In this issue:
- Stevenson Travels to Poland
- Alumni Lauren Dillon
- Senior Spotlight: Bruce Van Baren
- Alumni Jonathan Hirte
- Devries Leads 12th UN Interim
- Scholarship Winners
- Paul Henry Institute
- Events in the Department
- Professor’s Picks

Stevenson Travels to Poland

On March 24, Professor Stevenson traveled to the Center for Tocqueville Studies at the University of Lodz in Poland to give a lecture on "The American Melting Pot as Reductionist Kettle: Religious Liberty's Worrisome Condition." While in Poland Stevenson, along with his wife Rosemary, took in the rich history of Poland.

In the early 19th century, Lodz was a small village of 1,000 people, but the Russian empire (which controlled Poland at the time) designated it as their manufacturing center, particularly for textiles, and by the end of the 19th century its population was over 600,000.

That industry died after WWII, but most of the large textile factory buildings are still there. Alongside the factories were both owners' mansions and workers block apartments, most of which are being preserved as either museums or apartments.

The story of Poland's Jewish population is a big part of the history of Lodz as well. Before WWI, the city was about one-fourth each German, Russian, Polish, and Jewish. Lodz has one of the world's largest Jewish cemeteries, still an important historical site. Before WWII, Lodz had the largest Jewish population of any city in Poland.

During WWII, the Germans built walls around the primary Jewish neighborhoods, and so gave Lodz the distinction of having the largest Jewish ghetto in Poland. The Jews were then gradually shipped off to the death camps, so that by the end of WWII there were hardly any Jews in Lodz. Tour groups from Israel still come regularly to visit Lodz, along with all the other important sites related to the holocaust.

There are many other aspects to the city's history, including the legacy of Soviet Communism, yet it is a fairly new city (by European standards.) Many of the small towns nearby boast churches and military fortifications dating back to the 12th century or earlier.

Stenson said that it was "a truly wonderful week." At this time Poland is one of the most pro-American countries in Europe, and they felt very welcomed in the University and city of Lodz.

Lauren Dillon: Communication Coordinator

Lauren Dillon felt well-equipped the day she graduated from Calvin as an International Relations and Mass Media double Major in 2006. She gives Calvin a lot of credit for its amazing resources and the preparation it gave her for the professional world.

Lauren currently works as a communications coordinator and development assistant for Sunshine Gospel Ministries; an organization that focuses on building relationships, teaching and mentoring, developing life skills, caring and advocacy within the economically marginalized communities of Chicago’s south side. She is in charge of external communications for the ministry; she maintains their website, newsletters, fundraising efforts, and has many other responsibilities.

While she works on the local level, Lauren continues to stay deeply involved in international affairs, in keeping with her major. She is a member of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The council...
Jonathan Hirte: Legislative Correspondent

Political Science alumnus, Jonathan Hirte, completed his time at Calvin in the Spring of 2008.

After Graduation, Hirte moved to Washington, D.C. and began working for Congressman Vern Ehlers as a legislative correspondent. His office serves the people in the 3rd Congressional district of Michigan. As Legislative Correspondent, his main duty is coordinating the constituent mail operation.

Congressman Ehlers receives thousands of letters, emails, phone calls, and faxes each month and makes it a top priority to respond to each one. Hirte organizes all incoming correspondence and makes sure they all receive a reply as soon as possible. Recently, Hirte has also begun advising Congressman Ehlers on various legislative topics such as Social Security and Faith-based issues.

Hirte believes that his time at Calvin has been invaluable in preparing him for his current job. He learned the basic framework for the government in his intro Political Science classes, and his philosophical and moral viewpoints flourished in his upper-level political science classes. Hirte participated in the Washington, D.C. semester and interned for Congressman Paul Ryan’s office.

“Interning prepared me for the office setting I now work in, and having that experience probably helped me get hired. Finally, it reaffirmed my belief that public service was a noble calling and worth devoting a career to.”

Being involved in Student Senate during his time at Calvin was also an amazing experience for Hirte. He believed that being involved on Calvin’s campus greatly benefited him and allowed him to give back to the community.

Political Science professors also helped him immensely in his time as a student. “Many of them served as mentors to me, helping me to understand not just the theoretical concepts in class, but pushing me to discern how God wants me to live out that knowledge.”

Hirte says that he is quite content with his current job. He is learning new things everyday and continues to be challenged on a daily basis. He feels fortunate that the efforts in Washington, D.C. are done on behalf of the many friends he has back in Michigan.

He would like to gain more experience working on legislative policy, but for now is happy working hard each day. Hirte states that he is “trying to bring all [his] energy and knowledge to work on a daily basis, and letting God take care of where those efforts are expended.”
As with previous UN Interims in New York, the heart of the 2009 edition featured a two week series of briefings with diplomats of member states who explained their countries' perspectives on major global issues and hot spots and also briefings with UN officials who explained what the UN is doing in them.

What stands out about the 2009 interim is the class’s briefing sessions with the ambassadors or high ranking diplomats of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Israel, and Palestine. The intensity of the issues in this part of the world was reflected in the briefings and sparked considerable discussion among the students. Students were also able to attend a special session of the General Assembly on the crisis in Gaza during the Israeli invasion. Other briefings included sessions with diplomats from China, South Korea, Brazil, the Philippines, and Dominican Republic on such issues as trade, development, global warming, and nuclear proliferation.

Senior Nathaniel Valk was one of many students to go on the trip and he considers the trip time-well spent. "In short, the interim was amazing. Professor Devries led an excellent interim, and Calvin is definitely going to be at a loss when he no longer offers the trip. Not only was spending three weeks in New York a great experience, the interim was also intellectually stimulating as it offered us the ability to experience first hand the conduct of international relations. What made the interim especially interesting was that it took place during Israel's assault on Gaza. As we had many briefings in the UN building, our class was literally at the center of where this conflict was being negotiated and resolved. It was very interesting to be able to talk with diplomats from both Israel and Palestine and to hear their countries' position on what was occurring. I am not sure that I will be able to experience something quite like that ever again!"

Overall, Devries was very pleased with the quality of the briefing sessions and especially proud of the participation of my students. Several of the diplomats commented on the well informed and insightful questions and comments of the students. For their part, students gained a deeper understanding of global issues and what the UN can do about them. This is valuable for all students, but especially for those who are considering careers in international affairs. Devries concluded, “this is why I have offered this interim for now the 12th time.”

Scholarships and Awards for 2009-2010

Dekryger-Monsman Memorial Scholarship
Krista Johnson

Charles Strikwerda Scholarship
Elizabeth Howell

Johan and Wilma Westra Scholarship
Kari Homgren

Dr. Bernard Zylstra S.J.D. Memorial Scholarship
Paul Hartge
Caitlin McGill
Paul Schrampfer
Jonathan Knowles

Peace and Justice Scholarship
Kristen Fletcher
Run
By Ann Patchett

Tip and Teddy Doyle lost their mother as children and were raised by a loving Irish Catholic father who was at one time the mayor of Boston. Now young adults, Tip and Teddy are close to their father, who hopes at least one of them will follow in his footsteps and embrace a life of public service in politics. The young men seem to have other plans, which include a great affection for the dusty halls of the Harvard Museum of Natural History and for their uncle Father Sullivan, a terminally ill Catholic priest. The lives of these captivating characters are soon thrown into disarray by a catastrophic car accident, and the turmoil will open them up to a past they had never known and a future they had never considered. Populated by unforgettable personalities and surprising turns of events, this novel is both a page-turner and a profound reflection on the duties we have to our families, our communities and our own vocations.

- Professor Goi

This Semester the Political Science Department hosted a variety of speakers in their annual Career Fair. The list of speakers included:

- Anita Woudenberg, Attorney with Bopp, Coleson, and Bostrom; Graduate of Valparaiso University School of Law. Practices in the areas of Constitutional First Amendment Law and Campaign Finance Law.
- Nana Yaa Dodi, Partnership Facilitator for Africa, through Partners Worldwide; a non-profit organization that works to eliminate poverty around the world by creating job initiatives.
- Amanda Whitcomb, Technical Editor for General Electric Aviation.
- Matt Dejong, Patrol officer with Grand Rapids City Police Department; formerly, a detective with the Grand Rapids Police Department.

Purple Hibiscus
By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Written by the author of Half of a Yellow Sun (a novel set during the Nigerian Civil War), this novel explores the themes of authoritarianism and freedom in Nigeria under military rule. Through the lives of an elite family, the author explores the human desire for freedom, the high cost of repression, gender roles, and the tensions between traditional religion and Christianity. A fast moving, enjoyable novel.

- Dr. Patterson

The Reformation of Rights
by Emory Law School Professor and Calvin alum John Witte, Jr.

A remarkably cogent and detailed argument that most modern civil and constitutional rights owe their existence to early Calvinist struggles for religious liberty. In other words, what we now think of as civil or "secular" human rights grew not from secular movements but from religious claims by Christian believers. The larger importance of this argument, says Witte, is that in our day "human rights norms need religious narratives to ground them critically."

- Professor Stevenson