

**Department of Government**  
**Retreat Report**  
July 2008 (revised September)

The Department of Government held its (second) retreat on May 12, 2008. In attendance were: Patrick Coby, Martha Ackelsberg, Alice Hearst, Gary Lehring, Marc Lendler, Greg White, Steve Goldstein, Mlada Bukovansky, Catharine Newbury, Donna Divine, and Don Baumer.

Some of the meeting dealt with end-of-the-year department business. That part dealing with retreat business focused on four issues: alumnae outreach; pathways through the major; student research; and capstone courses.

Alumnae outreach is an effort we initiated last summer. Approximately 150 Government alums responded to an inquiry regarding their work-lives after Smith. This summer we began organizing that material in a web page. The plan is to put current students and past students into regular, easy contact so as to improve networking for the one and campus returns for the other. The faculty's interest lies in collecting specific career information useful in answering the question asked always of us, What does one do with a Government major? John Eue of Publications and Communications has been helping with this project and with a redesigned web site. As of September, the web site is operational, and the alumnae work is nearly, though not entirely, finished.

A "Pathways" web page was another undertaking of the summer. Our original intention was to list courses inside and outside the major that support the core Government courses taught in each of the subfields. But at an August meeting, we decided on an alternate approach. We drafted text for a new web page, since put up, which shows two ways in which students can structure the major: by subfield and by theme (e.g., public policy, regions of the world, history of political thought); and which specifies four attendant goals pursued by work in the major: intellectual skill development, career preparation, civic engagement, and studying/living abroad.

A committee was formed to identify student research opportunities currently available and to propose new opportunities going forward. That committee has completed its work, and a student research page has been added to the department's revised web site.

Because of our size, no capstone course can be required of all majors; and because of the discipline's division into four subfields, no one course would suffice for all. Our idea is to offer an occasional elective, described as a mini-capstone, in which recent important books in a given area are read and discussed. Steve Goldstein has proposed one such course for next year in lieu of a seminar on China.

As regards future staffing, it seems reasonable to assume that retirements will occur and that replacements will be needed. Planning for these contingencies is of course difficult and speculative. Much depends on the order of the retirements and the nature of the candidate pools that result from the searches.

However, with these caveats in mind, we do suppose that some positions, refilled, would not simply replicate present configurations. For example, one of our senior comparativists covers both Russia (the former Soviet Union) and China. We do not think it likely that this combination

of area specialties can be reproduced. Moreover, we recognize that the field of comparative politics has moved steadily away from area studies toward international relations/political economy, with quantitative methods used increasingly as an instrument of analysis. Thus, while we would expect to search for an East Asian specialist, we would also expect that the candidate would possess some training in international relations, perhaps with an interest in a global policy issue, as well as a competence in quantitative methods sufficient to contribute to our quantitative offerings. The Russian side of the position could not be simply ignored, so we would have to think creatively about how to fill that void.

Another position we would not expect to replace exactly is urban politics, since over time it has spread to include feminist thought and political theory. Most likely we would seek someone who specializes in either political theory or American politics (urban, state and local, race and gender). It is too early to judge the advantages and disadvantages of filling the position in one or the other of these subfields, but we recognize that the need to do so will present itself in the future.

On the other hand, several positions, when replaced, would likely continue on more or less as they are presently configured. For example, Middle Eastern politics and Sub-Saharan politics would be maintained at their current full and half positions respectively, as the future need for coverage in these fields will very probably be no less than it is today—and Africa might need to be expanded. In both cases some level of expertise in international relations, development studies, or conflict resolution, would certainly come with training in comparative politics. Replacing faculty in these fields is also essential for the well being of interdisciplinary programs at Smith and in the Five-Colleges.

The department's immediate hiring priority is a position in international relations, with an eye not only toward satisfying demand within the major, but also within the international relations minor and the emerging Center for International and Intercultural Studies. According to present understandings, this position, if filled next year, "mortgages" the Latin American politics position held by the Provost. The description of the new position is: international relations with a focus on international law and human rights and with side competences in quantitative methods and Africa or South Asia. Only with this position will the department be at its full complement of 15 tenure-track slots; and only with this position will the department be able to carry through with its plan of requiring Gov 190, Empirical Methods in Political Science, or an equivalent course, as part of the Government major. As indicated by the description above, we have committed a portion of the requested I.R. position to teaching Gov 190 (or its equivalent), and we plan to make this change in departmental requirements as soon as a new hire is in place. In the meantime, we strongly encourage our majors to take Gov 190. In recent years, enrollments have gone up, and they now generally number between 25 and 40. We have also added quantitative modules/materials to other 200- and 300-level courses (Gov 204, 208, 210, 217, 242, 267, 269, 305, 310, and 312). Several members of the department have participated in faculty workshops designed to develop quantitative components.

Regards,  
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