

# POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

Dear Students,

I'm happy to be in touch with you through this introduction to our newsletter. These will be my last introductory remarks, as in June of 2017 I'm stepping down as Chair of the Department to be replaced by Professor Natalie Taylor, our current Associate Chair. I would like to wish Natalie the best in the certainty that she will do a wonderful job leading us in the next few years. In the meantime, until the end of this Spring term, if you need to discuss anything related to your major or minor in Government, obtain authorization for courses to be taken abroad, or talk about any other requirement, please don't hesitate to contact me. My office is located in Ladd 319 (X5249) and my e-

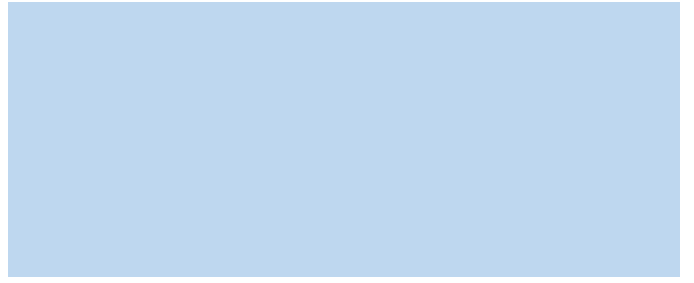


has been researching the role of legal advocacy in the fight for LGBTQ rights. Although courts are commonly viewed as the primary guardians of minority rights, as they are insulated from the influence of the political system and electorate, she has found this is not always the case in regards to LGBTQ issues. Many times these activists will build social and lobbying movements to win local battles before winning victories in the courts. She is excited to be working with Eliana

# Mara Suttmann-Lea

I am thrilled to be joining Skidmore's Department of Political Science this fall. My research focuses on election laws, political campaigns and citizen engagement. At Skidmore, I'll be working on my book manuscript, *Convenience at a Cost: The Unintended Consequences of Early Voting*. I'll also be launching my next research project, which examines how poll workers evaluate voter eligibility. Though I am open to all research methods, I have a soft spot for archival research, and spent the summer of 2015 driving across the country to six state archives.

This fall, I'll be teaching the American Presidency and Introduction to American Politics. My Presidency course will examine the age-old question: "what makes for presidential greatness: the person or the times?" In this course, we'll analyze how presidential power has changed over time and evaluate key theories of presidential power and leadership. There will be many "Hamilton" interludes



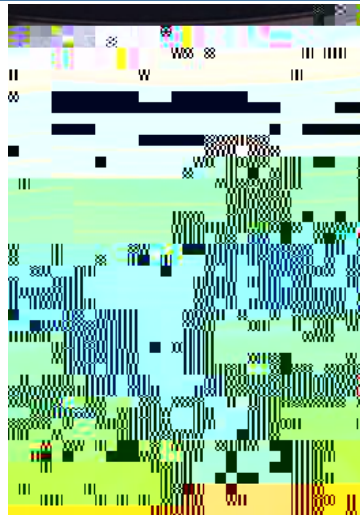
Gonzalo Chavez '17



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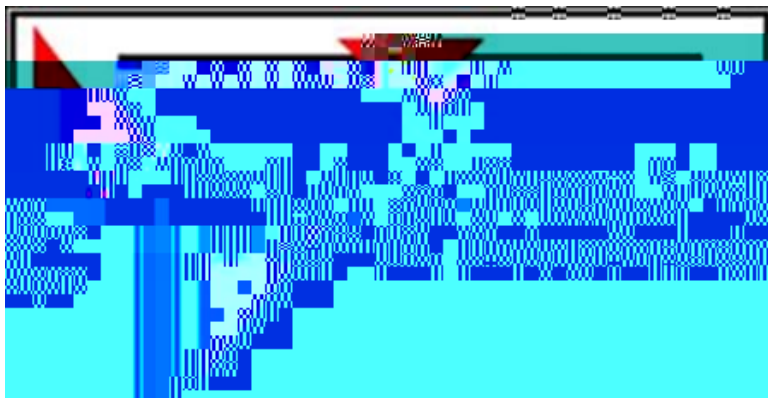
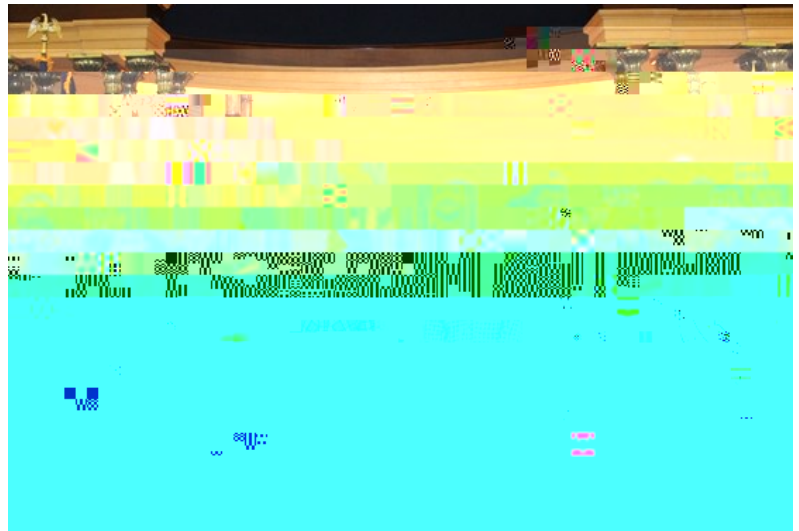
Matthew Bristol, Orr Genish,  
 David Immerman, Eliana Kosova,  
 Luca Mobilia, Megan Schachter,  
 Rachel Talanian, Graham Van Korff,  
 Joshua Wagner



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Edson Acosta, William Berg,  
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 Rachel Turk, Kali Villarosa,  
 Emily Walter, Nicole Werner







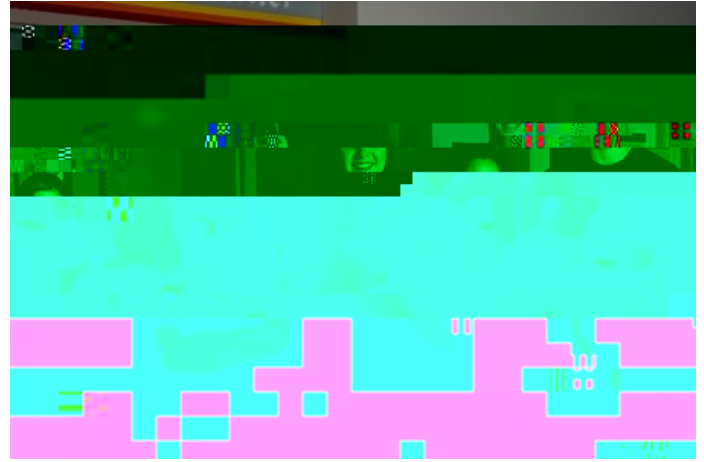
On November 18, 2017, students of Professor Yelena Biberman-



## David Immerman '17

One of the most rewarding experiences of Professor Mann's Election Research class this past fall was the opportunity to go out in the field and collect original data. On Election Day in November, Professor Mann scattered the class and some additional student-volunteers from the Political Science Department across the Capital District region in teams of two to survey randomly selected polling places. We visited polling locations in Albany, Rensselaer, and Saratoga counties. Our day started at five in the morning and many of us did not return until seven that evening.

The survey, which we built as a class in the weeks leading up to the election, aimed to capture data on the quality and accessibility of each voting place. While impossible to eliminate all subjectivity from a survey like the one we did, we worked hard to mitigate bias by making the questions as clear as we could. All data collectors attended one training session and each individual in each team filled out a survey at each polling place. We used an app developed by computer programmers at MIT and Dartmouth to capture data on the length of lines at the polling places and the time it took voters to get through different stages in the voting process.



Once we had physically collected the data, we needed to clean it and prepare it for analysis. This part of the class was Professor Mann's version of a crash course in data management. We had to clean our survey data, merge it with data from the smartphone app, and combine all of that data with demographic info from the U.S. Census. It was a time consuming and tedious process, but an extremely valuable lesson in what it takes to conduct original research.

After we had our dataset, the final project in the class was for each of us to come up with a research question and try to answer it using the variables our data gave us. Many of us looked at the ways in which different demographics affected line lengths and other indicators of a successful polling place, while others looked at more specific variables (such as the layout of a polling place) and how those factors impacted the voting experience. In order to test these relationships between variables, Professor Mann needed to teach us some basics on regression analysis. In a little under two hours, he was able to show us how to read and interpret the output of a regression, which was not only impressive, but also another very important takeaway from the class in terms of learning what it means to do real research. We each wrote a report that explained our research question and gave the results of our regression models. Having a final product come out of all of our hard work from the semester was a nice way to close out the process and class.

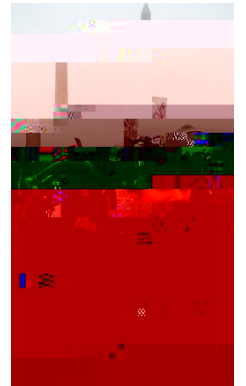
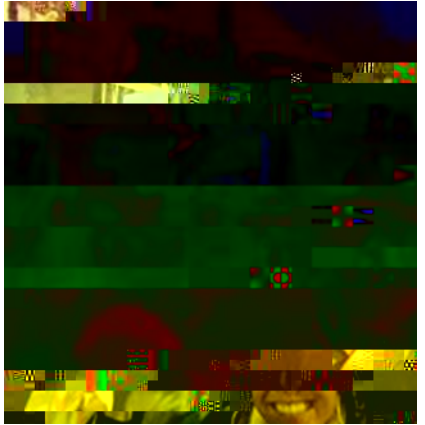
Political Science major, [redacted] will be conducting research with Professor Yelena Biberman-Ocakli this summer on the political-military implications of the current revolution in biotechnology, in particular the development of new tools for analyzing and changing an organism's genetic material. It is an inter-disciplinary inquiry into the relationship between scientific innovation and international security. Their focus will be on "personalized bioweapons" –



*Rachael Thomeer '18 with her mom in Buffalo*

*Prof Vacs in Washington DC*

*Jane Moretta-Miller '18 in San Francisco*

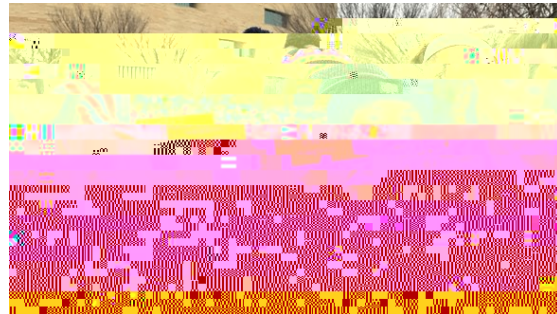
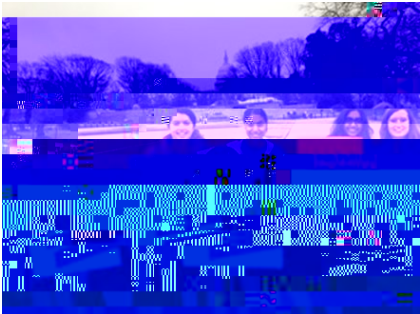


Katie Zuber in NYC,  
Washington D.C.

Joshua Wagner in  
*Photos continue on page 12*



We were at the March for Women continued from page 11



*by Alex Mahoney '18  
in Washington DC*

*by Emma Bernstein '19, Erin Mah '19  
and Hannah Fishman '19 in Washington DC*

*by Jane Moretta-Miller '18 in  
San Francisco*



## Biba Contin '19

Last week, as I was driving on the New Jersey turnpike, four black SUVs were patrolling the highway and sporadically stopping cars for random inspections. Before leaving for my ultimate Frisbee tournament, I had read on Facebook about how the Trump administration had been sending out police officers on raids to detain undocumented immigrants. As an international student, I technically do not have anything to worry about – I am a documented student with a Visa that lasts for my four college years. However, as I rushed to get ready to travel with my team, I left behind my I-20, the document that can prove my legal status in America, as well as my passport, and if any of the raid cars wished to pull me and my friends over, they could arrest me.

When I came to America I never imagined that I would have to worry about being detained because of my cultural background. During my freshmen year, I saw Trump use his hate rhetoric towards undocumented Latino immigrants as well as Muslims, specifically Arabs. Since I fall so close between that intersection: a Latina with Lebanese decent, I find that I am often times in fear of how my physical appearance could harm my presence in America. On November 8th, when Donald Trump was elected, I had never felt more unwanted in a country. In so many ways, I embody all of the intersections that Trump supporters seem to hate: the queer, Latino-



**Orr Genish '17** *Centralization within the United States military and how to expand that knowledge to Afghanistan and Iraq*

**Luca Mobilia '17** *The Effect of Student Aid Policy Design on Political Participation Among Millennials*

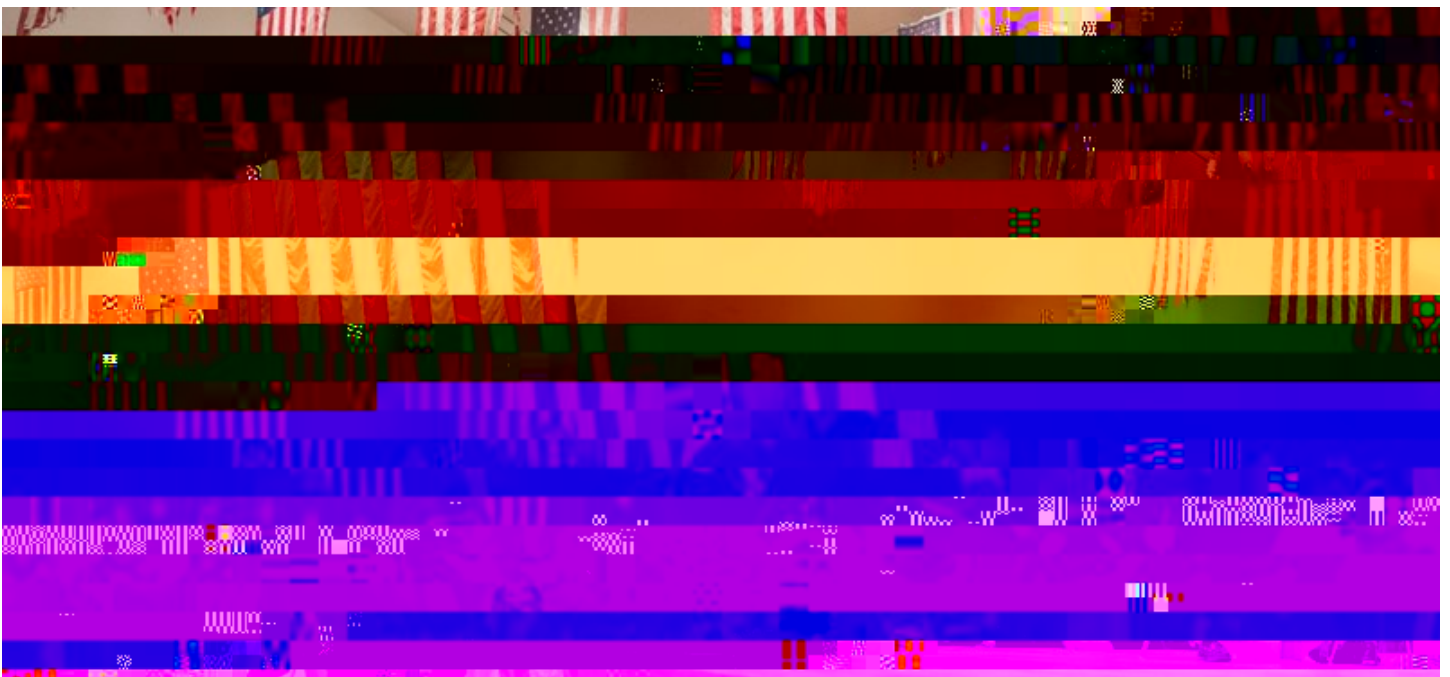
**Megan Schachter '17** *Reconsideration of Sex Offender Public Notification Laws*

**Jack Schreuer '17** *Legitimizing the Revolution State through Constitutional Creation*

*continues on page 18*



At left Erin Mah '19, political science major and '19, in



## Collected by Jason Sutherland '18

Despite only being a month in, this semester has been a whirlwind. Outside of my classes, I am President of Skidmore's animal rights club, Compassion for All. Recently we have been discussing currently contested legislation pertaining to animal welfare. The next four years will be a constant fight on behalf of wild and domestic animals.

This past year I graduated high school, and dove right into college with an ever-strengthening passion for Political Science. Due to our current political atmosphere, I declared my major during my first semester on campus. Over winter break I marched with my family in DC, and this summer I plan on working in poli-




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a summer camp in the French alps. On campus, I host a weekly radio show (on Saturdays) covering topics in the world of football, and I also contribute articles to Skidnews. For this upcoming summer, I am excited about an internship at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. Although I plan on traveling abroad to Paris next year, I am looking forward studying more in the Political Science Department!

Over the course of my junior year, I have been exposed to the intricacies of the college's administration through my involvement in Academic Council and the Committee on Academic Standing. I am also continuing as the co-Vice President of the Honors Forum, co-President of the Franklin Forum, and the Faculty and Administration Editor of SkidNews. Although I am waiting to hear back from internships for the summer, I am already enrolled in a week-long course on U.S. Grand Strategy at the Hertog Foundation.

This semester, I am spending my time abroad in Chiang Mai, Thailand learning about the intricacies of international development from a non-western perspective. My study abroad institution's (ISDSI) focus on sustainability has challenged me to think critically about our globalized world. The collective discussions about alternative



four Political Science majors qualified for membership last fall into the Thoroughbred Society. Members of the Thoroughbred Society are student-athletes who have maintained a GPA of 3.67 or above for the previous semester.

Currently, I am abroad studying at the University of Westminster in London. My political science classes here are especially interesting due to the Trump administration. My international relations class is focusing on how Trump will affect the U.K, and since I am the only American in my class I am bringing an interesting perspective on the future. I am also looking forward to seeing everyone back in the Political Science department next fall.

I am currently studying abroad at Trinity College, Dublin, where I am taking courses on Irish politics. I am excited to come back to Skidmore in the fall







