News From The Chair

Each semester, it seems, brings significant historic events which students are eager to discuss and analyze: the 2000 Presidential Election, the events of September 11th, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Political Forum class, facilitated by all five faculty members, is intended specifically for such analysis of current events. This past semester, we discussed Thomas Friedman’s latest book on U.S. policy in the Middle East, Longitudes and Attitudes. Frequently, however, we were drawn instead into discussion of news commentary and daily events in Iraq and invited guest speakers such as John Bersia of the Orlando Sentinel to share their expertise.

Speaking of news commentary, perhaps you have read about a major new book entitled The New Face of War by Bruce Berkowitz, without knowing that Bruce Berkowitz is also a Stetson University graduate (see Alumnus Highlight). In addition, Professor George Edwards, class of 1968, is in the media at times analyzing the Bush Presidency, and frequent CNN Political Commentator Craig Crawford is also a Stetson Political Science alumnus. We have many graduates to brag about, and hope that we contributed to their success in some small way.

Here on Campus, the Political Science Department continues to win accolades: Dr. Gary Maris won the “Hand Community Impact Award” for extraordinary service to the University and the City of DeLand. It speaks well for our Department that our faculty members have won this award three times since it was established just four years ago. Also, Dr. Hallum won the 2003 Doyle E. Carlton Alumni Award, and Dr. Bailey received honors for being a faculty member at Stetson for 40 years, mentoring thousands of students. Dr. Nylen learned that his book, Participatory Democracy vs. Elitist Democracy: Lessons from Brazil, will be published by a major academic publisher, Palgrave/St. Martin’s Press. Meanwhile, Dr. Huskey’s book, The Executive in Russia, is being used in university classrooms across the country, including Johns Hopkins and Harvard. It is a privilege to be the Chairperson of such an extraordinary department.

Finally, for students of the American Presidency, the University has recently been contacted by an alumnus who is interested in donating an extensive collection of presidential campaign memorabilia, dating back to the campaign of William Henry Harrison. We are exploring the possibility of refurbishing Room 320 in Elizabeth Hall as a seminar room, where some of this collection could be displayed. We have in mind a room like the History Department's “Gilbert Lycan Room,” with elegant table and chairs, new carpeting and lighting, etc.; campaign buttons and pennants would be framed on the walls and in narrow display cases along the walls. Please contact the department if you are interested in contributing to this effort.

Warm regards from your Alma Mater,
Anne Motley Hallum
Department Chairperson
What’s in a Word

The discussion in philosophical circles today includes debates over whether words signify reality of some sort or whether words themselves are all that’s real. This discussion gets pretty complex, confusing and nigh unto incomprehensible at times – an irony that should not be lost since the discussion is, after all, on the use of words for effective communication. This discussion is matched in the practice of how we use particular words in the political arena. After a while political words seem to take on lives of their own and obfuscate some of the essential issues that have been shoved below the surface of the basic terms. Thus, political communication skates along on some very superficial ice of meaning until falling into the cold waters of reality that tend to wake us up to some thoughtful inquiries into the meanings of the words. We have some prime examples today such as “security,” “war,” “threat,” “terrorism,” “support our troops” and “bipartisanship.”

A good example is the popular notion of “bipartisanship.” Bipartisanship has become a word denoting some sort of virtue in political life. Opposite it is the evil “partisanship” set to wreck our democracy. We need to get back to basics. What does democracy involve and why do we think it’s a pretty good way to run a governing process? Among the multitude of reasons for our love of democracy, two basic ones come quickly to mind that suggest bipartisanship may often be a vice rather than a virtue.

The first basic idea is that any issue has numerous sides to the argument and the best “claim to truth” comes from the discussion among contending ideas. (Note the caution in avoiding the idea that “truth” will emerge and referring instead to a “claim to truth.” This choice of words moderates a sense of self-righteousness once winning a debate and also encourages one to continue questioning whatever decision is reached.)

The second basic idea is that we need a governing process to allow for this discussion. We have such a process in the U.S. Part of this process is for several groups to formulate alternatives for the various policies under debate. This allows for the citizen to participate in an effective fashion since information is discussed in a manner that allows for critique of ideas and the opportunity to reason out one’s position among different ideas and presentations of information. The policy formulation of going to war with Iraq and the widespread acceptance by almost all politicians immediately did a disservice to the democratic ideal and short-circuited the possibilities for finding better alternative solutions to a nation’s most serious policy action – going to war and placing the lives and treasure of the nation in jeopardy.

Simply to jump on the political bandwagon when the President proclaims an enemy and a threat is to ignore the democratic imperative of debate and the forceful presentation of alternatives. Bipartisanship was alive but democracy either dead or severely wounded in this instance. The question of war with Iraq had multiple sides to the issue. However, “bipartisanship” was the rage as the politicians tried to outdo each other in “loyalty” and “support for our troops” when, to the contrary, “loyalty” to democratic principles means that voices raised in opposition to attacking Iraq are healthy and necessary for the debate. Indeed, to “support our troops” we should be fully assured that this is the right time and place to send them into battle. The so-called “war” (a metaphor that allows the government to curb civil liberties severely, among other things) on “terrorism” should have been analyzed carefully before opening all our financial granaries to feed the war horses. (“Terrorism” is another of those words we all have some sense of but is slippery when being used. In varied contexts one finds different terrorist acts. Do we mean individual suicide bombers? B-52’s carpet bombing a city of civilians such as Dresden in WWII? “freedom fighters”? Israeli tanks?) Parties not in control of the political levers of power and members even of the governing party should see themselves as members of a “loyal opposition.” (Unfortunately in the United States opponents to war are even sometimes seen as non-patriots, and some folks go so far as to call them traitors.) Notably in Britain one did not hear of “bipartisanship” but instead there was not only the loyal opposition but opposition from within the governing party. (Albeit, the Conservative Party members were more supportive of Blair than was his own party.)

The thought here is not to persuade of any position on the question of war with Iraq but to call attention to the significance of word choice and the necessity to think carefully even about words we so frequently read and use in order to understand their importance in the given context. A first step in rationally appraising the policy of government and proposals by any group is to come to grips with the clear meaning of the terms being used in the discussion. I suggest that we lighten up on our love affair with the term “bipartisanship” and be supportive of efforts to lay out various policy alternatives in order that we can practice democracy to the fullest extent. This doesn’t foreclose members of various general political persuasions coming to agreement and joining forces on issues, but this should be the end of the process at most and not the beginning.
Alumni Highlights

Bruce Berkowitz 76’

Bruce Berkowitz is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. His work focuses on defense, intelligence, and technology policy. Dr. Berkowitz is currently serving as a senior consultant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Dr. Berkowitz has published several books about national security affairs, including Best Truth: Intelligence in the Information Age (Yale University Press, 2000); Strategic Intelligence (Princeton University Press, 1989); and The Need to Know: Covert Action and American Democracy (Twentieth Century, 1992), all with Allan Goodman. He previously published two additional books, Calculated Risks (Simon and Schuster, 1987) and American Security (Yale University Press, 1986). His latest book, The New Face of War, has just been published (2003) by the Free Press. In addition, He has edited two collections of articles on national security affairs, and is a frequent contributor to the Wall Street Journal and prominent academic journals.

In addition to his position at Hoover, Dr. Berkowitz is a senior staff member at RAND, frequently lectures in Washington on national security issues and was a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution from 1985 to 1986.

From 1974 to 1976, Berkowitz attended Stetson University, graduating summa cum laude. He began his career at the Central Intelligence Agency, where he served from 1978 to 1980 and 1982 to 1985. He then became a professional staff member for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, serving from 1985 to 1987. Berkowitz completed his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Rochester. His home is Alexandria, VA.

(compiled from www-hoover.Stanford.edu/BIOS/berkowitz.html)

Jessica J. Jordan, 90’

Graduated with a BA from Stetson in 1990 and an MA from the University of Miami in 1993. Following two years in the Peace Corps, she joined the United Nations and served in South America, the Middle East, the Balkans and the Horn of Africa. In 2002, she was invited to join the US Department of State and become a US Foreign Service Officer with the United States Agency for International Development. Her work now concentrates on Human Rights and Conflict Mitigation, Management and Resolution all over the world.
Alumni Notes

Class of...

2002 Kendra Koivu, received a Fellowship from Northwestern University in Chicago, to complete a Ph.D. in Political Science

1998 Mark Payne, is Director of Corporate Partnerships with university relations at University of Richmond (Spider Sports Marketing).

2000 Amanda Sharkey, Graduated from University of Miami School of Law, JD, Cum Laude, in May 2002. Presently Associate Attorney with the law firm of Hightower, Weiser & Pozo, PA.

1994 Stephanie Friese, is managing partner of the Friese Law Firm, and received the 2002 New Member of the Year Award from Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) in Atlanta.

1993 Nancy Pingree Pahel, is Study Coordinator/Senior Data Technician, at Duke University in the Department of Medicine, Center for Aging.

1991 John Dickson, recently moved from The Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., to work as a Governmental Analyst in the Executive Office of the Governor in Tallahassee. (Current student, Josh Bridwell, will be an intern at the Heritage Foundation in the summer of 2003)

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