

A COMMUNICATION *of the* PSIA DEPARTMENT *of* UNG



ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



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Dear Alumni,

Welcome to our very first alumni newsletter! We are excited to share with you news about our alumni, current students, faculty and departmental events. As Department Head, I couldn't be more proud of our students, faculty and staff.

Our current plan is to publish this Newsletter three times a year – the Summer edition around the Fourth of July; the Fall edition in conjunction with Dahlonega's Gold Rush festival; and the Spring edition in conjunction with Alumni Weekend.

If you are not yet following us on social media, please do so on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to learn more about the exciting things going on in our department. Please also check out our blog [HERE](#).

I hope that you enjoy finding out more about what has been happening around the department, and we would love to hear about what has been happening in your life as well! Please get in touch with us by filling out our [alumni information form](#). We would love to hear from you!

Take Care,

Dr. Dlynn Armstrong Williams

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DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE &
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Student News

JJ GILLELAND

JJ Gilleland, a graduate from the MAIA program and a Teaching Assistant for the PSIA Department, received funding from Graduate Studies to attend the International Academic Forum's Conference on Asian Arts & Humanities in Tokyo in May 2020 and a joint conference with SA/ECPR/APSA on Human Rights and Foreign Policy at the University of London in June 2020.



RECENT GRADUATE MICAELA TIERCE RECEIVES HONORS DISTINCTION WITH HER THESIS

Micaela Tierce

Micaela Tierce, who just graduated with an International Affairs Degree with a concentration in the Middle East and North Africa from our department, recently defended her thesis on the proxy war in Yemen being conducted by Iran and Saudi Arabia. She argued that Iran's and Saudi Arabia's actions could be explained through Classical Realism. Due to her thesis, she graduated with an Honors Distinction on her Bachelor's degree. Micaela is ready to complete the Basic Officers Leader Course (BOLC) for the Air Defense Artillery, which is a mandatory training event prior to going to one's first assignment. After completing the BOLC, she hopes to pursue a Master's degree through an online program in 2021.



TWO PSIA MAJORS WIN FULBRIGHT AWARDS

In January 2020, 11 UNG students and alumni were selected as semifinalists for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. We are happy to announce that two of our majors received awards!

Madelyn Beacham, a fall 2019 graduate in International Affairs, was selected for Fulbright graduate degree. She plans to pursue a Master's program in International Relations, while doing research in Turkey on education strategies for young adult refugees. Her grant will cover her living expenses plus her tuition at a Turkish university. She is the first UNG student to receive a Fulbright graduate degree grant.

Benny Purk, a fall 2018 graduate in International Affairs, was selected for a German English Teaching Assistantship.

Congratulations to Madelyn and Benny!

IN SPRING 2020 A SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE WITH FORMER GOV. NATHAN DEAL "POLITICS IN THE PEACH STATE". "THE EXCELLENT PART OF THIS COURSE WILL BE THE OPPORTUNITY TO NOT ONLY LEARN ABOUT GEORGIA POLITICS FROM THE FORMER GOVERNOR'S PERSPECTIVE, BUT TO HEAR FROM OTHER IMPORTANT FIGURES IN GEORGIA STATE POLITICS," SAID DR. DLYNN WILLIAMS, DEPARTMENT HEAD OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT UNG.

FORMER GOVERNOR NATHAN DEAL SERVES AS A REGENTS PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

Photo: Regents Professor Nathan Deal with Dr. Carl Cavalli



PSIA DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES "ALUMNI WEEKEND" WITH A VIRTUAL REUNION

To commemorate our alumni, our department, in conjunction with UNG's Office of Alumni Relations, hosted the very first virtual "Alumni Weekend," April 17-19. The event was streamed on [Facebook Live](#), with our very own department head, Dr. Dlynn Armstrong-Williams. We celebrated distinct alumni such as Drs. Barry Friedman, Carl Cavalli, Douglas Young, Kerry Stewart, Trey Wilson and more. Eight faculty members recorded a "greeting" that we posted on Instagram and Facebook. The event was a great success, with 135 people engaged with the faculty videos on Instagram and 234 people engaged with the videos on Facebook. You can watch the entire virtual reunion on our YouTube channel to learn more about all of the exciting things going on in our department!

Pictured: Dr. Trey Wilson



Faculty News

POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR DR. JONATHAN MINER HELPS CREATE DASHBOARD FOR COVID-19

Dr. Jonathan Miner



Dr. Jonathan Miner, in conjunction with Melissa Mack's team at Witt O'Brien's, a crisis and emergency management company, recently helped to launch a dashboard that shows every country's current response to COVID-19. With this dashboard, one can find real-time, up-to-date information about school closures, essential business closures, non-essential business closures and shelter-in-place (stay-at-home, curfew, etc.) orders, as well as the progress of the gradual opening of each country's economy.

Following extensive research and data collection for the COVID-19 dashboard, he and his colleagues developed a color-coded map to show each country's response to the disaster. You can hover over country to see the government restrictions and the most recent information.

Dr. Miner, a Professor in our department, became interested in the project due to its international affairs relation. He started working on the project the week of March 27, 2020. Melissa Mack was developing the dashboard for Witt O'Brien's and he was on spring break prepping for going online.

He initially became involved in the project as a way to help Ms. Mack out. Analyzing international policy is his main research interest, so this was a way to contribute to the COVID-19 response in some way while being quarantined. Ms. Mack was not sure if the project would officially be launched by her company, but the policy development research was needed to see if it was possible to assemble all of the evidence in one place.

“In working through this pandemic with our multinational clients, we identified an important gap,” said Mack, director and leader of this new initiative. “There does not appear to be a single source of information on constantly changing government restrictions, which differ nation by nation. We have elected to make this dashboard freely available, to provide situational awareness for both organizations with global operations and private citizens with a need to travel.”

The dashboard aims to provide up to date information to questions regarding the status of each country's lockdown such as: What are the policies regarding school closings, essential and non-essential businesses and domestic/international travel? What parts of their economies are opening, and from what date? The COVID-19 outbreak is an international issue, and these questions compare the vast majority of the world's countries regarding such an issue.

Dr. Miner says that, “It's been very interesting researching and interpreting the direct policy makers in each country, and informally analyzing and understanding the differences between states. For example, it is far easier to enact restrictive COVID-19 policies in authoritarian states where top-down power is established than democratic systems where citizen input is needed for national decisions. Compiling the many different types of national policies adopted and the ways in which they are now reopening is fascinating from a political science perspective and opens some doors for further research and publication projects.”

Dr. Miner is focused on the real-life application of his research and he guides students in this way. His research includes comparative foreign policy, specifically comparing U.S. foreign policy to another country regarding a specific issue. An example includes comparing U.S. and Russian foreign policy regarding the conflict in Syria, or Iranian and Saudi foreign policy regarding the conflict in Yemen. This last example was the subject of UNG's undergraduate student, [Micaela Tierce's thesis project](#), completed this semester for the Honors Program.

Campus Events

#ONEUNG CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS

Over 300 students across the University of North Georgia (UNG) have participated in Model UN activities through the Model UNG club. Model UN conferences are a real-time simulation of negotiation, diplomacy and resolution writing patterned after the committees and issues in operation at the present time in the United Nations.

Each year, Southeast Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) conferences draw more than 1000 university students from more than fifty different U.S. schools and universities, enabling UNG students to participate in an arena to develop skills in diplomacy, negotiation, critical thinking, compromise, public speaking, writing, and research. Funds are raised through student dues (\$50/semester), SGA budget requests, Departmental funds and other requests.

We raised \$2,950 this past year through the Crowdfunding campaign through the UNG Foundation. This is by far our biggest fundraising success. Student delegates participate in the Southeast Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) annual conferences held in Charlotte in March, Atlanta in November, and the student-directed on-campus Model UN conference each February!



Alumni News

An Interview with Aaron Brown

Aaron Brown, a graduate of the Political Science & International Affairs Department, class of 2013, recently spoke with us about his experience in the program, as well as what he is doing now.

His Experience in the PSIA Department

Aaron received his Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science with a focus in American Politics. He also minored in International Affairs.

He mentions that a favorite class was Dr. Carl Cavalli's Political Parties in America course. He took it his senior year and really enjoyed studying American politics and elections and how they have functioned over the years. In the course, you dive into learning about the founding of our country until present times and how we got to where we are now. Aaron says that he would love to take the course again to dig into how things have evolved since 2013.

He also took classes with Drs. Armstrong, Greathouse, and Miner, who excel in foreign policy, areas he has dabbled in. These courses helped him to expand his view of how things work and don't work. He says that you recognize that the world is messy but there are great solutions to be had there.

After Graduation

After graduation, Aaron moved to the Washington D.C. beltway to work in the fundraising and communications field at a large organization focused on policy development and advancement, grassroots advocacy, and election efforts at both the national level and in multiple states. During his time there, his responsibilities grew to include managing communications covering policy and election efforts in over two dozen states, developing fundraising strategies to reach major funders, and crafting reports and other materials for financial supporters. Aaron was there just shy of four years, when his wife – Caitlin (class of '14) whom he met at UNG -- and he decided to move back to Georgia to raise their growing family.

Aaron is now a manager at a think tank focused on advancing economic policies and ideas.



AARON BROWN

On the side, he also runs an upstart consulting business that assists clients with fundraising, communications, and advises election campaigns.

How UNG Helped To Shape His World

During his senior year, Aaron participated in the Student Conference for U.S. Affairs, a program with the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He also had the opportunity to participate as a fellow with the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress—which resulted in the opportunity to expand on and present his senior thesis which was published in the UNG Digital Commons. He says that “both programs were huge for him his senior year.” He was North Georgia’s representative for both programs.

Aaron says that he is “eternally grateful for what UNG has provided him.” He and his wife have already brought their son to the campus. He is a proud alumnus. He has gone to two alumni weekends since graduation and cannot wait to attend another one.

Thank you to all of our alumni for making our department such a success! You are all very special to us. Thank you also to everyone who has made a donation – every bit counts to help our programs become stronger. You can make a donation [HERE](#).



FOLLOW US!

A dark blue horizontal bar containing social media links. From left to right: a yellow speech bubble with the text 'FOLLOW US!', the Facebook 'f' logo, a QR code, the YouTube play button logo, another QR code, the Instagram camera logo, and a final QR code.