Political Science Welcomes New Chair

Congratulations to Dr. Ravi Perry!

When former POLI Chair Dr. Deirdre Condit was promoted to Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs in the College of Humanities & Sciences, Dr. Ravi Perry was elected to take the helm. An expert on Black politics, minority representation, urban politics, American public policy, and LGBT candidates of color, Dr. Perry is the editor of 21st Century Urban Race Politics: Representing Minorities as Universal Interests, a book that discusses the efforts of African American, Latino and Asian mayors to represent the interests of minorities in historically White cities in the United States. His second book, entitled Black Mayors, White Majorities: The Balancing Act of Racial Politics, focuses on the challenges Black mayors face in representing Black interests in majority White, medium-sized cities in the state of Ohio. His third book, published with his mother, is The Little Rock Crisis: What Desegregation Politics Says About Us. Currently, Dr. Perry is writing a book that introduces the lives and campaigns of Black, and openly lesbian and gay elected officials in the United States.

A member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Perry is Immediate Past President of the Association for Ethnic Studies, and a member of the Executive Council for the Urban Politics Organized Section of the American Political Science Association.
Welcome New Faculty

Dr. Andrea Simonelli joins our faculty as part of our initiative to expand the department’s course offerings in our new Human Security concentration. Having earned her PhD from Louisiana State University, Dr. Simonelli’s scholarship specializes in governance responses to human migration; specifically the inter-governmental institutional responses to those being displaced by climate change. Her book, Governing Climate Induced Migration and Displacement: IGO Expansion, and Global Policy Implications, came out in November of 2015.

She has experience speaking and presenting her work in the USA, Europe, and Australia and has followed the development of the Loss and Damage Mechanism being developed by the UNFCCC negotiations. Her experience also includes field work in the Maldives.

Prior to coming to VCU, Dr. Simonelli spent 10 years as a political fundraiser, electing officials ranging from county commissioner to Congressman, raising millions of dollars, and training candidates and their respective staff.

Dr. Simonelli’s experience in the applied politics of campaigning and her experience conducting field work across the globe brings a unique pedagogical approach to her classroom.

Learn more about Governing Climate Induced Migration and Displacement at amazon.com/Governing-Climate-Induced-Migration-Displacement/dp/1137538651

Upcoming Events

12th annual Lucy Saladino spaghetti dinner!

It’s really been 12 years since Dr. Chris Saladino’s daughter, Lucy, started this fundraiser and it will be the 10th year that we remember her efforts with this pasta fiesta. The focus of the evening is to raise funds to find a cure for cystic fibrosis, but the BEST part of the evening is seeing everyone come out for the hugs, smiles, laughs and fellowship that we share with each of you every April. Your continued support keeps us strong and fighting. Oh, and you get to go home with a belly full of wonderful Chris Saladino food, too!!!

Event details at facebook.com/events/549668872063547/

Support VCU Political Science with a Gift

To make a gift to the department, visit support.vcu.edu/give/humanitiesandsciences and select “Political Science”.

For additional information on how you can support other initiatives in the departments, contact Bethanie Constant, Senior Director of Development at (804) 828-4543 or constantb@vcu.edu
Virginia Commonwealth University hosted the 46th Annual Association for Ethnic Studies (AES) Conference from March 8th-10th; the conference was attended by scholars across disciplines, across the country, and across the globe!

Richmond provided a particularly timely and relevant backdrop for the conference’s theme, The Ongoing Struggle: On Confronting White Neo-Nationalism, 21st Century Racisms, and Settler Colonialism, given the political violence in neighboring Charlottesville, and the continued protests along Monument Avenue, over the past twelve months. Highlights of the event included a workshop on community organizing by James J. Minor, Richmond NAACP President, a tour and reception at Richmond’s Black History Museum and Cultural Center, and a stirring keynote address by Christy Coleman, American Civil War Museum CEO. Though the event largely showcased the scholarship of faculty, participants also incorporated the expertise and experiences of members of Richmond’s local community, including state legislator Del. Lamont Bagby and representatives from the ACLU of Virginia, Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Peace Education Center, Richmond Hill, the Urban League of Greater Richmond Young Professionals, and many other community partners.

POLI student scholarship included Diego Orbegoso’s presentation, “Immigration Industrial Complex and Crimmigration,” Stephanie Jones’ “Rebel Without a Cause: Contextualizing Whiteness in Black Spaces,” Brianna Howards’ “Police Cultures, Silence, and Accountability,” and Colleen Arthur’s “The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment”.

Of particular note is the work produced by our Spotlight Student Scholar, Tristen Taggart, for the AES Conference. Tristen’s paper, “It Gets Better (For White People): The Impact of Queer Identity Politics and Systematically Politicized Racism on Black Queer Youth Suicide in America,” was awarded the prestigious Cortland Auser Undergraduate Student Paper Award. Additionally, Tristen has been accepted to present a new piece of scholarship overseas at the University of Central Lancashire’s 2018 conference; this year’s theme is Women’s Spring: Feminism, Nationalism, and Civil Disobedience, and Tristen will be presenting on the topic of “Hashtagged: Neoconservative Politics, Subversive Empowerment, and the Digital Commodification of Sexual Assault”.

The Association for Ethnic Studies Conference’s Cortland Auser Undergraduate Student Paper award winner, Tristen Taggart (pictured to the right), is an undergraduate student pursuing their Bachelor’s Degree in Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies and Political Science with a concentration in Civil Rights. Their undergraduate scholarship focuses on interrogating body and identity politics as vital cultural sites which are weaponized by intersectional, postmodern oppression systems and strategizing creative and formal resistances to decolonize harm, bodies, and resilience through a feminist human security framework. Tristen is currently the Policy and Programming Intern at FORGE and is designing two national surveys to assess the healing needs of trans survivors of sexual violence and the clinical experiences of trauma providers who have treated trans clients.
Fadel Allassan is an African immigrant, born in Senegal by Togolese parents. In his time here, Fadel has served as the news editor and is now managing editor for The Commonwealth Times, the award-winning student-run newspaper at VCU. He uses journalism to communicate issues surrounding race, mental health, and policy in Richmond and Virginia-wide. By combining his passion of political science with journalism, Mr. Allassan found a forum to express his beliefs about the injustices happening to not only the black community in this city, but to other communities around the nation. He moderated a Commonwealth Times forum on gun politics in the U.S., and recently penned stories covering the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, Richmond’s March for Our Lives rally, and interviewing Susan Bro, mother of slain Charlottesville activist Heather Heyer. Check out these stories and others written by Allassan at commonwealthtimes.org/tag/fadel-allassan/.

Kevin Britton was born in Los Angeles County, California, to a teenage mother who raised him as a single parent to keep his physically abusive, drug-addicted father from harming them both. Kevin has worked as a Peer Mentor for Rams in Recovery, the Collegiate Recovery Program at VCU for the past 14 months. As the program’s first student worker, Kevin set the standard for consistency, service and dedication, and played a critical role in the growth of the program from 10 students at the beginning of 2016 to more than 60 students now. Kevin was also the Teaching Assistant for the Science of Recovery class, helping to initiate and lead a class in the Richmond City Jail with half students in recovery and half residents in the jail, and he personally enrolled in a course in the Richmond City Justice Center with current inmates in order to integrate education into holistic inmate rehabilitation. Kevin is also a mentor at VCU’s Wellness Resource Center.

Black History in the Making Awards

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Student Intern Spotlight

Current students connect with our wonderful alumni during internships every semester!

“Interning at Senator Mark Warner’s Office has given me the opportunity to experience the everyday workings of the legislative process. As an intern for the Senator, I get to assist the Office by conducting legislative research, organizing casework, and most importantly communicating with the Senator’s constituents regarding their opinions on policies and the government. Furthermore, I’ve had the chance to attend a regional meeting with the Richmond Veterans Affair Medical Center, a naturalization ceremony in Charlottesville, and a tour of the Rivanna Station Intelligence Campus; an opportunity I’d never get to experience otherwise.” -- Kristen Belber, Senior, Norfolk, VA

Make it Real for Our Students

Our students are always looking for internships in Richmond, NoVA, DC and beyond!

If your workplace has internship opportunities please let our Internship Director know by contacting poliintern@vcu.edu and requesting the link to our internship request form.

Kristen and VCU Political Science alumni, Curtis Edwards, Class of 2014