

POLITICAL SCIENCE NEWS & NOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SVSU POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

FEBRUARY, 2009

The Importance Of Writing In Law School And Beyond

By Jeff Romback

Upon graduation from Saginaw Valley, you will have many important decisions to make. Many of you will enter the real world; this column is for you. Others may continue their education with graduate or law school; this column is for you as well. This column is about writing in either circumstance. Be prepared, because I'm going to challenge your writing beliefs. However, I'm going to give you tips on how to write to impress your boss or your professor. Remember these keys: simplicity, voice, and proofreading.

First, a bit of background on the writer: I'm Jeff Romback and I graduated from SVSU in 2006 with Bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Criminal Justice. I thought my writing was flawless. I could write long, flowing sentences with independent clauses, omnipresent commas, six-syllable, academic-sounding words, and make them a paragraph long. I thought this was excellent writing. I was wrong. Now, after two years of law school and over a year clerking for a judge in Oakland County, I am a much better writer and I continue to improve.

Writing for either the professional world or graduate school is about short, hard-hitting sentences that demonstrate your point to any read-



Courtesy/Valley Vanguard

SVSU student Greg Dietrich shaking hands with fellow students while campaigning last year. Dietrich now serves on the Buena Vista Township Board of Trustees.

Greg Dietrich Awarded Dow Corning Service Scholarship

By Michael Westendorf

Greg Dietrich has been awarded the Dow Corning Public Service Scholarship, a \$1,000 award to offset the cost of tuition while Dietrich interns at the Michigan House Fund, an organization that raises money for members of the State Legislature. The scholarship was designed to award students who seek to further themselves in public service. SVSU Foundation Executive Director Andy Bethune and Center for Public Policy & Service Direc-

tor John Kaczynski worked together to create a list of interested students. "We deeply appreciate Dow Corning's generosity in partnering with Saginaw Valley State University to encourage and reward the future leaders and public servants of our region," said Bethune late last year in a press release that was picked up by the Bay City Times. Dietrich is the political science student who last Nov. was elected to a seat of the Buena Vista Board of Trustees.

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Reader:

The new year begins with the third issue of our department newsletter. As we look ahead to a busy semester, I hope that you might find the time to sustain this publication.

First, it still needs a name. News and Notes has the virtue of being descriptive, but it is not very exciting. Might we come up with a new title for the next issue? You may submit suggestions directly to me. A \$25 Barnes and Noble gift certificate will go to the best entry, as determined by the Department.

We always welcome unsolicited articles. Club news, internship and campaign experiences, research notes, profiles of faculty or students, and the like can all be published. Note that we need material for two upcoming thematic issues: one on international politics, the other on students and the 2008 political campaign season. Please share your stories.

Finally, you will notice that the current issue includes an article written by Jeff Romback, an alumnus. I am starting to hear from more alumni, and I would really like to include additional material of this kind. If you do not have the time to write an article, please drop me a short update that we can put in our "alumni news" column.

Erik Trump, Ph.D.
Dept. Chair



POLITICAL SCIENCE NEWS&NOTES

MICHAEL WESTENDORF
Editor

CONTRIBUTORS
Jeff Romback, Emily McGuire

POLITICAL SCIENCE DIRECTORY

DEPT. CHAIR
ERIK TRUMP, PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-6087
EKT@SVSU.EDU

ROBERT W. LANE, PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-4366
RWLANE@SVSU.EDU

JESSE DONAHUE, PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-4364
JDONAHUE@SVSU.EDU

LEE TREPANIER, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-4378
LDTREPAN@SVSU.EDU

PAMELA EDWARDS-HAM, PH.D.
ASST. PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-4875
PJEDWARD@SVSU.EDU

STEWART FRENCH, A.B.D.
ASST. PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-2224
SLFRENCH@SVSU.EDU

MARK NICOL, A.B.D.
ASST. PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-2605
MLNICOL@SVSU.EDU

JULIE KEIL, J.D.
INSTRUCTOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-2126
JAKEIL@SVSU.EDU

JOHN KACZYNSKI, M.P.A.
INSTRUCTOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-7481
JLKACZYN@SVSU.EDU

MEGHAN CHERRY, M.S.E. M.P.P.
LECTURER OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
(989) 964-2752
MCHERRY@SVSU.EDU

WRITING

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er. The easiest way to illustrate this is to say, “write as if you were explaining your topic to your mother.” Being that Constitutional Law is a cornerstone of the Political Science program at SVSU, most of you have been subjected to the best and worst of legal writing. Some of the best, regardless of your opinion on his opinions, is by Justice Antonin Scalia. He recently co-authored a book with Bryan Garner (Editor-in-Chief of Black’s Law Dictionary and the leader of the new school of simple legal writing) entitled *Making Your Case: The Art of Persuading Judges*. In the book, the authors show you how to properly frame arguments in both verbal and written forms. The written portion instructs lawyers (the biggest grammar/writing

“The best professional writing advice I can give is to have a proper resume.”

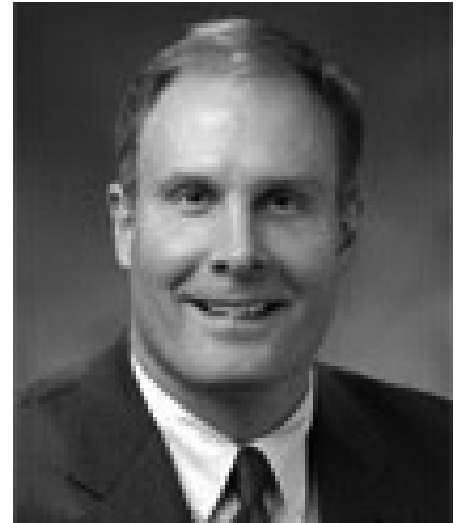
criminals on the planet, take my word) to keep their writing simple and easy to read. This does not involve writing the aforementioned long, complicating, confusing, never-ending, wordy, hastily constructed paragraphs and sentences. To give you a bit of perspective on the “new school” of legal writing, the Federal Courts (well noted for their lengthy and completely confusing opinions) now allow only five-page briefs to be submitted on appeals. You get five pages to prove your point on some of the most complicated legal issues imaginable. If lawyers can be held to five pages to get their point across, you should be able to construct your argument in fewer words.

Your voice while writing should reflect your tone. How do you want to speak to an interviewer? Write that way. How do you want to convince a professor that you’re correct? Write that way.

Voice reflects greatly upon the information you are trying to convey. You can almost hear Abraham Lincoln’s voice when you read the Gettysburg Address. When you read a dissent written by Justice Scalia, you can nearly hear the anger and frustration in his writing. Have voice and style in your writing. If someone is reading your words, especially a prospective employer, you want your writing to reflect your presentation. Remember, writing for either the professional world or the academic world is about persuasion, and one can be easily persuaded with voice and style. For example, Professor Lane has his calm and relaxed tone, and I’m sure his writing reflects his voice. As I recall, Professor Lane was very persuasive.

The best professional-world writing advice I can give is to have a proper resume. Keep the same values as stated above. Use simple sentences that get your point across so it sticks in the employer’s head. Sentences like “Earned Political Science degree from Saginaw Valley State”, “Maintained 3.5 grade-point average and graduated cum laude”, are simple and articulate your point without interpretation. Start descriptions of your achievements with verbs. As you saw above, my sentences started with “Earned” and “Maintained”, both verbs that are “doing something.” Also, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, and PROOFREAD. Ask a professor to proofread. Silly mistakes such as “your” versus “you’re” show you are being hasty. Same with “their,” “they’re,” and “there,” easily confused words that drive readers crazy and make them file your (ha!) resume in the circular file.

In conclusion, work on your writing. If you’re a person who needs the formal structure of a classroom to learn the writing rules, take a class or two. If you believe you can improve your writing without taking the classes, sit down with professors and have them critique your style. As Political Science students you’ve all felt the wrath of Dr. Trump’s edits. He doesn’t do those because he likes the color red; he does them so you learn.



Michigan State Rep. John Moolenaar Joins SVSU Faculty

By Emily McGuire

State Representative John Moolenaar will be trading his seat in the Michigan State House of Representatives for a seat in the classroom this semester. After being forced from office due to term limits, Moolenaar will hit the books with Cardinal students by teaching a Political Science 123 class for this winter term.

Born and raised in Midland, the Dow-High graduate attended Hope College and later attended Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government where he obtained his Master’s in Public Administration.

“I considered being a teacher and coach for years,” said Moolenaar of his change in occupation. “I’ve always enjoyed the history of the political system and have been a practitioner. Finishing my time in legislature, I will be able to share my experience with students... I enjoy teaching and introducing students to the political system,” he said.

Nearing the end of his final term, Moolenaar sought out a position at SVSU, talking to faculty members and eventually submitting his application.

This is a snippet of an article that appeared in the Valley Vanguard’s 1/12 issue

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	TIME	EVENT	VENUE
Feb. 23	5:00 p.m.	Public Official Day State Rep. Bill Caul	3rd Floor Brown Faculty Lounge
Feb. 25	7:00 p.m.	Israel / Palestine Forum	Rhea Miller Recital Hall



7400 Bay Road • University Center, MI 48710 • USA