Within the field of political science, it is important for scholars and government officials to exchange ideas. This past summer, from July 8-14, Prof. Joel Westra had the opportunity to participate in the US Scholars’ Delegation to Taiwan. In lieu of embassies and consulates, Taiwan conducts relations with the United States through Taiwan Economic and Cultural Offices (TECO). Each TECO office within its region was responsible for identifying candidates for the delegation. After Prof. Westra was identified by the TECO office in Chicago, he was asked to send in his credentials and was finally approved by the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Relations Office (TECRO) in DC. In all, TECRO selected eight US scholars to participate in the program, representing a range of fields including international business, law, security, and institutions.

The purpose of the US Scholars’ Delegation is to discuss policy with government officials, university institutes, and think tanks. Some of the officials the delegation met with included the Deputy Minister of National Defense, the Director General of the Department of International Cooperation within the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and the president of the Taipei Forum. During such meetings, the official would often give a policy briefing and then questions and discussion of the policy would follow. The meetings with the university institutes were less formal, following a roundtable format. These discussions fostered an exchange of ideas, covering topics centered on cross-strait relations with mainland China, US-China relations, US-Taiwan relations, and current issues and politics in Taiwan.

One of the current events Prof. Westra discussed with the delegates and officials focused on the trade dispute between the United States and Taiwan regarding US beef with artificial hormones. At the time Prof. Westra was visiting, Taiwan was waiting on a scientific ruling from Codex, which oversees international food trade, and there was a lot of domestic disagreement. Another timely issue that was discussed involved territorial disagreements between China and Japan, especially concerning the Senkaku Islands. Many developments took place in July, so the issue was a hot topic during Prof. Westra’s stay.

TECRO also encouraged Prof. Westra and the other delegates to explore Taiwan, so they arranged for them to visit the Taipei 101 Financial Tower, the Taiwan Handicraft Promotion Center, Longshan Temple, and the National Palace Museum among other sites.

By participating in the delegation, Prof. Westra said he gained a much better understanding of the domestic and international politics of Taiwan and also made both personal and professional connections with scholars from around the United States. Most of all, Prof. Westra appreciated the opportunity to be engaged in informed and analytical discussion about current events with policy makers.
Randall's involvement in the development of the project included through altering the existing structures or creating entirely new ones. His efforts to reform the charter and the entire global security order, military decision making by the permanent members of the Security Council, and finding that the process itself is gratifying. This decision is a testament to the strength of the candidates, and the fact that this was such a difficult decision was a testament to the strength of the students in this department. Prof. Westra noted. Prof. Westra’s project for the McGregor program could be called a “sequel” to his previous book, which looks at the law of the UN Charter as a restraint on military decision making by the permanent members of the Security Council P5. The book concludes with the question of how long states will be satisfied with the current charter, as it is in some ways outdated. This is where his second book will begin. It will look at states’ efforts to reform the charter and the entire global security order, through altering the existing structures or creating entirely new ones. Randall’s involvement in the development of the project included research in previous reform proposals and documenting how states responded to those proposals. After collecting the data, he then organized it into categories of acceptance of proposals, acquiescence, or rejection. The project is immense and still requires much research, but Randall enjoyed the challenge. He described it as the first job he has had where he was not consistently looking at the clock. Although the project demanded lots of reading and writing, Randall says it did not feel like work, but rather, scholarship. Randall also enjoyed the opportunity to work directly with Prof. Westra. He felt that Prof. Westra made a pointed effort to include Randall in the development of the project and considered Randall’s thoughts and findings, making him feel more like a junior scholar rather than hired help. The entire McGregor experience has taught Randall much about the research process and the persistence it requires. Since the project’s completion is still a few years in the making, Randall has learned to find joy in the process rather than the result, finding that the process itself is gratifying. This opportunity has also prepared Randall for policy analysis for international organizations. In January, Randall will begin an internship at the office of the US Ambassador to the UN in DC. The Political Science Department has a steady record of participation in the McGregor program. Prof. Westra himself has had three McGregor fellows in the last five years. Randall found the McGregor program to be an amazing opportunity to work one on one with a professor, and believes it is unfortunate that there are not more programs like this in the social sciences and humanities. He thinks any qualified student who wants to partake in such an opportunity should be encouraged, and he hopes donors will see the value in funding these types of programs.

As Calvin College has embraced change with the arrival of President Le Roy, so too has former Calvin political science professor Doug Koopman. The Political Science Department has had to say its farewells to Koopman, but he has not moved too far away. Across the beltline, Koopman now works as the Executive Associate to the President for Communication and Planning. The title is quite the mouthful, but Koopman described his new position neatly. The “communication” part of his job includes improving communication across the various departments of the college in order to make sure the college is operating efficiently and transparently. The “planning” portion consists of helping the community to envision what Calvin College will look like in five or ten years. Koopman does not make these decisions himself, but rather facilitates how people of the Calvin community, such as alumni, current faculty and staff members, and even future Calvin parents, can contribute to the decision-making. In addition to these tasks, Koopman will also tackle special projects that emerge. As President Le Roy is new to the Calvin community, Koopman has also been helping him understand what Calvin is all about. Koopman has been with Calvin College since 1995, spending 17 years with the Political Science Department teaching mostly American government courses. Before coming to Calvin, Koopman worked in Washington DC for members of Congress on personal, committee, and leadership staffs. His current position is similar to his work in Washington. Like a chief of staff, Koopman is responsible for protecting the president’s time and advancing his priorities. It is his responsibility to help the president achieve his goals, and similarly, to help the college “get where it wants to go” as well. As a result, Koopman sometimes has to set his own views aside, for it is the college’s opinion that matters. In this way, his job is also like Capitol Hill in that a chief of staff works according to his representative’s vision, not his own. Describing his position as “the best of politics and the best of Calvin College together,” Koopman thoroughly enjoys it. However, he admitted to missing the students. While he does not yearn to grade papers, Koopman misses helping the students with anything they might need. Koopman also wanted to state that any student who reads this may take him out to lunch! Good luck with the new position, Dr. Koopman! The department will miss you very much.
Before he passed away in 2010, Dr. Jim Penning, director of the Center for Social Research (CSR) and faculty member of the Political Science Department, was disappointed with the lack of thorough public discussion and news coverage concerning cooperation among local governments. At the time, the One Kent campaign, which proposed to merge all Kent County governments, was just beginning to emerge.

Dr. Penning suspected that the public’s opinions would be more complex than media coverage suggested. In cooperation with the current director of CSR, Dr. Neil Carlson, Dr. Penning created a brief set of survey questions and presented the idea to the Community Research Institute (CRI) at Grand Valley State University. After working with public officials to adapt and expand the questions, CRI incorporated Dr. Penning’s and Dr. Carlson’s questions within their regularly scheduled survey of Kent County residents, the Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey. In addition, they created a short survey with the same questions for public officials. According to Dr. Carlson, the surveys for both the residents and officials included questions about the “respondents’ exposure to information about government cooperation” and also “general support of intergovernmental cooperation and sharing of services.”

Since graduating from Calvin in 2009, Amos Garcia has been able to use the skills he learned through his political science classes in various ways. Until December 2010, Garcia worked in Washington DC for the National Alliance for Public Safety GIS Foundation, which is a public safety-related organization working towards increasing awareness and use of GIS technology among public safety responders. Garcia brought together public safety members from all levels of government by coordinating regional educational workshops. In August 2011, Garcia traveled to the National University of Singapore to attend graduate school at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. He is studying Economic Policy and Analysis, and he is also the editor for the school’s academic journal, the Asian Journal of Public Affairs. Eager to explore opportunities throughout Asia, Garcia spent this past summer interning at the Philippine Central Bank and is currently on exchange in Beijing at Tsinghua University’s School of Public Policy and Management. He will finish his degree in May of 2013. Although Garcia’s focus has shifted more towards economics, he explains that the political science classes prepared him for graduate school in the several ways. First, Garcia has been able to handle the work load in graduate school because of the demanding reading and writing requirements at Calvin. In fact, Garcia has been surprised to find the work load relatively equal, if not lighter. In addition, the political science classes taught Garcia how to maximize his time. He noted how he learned to absorb the important concepts from his readings in spite of the fast pace of the courses. Garcia has also found that the study of the historical development and current state of national and international political regimes has helped him in his study of governance issues in Asia. During his experience with the Political Science Department, Garcia found the Washington DC semester and Prof. DeVries’ UN program to be most memorable. Garcia participated in the DC program in the spring of 2008, and it helped prepare him for the professional world of DC. In fact, his internship supervisor hired him to work at NAPSG after he graduated. Concerning Prof. DeVries’ UN program, Garcia noted that it “provided interesting insight into the slow and highly bureaucratic nature of the UN, but I was surprised at how much progress and compromise happens behind closed doors beyond the public eye.” As Garcia finishes his remaining year of graduate school, he hopes to pursue work in policy research, analysis, and consultation through an international or non-profit policy-related organization or through an academic think tank or research institute with a focus on economic development and growth in Southeast Asia.
**Visualizing Public Life Project**

The Henry Institute is sponsoring a program, in partnership with the Calvin Center for Social Research, which encourages students to explore various approaches to demonstrating quantitative information about public life through visual presentations. The goals include helping students develop aesthetic and technical competence in interpreting and producing good visualizations (such as maps, charts, and graphic representations), fostering moral discernment about how visualizations are produced and used, and enhancing the technical skills of students in this area. The projects will be entered in a juried competition and public display of student exhibits in the spring of 2013. Finalists’ projects will be displayed publicly at the Henry Institute Symposium held in April 2013.

**2012 Election Conversations**

The Henry Institute has co-sponsored a number of programs that center around debates and conversations about issues pertinent to the November elections.

- Sept. 9: “Religion and Political Division: How Should We Respond”
- Sept. 26: “Criminal Justice Issues: a Kent County Candidate Forum”
- Nov. 8: “Post Election Analysis”

**Senior Research Fellows and Visiting Scholars**

Dr. Corwin Smidt and Dr. Stephen Monsma are serving as Senior Research Fellows for the Henry Institute this year. In their role, they continue research and scholarship projects which are pertinent to the mission and goals of the Institute.

The Institute is also welcoming a visiting research fellow from China for the upcoming academic year. Mary Ma is in the United States to study at Calvin Theological Seminary while also continuing her research on Chinese house churches under a grant from the Center for the Study of Chinese Religion and Society at Purdue University and the Templeton Foundation.

**Department Picks**

*The Quiet World: Saving Alaska’s Wilderness Kingdom, 1879-1960* by Douglas Brinkley

*The Quiet World* is a rich and raw examination of efforts to save wilderness in Alaska, from the years before statehood through the burgeoning environmental movement of the 1960s. Historian Douglas Brinkley introduces readers to both the land itself and the people committed to saving it, and the result is a fascinating tale of how human passion and clever political strategy converged to protect a stunning array of natural resources on the Alaskan frontier. The cast of characters ranges from John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt in the early years to Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and biologist Rachel Carson in the mid-20th century. Douglas does not hide his own support for strong protections of the wilderness, but his considerable research is the focus, not his own beliefs.

Professor Kevin den Dulk

*The Flowers of War* Directed by Zhang Yimou

"The Flowers of War" depicts the 1937 Nanjing Massacre through the eyes of a young Chinese girl who is a student at a convent school in the city. What is most intriguing about this film is the insight it gives into longstanding Chinese resentment toward Japan arising from the events it portrays, conveyed by director Zhang Yimou via a film intended primarily for Western audiences. Critics have praised the film for its visual imagery and actor performances, but also criticized it for tending toward sensationalism. However, given the enduring emotional and political impact of the events being portrayed - and the horror of the events themselves - the film is far more nuanced than one might have expected and thought-provoking as well.

Professor Joel Westra