

POLITICAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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Special points of interest:

- *Students reflect on meetings with current and former political leaders*
- *Political Science Student's Association is holding its annual conference*
- *Congratulations to our faculty*

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The Importance of Economics for Public Policy Students

By: Heather Lavers

When students think about a career in public policy, they want to change the world and develop the next great guiding principle that will make Canada a driving force in today's world economy. However, these same students may be deterred from the Public Policy program at Mount Saint Vincent University for the number of economics courses required for the degree.

Dr. James Sawler teaches many economics courses for the Public Policy program. Sawler explains that a lot of the mathematical calculations that intimidate people aren't used in this context. He adds, "We use an applied approach, these courses focus on problem solving and institutions as they apply to policy problems."

According to Steven Byers a 2nd year Public Policy major, "Many students see the economics requirements for this program and get scared off into just taking a major or advanced major in politics alone. To get a good grasp on the advantages and disadvantages of policy you need to understand economics. In the real world making a policy decision based on economic policy versus just theory is invaluable."

"Economics is the study of



Left-Right: Steven Byers and Dr. James Sawler

making rational decisions, in designing public policy you have to make choices; economics provides a framework for that," explains Dr. Sawler.

Justine Müller a 3rd year BBA says, "Not a lot of people know why policy is made... we need economics for this understanding."

The use of economics in the Public Policy program is integral to the understanding of why policies come into effect. One cannot have a full idea of public policy without economic study. Dr. Sawler explains the importance quite simply, "No field exists in a vacuum, and by avoiding economics you can't get the full picture."

Canadian Federalism: A National Success or a Disastrous Failure?

By: Steven Byers



Steven Byers, Public Policy Major and Vice-President for the Political Studies Society

The Canadian Political Science Student's Association held its annual conference for this academic year at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John's January 16th – 20th, 2008. Universities from all across Canada sent participants from their Political Science and Political Studies departments. This year, through the hard work of the Political Studies Society, MSVU sent 11 students to the conference. The topic of discussion for this year's CPSSA Conference was "Federalism: Is it Working?". Key-note speakers included Clyde Wells – former Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and current

Chief Justice of that Province, as well as John Crosbie, a Mulroney-era federal cabinet Minister and current Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The students who went to St. John's returned with the memories of an invaluable experience where they had a chance to participate in discussions with a diverse group of students from across the country, as well as having had the opportunity to listen to, and probe the minds of, some of the foremost leaders from the past and present of Canadian political life.

If you have questions about the Conference or would perhaps like to attend next year, please contact the President of the MSVU-Political Studies Society, Scott MacDonald, (psspresident@hotmail.com) or Steven Byers, Vice-President (sabyers@eastlink.ca) or Dr. Jeff MacLeod (jeffrey.macleod@msvu.ca).

"We students enjoyed a short lesson in politics, and then applauded his recent triumph with the negotiations made with the Prime Minister in regards to the Atlantic Accord."

Political Studies class, when he visited MSVU on November 13th. We students enjoyed a short lesson in politics, and then applauded his recent triumph with the negotiations made with the Prime Minister in regards to the Atlantic Accord. However, as I read about Bill Casey's frustrations in Ottawa over the past week I could not help but regret my applause.

Province first? The Premier acts as if he is in federal government, making it clear that he would not support Bill Casey in the upcoming federal election because he is FIRST a conservative, and Casey had voted against the federal Conservative budget tabled last month. Perhaps the Premier needs to be reminded that

Feature Student: Reflecting on the Premier's Visit

By: Jonathan Boyd

"Province first, riding second, and party third," is what Premier MacDonald said to a



Left-Right: Jonathan Boyd, Political Studies Major and Premier Rodney MacDonald

Bill Casey lost his job fighting for the very Nova Scotians he calls his "first" priority. In fact, Casey is in Ottawa right now pleading for the federal government to show him, or show anyone for that matter, the so-called 'agreement' that was made between MacDonald and Harper, because those documents have yet to be made public.

Although some of the Premier's words were contradictory, his visit to our school was very much appreciated and some people's opinions of him changed. Tammy Green of the Political Studies Society said, "He isn't as bad as the media makes him out to be." I guess being the "fiddler from down the road" (as he is known in his hometown of Mabou) has taken Premier MacDonald to the top, however, his inconsistency in the past few months may be his political downfall – only time will tell.

Focus on Faculty: Dr. Michael MacMillan

I've been at the Mount since 1978. I came here immediately after finishing my Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Minnesota. My areas of teaching and research interest straddle several of the traditional sub-fields in the discipline, including political theory, political behaviour and public policy. While students are very familiar with my work as a lecturer, I thought it might be helpful to emphasize a less immediately visible part of my activity – my research...

My research interests include human rights issues democratic process. While a graduate student, I chose my dissertation topic to allow me to combine these interests in studying an important Canadian topic, language issues. I analyzed the political ideas of a prominent turn of the century Canadian politician and journalist, Henri Bourassa, in relation to language rights in Canada and French-English relations. From that project, I decided to explore the subject of language rights more broadly and to examine language policy in Canada at the federal and provincial level, both in terms of the intellectual justification for the policies and in the explanation of the language conflict to which these policies gave rise. This resulted in a number of published academic articles and my book, *The Practice of Language Rights in Canada*, which was short-listed for the Donner Prize as the best book in Canadian public policy published in the previous two years. This is a fascinating

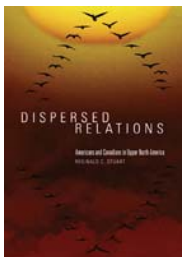


Dr. Michael MacMillan

area of research, and I have a list of projects I still want to do in this area. However, I decided it was finally time to return to my other long-standing research interest in democratic theory and practice.

While I was writing my dissertation, I was also involved as a community volunteer in urban planning for my neighbourhood, which allowed me to organize and observe democratic decision-making at the local level. This was an excellent preparation for my current interest in the area of deliberative democracy, which aims to enhance citizen engagement in decision-making processes. Coupled with that, is a developing literature focused on the means to “audit “ democratic processes in government and community organizations. During my sabbatical in the winter of 2008, I am combining these themes in a research project designed to analyze the reaction of participants in a province wide citizen consultation process on heritage planning. I am quite looking forward to working on the results of this study and using it as a point of departure for new research projects in the future. Among others things this should benefit our new course on Democracy and Civil Society which we will launch in the coming year.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!



Congratulations to Dr. Reginald Stuart on the publication of his new book, “Dispersed Relations: Americans and Canadians in Upper North America.”



Congratulations to Dr. Meredith Ralston for receiving the Beyond Borders Media Award in the broadcast category for her documentary, “Selling Sex in Heaven.”

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Coming Course Attractions!!

By: Dr. Jeffrey MacLeod and Dr. Michael MacMillan
Coming in Fall 2008/Winter 2009:

POLS 3310: Special Topics: Political Leadership

There does not seem to be a consensus in the political studies literature on the theoretical approach one should adopt when examining political leadership. Opinions on the matter are arranged across the spectrum from the view that leadership is a vital component of political activity, to the perspective that leadership has little tangible impact on policy. Is society shaped by "the vision" of leaders, or are we products of a deterministic historical dialectic? Are leaders constrained by the political structure, or do they control and shape it? Also, what makes a "strong" leader? Can a leader be "strong" and still listen to the views of others and build a consensus?

POLS 3314: Democracy and Civil Society

A new addition to our list of regular offerings in political theory. The purpose of this course is to address contemporary debates about democracy as practiced in liberal democratic societies, explore current discontents with how it works and consider avenues for reform. It examines new initiatives to enhance democracy in everyday life, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the role of civil society in enhancing democracy.

“I Did What I Had To Do!”: Breakfast with Mulroney

By: Scott MacDonald

There aren't too many reasons why I would get up at 6 in the morning, but being in audience with a former Prime Minister of Canada certainly is one of them. Along with 8 other students from MSVU and Professor Jeff MacLeod (and students from all other local universities and high schools), my anticipation had been building for a few weeks. What would breakfast with a Prime Minister be like? What would breakfast with one of Canada's most polarizing PM's Brian Mulroney, who ruled the "True North Strong and Free" from 1984 until 1993? At around 7:30 a.m I was about to find out.

The World Trade and Convention Center in downtown Halifax was the location. In attendance were the party faithful, the Premier, business men and women, and a lot of giddy students. This is the man some of our parents taught us to admire and others to loathe. We all know the history. We know the (ongoing) scandals. What we heard were a few knee-slapping political jokes about Diefenbaker, a few stories about Nelson Mandela and how loved Mulroney was by world leaders. Not exactly a humble man, but to be fair he was a Prime Minister in the 1980's. No one could've been then.

Then out came Mulroney's list of people to scold. Clyde Wells? He's on the list. Pierre Trudeau? He may be dead, but he's on the list. Chrétien and Martin? They wish they were on the list.

Meech Lake happened! The GST was necessary to save Canada from Trudeau's legacy! For a former Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney sure does hold a nasty grudge. I was expecting to hear lessons to students about the importance of politics and civic involvement, not a 45 second, "Oh yes kids, get involved" speech. Speaking strictly for myself, I do consider it a privilege to see a man of historical importance in person, but I was not Impressed. His personal mannerisms while at times charming, also revealed a man that was very bitter that history had already judged his legacy. It was a shame while he was trying to be humble he came across as arrogant, and while trying to be assertive he came off like a character Hemingway would've written. Remember folks, politics can leave a nasty taste in your mouth, even over a decade after you've left it.



L-R: Amber Daley, Jonathon Boyd, Justine Müller, Jason Haughn, Tammy Green, Brian Mulroney, Danielle Delano, Steven Byers, Scott MacDonald and Noelle Peach.