

# Spring 2023 Newsletter

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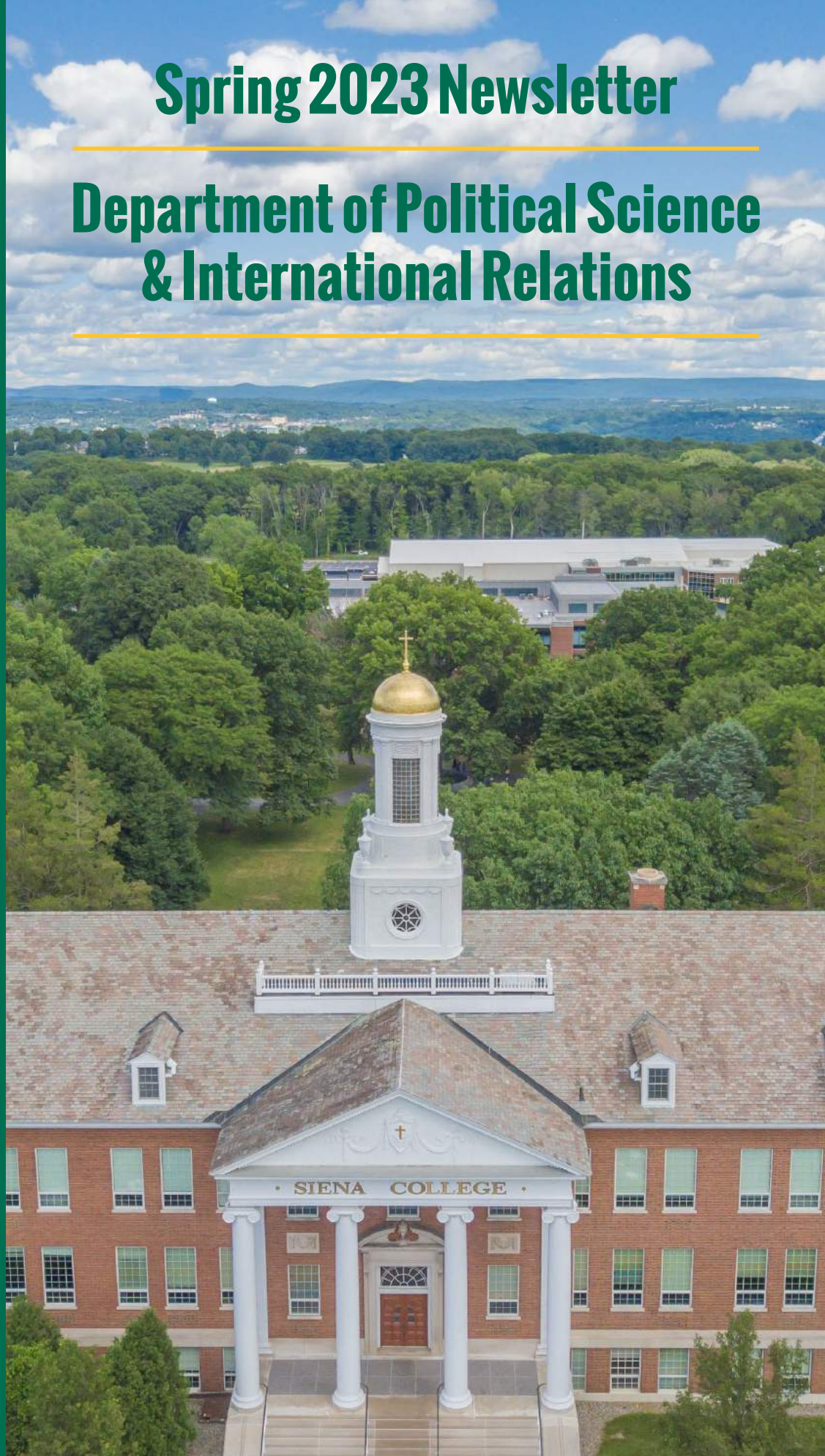
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# A Letter from the Chair

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Dear Political Science Majors, Minors, Alumni, and Friends,

2022 was certainly an exciting year in politics and in the Department of Political Science & International Relations. As you'd expect, we worked hard throughout the year to engage the Siena community in the most pressing events and debates, including protests in Iran and China, the controversies surrounding the Supreme Court, and mobilizing students for the 2022 midterm elections. In addition to engaging with global and national issues, we have taken considerable time for self-reflection as part of our 5 Year Program Review. We thank all the students and alumni that contributed to the report in the Fall. Once we get feedback from our external reviewer, we are excited to develop new plans to make our programs stronger than ever. Speaking of strengthening the department, we have been fortunate to be joined this year by Visiting Assistant Professor Yuyang Pu, who taught a course on the Politics of China in the Fall and Propaganda & Censorship this semester.

As such, 2023 promises to be a banner year for the department. We have a number of events planned, including discussions on the Rise of Christian Nationalism, Careers in International Affairs and National Security, and Careers in Political Communications. Our faculty keep producing cutting edge research on a wide range of relevant political science questions. And, our students and alumni continue to impress us with their successes.

So, we are once again happy to offer a newsletter chock full of interesting news and updates. As always, we'll provide updates on our students, faculty, and alumni. Each of these items highlights the inspiring experiences and successes of our growing community of Saints. I hope you all enjoy reading about them as much as I have.

Of course, please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, concerns, or ideas you may have. And, please keep sharing all your news with us throughout the year.

Cheers,  
Dr. Daniel Lewis

# ALUMNI UPDATES

**Bernard Melewski '73** is an environmental lawyer and organic farmer in Altamont, NY. In February 2022, his book *Inside the Green Lobby* was published by SUNY Press. The book recounts the behind-the-scenes struggles of his work to save New York's six-million-acre Adirondack Park from the devastating damage from acid rain and the sudden breakup of massive private land holdings.

**Michael Zurlo '92** is County Administrator and Clerk of the County Legislature for Clinton County, NY. In September 2021, he was elected as first vice president for the New York State Association of Counties.

**Shontell Smith '04** started a new position as Executive Vice President at Tusk Strategies after serving as Chief of Staff and Counsel for the New York State Senate Majority Leader.

**Kate Better '10** is Director of Development & External Affairs at KIPP Capital Region Public School.

**Kathleen Digan '10** is Manager of Public Policy at Amazon.

**Therese Daly '12** is Deputy Director at the New York Association for Training and Employment Professionals.

**Corbin Woodruff '15** is Associate Budget Examiner at New York State Division of the Budget.

**Sarah Ferritto '15** is a Business Systems Analyst at New York State Office of Mental Health.

**Samantha Coons '18** is Senior Associate Director of Annual Giving at Union College.

**Ryan Kelleher '18** is a Management Analyst at the United States Department of The Army in Washington, DC.

**Richard Bratton '19** is Director of Market and Regulatory Affairs at Independent Power Producers of New York (IPPNY) and will be teaching a course on "Earth Law" at Siena in the Fall 2023 semester.

**Shelby Davis '19** earned her MS in Criminal Justice at the University of North Carolina - Charlotte in 2021. While studying at Charlotte, she published studies in two peer-reviewed journals, *Policing: An International Journal* and *Crime, Law and Social Change*. In Fall 2021, she entered the Ph.D. program in Political Science at the University of Houston.

**Laura Durham '19** earned a JD from SUNY Buffalo School of Law in May and has started her law career as an Associate at Penberthy Law Group LLP working on plaintiff's personal injury matters, among other general law cases.

**Kala Lomnicki '19** earned her MPA with a specialization in Nonprofit Management from Ohio University this past summer and started a new position at Syracuse University as Matching Gifts Coordinator.

**Jacob Mantey '19** completed his JD at Albany Law School. He interned for two semesters at the Immigration Law Clinic and served as President of the Immigration Law Pro Bono Society and the founding President of the Immigration Law Society. He is currently working on housing issues at the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY.

# ALUMNI UPDATES

**Lindsay Nugent '20** is a Coordinator and Data Analyst with CASA Missoula (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) in Montana where she matches children in the foster care system with volunteers who advocate on their behalf in court. Prior to her current position, she served an AmeriCorps year with Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest in Missoula helping members of marginalized communities find employment and housing.

**Rachel Clark '20** is Communications Coordinator for the Communications and Information Services office in the New York State Assembly. She worked on messaging strategies for Democratic Assembly Members in competitive districts ahead of the 2022 elections.

**Isabel Tripoli '20** is Legislative Assistant for Amplify Education in Albany.

**Kyle Creech '20** completed his MPA at Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and is now a State Program Examiner with the New York Comptroller.

**Zoe Schlesinger '20** is an English Teacher at Bethlehem Middle School in Delmar, NY.



## Class of 2022

**Hunter Galpin** is attending the University of the District of Columbia's School of Law.

**Samanthe DeRagon** was awarded a Graduate Recruitment Fellowship to fund her doctoral studies in political science at the University of Iowa. She is presenting a paper coauthored with Daniel Solis'24 and SCRI Director Don Levy at the 2023 American Association for Public Opinion Research conference in Philadelphia.

**Nicholas Discala** won a full scholarship to pursue his JD at Albany Law School.

**Lila Dodge** is pursuing her JD at Albany Law School.

**Tatiana Vaz** is attending law school at Syracuse University School of Law

**Amir Taylor** is pursuing a fully funded doctoral degree in Sociology along with a master's degree in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University at Albany with full funding.

**Holly Bednarek** attended the Marine Corps' Officer Candidate School last summer and is now attending University of Denver's Sturm College of Law as she works toward a JAG position.

**Teresa Carlin** is serving as a clerk for the Town of Southeast Courts in Brewster, NY.

**Nick Lushkevich** currently works at CDPHP in the State Funded Programs Department. He is applying to graduate school to pursue an MBA or MPA.

**Maura Callahan** is attending Albany Law School to earn a Master's in Government Affairs and Advocacy.

# FACULTY UPDATES

**Yuyang Pu** joined Siena College in the fall of 2022. Besides teaching 4 courses, during the fall semester, he hosted an information session regarding the white paper movement in China and discussed the country's zero-covid policy and the protests it sparked. Dr. Pu attended the *Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting* in Florida in January, where he presented two papers titled "*Killing Two Birds with One Stone: Heterogeneous Effects of Anticorruption Messages*" and "*Corruption, Sex Scandal, and Female Underrepresentation: A Survey Experiment in China*". In the current spring semester, Dr. Pu is offering a course on propaganda and censorship, providing students with the opportunity to conduct their own research projects, which may be developed into conference papers or even published works. Dr. Pu also enjoyed teaching *Contemporary U.S. Politics* and found teaching it to be quite rewarding.

**Len Cutler** and his Summer CURCA Research Scholar Sarah Falgiatano presented a jointly researched study entitled "An Assessment of the Biden Foreign Policy Doctrine" at the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association held in Boston. They hope to continue their CURCA supported research this Summer. Dr. Cutler was appointed by Colonie Town Supervisor Peter Crummey to serve as a member of the Town Ethics Board for a term of three years beginning January 2023. Dr. Cutler has been interviewed by the local media including the Times Union, Channels 6 and 10 concerning the legal/Constitutional issues raised as a result of the NYS Senate's Judiciary Committee refusing to confirm Governor Hochul's nomination of Hon. Hector Lasalle to be the next Chief Judge of the NYS Court of Appeals. Dr. Cutler will be taking a group of students to the Court of Appeals for a tour, and to hear oral arguments in April.

**Vera Eccarius-Kelly** enjoyed her sabbatical during fall semester 2022 and spent extended periods of time in Germany and in Cuba. In Germany, besides visiting family, she attended a number of protests against the Iranian regime, including the massive gatherings held in Berlin that attracted 800,000 participants. She interviewed a series of Kurds from Iran in the diaspora to learn more about their mobilization efforts around the principles of *Jin, Jiyan, Azadi* (Woman, Life, Freedom), which is rooted in 40 years of Kurdish struggle. In Cuba, she spent time with community leaders, rural and urban activists and artists, and explored the use of art to expand the boundaries of political expression and dissent. Throughout her sabbatical, she continued her participation in WAMC radio Roundtable discussions (regional NPR), collaborated with national NPR on an interview related to women's protests in Iran, and supported asylum applicants with submissions of expert witness reports for their court hearings. She published a Review Essay of *Diaspora as translation and decolonization* by Ipek Demir in *Politics, Religion, & Ideology* 23, no. 3 (2022): 374-376. Dr. Eccarius-Kelly and POSC major Kiley Lenahan have been selected as 2022/2023 recipients of the Siena College Award for Excellence in recognition of their long-standing work with ECAR (Every Campus a Refuge). The ECAR program at Siena has been hosting the Danesh family from Afghanistan on campus.

# FACULTY UPDATES

**Taewoo Kang's** review of *The Other Divide: Polarization and Disengagement in American Politics* by Yanna Krupnikov and John B. Ryan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 250 pp.) was published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 2022. Dr. Kang presented his co-authored research on how people view television advertising and online advertising differently at the 118<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Political Communication Pre-Conference, Montreal, Canada). While in Montreal, he chaired a panel on *Creating Engaged Learning Environments*. In collaboration with the Midwest Political Science Association, Dr. Kang has been mentoring a Ph.D. student from an unrepresented group since September 2022. As the Siena College Research Institute's Inaugural Faculty Fellow, Dr. Kang taught a class entitled "*Siena Poll: Gateway to Public Opinion*" in Fall 2022. Students in the class conducted interviews during the 2022 election cycle and interacted with various guest speakers (e.g., directors of polling organizations, pollsters, and CEO of data management/ analytics company). Dr. Kang won the School of Liberal Arts Tenure-Track Outstanding Teacher-Scholar Award in October 2022. In 2023, Dr. Kang will serve as a member of the 2023 Paul Lazarsfeld Best Paper Award Committee for the Political Communication section of the American Political Science Association. In Spring 2023, students in Dr. Kang's *Introduction to Political Communication* class will work with the news director of a local TV station, a national newspaper's reporter, the editor of a local newspaper, a former U.S. Congressperson, and political campaign/public relations specialists.

**Dan Lewis** and his coauthors on "Team Kansas" published, "Transitioning Opinion? Assessing the Dynamics of Public Attitudes toward Transgender Rights," in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in May. The study explores how attitudes toward transgender rights have developed in the past decade, highlighting shifts in key factors underlying these attitudes. The team also published, "Taking Perspective of the Stories We Tell about Transgender Rights: The Narrative Policy Framework" in the *Policy Studies Journal* in September. This experimental study explores how narratives may be used to influence attitudes on transgender rights. Dr. Lewis presented another study from Team Kansas, "Cultural Threat, Intergroup Solidarity, and Attitudes toward Transgender Rights," at the 2022 Midwest Political Science Association conference. The Team also won a grant from the Williams Institute at UCLA to conduct a survey experiment on "Shaping Public Attitudes on Sports Participation by Transgender Youth" and their prior work on these attitudes was highlighted in a Monkey Cage posting at the Washington Post in May. Dr. Lewis also published a study on "Making the Vote (In)Accessible: Election Administration Laws and Turnout among People with Disabilities" with his coauthor, Dr. Robynn Kuhlmann, in *Politics, Groups, and Identities* in October.

# FACULTY UPDATES

**Laurie Naranch** published Chapter 6: “What Reassurance? What Reality?: Governor Cuomo, COVID-19, and the Politics of Masculine Protection” in the collection *Persevering during the Pandemic Stories of Resilience, Creativity, and Connection*, edited by Deborah A. Macey, Michelle Napierski- Pranci and David Staton (Rowman and Littlefield 2022). She gave a research paper on aging and political theory at the Northeast Political Science Association in Boston in November 2022 and she will present a revised version at the Western Political Science Association Meeting in San Francisco in April 2023 where she will also be on a panel about the book *Slow Culture and the American Dream* inspired by the slow food movement. She will be a commentator at the Arendt Center at Bard College for their March conference “Judgment, Pluralism, and Democracy: On the Desirability of Speaking with Others”. Dr. Naranch also looks forward to working with her Honors Body Politics class this spring and developing the Free Use Closet pop-up experiences started by Kiley Lenahan with other interested students. Finally, Dr. Naranch continues to be active in her community as a Zoning Board of Appeals member and as a newly drafted member of the town Ethics Committee.

**Ausra Park** published a chapter titled “Domestic Contestations in Lithuania’s Foreign and Security Policy: Who Calls the Shots?” in 2022 (co-authored with Dr. Gerda Jakstaite-Confortola) in *Small States and Security in Europe: Between National and International Policymaking*, eds. Tomas Weiss and Geoffrey Edwards, Routledge: London and NY. (<https://www.routledge.com/Small-States-and-Security-in-Europe-Between-National-and-International/Weiss-Edwards/p/book/9780367535513>). Over the summer, she has also attended and presented three papers at selective international conferences taking place in Portugal (Conference for European Studies), Slovenia (European Politics and Gender Conference), and Sweden (Gender in Diplomacy workshop). Dr. Park also gave several lectures at the Lithuanian Military Academy and conducted research on women presidents and interviewed women diplomats in Latvia. Also, two of Dr. Park’s international relations and policy- relevant analyses appeared in the *Australian Outlook* published by the Australian Institute of International Affairs. She is currently revising two publications. The first one examines the socio- demographic profiles of Lithuania’s foreign service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff and ambassadorial levels over the past 30 years (the 1991-2021 time period); the second publication is a comparative study analyzing the gender aspect in the diplomatic corps of the three Baltic States. Dr. Park’s next project (a book chapter) will explore growing and disconcerting tendencies of anti-gender/ genderphobia policies and rhetoric in the Baltic States in light of the backlash that women’s ascent in politics since 2020–Lithuania and Estonia presently have the most gender-balanced executives in the history of the two states–has (unexpectedly?) produced.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

- Nick Willock, Director of Conference Press Operations for Republican Conference in the the New York Assembly will be leading a panel discussion about careers in Political Communication on March 10.

The panel will also include professionals in government and the private sector.

- The Center for the Study of Government and Politics is hosting a discussion on the Rise of Christian Nationalism in the United States on April 24. The discussion will be lead by two distinguished guest speakers: Amanda Tyler, Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, and Andrew Whitehead, Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Association of Religion Data Archives (theARDA.com) at the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at IUPUI.

- Ryan Kelleher '18, a Management Analyst at the United States Department of The Army in Washington, DC, will be visiting campus on April 4, 2023 to discuss careers in International Affairs and National Security. Ryan earned an MA in Security Studies at George Washington University and won a John S. McCain Strategic Defense.

- A Free Use Closet serves as a place where any student or staff member can find clothing items that they need, such as winter coats, professional clothes, and everyday wear. Free Use Closets promote sustainability to keep gently used clothing and textiles in circulation without contributing to waste. Free Use Closets help to build community because students, faculty, and staff will be able to circulate their clothing, intertwining our fashion habits. The pursuit of sustainability and equity are core principles of St. Francis's teachings and Siena College's values.

**The Free Use Closet**  
will have a Pop-Up and Panel  
about Work Wear and the  
Politics of Appearances

**Monday, April 17, 2023**  
**in Sarazen 241**

in association with the Body Politics class

**Panel 5:30-6:00 pm**  
**Pop-Up Closet**  
**access 6-7:15 pm**



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A FREE USE  
CLOTHING  
CLOSET



# THE HON. JAMES P. KING MOOT COURT/MOCK TRIAL TEAM

The Siena College Moot Court/Mock Trial Team is a competition team through the American Mock Trial Association. With the guidance of our coaches and the distinguished Jurist in Residence, the team prepares a case for the Plaintiff/Prosecution and two cases for the defense to compete in various competitions.

This year, Mock Trial had a record number of students join so for the first time Siena was able to create two competing teams! During this fall semester, both teams attended the Capital Region Clash hosted by SUNY Albany in preparation for Regionals. In this competition, we competed against schools such as Drexel University, St. Rose, and SUNY Albany! At this tournament Carly Fanning '23 and Jeremy Dalipi '25 won Outstanding Attorney Awards!

After this tournament our Green team traveled to Boston College to compete against schools such as Boston University, Princeton University, Northeastern, and Brandeis! At this tournament Emily Long '23 won the best witness award for the tournament! The team is currently preparing for regionals at Princeton University February 18th-19th.

Mock Trial provides real-world skills, even for students who are not interested in attending law school. Students learn critical thinking skills, quick thinking, to form and defend proper arguments, public speaking skills, how to adapt to an ever-changing environment, and more! These are skills students are able to use in their courses at Siena and beyond.

If students are interested in learning more about Mock Trial and are interested in joining us for our training season this spring, please reach out to Dr. Cutler ([cutler@siena.edu](mailto:cutler@siena.edu)) and our captains Carly Fanning '23 ([cm29fann@siena.edu](mailto:cm29fann@siena.edu)) and Bradley Wisinski '23 ([be04wisi@siena.edu](mailto:be04wisi@siena.edu))!



# POLITICAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

This past year, Political Science Society has been active in helping raise student awareness of events going on in the political world. With bi-weekly meetings to discuss the current state of events, we seek to raise our collective understanding of the current political world. We have also been active in events in the Siena Community.

This Fall our Voter Friendly Campus Committee visited First Year Seminar classrooms to educate Freshmen about registering to vote and requesting absentee ballots. They also tabled in residence halls and the SSU in order to get the whole campus to be registered and request their ballot as well. The Voter Friendly Campus Committee consisted of Chair Carly Fanning '23 and members Lauren Waters '23, Amelia Risnit '24, Emily Atassi '25, Jimmy Hamilton '25, and Kristen Kiernan '25. This winter we had an election to nominate our next VFC chair and Kristen Kiernan will be taking over.

Last spring we also organized an event on the Supreme Court, looking at its politicization and the way that the Court is currently functioning. That event brought law school professors Ilya Soman from George Mason University and Ava Ayers from Albany Law School to campus as well as the Hon. Mae D'Agostino '77. The event also included a presentation from Don Levy, Director of the Siena College Research Institute, Sami Deragon '22, and Daniel Solis '24, about the results of a poll their national survey on attitudes toward the Supreme Court. Nicholas Discala '22 moderating an engaging discussion about the changing nature of the politics of judicial nominations and the role of the court in our government today.



The Political Science Society is continuing to put on great events and is hosting an event on the rise of Christian Nationalism along with the Center for the Study of Government and Politics. Kiley Lenahan '23 is leading this effort and will serve as moderator for a discussion with Amanda Tyler, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, and Andrew Whitehead, Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Association of Religion Data Archives at the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Carly Fanning was recognized at halftime of the February 5<sup>th</sup> Siena Saints basketball game for her work leading the Voter Friendly Campus effort during the 2022 Midterm Elections.

# DEPARTMENT NEWS



## Citizen Lobbying & Advocacy

Dr. Lewis' POSC 210 Citizen Lobbying & Advocacy class visited the New York Capitol on January 27 and met with Assemblyman Phil Steck and staff from the Senate Finance Committee in preparation for their lobbying projects. Teams of students will be advocating for the passage of a range of policies, from a cap on insulin prices to the Dignity in Death law.

## Info Session about China's White Paper Movement

In December 2022, Dr. Yuyang Pu held an information session on the white paper movement in China. During this session, Dr. Pu discussed China's zero-covid policy, its implications on Chinese citizens' daily life and China's economy. Moreover, he also informed the Siena Community about a tragic fire incident in Xinjiang, online censorship about this incident, and the protests it sparked across the country. Additionally, he compared the protests in 2022 and 1989 and highlighted the rarity of such protests in China.

## Every Campus a Refuge

Dr. Eccarius-Kelly and Kiley Lenahan will receive the Siena College Award for Excellence in recognition of their long-standing work with ECAR at the MVP Arena on February 12, at 2 pm.

The Danesh family is expecting a baby girl at the beginning of February and we will share news in the coming days and weeks.

A team of 5 students (with Dr. Eccarius-Kelly) has been selected to participate in a specialized day-long workshop and training seminar offered by the national ECAR organization on April 21, 2023. The training will be held in Troy at the Women's Institute at Russell Sage.

# PRE-LAW SOCIETY

Pre-Law Society is an organization that helps students explore their interests in law. We help students make connections in the legal field, as well as provide opportunities for students to prepare for law school. Last semester, we held various LSAT preparation events, as well as an Albany Law information session. This semester, we are working to plan more LSAT prep events, as well as our Pre-Law Mentoring Event.

We are excited to be hosting our annual Pre-Law Mentoring Event on Wednesday, April 12 at 6:00pm. More details to follow, but please reach out to Alli Tsamis at [aj11tsam@siena.edu](mailto:aj11tsam@siena.edu) with any questions.

