

# Political Science

## News & Notes

SVSU Winter 2013



### Moot Court: From Regionals to Nationals

A battle of wits and words, Moot Court takes talk-tennis to a whole new level.

An invigorating intellectual exercise, the Moot Court program on campus is a simulated argument in front of the United States Supreme Court. Working in teams of two, each team must be ready to perform the roles of both petitioner and respondent. The petitioner typically being someone who is suing, claiming their constitutional rights were violated, with the respondent typically being the government or a similar large entity. They are given a fictional case problem and a set of actual Supreme Court cases from which they develop their arguments.

This year, SVSU hosted its very first Moot Court regional tournament, which was one of only nine held across the country. Thirty teams competing from six schools, SVSU's teams tested their wits against students from institutions like the University of Denison and the College of Wooster, both Ohio-based.

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*Above:* Ashley Hanson (left) and Marissa Geyer (right)

*Above Right:* The tradition continues. The picture shows Stuart Chipman (left) Professor Julie Keil (middle), and Joe Chrysler (right) at the 2011 Moot Court Nationals.

### Model United Nations: AMUN & Chicago!

Stepping into the shoes of the world's United Nations diplomats, Model UN ventured to Chicago.

Academically and professionally rewarding, the Model United Nations (MUN) program on campus is a simulation of the United Nations that aims to educate participants about current events, topics in international relations, diplomacy, and the United Nations' agenda. Participants role-play as diplomats representing a country or NGO in a simulated session of a committee of the United Nations, such as the Security Council or the General Assembly. Participants research a country, take on roles as diplomats, investigate international issues, debate, deliberate, consult, and then develop solutions to world problems.

This past November, SVSU's MUN group went on a five day trip to Chicago for the American Model United Nations (AMUN) conference. Competing with fifteen hundred students from eighty-five schools, SVSU picked up four awards this year. The teams of Dylan Hellus, a Political Science and Economics major, and Kayla Langmaid, a Political Science and French major with a history minor, and Jared Quist, a Communications major with Political Science and English minors, and Keven Washburn, each captured best delegation honors for their respective presentations.

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# Student Scholarship

## Political Science News & Notes

A record number of students mentored by Political Science department faculty presented papers at professional academic conferences this year. According to Professor Erik Trump, "In my 15 years in the department, I can't recall having such a large number of academically talented and ambitious students at one time. Nor have we ever had students go to so many different conferences."

In early January, Professor Pam Edwards-Ham accompanied Hailey Kimball and Kevin Lorentz to the Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference (Orlando, FL), where Hailey delivered a paper on public opinion and health care, and Kevin delivered one on ethnic secession and Sudan. Both presentations emerged from their Honor Program theses. Edwards-Ham reported that one participant on Kevin's panel "noted his presentation was the best by far of all those he'd seen at the conference." Kevin had polished his paper after feedback he received at the Michigan Political Science Association Annual Conference in October, 2012. As Professor Edwards-Ham notes, "getting external advice and questions about one's research is a vital part of the scholarship process," and professional conferences are excellent places to engage with a broader audience.

Professor Trump chaired a Michigan Academy (Hope College) panel that included presentations from three SVSU students: "Keeping Time with the Grim Reaper: Soldiers, the Battlefield, and the Music that Motives Them to Kill or Be Killed" (Scott Merrow), "The Democracy Complex and Pussy Riot: The Ongoing Cultural War Between American Advocates of Democracy and Vladimir Putin" (Anthony Kirk), and "Zombieland and Political Disinterest: Lock the Doors, Buy a Book, and Grab Your Twinkies" (John Parcell). Also at the Michigan Academy, Ashley Giordano presented a version of her Honors Program thesis (completed under Trump's supervision): "Besides the Lorax, Who Else Speaks for the Trees? Children's Films and the Environmental Politics of Suburbanization." Lorentz took on Great Lakes water policy in "Water Ownership and the Great Lakes: A Historical Survey"; he delivered an earlier version of the paper (which also won an SVSU Braun Writing Award) at the MPSA Conference. And, Nancy Lackey delivered a paper based on her Honors Thesis (supervised by Professor Jesse Donahue)

On March 30, Giordano and Parcell travelled to Washington, DC with Sam Nolan to give their papers at the undergraduate section of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference. Nolan's paper was titled "Doomsday Will Be Televised: Survivalism and Conservative Ideology in American Reality-television." It was an honor to be selected for this conference, since less than half of the proposals were accepted.

Professor Lee Trepanier served as a mentor for Emily Sullivan, whose paper, "John Rawls and Public Reason in US Supreme Court Decisions," was accepted at the 2013 Midwest Political Science Association conference in Chicago. Emily, who also presented a paper at last year's MPSA conference, describes it as "a really good networking opportunity. It's not as intimidating as one would think, so there's nothing to be scared about!"

Jeremy Killion, Dylan Hellus, and Trent Varva discovered that presentation opportunities are not limited to the North American continent. On April 8, along with faculty adviser John Kaczynski, they travelled to Prague, Czechoslovakia for the International Research Society for Public Management 2013 Conference. There they delivered a paper titled "The City of Saginaw and Saginaw Valley State University: Forming New Ties for the Future." The paper's method emerged from Kaczynski's Ph.D. dissertation research. Kaczynski says, "When a colleague at Central Michigan University suggested the need for a study suggesting how mid-Michigan's public universities can provide some of the community functions no longer being performed by local governments, I knew right away that my dissertation – which focuses more on the greater Detroit area – was a model for such an analysis. Also, Jeremy, Dylan, and Trent had already completed a significant analysis of Michigan's transportation policy, so I had a lot of confidence in their ability to research this new topic." Kaczynski expects their research to spur some real-world action. And, the opportunity to share ideas in an international context is especially important for today's public servants, according to Kaczynski, because governments are increasingly looking beyond their borders for innovative ideas.

All of this student travel was supported by generous funding from the SVSU Foundation, the Student Research and Creativity Institute, the Student Association, Student Life, and the Resident Hall Association.



*From left to right: Ashley Giordano, Anthony Kirk, Dr. Erik Trump, Scott Merrow, Jake Parcell; at the Michigan Academy*

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## Moot Court, cont.

Armed with the knowledge of ten constitutional law cases and prepared arguments for the main case's dual issues involving the 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, SVSU's teams put all their hard work to the test during regionals. The real challenge, however, was not to merely memorize relevant cases and talking points, but to be able to respond to any challenge a judge might throw their way. Teams were forced to think on their feet whenever judges countered parts of their arguments or challenged the phrasing used. This academically challenging and intense back and forth exchange kept all teams mentally on their toes.

Over the course of the two-day regional competition, nine of SVSU's twelve teams made it to the second day of eliminations, with teams from three schools finishing in the top four and SVSU ultimately coming in fourth. After this intellectually demanding, yet rewarding, experience, three of SVSU's teams qualified for the third time to compete at the national competition held in Virginia Beach, Virginia. For a Moot Court program in only its third year, this success is further pronounced. The national qualifiers consisted of Hailey Kimball, a Political Science major who will be graduating in spring, and Kevin Lorentz, a Political Science major; Mikaela Burch, a Political Science and Criminal Justice major, and Brandon Harris, a criminal justice major, and Marissa Geyer, Political Science major with a Criminal Justice Minor who plans to attend graduate school for a Masters of Public Administration, and Larissa Skalecki a Political Science major.

SVSU also had students compete in the brief writing portion of the competition. Brief writing involves taking the oral argument and putting it into writing, similar to what is submitted to the US Supreme Court.

This involves learning how to set these up as a lawyer would, along with learning to do legal research and writing. The SVSU teams who competed in this portion of the tournament were Kevin Lorentz and Hailey Kimball, Nicole Berwick and Chris Anaman, Marissa Geyer and Larissa Skalecki, Brandon Harris and Mikaela Burch, Trevor Ward and Samantha Jackson, and Josh Fairbrother and Joey Kirkland.

For those thinking about law school, the Moot Court program can benefit future law students in several ways. Most critically, it gives students a taste of what real attorneys do and lets them get a feel for they would actually enjoy it and be good at it. While the process of participating in the program gives students the skills



*Above:* Chris Anaman at the 2012 Moot Court Regional

needed for law school, it also provides an academic challenge for academically gifted students to chew on. Students are not only allowed to see how well they measure up against other students across the country, but also given a chance to travel to regionals and nationals and experience other parts of the US.

Even for those who may not be thinking about law school, Moot Court has a spread of delectable practical skills on its platter. Skills of research, organization, time management, communication, active listening ability, and public speaking are some of what any student can acquire throughout participating in this program. Marissa Geyer, going into her third and final year of the program, speaks from her own rewarding experience as she urges "I would definitely encourage students from all backgrounds, experiences, and majors to partake in Moot Court."

More than 300 teams competed nationwide at regional competitions, and at the National Moot Court competition in Virginia, eighty teams from all over the country, including top schools like Patrick Henry College, who has won the competition for the fifth year in a row, and the College of Wooster, contended in an intense bout of oral and intellectual skill. This year's case was about a female high school senior who was denied admittance to a university because the university employed an affirmative action program favoring males.

To qualify for nationals, a team must place in the top 25 percent of teams at a regional competition. Hailey Kimball and Kevin Lorentz placed 4<sup>th</sup> at the Great Lakes Regional hosted by Saginaw Valley, and 13<sup>th</sup> in the national competition. Placing 13<sup>th</sup>, Kimball and Lorentz proved themselves among the best undergraduates in the nation when it comes to arguing legal issues. Kimball expressed how very proud she was of how far she and her partner had come. "Our goal was to make it into the second day of competition because no one from Saginaw Valley has done it so far, and we achieved that." Lorentz concurred. "I am proud



## Moot Court, cont.

of what we accomplished. It's a great feeling knowing all the work we've put in paid off." Professor Julie Keil, advisor to the Moot Court teams, expressed praise for the performance of SVSU's teams in this year's national competition. "It was very close. They've all done well, the quality of competition is much better than even last year, so this success is wonderful."

Kimball was the valedictorian of the Onaway High School class of 2009, and will be attending the Michigan State University (MSU) College of Law next fall. Kimball was awarded the Dean Charles H. King Scholarship at MSU, a full-tuition scholarship with a three-year value of \$105,000.

While an academic activity, Moot Court is also community of individuals that makes room for fun and social bonding. Geyer asserts "Aside from the educational aspect, I enjoy Moot Court for social reasons. Many of us in the class became close friends this year because we spent so much time working, competing, and traveling together."

A good amount of time is put in by students to achieve the rewarding results of this program. Moot Court has a class students can sign up for [exact one here], which meets once a week for three hours over the course of fifteen weeks. In addition to the three to five hours outside of class they spend meeting and practicing as a group, there is also an estimated forty hours of reading spent over the summer for students to review the ten Supreme Court cases and writing case briefs, which will help students support their arguments for the single big case, for the following year.

Next year, the national Moot Court competition will be held in Phoenix, Arizona. As the youngest student from SVSU to attend nationals this year, Geyer expressed enthusiasm for next year and encourages students to take advantage of Moot Court. "I will be going into my third and final year of the program, and I again will set a personal goal. I think with the returning students, along with hopefully some bright, new, and eager faces, the program will continue its success." There is ample opportunity for students to get involved with SVSU's rewarding Moot Court program. The team is open to include even sophomore level students. For additional information, feel free to contact Professor Keil.

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## MUN, cont.

This isn't the first time SVSU's MUN has won awards at conferences. Last year, at the 2011 AMUN conference, SVSU's delegation got the best delegation overall out of eighty-three schools. Out of all the schools that year, SVSU picked up the most awards.

While the group took part in the conference for three days, they also had two days of the Chicago trip to themselves to explore the city. There were endless ways for the group to enjoy what Chicago had to offer. Whether it be inhaling the aroma and taste of Giordanos deep dish pizza, walking along the Navy Pier, strolling through the Chicago Institute of Art or Museum of Natural History, or going out to Wrigleyville and Millennium Park.

Each of the students who go has their favorite go-to sight-seeing preferences, and Trent Varva is no different. A senior Political Science major with an Economics minor, as well as being the current MUN president, a few of Varva's favorite things to do are to visit the Chicago Institute of Art and the Aquarium, and walk around the city to explore the plethora of shops. He has nothing but enthusiasm for the experience. "The food is simply amazing and it's nearly impossible to find a place you wouldn't go back to again. A personal favorite of mine and many of my MUN friends is the Rock Bottom Brewery where they have fancy Macaroni and Cheese that you wouldn't believe."



Above: SVSU MUN members at the 2011 AMUN. Award-Winning delegation.

## MUN, cont.

After all of the anticipation and hard work that comes before each conference, there are many rewarding aspects of the experience. For Varva, the most rewarding part of the conference is always the passage of a resolution he had a major part in creating. Resolutions are written suggestions for addressing a specific problem or issue; they emerge after much discussion, writing and negotiation. “Both of my years at AMUN I have had the fortune to have passed resolutions on the two topics of my committees that had the largest margins of support. It is satisfying passing something by a majority, but when you can get a two-thirds majority or even a consensus, it really makes you feel good about what you accomplished.”

For Dylan Hellus, the former president of MUN, one of the top highlights of the conference was when he delivered a particular speech. “It was a pretty fiery, stand-up-for-the-little-guys-in-the-room kind of a deal and my partner and I ended up getting awards for it.”

There are several engaging opportunities available while students attend conferences like AMUN. Students could choose to serve on international court of justice, the international press delegations, or on one of the various committees that deal with issues from terrorism to women’s rights to nuclear proliferation.

SVSU students participate in not only the AMUN conference in Chicago, but also the North American Model United Nations (NAMUN) conference in Toronto, and the Model Arab League (MAL) conference in Grand Rapids. Along with the fun and excitement that comes with participating in conferences around the country, MUN members are also able to gain valuable skills that will serve them well both academically and professionally. Some of these skills include: research, negotiation, diplomatic procedure, international law, foreign affairs, public speaking, ability to



reach resolutions from conflict, think on feet, improve skills in logic and rational thought, improve knowledge of international organizations, knowledge of how to properly write resolutions, and knowledge of how to communicate at a press conference.

One of the specific skills Varva says MUN has given him is the ability to think critically under fire. “After speeches, other delegates usually have the opportunity to grill you on many different points that you may or may not have addressed while working on the resolution you are promoting, so being able to answer those questions quickly and in a way that makes your position look good is a skill that is developed over time.” Hellus adds that another part of the skill-building process with MUN is figuring out what skill to use and when to use it.

Even if a student doesn’t seem to have a major that directly correlates with MUN, Professor John Kaczynski, advisor for SVSU’s MUN, says that it wouldn’t matter. “MUN is multi-disciplinary. The program teaches you multiple skill-sets that can cater to any major or minor.” Kaczynski would recommend MUN to any student for this reason, and also because MUN is a multi-faceted and all-around rewarding experience.

MUN has done much for the students who have been a part of it, and can also serve as a stepping stone for what students wish to do after graduating from SVSU. For students like Hellus, who wish to work with local governments or organizations and help spur community and economic

development, MUN has helped lay a foundation an intended career. This also holds true for meaningful effect on policy creation. “MUN has given me a lot of skills that will help me in my career in politics going forward. Not only did it help hone my ability at forming coherent policy points to argue effectively but it also helped me with my technical writing, negotiation, public speaking, and many other skills. It has also provided me with a number of friends that I know I will stay in contact with for many years to come. I will always be able to rely on their expertise to help me continue to pursue effective public policy, and if I ever need a job, I’m reasonably sure at least one of them will know somewhere I can apply.”

MUN is an invigorating and rewarding experience that many members would recommend to other students. Jared Quist, who is also the MUN secretary, says, “I would recommend it to others because it’s a great way to gain important skills, make new friends, and experience the world from a different country’s point of view.”

SVSU’s MUN program is open to any and all students at SVSU who are interested in international affairs, public policy, or law school. Members of MUN enroll in PS 363 (offered each fall), and can earn up to six credits from the class.

Any student who is interested in MUN can contact Professor Kaczynski:

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## Congratulations! Political Science Graduates, 2013

One of the largest classes ever will be graduating with a degree in political science this year, and the faculty wish to extend their congratulations to each graduate. We will miss all of you, but we look forward to hearing about your future accomplishments. Please stay in touch!

**Pia Abel**  
**Chris Breznau**  
**Nicholas Buggia**  
**Michael Camfield**  
**Jasmine Charlton**  
**Ben Curtis**  
**Kane Dietzel**  
**Tyler Dietzel**  
**Sarah Eisenberg**  
**Joshua Fairbrother**  
**Ted Goodman**  
**Lindsay Haar**  
**Dylan Hellus**  
**Taylor Irland**

**Kimberly Keller**  
**Kevin Lorentz**  
**Tyler Manning**  
**Andrew Niedizl**  
**Chris Pappas**  
**Kirsten Perry**  
**Jennifer Reuther**  
**Rachelle Rice**  
**Andrew Rubley**  
**Katie Sierocki**  
**David Wildner**  
**Daniel Wimmer**  
**Jordan Woods**

We know that everyone is making plans for the next stage of their lives. Here are a few examples:

**Mikaela Burch** plans to study international and human rights law in the Netherlands at the Tilburg Law School, where she has been accepted.

**Cassandra Gilkey** will move across the state to Western Michigan University to complete a master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

**David Mueller** is heading to Washington, DC and the American University's School of International Service to pursue a master's degree in International Relations/US Foreign Policy. David will have several options, including interning with the US Department of State or joining the Peace Corps while obtaining his degree.

**Ryan Perini** will be attending Cooley Law School in the fall.

The offer of a full-ride scholarship was one of several factors drawing **Emily Sullivan** to Wayne State University's Law School. After her first year, Emily plans to apply for a joint degree program with the university's Political Science department.