A typical day this semester for junior political science major, Heather Sparks, begins with a walk to the Senate Offices of Senator Wayne Allard. Once there, she performs jobs such as responding to constituent mail, giving tours, and answering the phone.

Heather has access to the “staff only” network of underground transportation. Recently, she had the opportunity to converse with Senator John McCain, whom she highly respects. Heather also goes to luncheons and meetings on healthcare and budgetary issues. This is particularly interesting for Heather as she was a part of the nursing program until this year.

She is working as an intern for Senator Allard from Colorado through the Paul B. Henry Institute (see page 2) Semester in Washington D.C. Twenty-three Calvin students, primarily Political Science and Social Work majors, are in D.C. this semester.

Last spring, students applied for this off-campus opportunity. When they came back in the fall, they took a one credit class, led by Dr. Simona Goi. This class allowed them to get to know one another, while they prepared their resumes and applied for their internships.

In the spring, they live in D.C. working at internships either on Capitol Hill with senators and representatives, in embassies with diplomats, or non-profit organizations. Students are able to work on an internship in their particular field of interest.

Along with working from 9-5 on Tuesday through Friday, they must also attend two classes. One class is on a topic of the professor’s choosing, in this case, Democracy, Rights, and Globalization. The second is a class on integrating faith and public life. Senior James Schmidt said that balancing life as a student and as an intern was one of the hardest parts of the semester.

He also stated that keeping Christian values was difficult in D.C. because many people are there to “get to the top.” Having that class and his fellow students around him, helped to maintain his faith and Christian values.

Dr. Amy Patterson, who led the D.C. semester last spring, said that one of the advantages of having an internship through Calvin’s program is that students learn about faith and politics in the classroom, but also the students are a support system for each other. In addition, she pointed that Calvin students did not want to besmirch the reputation of their school.

Everybody interviewed agreed that whether or not students are planning on working in Washington D.C. in their future, this program is very beneficial. Heather said that one of the best parts of the program is that students learn about faith and politics in the classroom, but also the students are a support system for each other. In addition, she pointed that Calvin students did not want to besmirch the reputation of their school.

James pointed out that being an intern in Washington opens up many opportunities, both in D.C. and elsewhere. It has already benefited him as he is campaign manager for Christian Meyer, a Republican running for Michigan State Representative in the Grand Rapids area.

Whatever focus or future plans students have past their semester in Washington D.C., most participants agree that spending a semester in Washington D.C. was one of the best decisions they made while at Calvin.
“Serving the Claims of Justice”

The Calvin College Political Science Department has a unique opportunity to explore Christian political thought, as it is the home to the Paul Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics. Named for former Congressman and Calvin professor, Paul Henry, this organization examines the integration of Christian faith and politics.

Before his premature death in July 1993, Henry worked in West Michigan and Washington D.C. as a public servant and a pursuer of justice. He was convinced that even politics, often thought of as a corrupted field, could be restored with the work of Christians and the grace of God.

The Paul Henry Institute functions as a national forum for debate, discussion, and research on the relationship between Christianity and politics. This institute hopes to highlight the importance of Christianity in politics, but also the integral role of politics in the Christian life. The Henry Institute provides many opportunities for research on this interesting interaction.

One of the best ways the Henry Institute provides exploration of this subject is through its lectures. Throughout the year, the Henry Institute hosts speakers on topics such as Neo-Zionism (“Christian Zionism: A Roadmap to Armageddon” by English Vicar, Steven Sizer last year) to the framework of politics for Christians (“Can There Be a ‘Christian Politics’ Today?” by Dr. Garrett Paul in November). Attendees are able to hear many different views and issues within the realm of religion and politics.

Additionally, this spring Calvin College will host the 3rd Biennial Symposium on Religion and Politics from April 27-29, 2006. Scholars from domestic and international colleges and universities will come to Calvin to present their papers on many different topics. The range of social scientist scholars varies widely, from historians, to sociologists, to political scientists.

The last Symposium was in the Spring of 2004. There discussions were held on subjects ranging from Catholic Political Thought to Religion and the American Founding to Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Europe.

Ellen Hekman, administrative assistant for the Henry Institute, said that the Institute is very pleased that Calvin hosts this biennial event.

Her favorite aspect of it is that the Grand Rapids community is able to participate in such an educational and interesting event.

The Paul Henry Institute services Calvin College students through its fellowship program. Every year a select few juniors and seniors work five hours every week for the Henry Institute, performing jobs such as researching different projects, synthesizing and analyzing data, and attending lectures hosted by the Institute. This year, Rob Zandstra, Phil Boonstra, Audra Groenendal, Nathaniel Fischer, Sarah Berg, Melissa Rick, Carolyn Yu, and Shiko Nguru are working as fellows.

Zandstra, a fellow in his second year of work there, says that he has gained a lot from his experience, because he is challenged in his beliefs as a Christian, especially through the lectures. Vincent Bacote’s lecture “Spiritual Public Theology: Advancing Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy” where Bacote stressed the importance of the Holy Spirit, which is often forgotten in politics and the measure of common grace it brings, is one example.

His skills as a student have also been enriched through this experience, because he feels he really “thrives on outside of the classroom education” such as in the research and writing he practices because of his fellowship.

Furthermore, the members of the institute work on research for publications (see sidebar). Currently, five institute scholars, Steve Monsma, James Penning, Doug Koopman, Corwin Smidt, and Kevin denDulk, are studying how religion affects political and civic participation, through a grant from the Bradley Foundation. They hope to eventually turn the research from this one year grant into a book.

To hear about any of these projects or events or for questions or comments, please contact the Paul B. Henry Institute.
The Life and Work of Jorge Fernández

Homecoming weekend, Calvin was blessed to host graduate Jorge Fernández as a speaker. Born in Cuba, he and his family fled in the 1960’s to Miami as refugees. His life there as a teenager was very different from the middle class life he led in Cuba, as the family of nine shared a one bedroom apartment. His family occasionally went to the local CRC church in Miami, which connected the family with a church in Holland, MI willing to sponsor them.

The family moved up north where Montello Park CRC paid rent on the house until the parents could find jobs and sent all seven of the children to Holland Christian High School for two years. As he says, “to be a hybrid of a Cuban and a Dutchman is an interesting experience,” but the opportunity eventually led him to Calvin. He did not feel he could go to college because of his grades and financial situation. One of his teachers thought differently and talked to President Spoelhof, after which Fernández was admitted.

He graduated from the education program with majors in political science and Spanish. After graduation, he moved to Miami to work as a second grade teacher. Then he went into school administration as a middle school principal—an awful experience where he says he was “burned by parents in effigy.”

Mr. Fernández attended Wayne State School of Law in the accelerated program, because his wife only wanted to spend one winter in Michigan. He was excited to be help solve the some of the problems in Miami and redeem his culture, but his first job out of law school was doing menial tasks for a big law firm.

He decided that was not the path he wanted his life to take, and he became friends with the mayor one day as he passed out business cards. The mayor suggested that Fernández should see the city attorney, and Fernández was given the position of assistant city attorney and eventually city attorney. He went into this job with a renewed vigor, excited that he would be able to make a contribution to his adopted hometown.

However, with Miami in the thick of the Cocaine Wars of the 1980’s, with many of the drugs in the U.S. coming through there, corruption in the city was rampant during his first stint as city attorney in 1987-1991. Also during this time, the National Guard was called in three times, parts of the city were burned, and Janet Reno, then Florida State Attorney, indicted over 40 Miami policemen involved in drug trade.

During this time, Sarasota, Florida, was looking for a county attorney, and offered the job to Fernández, who left Miami frustrated with his efforts at redemption. Sarasota was a completely different land with completely different problems. It had no affordable housing, no social programs, and a determination to keep the county free of the poor. After fourteen years in the wealthy area, he was ready for a change. And Miami came looking for him.

Miami was looking for an ethical person for city attorney, and they had not forgotten Fernández, even though he left the city feeling a total failure. Now, Miami faces a new set of challenges, such as deciding how many government services should be relegated to the private sector and how much should remain public. He is ready for these challenges again, and in the midst of his trials he remembers Psalm 24:1, “this world is the Lord’s.”

Katherine Fick: Patents, Trademarks, and Immigration

Since graduating in 1999, Katherine Fick has continued Calvin’s commitment to serving the community. Ms. Fick, a University of Chicago law school grad, is currently working in Boston as a lawyer with the firm, Foley Hoag, LLP, where she mainly focuses on litigations dealing with patents and trademarks and has been named one of Massachusetts’ best young lawyers.

Her real joy as a lawyer, though, comes from her pro bono work. Recently, she successfully argued for asylum for a woman and her three children. Most of her pro bono work is in cases involving immigration/asylum and domestic violence.

In 2004 Fick was selected to participate in the Boston Bar Association’s Public Interest Leadership Program. This prestigious program selects eight lawyers from Boston who work to facilitate justice and serve the greater good of the community.

Katherine also served as a clerk to Federal District Judge Mark Wolf, which she described as a “fantastic experience” because it gave her a background in criminal litigation.

While at Calvin, Ms. Fick took full advantage of exploring different subjects. Majoring in English and Political Science with a minor in History helped fuel her natural curiosity of the world, important in her current work. She also appreciated how her interactions with professors at Calvin made her comfortable with authorities.

These days, she is enjoying Boston, especially because of its history and proximity to the ocean.
Podcasting in the Classroom

Professor Mathew Roberts is among the first Calvin professors to podcast lectures. This semester, Professor Mathew Roberts is podcasting the lectures for two of his classes: political science 101 and political science 251 (Methods in research analysis). This is a recent phenomenon in many university classrooms across the country where professors can record their lectures and put them on the internet. Students can subscribe to and download the podcasts for free the very day of the lecture.

Roberts decided to podcast his lectures to try a “toy of technology” and to enrich the learning process. He feels that podcasts are especially beneficial to students who do not take notes well or who miss a class. It is also helpful for students preparing for an exam to go back and clarify any problems.

One major concern about podcasting is that student attendance will decrease. To combat this, Roberts has increased amount that attending class is worth. Participation and attendance in his 101 class is 12.5%, almost double what it was worth last semester, and in his 251 class, he added in points of participation where last semester there was no such grade.

Additionally, Professor Roberts is confident that the majority of students will use the podcasts as an enhancement of the class, rather than a substitution for it. In particular, students cannot engage in the material, such as asking questions, through podcasts. In a survey of students last semester, over 80% said that they would be only somewhat more likely or not more likely at all to skip podcasted classes.

Though he cannot know exactly how many people use the podcasts or how it affects students’ achievement yet, Professor Roberts is excited to be using this technology to improve the learning environment.

Scholars Rewarded for Hard Work

This spring, the political science department awarded scholarships to 8 students. They were awarded scholarships based on academic achievement, career interests, and community service. Congratulations to these students!

De Kryger-Monsman Memorial Prize
This award, generously given by Mrs. Gerald Monsma in memory of her husband, is given to a junior each year based on academic achievement. The recipient of this scholarship is Christine Holst, from Tucson, AZ. She is currently studying in Washington, D.C. While in Grand Rapids, she is an editor for the weekly newspaper, Chimes.

Charles Strikwerda Scholarship
The late John Van Dellen established this scholarship to honor his nephew, Dr. Charles Strikwerda. This award is given to a sophomore or junior who is an “all around good student who contributes significantly to the classroom and campus environment.” This year, the scholarship was given to Abigail Rockey, from Glen Isle PA and Melissa Rick, from Indianapolis, IN. Among Abigail’s activities are working as a Junior Achievement teacher, interning on a political campaign and tutoring fellow students. Melissa works at a law firm, tutors with the Kent County Juvenile Department, and gives tours to prospective students. Both are currently participating in the semester in Washington D.C.

Johan and Wilma Westra Scholarship
Dr. Johan Westra, Calvin’s first political science professor, and his wife, Wilma, an active Calvin member, funded this scholarship to recognize volunteer work and public service. Ellen Arrowsmith is from Rehoboth, NM and Paul Davis, from Vergennes VT, were this year’s recipient. Ellen works with ESL students, and will work with AIDS victims in Ethiopia this summer. Paul Davis volunteers at local churches and schools. Next year he will serve as Student Senate President.

Peace and Justice Scholarship
Alumnus Paul Hoffman established this scholarship in 1987 for Calvin students actively committed to peace and justice. Grace Miguel, originally from Peru, spent this past summer working there, and is very involved with the Service Learning Center. Mandie Stehle is from Trafford PA. During interim, she studied the Roma culture in central Europe. They both have spent a semester in Honduras, studying international development.

Bernard Zylstra Scholarship
Funds for this award are generously provided by Mr. Gerrit and Mrs. Carol Zylstra, in memory of Bernard Zylstra, renowned for development in political philosophy. This award is given three people in history, philosophy, or political science. Nathaniel Fischer, a junior from Wappingers Falls, NY, was one recipient this year. He returned to Calvin after a semester studying at Oxford in England. He is involved in Student Senate and is attempting to start a crew club at Calvin.

Professor’s Picks

“My favorite movie of late is Crash, not only for its story-telling quality and its dissection of the human tendency to categorize others narrowly (and so wrongly and unfairly), but for the way it shows the complex interplay between human motivation and human behavior.” —Dr. Bill Stevenson

“The book is the most inspiring account I have ever read of the life of a living individual who has dedicated his life to provide relief for the poorest, most forgotten people on earth, and has done so because of the Gospel message of Matthew 25. But what is even more remarkable is Dr. Farmer does not come across as a self righteous, brow-beating martyr, but as a very self-deprecating, unbelievably hard working, passionate human being who has taken the call to care ‘for the least of these’ very seriously.’” —Dr. Simona Goi.

“Erik Larson, The Devil in the White City --- a book which is a great mystery story about a serial killer but which has much to say about urban planning and the development of modern Chicago”– Dr. James Penning.

Articles Written by Mandie Stehle