

ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2024

# THE VIEW FROM OLD MILL

The Official Newsletter of the UVM Political Science Department

## A Message from the Chair

Greetings from the 5th Floor of Old Mill,

We hope this note finds all of you—students, alumni, families, and faculty—doing very well as we kick off the new year! This is our first newsletter in nearly a decade, and we are delighted that we can connect with all of you and share news about exciting developments in UVM's Department of Political Science. There is so much happening with our faculty, our students, and our alumni.

The end of the pandemic has really opened up opportunities to not only get back to life as normal, but to build on existing initiatives and undertake new ones. As you'll see within, our students have reinvigorated the UVM Political Science Club, completed fascinating internships and summer programs, and participated with faculty in our first-ever summer book club. Our faculty continue to be campus and community leaders, setting new standards for excellence in their service and teaching. And our scholarly profile has only grown, with faculty earning national and international accolades for their research, and new and visiting professors joining our department. Finally, our alumni continue to amaze us with their success. We feature a few of our notable alums in this newsletter, and in future versions we hope to expand our attention to this. So, alums especially, please keep in touch with us (contact details below)!

As our alumni will recall, we always assigned a lot of reading in our classes. And this newsletter is no different—there is just so much to tell. We hope you enjoy it and look forward to keeping in contact.

Kind regards,

Peter VonDoepp, Chair  
[pvondoepp@uvm.edu](mailto:pvondoepp@uvm.edu)



## CONTENTS

Faculty Feature  
PAGE 2

Student Spotlight  
PAGE 09

Department News  
PAGE 11

Grads Do  
Amazing Things!  
PAGE 15

Stay Connected  
PAGE 18

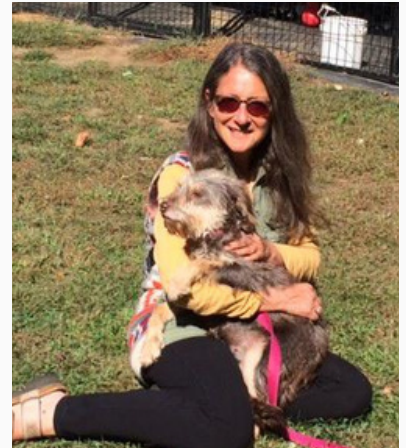




# FACULTY FEATURE

## Jan Feldman Teaches Her Last Class

On December 7, 2023, Professor Jan Feldman taught her last class at UVM! Professor Feldman joined the university in 1982, and since then has taught thousands of students. A specialist in political theory, her signature classes have included “Democratic Theory,” “Political Islam,” and “Religion, Liberalism and Democracy.” She also taught the department’s Senior Honors Seminar and in UVM’s Honors College.



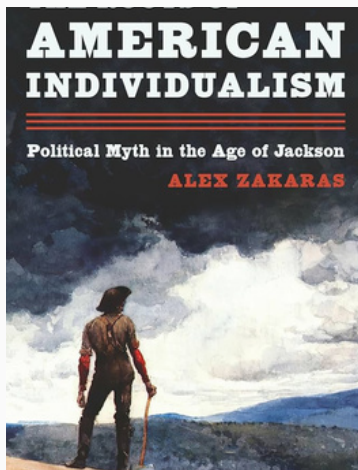
A group of colleagues were on hand to join students in giving Professor Feldman a big round of applause as she concluded her last class. She was then greeted by other faculty members as she returned to the department for a brief celebration.

Professor Feldman will be conducting research during the spring semester, at the conclusion of which we look forward to celebrating her retirement. Many thanks to her for the years of service to UVM’s students.





## Alex Zakaras Wins Major Award for his New Book



Professor Alex Zakaras's recent book, *The Roots of American Individualism: Political Myth in the Age of Jackson* (2022), has been recognized as the winner of the 2023 Best Book Award in the American Political Thought Section of the American Political Science Association.

Professor Zakaras, who specializes in political philosophy and the history of political thought, has spent ten years researching how individualism, a defining feature of American political and cultural life, has developed through American history.

Focusing primarily on the Jacksonian Era (1820–1850), Zakaras explores three foundational myths: the myth of the independent proprietor, the myth of the rights-bearer, and the myth of the self-made man. He draws from a plethora of primary sources, including political speeches, newspapers, and sermons, and shows how each of these myths has shaped American political ideas over the last two hundred years. For more, [click here](#).

*The Roots of American Individualism: Political Myth in the Age of Jackson* is available for purchase from [Princeton University Press](#), [Amazon](#), and other booksellers nationwide.

“The Roots of American Individualism is a beautifully written, meticulously researched, and boldly imagined tour de force.”

JAMES A. MORONE





## Lisa Holmes Wins Scholar Teacher Award

Professor Lisa Holmes, who specializes in public law and American politics, was recognized as the 2023 recipient of the College of Arts and Sciences Scholar Teacher Award. The award recognizes professors who are both excellent teachers and highly respected professionals in their own discipline. Award winners are especially effective in translating their knowledge and skills into exciting classroom experiences for their students.

Professor Holmes' approach to teaching is to be genuinely enthusiastic about the material she covers in the hope of stimulating real interest among her students. And, as hundreds of current and former students would surely attest, she definitely succeeds in this! The former winner of the Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Award, Professor Holmes has long been recognized as one of the best teachers in an excellent teaching department. She has also served for decades as one of our key pre-law advisers and in that capacity has helped mentor many of UVM's students as they have applied to law schools.

# Alec Ewald Wins Service Award



This fall, Professor Alec Ewald was named the winner of the 2022 College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Service Award! Professor Ewald has always been a stalwart provider of service to the university, college, and department. However, in the past year he truly distinguished himself through admirable service to the community, particularly through his outreach to and engagement with incarcerated individuals in Vermont's prison system. Professor Ewald has long volunteered with Burlington's Dismas House, which provides transitional housing for individuals released from prison, and now serves on the Dismas of Vermont Board of Directors.

This past year, Professor Ewald conducted a voter-registration program in Vermont's six prisons as well as an additional facility in Mississippi where about one hundred Vermonters are incarcerated. Visiting each facility for a full day and working with correctional staff, he talked with incarcerated men and women about voting and helped them fill out registration and absentee-ballot forms, following up afterward with town clerks as needed. While this was a powerful and rich learning experience for him, it also served UVM's public mission. Congratulations!





## Peter Henne Completes Fellowship at Edinburgh



Professor Peter Henne, Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Middle East Studies Program, spent the spring of 2023 in Edinburgh, Scotland, as the IASH-Alwaleed Research Fellow.

During his fellowship, Professor Henne conducted research on international Islamic politics. Over the course of the semester, he presented his research in Nottingham, Rome, and Hamburg. Professor Henne also recently published a book, *Religious Appeals in Power Politics*, which examines how states, particularly the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Russia, use religion in foreign policy.



## UVM Welcomes Leigh Raymond

This spring, the Political Science Department welcomed Professor Leigh Raymond. Professor Raymond joins us from Purdue University and specializes in public policy and environmental politics.

In the upcoming semester, Professor Raymond will be teaching a seminar titled "The Politics of Fairness," exploring the role of fairness in driving political change. The course will examine how different political groups articulate notions of fairness and justice, such as in issues like environmental justice, gun control, and marriage equality.

Currently, Professor Raymond is collaborating with four UVM undergraduate students on a project similar to his seminar. His research examines various types of conversations and trends around environmental justice. There is a sense that community involvement is becoming an increasingly important factor guiding environmental policies.

Beyond academics, Professor Raymond brings a genuine enthusiasm for Vermont's natural beauty, expressing a love for the outdoors, hiking, and the scenic landscapes of the mountains and Lake Champlain. Excited about teaching again, he looks forward to immersing himself in Vermont's local politics and environmental discussions.

# Our Visiting Professor: Denis Charbit

This past fall, the department welcomed visiting scholar, Denis Charbit for a sabbatical semester. Professor Charbit teaches at The Open University of Israel and specializes in the Israeli political system and the influence of French intellectuals and artists on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Professor Charbit taught two classes, "Religion and State: Israel in Comparison," and the "Israeli Political System." In December, he also gave an educational guest lecture with the Political Science Club on the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



The Monday after October 7th, Professor Charbit invited his wife and son to speak to his class. It was a deeply personal gesture and a way to share the impact of a conflict that had touched his family and many others in the community. He was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from both students and faculty in the weeks that followed.

"It was something special," Professor Charbit said, reflecting with gratitude. Students, despite perhaps having differing perspectives on the conflict, were able to have productive and respectful conversations. Professor Charbit is also grateful for the support and compassion of the faculty, "I am leaving behind many friends and will remember them fondly."

Professor Charbit will also miss Vermont's beautiful landscapes, having particularly enjoyed the stunning fall foliage. He and his wife went on many long walks and drives throughout the semester.

**"I am leaving  
behind many  
friends and  
will remember  
them fondly."**

DENIS CHARBIT



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



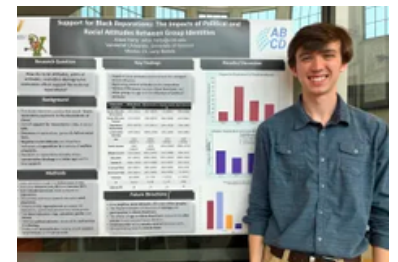
**Hannah Warn**

Political Science major and UVM senior Hannah Warn spent last summer interning with Emerge, a nationwide political organization that recruits and trains Democratic women to run for office.

Over the summer, Hannah interned for the organization's office in Massachusetts and is currently continuing her work for their office in Vermont. Hannah managed communications, did data entry, and helped organize and manage events. She gained insights into the possibilities of a career in politics by networking with other women in the field. "I appreciated being in a space in the real world where women were uplifting other women," Hannah said.

Over the course of last summer, senior Aidan Harty participated in an eight-week course at Vanderbilt called "The Summer Program in Accountability, Behavior, and Conflict in Democratic Politics." This eight-week Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) site is funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF). The program's goals are to provide mentored social science research experiences, build students' interest and skills in social science research, and prepare students for careers involving social science research.

Aidan investigated how racial attitudes, political attitudes, and other demographic indicators affect support for material reparations. He had the opportunity to be mentored by Dr. Larry Bartels, a scholar whom Aidan respected and admired even before the program. Currently, Aidan is preparing to present his research at the Annual Meeting for the National Conference of Black Political Scientists this coming spring.



**Aidan Harty**

## Jason Huynh

Last summer, sophomore Jason Huynh was the Summer Coordinator and Mentor Intern at Life Pieces to Masterpieces, a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. The organization's focus is on empowering young African American students from impoverished areas of D.C. Jason worked as a mentor and an assistant teacher in the classrooms. He would remind students of classroom rules and be a support system for them.

Jason notes how his internship helped him understand the importance of having support: "I never had that kind of support when I was younger, and it was amazing seeing my organization help create a chance for these kids to do some good and contribute to their communities. And years later, these same kids will help diminish the amount of people being affected by poverty. And now, I have a better understanding of how small actions can change the lives of dozens of people."



## Iona McQuiston

Political Science and Geography double major Iona McQuiston is currently continuing a summer internship with the Linley Foundation, a small non-profit based in Northfield, Vermont.

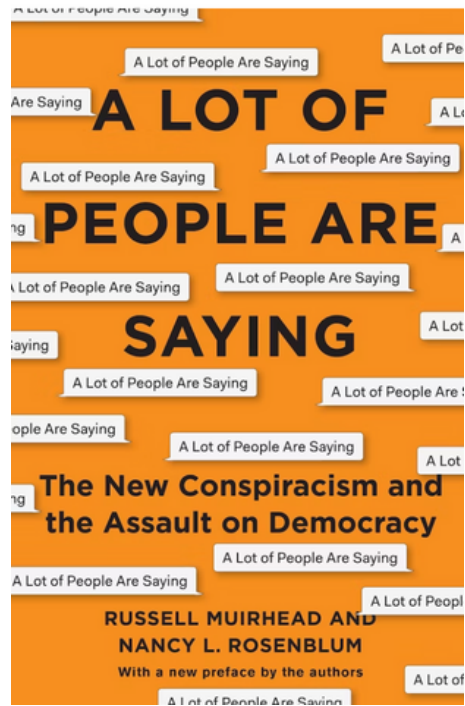
The project asks citizens their opinions on American democracy and what they want from their government, then the foundation analyzes the state of polarization based on those responses.

Iona's responsibilities include managing communications, helping to analyze themes and trends, developing proposal drafts, organizing data into world clouds and other appealing and understandable ways, and assisting with project planning and editing.

Iona hopes that the project can dispel stereotypes and help people become more open-minded and that they can learn about other parts of the country.

# DEPARTMENT NEWS

## Summer Book Club



For the first time ever, the UVM Political Science Department hosted a book club bringing faculty and students together to read a book over the summer and then discuss it in the early fall. Supported by funds from the Mark L. Rosen Lecture Series, all students who participated were provided a free copy of the book, *A Lot of People Are Saying*, by Russell Muirhead and Nancy Rosenblum. During a small group discussion, students and faculty came together, ate pizza, and discussed conspiracy theories, democracy, and the assault on truth. The professors posed thought-provoking questions, encouraging students to view the book as a tool for understanding the current political landscape. Later in the semester, Professor Russell Muirhead delivered the Mark L. Rosen Lecture, focusing on the book and its lessons.

Students had very positive things to say about the experience. Sebastian D'Amico, a junior with an interest in democratic legitimacy, found the book to be more than an examination of conspiracies. He saw it as a guide to identifying threats to democracy: "We can use this book to identify conspiracists and populists within our current structure and fight back against the degradation of democracy." Sebastian also appreciated the opportunity to discuss the book in a group, saying, "(I)t gave me a really good opportunity to hear others' opinions... Professor Zakaras and Professor Taylor provided thought-provoking questions. We were challenged to look at the book as more of a forecast for contemporary American politics than just an informative discussion of conspiracy theories." "It was also a great opportunity to meet new people and share new perspectives," noted junior David Delaney.

**“[T]his is an impactful book that can help anyone make sense of the confusion and chaos that is trying to break down the doors of democracy”**

CHARLOTTE MAYS

Noah Ampe, a rising senior, appreciated how Rosenblum and Muirhead described the “new conspiracism” as “conspiracy without the theory.” Noah was surprised to discover that many of the new conspiracies lacked a concrete event, relying on repetition for validation. Drawing a connection between this repetition and the recent rise in political extremism, he shared, “I think having an awareness that this is a good step towards educating others and unlearning some of these new conspiracies.” Charlotte Mays, found that the book clarified how modern conspiracies threaten democracy: “I believe this is an impactful book that can help anyone make sense of the confusion and chaos that is trying to break down the doors of democracy.” Alana Baker, reflecting on the responsibility of political elites and media corporations, highlighted the book’s emphasis on combating the new conspiracies. She noted, “the growth of media has given society many opportunities; however, it is important to be aware of its consequences and role in exacerbating polarization.”

Later in the semester, students had an opportunity to hear Professor Russell Muirhead, talk about the book during the Mark L. Rosen Lecture. “It was very interesting to hear Professor Muirhead discuss this in depth when he came to campus to speak recently,” Noah noted. The visit provided a deeper understanding of the book’s implications for our contemporary era.

JAMES A. MORONE



## Russell Muirhead Delivers the 2023 Mark L. Rosen Lecture

On November 8, Professor Russell Muirhead of Dartmouth College delivered the Mark L. Rosen Lecture, one of the department's signature events of the academic year. Speaking to a packed house of students, alumni, faculty, and members of the community, Professor Muirhead delivered a lecture titled, "Conspiracy and the Illegitimate Opposition: How Demagogues and Quacks Convert Opponents into Enemies." This built on his work with Nancy Rosenblum, *A Lot of People are Saying: The Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy*, the same book that was read by a number of students and faculty as part of our summer book club. An amazing speaker, Professor Muirhead encouraged the audience to consider and appreciate the challenges we face with new conspiracies that are designed to delegitimize actors and institutions that are at the core of our democratic system.





## UVM Political Science Club Off and Running!

The UVM Political Science Club is now thriving and providing students with an enthusiastic community, exchanging new ideas and having lots of fun in the process. Outside the formalities of the classroom, the club is a safe space for individuals to civilly express their political views and learn more about politics. Junior David Delaney assumed the role of president this year and, along with other officers Henley Lynch and Emmett Avery, successfully increased engagement. Facing initial challenges with attendance, the team prioritized building consistency and membership, resulting in a successful turnaround. Supported by an occasional pizza donation from the department, the average weekly membership exceeded 25, creating an active and healthy community.

Throughout the semester, the club organized student-led presentations, showcasing a diverse range of topics often overlooked in traditional classrooms. These included discussions on the continuity of parties in American politics, the Iran-Contra scandal, corruption in the Illinois State government, indigenous voices in Australia, queer politics in the south, and local Vermont politics. The club's well-organized approach made these presentations valuable opportunities for members to delve into unconventional aspects of political science that may not be discussed in classes. The engagement didn't stop there; the club also hosted guest speakers, such as Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, offering an intimate and enriching experience for students to learn about Vermont politics. This open forum allowed students to pose questions and gain insights directly from influential figures. Professor Denis Charbit also gave an educational presentation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where students could learn more about the issue.

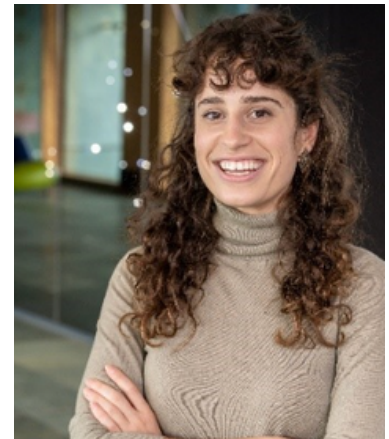
Looking ahead, the club aspires to expand its events, presentations, and interactive sessions in the coming semester. It continues to thrive as a hub for those passionate about discussing and learning about politics in a welcoming and enjoyable environment. The UVM Political Science Club stands as a testament to the power of community and shared intellectual curiosity.



# GRADS DO AMAZING THINGS!

## Lily Teitelbaum (Class of 2013)

Since receiving my bachelor's in political science, I've found myself living in Berlin, Germany, working on bioeconomy projects for the European Commission's transnational research and innovation programme, Horizon Europe. But it was first at UVM where the political science department sparked my interest in comparative politics and ultimately led me from interning in the state House in Montpelier, to working in the Maine State Senate, to finally crossing the Atlantic to take part in a parliamentary scholarship program in the German Bundestag.



After almost five years working in the fast-paced day-to-day setting of a legislature, I sought space for reflection and the chance to broaden my skills in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation through the Public Policy Master's program at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin.

Over the course of my academic and professional career, I acquired a strong interest in the areas of development, energy access, and sustainability. I had the honour of writing my bachelor's thesis with Professor VonDoepp about the democratic trajectories of Ghana and Malawi. Years later my master's thesis brought me back to Africa where I researched grid electrification in Uganda and worked for a small biomass green energy start-up. This led me to take a job after graduation as a research and policy analyst supporting the International Advisory Council on Global Bioeconomy (IACGB). I am now currently enjoying my work in the space of policy implementation on European bioeconomy research and innovation projects. In this highly interdisciplinary field, combining sustainability, the life sciences, circular economy, and research and innovation policy, I am grateful I can rely on a broad range of skills many of which were fostered by my enthusiastic and dedicated professors in the Department of Political Science at UVM.

## Luke Martin (Class of 2011)



The first poll I ever conducted was as part of Professor Gierzynski's research on how the Harry Potter series impacted the political socialization of the millennial generation. It was the first time I realized that public opinion was much more than just numbers and percentages but that they represented real human attitudes, emotions, and experiences. After graduating from UVM, I gave my Harry Potter paper to a political pollster in Washington, D.C. who was so intrigued she offered me a job. Thirteen years later I'm a Vice President at Impact Research, one of the nation's leading Democratic campaign strategy firms, and the lead pollster for President Joe Biden.

Understanding the psychology behind voters' behavior to help my clients better communicate with them is the core of what I do. I've been fortunate to use my skills to help Democratic candidates and organizations at every level of the political atmosphere develop winning strategies for their campaigns, including leading the polling effort for the Michigan House Democratic Caucus to flip the chamber in 2022 and give Democrats a trifecta in Lansing for the first time in over 40 years; working with Democratic candidates and expenditures like the DCCC, EMILYs List, and House Majority PAC to win frontline congressional districts; and helping school districts across the country pass historic funding initiatives to improve public education—something I'm particularly proud of as the son of two public school teachers.

Truthfully, I wouldn't be working at the forefront of the American political system today without the skills, guidance, and opportunities I received in the UVM Political Science Department. It's also where I got my first experience helping to run a campaign for (Professor) Philip Baruth's initial Senate run in 2010, and even where I met my wife!



I recently joined Microsoft's Digital Diplomacy team after a decade at the U.S. Department of State where I most recently was a Senior Coordinator for Cyber and Emerging Technology, analyzing the nexus between Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybercrime, and criminal justice reform globally. At State, I previously served as a Senior Cybercrime Advisor where I analyzed the global cyber and geopolitical landscape, drove engagement with a diverse array of stakeholders in a process to elaborate a new treaty on cybercrime, and contributed to efforts to promote an open and interoperable internet. I spent much of my decade at State focused on criminal justice reform in the Middle East and Africa, working on a wide range of human rights and internet governance issues. Prior to joining the State Department, I received a Fulbright Scholarship to Kuwait to conduct research on the impact of Kuwaiti state policies on women's rights; managed an English debate program in Qatar and coached their National Debate Team; and was the recipient of a Boren National Security Scholarship to study Arabic in Jordan.

My academic journey was profoundly shaped by my engagement with UVM's Political Science Department, which played a pivotal role in directing my focus towards learning other languages and the Middle East. Although UVM did not have Arabic language studies, the faculty went above and beyond to find ways for me to pursue my language goals by providing both scholarships and support to outside programs. Coming into UVM, I was keen to study international affairs and UVM's political science curriculum and faculty expertise further ignited my interest in foreign relations and equipped me with the proficiency and skills necessary for roles in diplomacy, steering me towards a career at the U.S. Department of State and beyond.

## Madeline Murphy Hall (Class of 2010)



# STAY CONNECTED

We would love to reconnect with our amazing alumni community. If you are interested in being part of the UVM Political Science alumni network, please complete this form via this link:

[I WANT TO BE INVOLVED](#)



Are you interested in supporting the UVM Political Science Department with a donation? Your gift can support student internship and research experiences, enhance faculty research, help to bring in high-quality speakers, and more.

[GIVE TO UVM  
POLITICAL SCIENCE](#)



How about supporting our amazing students in the UVM Political Science Club! Your donation can help to buy food for meetings, support educational trips for the club, and much more!

[SUPPORT THE UVM  
POLITICAL SCIENCE CLUB](#)



Please consider joining UVM Connect, our UVM career and networking community. Similar to LinkedIn—but specifically for UVM alums, students, staff and faculty. It's free and easy to join!

[JOIN UVM CONNECT](#)



Follow us on social media:

