of 2024. Your newsletter contributions can be emailed to Dr. Watson at annie.watson@mga.edu, while you can contact me at christopher.lawrence@mga.edu. I hope you have a productive and stimulating fall semester!



Dr. Caverly's new solo-authored book and course pack with Cognella Academic (Photo Credit: Matt Caverly)

Feathers in Faculty Caps

In the spring semester of 2023, Mrs. Grace Adams-Square, assistant professor of political science, worked closely with the Area B

team to implement Perspectives on Diversity effectively in the classroom and with D2L. Students in this class participated in a podcast with Dr. Wenegier on French conversations.

Mrs. Adams-Square also served as a

Presenter for Faculty Development Day on how to engage students in the classroom to address implicit bias; attended the National Conference of Black Political Science and the American Society for Public Administration Conference; and served on the MGA Greek Life Expansion Committee.

In future semesters, she will be reconnecting with the local FIRST LEGO League events as a volunteer, training with the Area B team to implement Perspectives on Diversity as a fully online course, and finalize her Open Educational Resources (OER) book.



Dr. Matt Caverly, lecturer of political science, published his second single-authored academic

book with Cognella Academic, entitled *Issue Areas and Political Time: The Multiple Presidencies and Congresses of American Foreign and Domestic Policy Construction*. The book examines the “politics of policymaking” between the executive and legislative branches of the national government and is the completion of a study he began in graduate school.

Further, Caverly published a course pack, also with Cognella Academic, *POLS 1101 American Government*. This work is a revised and updated edited volume that he had previously published under the name *The Drama of the American Political System*. It contains a series of contemporary and canonical essays on American politics, a handful of which are original contributions by Caverly. He also continued to do academic reviews of journal articles for Sage Open.

In teaching, Caverly experimented with utilizing new materials, like the abovementioned works, as pedagogical tools in order to advance student learning and appreciation of American politics. In that effort, he moved to a more interactive approach to the classroom that emphasizes student participation in discussions and classwork. It is his hope that these efforts will bear fruit with greater student engagement and improved learning outcomes relative to the political science study of American government and politics.

As a service provider, Caverly continued to be involved in the department’s presentations on

political topics of interest. Most recently, he was a panelist discussing the Russo-Ukrainian War. He has also become more active as a faculty advisor to Middle Georgia State University's (MGA) Tabletop Gaming Club.

He continues to serve in the Georgia State Defense Force (GSDF) and has recently begun duties as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of the Force's Search and Rescue (SAR) School.

In the spring semester, **Dr. Jim Decker**, professor of political science, researched, organized, and taught POLS 3115: LGBTQ Politics for the first time at MGA.

On April 13, 2023, he also organized a guest lecture on campus entitled, “On the Front Lines: A Plaintiff in the Fight for Marriage Equality.” He invited Don Johnston, an original plaintiff in the marriage equality case in Florida, to speak about his experiences surrounding the legal

fight around same sex marriage equality in the US.



In the spring and summer of 2023, **Dr. John Hall**, associate professor of political science, presented original research examining the effect of digital news summaries from the BBC on student learning outcomes at the Southern Political Science Association annual conference. He served as the chair and discussant for the panel “Civil Engagement and Political Science---Teaching Political Science” at the same conference.

He also began service as the interim coordinator for MGA’s new Doctor of Science in Public Safety program and as a member of the Youth Civic Summit planning committee, in addition to starting his third year of service as both the chair of MGA’s Institutional Review Board and member of the Faculty Senate.

Finally, he served as a panelist for multiple departmental policy discussions, including on Georgia



Dr. Watson and other members of the Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI) congregate at the University of Rhode Island’s Human Rights Measurement Workshop in May 2023. (Image Credit: Annie Watson)



Dr. Matyók moderates a panel on civil-military cooperation for NATO in The Hague. (Photo Credit: Thomas Matyók)

state politics and Russian war crimes in Ukraine, and as a judge for Middle Georgia History Day.



Dr. Christopher N. Lawrence, department chair, was promoted this summer to the rank of professor. He organized the Information Technology and Politics panels for the 2023 Southern Political Science Association meeting in January and represented the department in March at the annual USG European Union Studies Program conference as a panel moderator and discussant.

He also continues to serve on the editorial boards of *The Journal of Political Science Education* and *Papers and Publications*, an undergraduate research journal published by the University of North Georgia. Dr. Lawrence continues to work on a research project examining the executive branch's

use of discretionary transportation grant funding for political purposes.



In April 2023, **Dr. Julie Lester**, professor of political science, presented her research paper “LOST in Transition: Conflict, Issue Framing, and Local Governments” at the annual meeting of the New England Political Science Association in Mystic, CT. Her research considered how issues that

arose during the re-negotiation of Georgia’s local option sales tax (LOST) in 2022 were framed by municipal and county governments.

While in New England, Lester also had the opportunity to visit historical sites including the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park and the Seamen’s Bethel in New Bedford, MA, where Herman Melville attended services before embarking on the whaling journey that inspired *Moby Dick*. She also



Dr. Matyók (right) and Srečko Zajc of the Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Defense (left) (Photo Credit: Thomas Matyók)



Dr. Watson (top right) celebrates a successful panel with other human rights measurement scholars at the EPSA annual conference in June 2023. (Image Credit: Annie Watson)

visited the Mystic Seaport Museum, home of the *Charles W. Morgan*, which is identified by the museum as “the last wooden whaleship in the world.”

Lester also continued her work as a Civic Fellow with the American Democracy Project. Along with ADP staff, she continued planning for the Stewardship of Public Lands field seminar to be held in Glacier National Park in 2024.



Along with being a lecturer in the MGA Department of Political Science, **Dr. Thomas Matyók** is a Professor of Human Security and Women, Peace, and Security at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany. In the Fall 2023 semester, Dr. Matyók participated in the Program in Applied Security Studies multi-national course as a lecturer on Human Security and seminar leader.

In September, Dr. Matyók attended the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Key Leader Conference in The Hague, Netherlands. Dr. Matyók was invited to moderate key leader panel sessions that focused on civil-military interoperability.



In the spring semester, **Dr. Annie Watson**, assistant professor of political science, served as one of three analysts updating the Human Rights Measurement Initiative’s (HRMI) and Social and Economic Rights Fulfillment (SERF) Index’s international measures of economic and social rights. These scores are some of the only direct, global measures of international economic and social rights updated annually.

In March, Dr. Watson also presented research measuring the

respect for women’s rights demonstrated by countries’ policies at the International Studies Association annual conference in Montreal, Canada. In May, she participated in a workshop of high-profile human rights measurement projects hosted by the Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island. And in June, she presented her research on measuring individual legislators’ respect for women’s rights at the European Political Science Association annual conference in Glasgow, Scotland.

She also continued to serve on the Faculty Affairs committee, joined MGA’s Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship as an advisory board member, and took part in the interdepartmental committee to design the new Doctor of Science in Public Safety curriculum.

The Scoop on Our Students

Since graduation in May 2023, Noah Copeland (BS in Political Science, 2023) has enrolled in the MPA program at Kennesaw State University, where he has earned a position of Graduate Research Assistant, as well as an officer position in the Public Administration Student Association.



Nemiah L. Plant (BS in Political Science, Business Administration minor) received a Master of Public Administration from Valdosta State University in May 2022 and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Public Administration from Liberty University (with one year left).

She is also entering her sixth year of civilian service with the United States Department of Defense and has completed numerous leadership development programs and professional certifications within the US DOD that enable her ability to successfully lead others as a servant leader in public service.



The department would also like to congratulate the 2022 and 2023 initiates to Pi Sigma Alpha, the national honors society for political science: Noah Copeland, Camryn Jones, Logan Meredith, and Elijah Stinehelfer.



Celebratory cake for the Spring 2023 Pi Sigma Alpha initiation. (Photo Credit: Julie Lester)



Nemiah L. Plant (Photo Credit: Nemiah L. Plant)

Cyberbullying Implications and Recommendations

Mrs. Grace Adams-Square

Cyberbullying behavior is a public health problem that demands concerted and coordinated time and attention of multiple stakeholders including parents, educators and school administrators, health care providers, policy makers, families, and others concerned with the care of children (Tokunaga 2010).

After collecting cyberbullying data from cyberbullying webpages, here are my recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Cyberbullying

- A. All students should be protected from cyberbullying, but it is not recognized by federal law. Congress should enact a federal cyberbullying law.
- B. There are broad differences in how states define cyberbullying. States should have a universal definition of cyberbullying for all states to use uniformly.
- C. Local school districts are asked to prevent cyberbullying. States should provide more funding to support local school districts with the implementation of cyberbullying.

Recommendation 2: Policy

- A. The Department of Education has a cyberbullying policy that gives legal protection for groups who are vulnerable to cyberbullying. Students are cyberbullied for multiple reasons. A universal approach is needed to protect all students who are cyberbullied.
- B. All states are suggested to have cyberbullying policies. Alabama Department of Education identified they are the recipient of \$500 million in funding contributed by the federal government (Alabama Department of Education). However, the federal funding is not exclusive to cyberbullying policies and implementation. Federal cyberbullying recommendations should include federal funding specifically for cyberbullying policies and prevention.
- C. All school districts require the development of cyberbullying policies. School policies should reflect best practices as evidenced in Colorado State Department of Education.

Recommendation 3: School Responsibility

- A. Traditionally, school responsibility has been relegated to the local school districts. The Department of Education should not be eliminated but continue to evaluate how it can expand its support to local school districts.
- B. State Education Departments should include provisions to increase the ease with which the local school must report cyberbullying incidents.
- C. Local school districts should educate both students and parents about cyberbullying. Local school districts should create formal education and awareness programs that involve both students and parents to establish partnerships or strengthen existing partnerships between schools, students, and parents (Beale & Hall, 2007; Hoff & Mitchell, 2009).




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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