

**In this issue:**

- ✓ Notes from the Faculty
- ✓ Faith and Citizenship Initiative
- ✓ Senior Honors Thesis: Jenny Lamb
- ✓ Challenges for the Next President
- ✓ Alumni Update: Paulina Heule
- ✓ Career Breakfasts
- ✓ Department Pick

# Politeia

## Notes from the Faculty

The Department of

POLITICAL SCIENCE

CALVIN COLLEGE



Ezekiel Bulver, a 5-year old boy, sat at his breakfast table listening to his parents. His father, scribbling diagrams on a sheet of paper, looked up suddenly with some satisfaction and proclaimed that any two sides of a triangle will

always be longer together than the third side by itself. Mrs. Bulver's response struck young Ezekiel like a lightning bolt, "Oh, you say that because you are a man."

Looking back on this event as an adult, Bulver described his great discovery: "At that moment there flashed across my opening mind the great truth that refutation is no necessary part of argument. Assume that your opponent is wrong, and then explain his error, and the world will be at your feet. Attempt to prove that he is wrong or (worse still) try to find out whether he is wrong or right, and the national dynamism of our age will thrust you to the wall."

Ezekiel Bulver is, of course, fictional. He is a creation of C.S. Lewis of Narnia fame in a little-known essay entitled "Bulverism." But while Bulver the person is fictional, bulverism the phenomenon is all too real, and what Lewis warned against in 1941 has become so prevalent today that one need only observe everyday conversation for a moment to recognize it.

"He's only in favor of the war because

his dad is in the military."

"She feels abortion is wrong only because she's Catholic."

"They're religious because they need a crutch to get through life."

"He is against gay marriage because he is homophobic."

Thus any sort of proposition or argument is rendered superfluous. We can explain, or better yet, label, the psychology, and so we don't need to engage an idea.

The last question above is perhaps the premier example of contemporary bulverism. Rather than admit that reasonable people can differ about the morality of human sexuality and public recognition of various sexual relationships, some will employ the "homophobic" label for a broad swath of people from the truly homophobic (e.g., Westboro Baptist Church) to those who believe that although homosexual orientation is a sort of disorder and homosexual actions are morally wrong, gay men and women still are made in God's image and deserving of respect (e.g. Pope Francis).

Of course, how that dignity and respect translate into public policy with regard to marriage and the like is at the heart of the debate. But good-faith debate is hobbled from the beginning by the description of one entire side as suffering from a phobia. And to have a phobia is, by definition, to have an irrational fear. Another, less polite, word for irrational is "crazy." One

doesn't debate crazy people. One ignores them, or discredits them, or has them medicated.

Bulverism is an equal-opportunity phenomenon. The conversational examples listed above bulverize more conservative positions, but conservatives can be equally guilty in psychologizing and dismissing liberals. Advocating for higher taxes doesn't mean one necessarily hates the rich. Pacifists are not cowards. Criticizing national security policy does not mean one secretly wants the terrorists to win. Of course, it may very well be the case that some pacifists are cowards, and some who oppose gay marriage really do have an irrational fear and hatred of gays.

Yet when we bulverize, we undercut the civil discourse necessary for the health of any democratic society, and particularly necessary for the life of a college which depends on the exchange of ideas. We treat those with whom we disagree as mere subjects of our amateur psychologizing rather than as persons with ideas in their own right. It may very well be that upon reflection, we will conclude their ideas are false, or misguided. But we will not know unless we give them a fair hearing, and in the process we'll likely learn more about our own positions. More important, we'll engage in the sort of argument that can produce light and not merely heat.

- Micah Watson

# Calvin College Implements the Faith and Citizenship Initiative

The Calvin College Faith and Citizenship Initiative is one of three Provost-sponsored strategic initiatives launched earlier this year. Throughout the semester, Calvin faculty and students have been pursuing projects sponsored by the initiative.

In its earliest stages, the Faith and Citizenship Initiative was heavily shaped by political science professor Kevin den Dulk. Professor den Dulk, along with other faculty members at Calvin College and several sources of external support including the Henry Institute, developed this initiative to enhance understanding about what it means to be a citizen in the world today. The initiative is specifically meant to sharpen a Reformed Christian understanding of citizenship, develop and help implement projects in citizen education and formation, and engage the global church as it fosters a Christian calling to citizenship.

A large part of the initiative for this year involved hiring student research assistants for different faculty led projects here on campus. The initiative was able to hire seven students to work this semester

in the following project areas with various members of Calvin faculty: Faith, Citizenship and Worship in Pluralistic Societies; Religious Persecution and Religious Freedom across the Globe; the Civic Role of Faith-Based Education; Incarceration and Christian Responsibility for “Returning Citizens” and Visualizing Faith and Citizenship through Photography.

The research fellows are tasked with: collection, recording, and analysis of data; reviewing scholarly literature; assisting in development of academic seminars; efforts to encourage public engagement; and disseminating research findings through publication and/or conference participation. Each student has a specific area of responsibility, but he or she also works together with other fellows on areas of common need. In addition, the students meet regularly with one another, Professor den Dulk, and other interested faculty in an effort to foster a strong, dynamic research community. This initiative has thus far been a great success and we look forward to seeing where it goes next!

---

## Senior Honors Student Jenny Lamb Completes Honors Thesis

Political Science students have the opportunity to join the honors program during their time here at Calvin. In addition to taking six honors-designated or honors-contracted courses, students are required to complete an honors thesis. Senior Jenny Lamb is graduating from Calvin College with an honors political science degree after completing her honors thesis this spring.

Jenny’s honors thesis is a cross-national analysis focusing on civic education in the U.S., the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Jenny’s interest lies in how young people are socialized and what they become socialized to. In order to study such a complex topic, she looked at naturalization documents of the different countries she focused on, identified their varying definitions of what makes “a good citizen,” and compared this information to what the country teaches its children. Jenny believes the most interesting part of the project has been seeing what is important to a country. “You can point to a country’s naturalization process and see how that process makes the country who it is,” she explains.

When writing an honors thesis, students select a chair and a second reader. Jenny had the support of both Professor den Dulk as her chair and Professor McBride as her second reader. “It’s very helpful to have that support,” Jenny says. “Sometimes you get stuck and you need to work through a question before you can move on. The professors help you do that.” For Jenny, the professors



Jenny Lamb and member of her honors committee, Professor Becca McBride

challenged her to take ownership of the project; they supported her while she figured out what the project should look like. “[Professor den Dulk] kept telling me that it was my project. He didn’t tell me what to do,” Jenny shares. “It’s a different type of work when you’re not getting a grade. It gives you the freedom to write what you want.”

Jenny explains that working on an honors thesis has helped her feel more prepared for her future. “I developed sort of an expertise in doing this project,” she says. “It gives you confidence that you can do that with something else too.” Jenny went on to share that being able to work hard on a project independently is also an important skill to have for the future.

When asked if she had any advice for students considering the political science honors program, Jenny says she absolutely recommends it. “Anyone who has an interest in learning deeply should participate in the honors program. The community of people you meet through the program, especially the honors clusters, are great.” She continues, “You get to know your professors better and you get to look deeply at the things you care about.”

The department is proud of the many accomplishments Jenny has achieved during her time at Calvin College. We wish you the best in your future endeavors Jenny!

# Henry Institute Sponsors Challenges for the Next President Series

An article by Rachel Watson

When thinking about this election cycle and some of its problematic rhetoric, the leaders at Calvin's Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics wanted to become change agents for civil discussion. So Micah Watson, associate professor of political science, with an assist from Kevin den Dulk, executive director of the Henry Institute, launched a series called Challenges for the Next President.

The pair hired two students, Abbie Schutte and Ben Ridder '16, to help kick off each discussion with an introduction to the topic. At each event, several speakers are invited to talk from two perspectives for about 10 minutes each, then the floor is opened for questions and discussion.

The series aims to help Christians in our community come together around issues that will face the next president, but to do so in a helpful, rather than negative way. "We thought that this series would give us an opportunity to model good discussion about important issues from a Christian perspective, but from different Christian perspectives as well," Watson said. "I think part of what we're hoping to do is both to inform about issues but also practice the sort of dialogue and conversation that yields more light than heat."

So far the series has discussed topics related to the environment (Feb. 17), immigration (March 24), religious freedom (April 20) and restorative justice (May 3). The talks will continue in the fall with foreign policy, human dignity and the economy. After the election, there will be a round-table discussion about the results of the presidential contest and the implications for our country.

All talks are held in the DeVos Communications Center Lobby. Watson noted that audience turnout has been around 100 people for each talk so far, and the crowd includes Calvin Academy of Lifelong Learning (CALL) members, community members,



faculty, staff and students. He said the format is intentionally conversational rather than just "a data transfer" from the speakers to the attendees.

Upcoming topics are left intentionally flexible. "We've left it somewhat fluid," he said, "so that if something comes up between now and the election, we can actually slot that in there and have it be a more pertinent topic than what we would otherwise have."

The students who have written introductions for the talks said a primary goal is to act as a guide and tone-setter for the discussion. "We try to present a very bipartisan introduction—something that Christians from all sides of the political spectrum can come together and agree on," Schutte said. "So far, they've been pretty rooted in biblical text and in theology, and giving Christians a common framework within which to think about these different policy issues is a goal."

Ridder believes the series can benefit people from all walks of life. "This is an election that is going to affect everybody," he said. "So, if you plan on voting and getting involved, then you should educate yourself. And that impacts everyone, no matter what you're studying." Watson hopes people will come with respectful attitudes and walk away enriched. "I hope that people will come away with a sense that these things matter and that we can talk about them in constructive, God-honoring ways, even when we disagree," he said. "If we can make any observation about our political discourse this election season, and really over the last few years, it's that we have become more polarized, more divisive, and we've gotten uglier as a culture. Our hope is to offer these conversations as another way of doing things—a way of really wrestling with the problems, in a way that allows us to still be able to shake hands afterwards."

## Alumni Update: Paulina Heule



Paulina Heule graduated from Calvin College in 2015 with a double-major in Literature and International Relations. She is now in Washington D.C. working as a paralegal at Covington and Burling LLP. Throughout Calvin, Paulina was part of the Pre-Law program, which offered her a host of great options for learning more about a legal career. One of those opportunities included an internship at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City. These experiences fed Paulina's curiosity to learn more about the day-to-day life of attorneys and working as a paralegal provides a great avenue to explore that world.

When asked about what experiences helped prepare her for post-graduate life, Paulina cites her participation in the honors program, her engagement with pre-law events, and her work with Calvin Chimes as especially helpful. However, the most formative

experience for Paulina was Calvin's commitment to excellence and integrity. "I saw this commitment every day with my professors in the way they acted towards us and the work product that was expected from us as students," she explained. "This degree of excellence, honesty, integrity and ultimately, spirituality that surrounded me at Calvin prepared me well for a job in the legal field." Additionally, the required research projects for a variety of political science courses helped prepare Paulina for her work as a paralegal. "The writing and attention to detail is so important in the legal field and I've ended up being very thankful for all those research papers!"

Paulina concluded by sharing that Calvin's faculty played a huge role in her college experience. "I always felt my professors believed in me," she said, "and I think that feeling supported is half of the equation for success."

# THE PAUL HENRY INSTITUTE

## CAREER BREAKFASTS

This spring, the Paul B. Henry Institute sponsored “Career Breakfasts,” an opportunity to provide students with career advice and stimulating conversation with individuals who are working in areas related to political science and international relations.

The first career breakfast occurred on March 7 and featured businessman Ralph Luimes, who is the CEO of Hald-Nor Credit Union in Ontario, Canada. Mr. Luimes has experience in federal, provincial and municipal government relations in Canada. One student who attended the breakfast, Colleen Beunk, especially benefitted from Mr. Luimes’ visit. As a Canadian student, Colleen explained that it is difficult to find individuals here who are acquainted with the Canadian legal system. “He actually connected me with a law student in Vancouver,” she shared. “We are going to meet up this summer to talk about applying for law school in Canada.”

The second breakfast on March 23 featured Rebecca Samuel Shah, an Oxford-educated scholar, originally from India, who has “feet-on-the-ground” experience working with the untouchable/Dalit women in India. Ms. Shah was an especially great resource for students with overlapping interests in Political Science and Economics, International Relations and



International Development, Asian politics, or faith, justice, economic equality, gender and international religious freedom issues.

On April 20, Greg Van Woerhorn, District Director for Congressman Bill Huizenga, hosted students. Greg served as Congressman Pete Hoekstra’s campaign manager and was the director of Public Policy for the U.S. House of Representatives for eight years. His extensive political experience and connections in federal and state politics made him a great resource for students.

The final event on May 4 featured D.C. policy analyst Nathan Leamer, a 2009 Calvin graduate, with a degree in history and secondary education, who chose a career path related directly to political science. As a policy analyst and outreach manager for the R Street Institute, he is currently working on policy issues related to criminal justice. Formerly as legislative and coalitions associate for GenOpp (D.C.-based millennial advocacy organization), Nathan worked regularly with congressional leaders and staff on issues of particular importance to young Americans.

## Department Picks

### *Miracles from Heaven: Exploring the Relationship between Pain and Hope* - Professor Becca McBride



This semester I challenged my Global Democratization students to ponder the relationship between pain and hope, a theme that has pervaded this academic year for me. As part of my own exploration, I have been reading C. S. Lewis’ *The Problem with Pain*. Our hearts wonder how people can suffer so much pain if the God who created and upholds the world is truly loving and kind. In *The Problem with Pain*, Lewis argues that pain is only a problem because we misunderstand the nature of divine omnipotence, divine goodness, and human sinfulness and argues, “the world is a dance in which good, descending from God, is disturbed by evil arising from the creatives, and the resulting conflict is resolved by God’s own assumption of the suffering nature which evil produces (80).”

In the midst of reading this book, I saw the movie *Miracles from Heaven*, based on the true story of a Texas family. Jennifer Garner plays a mother whose daughter is diagnosed with a painful terminal stomach disorder. The physical and emotional pain the family suffers is unbearable and seemingly irredeemable. In a bizarre turn of events, the child falls three stories into a hollow tree, landing on her head, miraculously restarting her nervous system and curing her incurable stomach disorder. In one of the pivotal scenes of the movie, the mother speaks about her daughter’s miraculous healing. She says, “Albert Einstein said there are only two ways [to see life]: one is as if nothing is a miracle, [the other is as if] everything is a miracle.” She then revisits their family’s journey from the perspective of all the people who cared for them in the midst of crisis. Each of the seemingly unconnected moments of human compassion combined to become the miracle that sustained her family through the dark time in their lives.

The movie was a beautiful picture answering the tension I have explored with my Global Democratization class the same tension Lewis addresses in *The Problem with Pain*. How do we maintain hope in the midst of pain, especially when the solution we have been praying for eludes us? Lewis’s answer is that “suffering is not good in itself. What is good in any painful experience is, for the sufferer, his submission to the will of God, and, for the spectators, the compassion aroused and the acts of mercy to which it leads (110).” May we all be more intentional to serve as the heart of God to those around us who are in the midst of suffering.

CALVIN  
College



Political Science Department  
Politeia Editor: Abbie Schutte  
[www.calvin.edu/academics/departments-programs/political-science/](http://www.calvin.edu/academics/departments-programs/political-science/)