IR Matters!

Majors, Alumni, and Friends: We have come to the end of another year for the International Relations Department. This marks the end of our first year in our new office space in Academic West and with the exception of a few “moving in pains”; we are settled into our new environment. Students and alumni that have visited the new building have responded positively to what they have seen. If you happen to be on campus stop by the third floor and take in the views from the terrace!

This semester we welcomed 38 new students to the major and the faculty are looking forward to engaging these students as they begin their path in International Relations. The number of majors remains strong and we are further encouraged by the Admitted Students Day this spring, where there was standing room only in a session where I discussed international relations and the major. This is very promising for the future of the department.

After the success of our faculty panel on the politics in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, we held another panel this past semester on food security. The panel comprised Jason Cons and Erin Lentz from IR and Clare Sammells from Sociology. In a well-attended event, they drew on their research to address the various ways that food insecurity is emerging in the world and how it is being addressed. Given, the response to these panels, we will try to continue them into the future. Be on the lookout for a panel in the fall on contemporary European politics focusing on the impact of European elections to be held this year.

During the spring semester, we also held an alumni panel. Maddie de Boinville, Andy Watts, and Jennie Welch spoke to a full house in the Traditional Reading Room. The provided the students in attendance with insight into how the IR major has helped them and gave ample advice on succeeding in finding job opportunities. I’d like to thank them for their participation. We know that majors highly value these opportunities to connect with alumni and we will also be working to continue offer these types of events in the future. So, for any alumni that would be interested in coming back and sharing your experiences, please do not hesitate to contact us.

It is with some sadness, but with best wishes that I must inform you of Professor Richard Waller’s decision to retire at the end of the 2014-15 academic year. He has been a valuable member of the International Relations and History Departments and will be missed. Since he is still with us for yet another year, we will not dwell on his loss instead value his time with us. But, we will make sure that he leaves us all with some parting words in a future newsletter before he departs.

Finally, congratulations and best wishes to our seniors. You have all worked hard for four years and are now embarking on the next stage of your lives. Embrace this moment as you have prepared yourselves well for the future.

Best regards,
David Mitchell
Chair, Department of International Relations

Congratulations Class of 2014!
On Friday, February 7th the International Relations Department welcomed back three graduates, Madeleine de Boinville ’09, Jennie Welch ’11, and Andrew Watts ’13 to discuss their career paths and offer advice for students as they explore internship and job opportunities. Maddie currently works as a Social Science Analyst at the Department of Health and Human Services, conducting research and policy analysis on a variety of human services issues. Jennie works as a Program Associate for the Committee of 100, an international non-profit that focuses on Sino-U.S. ties and Asian American community issues, doing research, communications, event planning, and program design. Andrew is an Associate for Global Impact, an international philanthropic solutions organization, where he supports the workplace giving and partnerships team with research on corporate social responsibility and analyses on company-specific global giving trends.

Each graduate had valuable advice to offer current students. Maddie shared her story from landing her first job for a housing consulting firm in New Orleans, to earning her Master’s Degree in Public Policy, to eventually working at the Department of Health and Human Services. She stressed the importance of networking as part of “everyday life,” encouraging students to make connections and maintain them. As a recent graduate, Andrew explained his path to securing his first job working for Global Impact, also emphasizing the importance of networking with fellow Bucknellians, which was a crucial step in him landing an internship and eventual job at Global Impact. He encouraged travel, living abroad, and becoming well versed in international affairs as important for those interested in pursuing a career in international relations. Jennie described her path from receiving a Fulbright grant to study rural child malnutrition, to interning at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, to finally working for the Committee of 100. She emphasized the importance of utilizing every summer for a meaningful internship experience that can build up skills and interests later applied in the workplace. Whether through internships or in the classroom, all of the graduates inspired students to take advantage of every opportunity to enhance themselves professionally by improving communication and analytical skills and developing a strong network of connections.

Toni Blanchard ’14

Bucknell’s New China Institute

Under the directorship of IR professor Zhiqun Zhu, a new China Institute was officially launched at Bucknell University in fall 2013. Several Bucknell faculty members began contemplating a center for China studies as early as the mid-1990s. Due to insufficient interest and support, the plan was aborted. A couple of years ago, a few faculty members got together and revived the idea of a China program on campus.
China Institute, Cont’d.

With China in the international headlines daily, interest in the Asian giant has grown noticeably on campus. Encouraged by the tremendous support received this time around, the interested faculty from various disciplines formed a six-member steering committee and submitted a formal program proposal to the Office of the Provost and the Office and the College of Arts and Sciences. Without much surprise, the administration quickly gave green light to the establishment of the China Institute.

The Institute’s major objective is to promote teaching, learning and research about China at Bucknell. Since its inauguration a few months ago, the Institute has presented several lectures by our own faculty as well as invited speakers; hosted a national China Town Hall in cooperation with the National Committee on US-China Relations, which featured former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; and begun to reach out to institutions in China and other parts of Asia to explore new opportunities for study abroad and exchange programs. To highlight student research about China, the Institute held its first all-student panel in February 2014. Four current Bucknell students, one from each class, were selected to present their research on issues ranging from the future of the Chinese Community Party to China’s relations with Israel. One of the presenters was an IR major.

Most notably, the Institute hosted an international conference on China and Innovation, April 3-4, 2014 on campus. Chicago University Professor John Mearsheimer, whose works on offensive realism are familiar to IR majors, was the keynote speaker. His talk “Can China Rise Peacefully?” attracted a roomful of students and faculty at the Trout Auditorium, who raised many challenging questions during the Q&A session.

The China Institute is committed to contributing to diversity and cutting-edge research and teaching about China at Bucknell University. For this purpose, we welcome all program suggestions and ideas from our alumni as well as current faculty and students.

Professor Zhiqun Zhu

IR Professor Travels to Iran

In January of 2014, I was invited on a delegation to Iran entitled “Academics for Peace”. The purpose of this delegation was to foster understanding between individual Iranian and US academics, and for the American academics to develop some understanding of Iranian academic and political culture, outside of the simplistic narratives of fear promoted by US media. Our delegation was comprised of 10 members, 5 professors from schools of Arts and Sciences, and 5 from divinity schools across the United States. In our week-long trip, we traveled to Tehran and to Qom, called the city of Mullahs.

Our trip introduced us to Iranian Political culture, wherein as a result of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, academics within “think tanks” pursue studies of the implementation of Islamic values in dealing with the most pressing political and social concerns. The center for Islam and Economy examined the role of Shi’a Islam in promoting an economic system that provides for the most vulnerable, and at the ministry of education, we heard of the impacts of US sanctions on Iran on academics who are investigating issues ranging from the role of women in Iran’s political culture, to the use of Algae biofuels to mitigate pollution in Tehran.

The purpose of our trip was not to indicate our support for the Islamic revolution, but rather to understand it better, and to make contact with individual academics and to understand their experiences as colleagues. At the same time, our trip participants were critical of the ways that the US/Iran relationship has been handled for decades, and went in the hopes of supporting a more productive relationship between the two countries. This new relationship must, of course, take into account the history of animosity between the US government and the Iranian people, exemplified by the US-supported 1953 coup that removed the democratically-elected Mohammed Mossadeh.
Iran, Cont’d.

from power, and replaced him with the Shah of Iran, who while friendly with the West, engaged in campaigns of terror to maintain control of the country. While the Islamic Republic has little in common with the goals of Mossadegh’s secular regime, we were often reminded by government officials that much of the mistrust of the United States, in academic as well as popular circles came directly from this history of the US opposition to democracy throughout the 1950’s, 60’s, and 70’s.

It was also important to note the dynamics of Iranian society in the Islamic Republic. As many as 70 percent of terminal-degree recipients in Iran are women, and the revolution has produced some significant successes in development, including poverty reduction, health care, and education. Iranian political culture is divided, among those who seek to promote a new era of relations with the West, this is the faction that is currently in power in Iran, and those who wish to remain isolated from the West and to pursue their own agendas of development and politics.

During our short visit, we encountered academics from the most influential Iranian universities, including the University of Tehran, the School for International Relations, religious institutions, and think tanks that examined issues of Islam and society, and Islam and the economy. Our final day, we met with Dr. Hamid Baeidinejad, the head of the Iranian nuclear negotiations team, and presented him with questions and concerns, and our support for peaceful resolution of the current US/Iranian antagonism. Throughout, we were treated with respect, and a genuine interest in collaboration, and though our trip was extremely short, we left with a better understanding of some of the complicated dynamics of the Iranian/US relationship.

“Light the Way!”: Bucknell’s First Service Trip to China

Born in Shanghai, one of the most modern cities in China, I had little idea about the economic gap in the country. As I grew up and traveled more, I started to understand the world better. I chose International Relations as my major because I think our world needs more global citizens not only with knowledge but also with open minds to make it a better place. During the freshman year at Bucknell University, I met fellow Bucknell student Sean Xu who recently formed Go Beyond Class, a student-run nonprofit organization committed to pursuing social justice through community services. After sharing our own experiences in China and the USA, we both agreed that besides helping students in rural areas in China, it would be very important to raise the Asia awareness on this campus. A lot of Bucknell students do not get a chance to see the outside world; we hope our program will bring something different to Bucknell and provide an opportunity for students to learn more about Asia.

We created Bucknell University’s first service-learning trip in China last summer, from May 11 to May 29. Faculty advisor to Go Beyond Class Professor Zhiqun Zhu, who joined us on the trip, said the experience is an important complement to course work in Lewisburg. “There is a Chinese saying: Walk 10,000 miles, read 10,000 books,” he said. “One’s education is not complete if one only studies by reading books. Service-learning is a form of active learning, and this way learning and service reinforce each other. Simply put, you kill two birds with one stone: active learning through service and direct experience of a foreign culture.”

During our trip, we visited Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu and Yunnan to study how they can offset educational inequalities. The highlight of the trip was the service-learning part at the remote Ninglang country of Yunnan province. From helping to improve playgrounds to providing solar-powered study lamps, we interacted with local students, most of whom live and study in rooms without running water or electricity. We asked these elementary school students to draw pictures about their dreams. We wanted them to feel that we were not just giving, but were exchanging the school supplies we brought for their artistic pieces. We brought back all the paintings and held the “Light the Way” art exhibition at the Samek Art Museum this spring, followed by a silent auction to raise more money for the children. “It’s anticipated that Bucknell students will continue making such service-learning visits to China,” said Professor Zhu.

Maxy Xiao ’15

(International Relations and Spanish major)
Food (In)Security: Emerging Issues and Problems

The International Relations department hosted a panel on March 6, 2014 on the contemporary dilemma of food insecurity in various regions of the world. Entitled, “Food (In)security: Emerging Issues and Problems,” featuring Professors Erin Lentz and Jason Cons of the International Relations Department, and Professor Clare Sammells of the Sociology and Anthropology Department.

Professor Lentz argued there needs to be more nuance to our understanding of the roles of international food aid and food assistance. She discussed three recent pieces of evidence that are already, and can further, transform food security interventions. She spoke about the role of increased flexibility of food assistance options, the new attention on nutritional quality of food aid, and the importance first 1000 days (from conception to age 2) for food security. She argued that findings from these three research areas can reshape food assistance policies to be more responsive to recipient needs.

Professor Cons discussed recent research on the social impacts of shrimp aquaculture in coastal Bangladesh. While this industry has been a major source of revenue for the country, it has had devastating environmental and social impacts on islands where intensive adoption of shrimp aquaculture has occurred. While the ecological impacts of this industry have radically altered social life for everyone in these spaces, they have been most deeply felt by landless laborers, many of whom have been dispossessed of what little land they held, robbed of opportunities to pursue agricultural livelihoods, and displaced into urban slums in Bangladesh.

Professor Sammells considered the concerns of Americans and Europeans about their increasing quinoa consumption and the impact this might have on its Bolivian producers and diets. She problematized the argument that US quinoa sales are "starving" Bolivians, noting that the decrease in quinoa consumption in Bolivia is part of a long historical process involving colonialism, food aid policies, and cultural changes. Quinoa consumption within Bolivian is also uneven, based on region, class, residence, and other factors. While potatoes are the main staple in the highlands, quinoa has important symbolic significance disproportionate to its consumption.

The panel concluded with Q&A. Danielle Brottman ’14 asked what role we play as individuals: “Do we boycott shrimp and quinoa? Do we only donate to certain food aid organizations?” Professor Lentz responded, “This is an important question on how can we infect change. Being a critical consumer of what you eat is a difficult task. There is a lot of money and politics involved in that that makes it a harder task…it’s really hard work.”

IR looks forward to organizing another thought provoking roundtable in Fall 2014.

Please stay tuned….
Can China Rise Peacefully?

On April 3rd and 4th 2014, Bucknell University hosted a conference called “China and Innovation: Past, Present and Future”. Organized by the China Institute headed by Professor Zhiqun Zhu, the conference included varying perspectives on China’s current situation and possible future in the realm of international relations. The two keynote speakers were John Mearsheimer and Dongbai Ye. The conference included panels on Chinese innovation that covered history, economics, and technology.

John J. Mearsheimer gave the opening address at the conference. A distinguished professor at the University of Chicago, Mearsheimer made an exciting and passionate speech about the “China threat”, using his famous theory of “offensive realism”. Mearsheimer’s argument that China will not rise peacefully is based on the assumption that China’s economy will continue to grow. As long as its economy is steady, nothing will stop China from following in the footsteps of the United States in establishing its version of the Monroe Doctrine, and China will no longer tolerate global competitors such as the United States. Mearsheimer ended his speech by saying that even the best theories may turn out to be 75% right and 25% wrong most of the time. Therefore, he hopes that he is in the 25% wrong category or else the United States will be facing a showdown with China in the near future.

The audience remained doubtful on whether one can downplay the importance of economics in today’s world. Convinced by Mearsheimer’s argument or not, one would agree that it was a very stimulating speech to start off the conference with.

The other keynote speaker was Dongbai Ye, who presented at the luncheon on the second day of the conference. Ye was Consul for Science and Technology from the Consulate General of the People’s Republic of China in New York. His speech, “Innovation-Driven Development: China’s Strategic Choice”, was given in Chinese and translated into English by East Asian Studies Professor Song Chen. Ye’s argument was that innovation is an urgent need for China, and the government must play a key role in that process. The presentation included statistics about Chinese inventions that supported China’s commitment to innovation.

Bucknell University’s China conference was a great success because it brought together students, professors, and visitors from other schools and businesses to explore the varying perspectives of China’s future. China is one of the most important issues currently in international relations, and Bucknell showed its own innovation by devoting a conference to the pressing topic.

Danielle Brottman ’14

IR Faculty News

This semester, Professor Cons traveled to the Association for Asian Studies annual meetings in Philadelphia to present a paper titled “Modeling the Border: Space, Politics, and Symbolic Development” on a joint panel he organized exploring the return of model villages as a development strategy in Asia. He completed work on a piece co-authored with Kasia Paprocki (Cornell University) that is forthcoming in the Journal of Peasant Studies titled “Life in a Shrimp Zone: Aqua- and Other Cultures in Bangladesh’s Coastal Landscape” and completed work on a paper titled “The Fragments and their Nations: Making and Unmaking Territory at the India-Bangladesh Border” that is forthcoming in a special issue of SAMAJ: A Journal of South Asian Studies on “Ideas of South Asia.”
This summer, he will take part in a writing workshop on political boundaries in Asia at Aarhus University in Denmark. He is in the process of completing his book, *Sensitive Space: Anxious Territory at the India-Bangladesh Border*, under contract at University of Washington Press.

During January 8 - 11, Professor Lentz attended an AidData Research Consortium meeting at the College of William and Mary. She is a member of the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Team within AidData. AidData is committed to making information about development financing more transparent and accessible. She gave a talk on February 7 at the Penn State Dickinson School of Law entitled "The Future of Food Assistance: Opportunities and Challenges" for the Journal of Law and International Affairs Symposium on The 9 Billion People Question: The Challenge of Global Resource Scarcity. She also agreed to be a member of the Research on Food Assistance for Nutritional Impact consortium's Nutrition Research Steering Committee. Its first meeting is in July in London. Over a three year project, the steering committee will provide technical and ethical guidance on creating an evidence base on how best to prevent acute undernutrition in emergencies.

This semester, Professor Smith has been working on a study of the impacts of siege and isolation on vulnerable communities in the Gaza Strip in Palestine. He is also developing a book, based on his dissertation examining the political geography of Occupation as a practice in the West Bank and Gaza, and how these practices change over space and time. He submitted an article entitled “Salt in the Wounds,” which is a qualitative study of the ways in which the Israeli-led siege on Gaza promotes neoliberal policies in an overall context of de-development, using the Khan Younis Desalination Plant as a model of study. Professor Smith also presented a paper at the Annual Association of American Geographers conference in Tampa, Florida. Professor Smith was invited onto a panel on modern warfare at this conference, and he presented a paper calling for increased critical study of the role of blockades, sanctions, and siege in modern war.

Professor Uçarer published two journal articles. Her article “Tempering the EU? NGO Advocacy in the Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice” appeared in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. Another piece, entitled “Access and Agenda Setting in the European Union: Advocacy NGOs in Comparative Perspective” (co-authored with Markus Thiel of Florida International University), was published in the journal *Interest Groups & Advocacy*. She attended the International studies Association annual convention in Toronto where she was a panelist in the roundtable “Enhancing and Validating the Study of International Affairs: Integrating Honor Societies into the Educational Experience.”

Professor Waller has just completed a long online annotated bibliography of crime and law in colonial Africa for Oxford University Press (part of an ongoing OUP bibliographical project). He is currently writing a conference paper on the colonial roots of lawlessness and violence in contemporary Kenya.

The International Relations Department

From left: Jason Cons, David Mitchell, Kim DiRocco (administrative assistant), Emek Uçarer, Erin Lentz, Ron Smith, Richard Waller, and Zhiqun Zhu