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Virginia Tech Institute for Policy & Governance  
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**From the Director: Tidings Quarterly Reflection:  
Editing *Reflections*: Pedagogical Project and Emblem  
of Democratic Possibility**

Note to readers:

Today, I share as my *Tidings* column, my introduction to the forthcoming book to be published this fall, Max Stephenson Jr. and Lyusyena Kirakosyan, Eds., *RE: Reflections and Explorations: A Forum for Deliberative Dialogue* (Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance, 2017). I do so, convinced that this second volume in this series is very much in keeping with what we aspire for the Institute to do and simultaneously an evocation of the issues it treats. Graduate students from multiple disciplines and perspectives contribute to the *Reflections* series each semester, thereby illuminating a range of public and democratic governance challenges from a diversity of points-of-view. This volume's introductory essay reflects on the weekly *Reflections* editorial process that yields those articles. As I note below, we began the *Reflections* series nearly five years ago with an ambitious aim:

I hoped it [the *Reflections* series] could serve both as a lens into the catholicity and fruitfulness of a major university's intellectual life, at least as it pertained to democratic politics and governance. Moreover, I hoped it could contribute to a larger social conversation about just such



Max Stephenson  
Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy  
and Governance

concerns within the university and well beyond its boundaries. I see and saw *Reflections*, too, as an example of what former Yale University President A. Bartlett Giamatti once labeled the university in its role in cultural life:

“a free and ordered space” (Giamatti,1990). My continuing hope as its editor is that *Reflections* can offer its contributors a vital and fulfilling opportunity to share their intellectual interests and ambitions in a forum dedicated to the best of democratic probity and sensitivity, and in a context of civility and genuine and sustained engagement. These are ideals certainly, just as they are for the university writ large, but I hope the essays collected here suggest that all involved take them seriously.

My fond hope too is that the essays gathered in the new volume reflect those aims, even as they demonstrate the intellectual vitality and fertile imaginations of their contributors. MOS

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One key goal when the Institute for Policy and Governance launched *RE: Reflections and Explorations* was to provide the graduate students who write for it a professional editorial experience, since most are at the start of careers that will involve writing as their lingua franca. That editorial responsibility has fallen to me as I work with authors each week during the fall and spring semesters to polish their efforts for publication. I have found myself reflecting on that editorial role and its relationship to the potential for students’ growth as authors, professionals and scholars.

I was fortunate as a graduate student to work with a scholar considered an especially lucid and artful writer who helped me enormously as I developed my own writing capabilities. He proved endlessly patient and wise and willing to explain why he made specific suggestions to improve my prose. And more, he trusted me to edit his drafts, including a redrafting of his most famous book, in an effort, I am sure in retrospect, to help me develop as a writer and intellectual. I have always been grateful and humbled by these opportunities, even as they sensitized me as a young man to how important editing and editors can be in helping writers develop their finest possible work.

In that spirit, what follows are some thoughts on editing as democratic and pedagogical possibility and aspiration. I have sought to organize my treatment of these concerns around the recollections of a number of contributors to the *New York Review of Books* concerning the role of that journal’s editors’ guidance in their careers as they remembered their work with Robert B. Silvers, who died in March 2017. I was struck, by how similar those writers’ comments on his prodigious efforts were to my editorial aims for this series. While the *Review* is world renowned and its editor was perhaps unparalleled in his talent and intellectual reach, as an editor his work nevertheless embodied lessons and experience for all of those who would shoulder such responsibilities. I seek to highlight those here with profound respect for Silvers’ towering achievements.

Silvers was the legendary co-editor of *The New York Review of Books (NRRB)* from its founding in 1963 until 2006, and lone-editor from then until his death. He was 88 when he died and still working long hours at what he called the “paper.” He was fondly remembered in the ensuing weeks by the countless authors and reviewers whose lives he had touched and work he had helped shape. I was particularly interested to learn what those writers valued in his efforts and why. I here share some of those perspectives because they illustrate the goals I have sought to attain as I have worked with graduate student contributors to this series on the wide array of topics and concerns they treat.

In his comments on the role Silvers played in his writing career, professor and author (and now editor of the *New York Review of Books*) Ian Buruma argued,

My life as a writer owes everything to Bob's editorship. He had too much respect for writers he trusted to wish to change their individual styles. ... But he had an infallible eye for loose thinking. ... He made you think harder. There was no room in his "paper" for fuzziness or vague abstractions. He wanted examples, descriptions and concrete thoughts (Buruma, 2017, p.31).

When I read this remembrance, I thought, "just so, I experienced this, too." My aim as editor in this series has, in consequence, consistently been to be a curious and interested reader who respects contributors' writing styles, but who always asks that they ensure that what they say is as clear and clean as they can make it. My motive is two-fold as I press for editorial clarity and concision. First, when authors make such efforts, they become better thinkers and more capable of precisely articulating what they wish to contend substantively and why. And, one central aim of graduate education is to produce sophisticated analytical thinkers who can contribute to scholarship in their selected fields or to their chosen professions with equal aplomb. Secondly, to have an impact and to realize their personal goals, authors must share the fruits of those capacities, and lucid writing can do so with power, grace and, at its best, élan. So, my work on this series is aimed at helping students develop precise thinking and writing in tandem. I do so by asking that they write so all can understand them, and so the joy or quickened pulse that first animated their interest in a topic can shine through.

Fintan O'Toole, the famed Irish columnist, drama critic and literary editor recalled Silvers' editorial acumen this way:

The great editor is a chimerical creature, combining contrary qualities in one mind: assertive, and self-effacing, commanding and sensitive and infinitely curious and sharply focused, patient and fearfully demanding, wide angle and close-up. Robert Silvers was the greatest editor of our time because he managed these contradictions with a seemingly effortless elegance (O'Toole, 2017, p.35)

I have been editing *Reflections* for four and one-half years and can attest that this editorial role demands just these contradictory capacities and characteristics and they are ever difficult to balance. In my experience, this series' authors are wildly different despite the fact that all are graduate students. Some think and write broadly and are deeply interested in the intersections among phenomena, while others cast their intellectual nets more narrowly and work to focus their analyses as much as possible. Some are naturally interested in developing their writing capacities, while others are less so. Some are preternaturally curious about a wide array of concerns, while others have singular and single-minded interests. Some wish to explore broad philosophic frames, while others crave the specificity of particular policy choices. And so on.

As their editor, and as one who wishes to help each develop their intellectual and writing capacities, I seek weekly to discern their interests and direction and to help them attain it. I try to impart key concerns as sensitively and sharply as possible, while working to ensure the highest quality outcome feasible in the time frame available. As O'Toole notes in his paean to how well Silvers balanced these claims, these imperatives can be treacherous and yet, in their evocation, editors can highlight that which is most significant about their shared enterprise with authors, and help the writers realize their own aspirations more fully. This is not

merely a technical matter, but ethically tricky ground that demands imagination, empathy, self-awareness and discipline on the part of the editor. To be blunt, the responsibility is humbling.

O'Toole also noted that Silvers sought to edit the *Review* for a broad, but literate, audience:

He believed that there is such a thing as the general reader, that public life depends on the existence of a common space in which ideas can be shared, absorbed, mulled over, kicked around (O'Toole, 2017, p. 35).

We began the *Reflections* series with a like aspiration. I hoped it could serve both as a lens into the catholicity and fruitfulness of a major university's intellectual life, at least as it pertained to democratic politics and governance. Moreover, I hoped it could contribute to a larger social conversation about just such concerns within the university and well beyond its boundaries. I see and saw *Reflections*, too, as an example of what former Yale University President A. Bartlett Giamatti once labeled the university in its role in cultural life: "a free and ordered space" (Giamatti, 1990). My continuing hope as its editor is that *Reflections* can offer its contributors a vital and fulfilling opportunity to share their intellectual interests and ambitions in a forum dedicated to the best of democratic probity and sensitivity, and in a context of civility and genuine and sustained engagement. These are ideals certainly, just as they are for the university writ large, but I hope the essays collected here suggest that all involved take them seriously.

O'Toole also observed that Silvers unfailingly exhibited a related attribute in increasingly short supply in our present socially fractious moment, courtesy. I have sought to realize a similar aspiration for this series:

I always come back in thinking about Bob to his imperturbable courtesy. His good manners were not mere mannerisms. They said something. They were a constant reminder to the rest of us ... to remember that it all matters, that the life of a great journal is part of the life of democracy itself (O'Toole, 2017, p.35).

Universities, certainly, should be places in which many may hold diverse perspectives and may be granted leave and space to articulate and defend those as persuasively and vigorously as they can. Such freedom of thought and speech is the sine qua non of inquiry itself and central to the idea and potential of the university. *Reflections* includes a wide array of perspectives, and my role as editor is to help those offering them present them as cogently as possible. I do not seek to judge what is or is not acceptable against any sort of litmus test other than analytical rigor, clarity and cogency.

Columbia University political scientist and historian of ideas Mark Lilla has suggested *The Review* from its start

... was a democratic pedagogical project. ... Bob was a teacher, one of the greatest I have ever encountered. Many stories have been told of his legendary interventionism—the late-night calls about an obscure sentence, the flood of packages, faxes and later emails with suggested reading. ...What the journalists missed, but his authors

knew, is that the process of endless refinement was the point. ... It was a vocation, in the strict sense, an expression of magnanimity (Lilla, 2017, p.34).

As with the *Review's* essays for its authors, I hope that *Reflections* constitutes a journey for its contributors, and one that encourages them to continue to refine and develop their writing and intellectual capabilities, and to do so in a way that readers may access so that their ideas can become part of broader conversations and potentially thereby influence the evolving views and understanding of those they reach. More, I hope that engagement with *Reflections* teaches contributors that the life of a scholar is an ever-unfolding process of wonder and refinement in which one is continuously captivated by questions one did not originally even know to ask as an expanding tableau of inquiry unfolds. This is literature and analysis as metaphor for an intellectual life, and for how the same can inform democratic opportunity.

This refinement orientation also embodies a broader philosophic reality: many, if not most of the essential questions that confront humankind are not “answerable” in some finite sense, but instead represent constant preoccupations and approximations as men and women struggle to live justly and to secure freedom for themselves and for others in the face of their own frailties and brokenness. Perhaps writing as metaphor for such processes of endless and ambiguous personal enlightenment and social experiment and approximation is an especially apt mechanism by which graduate scholars can begin practically to address this reality of human existence.

While now under attack by an illiberal trend in social norms and governance, universities, at their best, embody the ideal of democratic possibility as perhaps no other institution can. They are forums and repositories for restless learning and for imagination. They are spaces in which talented individuals can follow their intellectual and moral hunches and explore the antecedents of those notions as well as their likely implications against a wide range of possibly relevant criteria. Indeed, the reach of universities is theoretically only limited by the reach of the human mind.

Finally, we should remind ourselves periodically that today's graduate students will lead tomorrow's higher education institutions. What a privilege, then, to offer those individuals opportunities to unleash their imaginations, to engage in the exhilarating passion of discovery and to learn the discipline that freedom and free inquiry demand. My fond hope is that *Reflections* can continue to play a small role in the realization of these vital goals for those whose work it presents and for the broader society it serves.

### References

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## Opportunities

**Call for Proposals** (deadline **October 9, 2017**) The 2018 Appalachian Studies Conference will be held at the Millennium Hotel in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio, April 5-8, 2018. The theme of the conference is “Re-stitching the Seams: Appalachia Beyond Its Borders.” ([appalachianstudies.org/annualconference/](http://appalachianstudies.org/annualconference/))

**Call for Submissions** (deadline **October 27, 2017**) The 13th International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) Conference will take place July 10-13, 2018 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The theme of the conference is “Democracy and Legitimacy: The Role of the Third Sector in a Globalizing World.” Conference organizers are keenly interested in a wide range of submissions, especially on topics related to democracy and legitimacy. In addition, ISTR is also interested in research which advances our understanding of theory, policy, and practice of third sector organizations. Overall, the 2018 Amsterdam conference offers a unique, and particularly valuable, venue for engaging with its very diverse membership of scholars to deepen our knowledge of these important issues. ([www.istr.org/?Amsterdam](http://www.istr.org/?Amsterdam))

**Call for Submissions** (deadline **October 6, 2017**) The 76th Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference will take place April 5-8, 2018 at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago, IL. For complete information about Papers, Roundtables, and Complete Panel Proposals, go to their website at: <http://www.mpsanet.org/>.

## Opportunities (continued)

### Anger and Revolutionary Justice

The Program in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics will host its PPE Distinguished Public Lecture on **November 03, 2017 (McBryde 100, 4-6pm)**. The lecture will be delivered by Professor Martha Nussbaum who is a highly accomplished scholar, a role model for women inside and outside of academia, and a pioneer with regard to issues of diversity and inclusion, especially in the context of the topic of social justice. Professor Nussbaum will speak on the topic of "Anger and Revolutionary Justice." Her talk is based on materials presented in her most recent book *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (2016).

No tickets are required for the lecture. The lecture will be followed by a public reception.

For further information concerning the lecture, please follow this link: [www.ppe.phil.vt.edu/news-events](http://www.ppe.phil.vt.edu/news-events).

## Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

**Maya Berinzon** (IPG research associate) and **Ryan Briggs** (Political Science) have been awarded the Hessel Yntema Prize in Comparative Law for their article *Legal Families Without the Laws: The Fading of Colonial Law in French West Africa*. The prize is awarded to the most outstanding article by a scholar under 40 published in a recent volume of the Journal and is accompanied by a \$1,500 prize. The prize will be awarded on October 28 at the American Society of Comparative Law's Annual Meeting.

**Christian Matheis** has been appointed Graduate School director of recruitment and diversity initiatives. Matheis, a visiting assistant professor in the [College of Architecture and Urban Studies'](#) [School of Public and International Affairs](#), will oversee Graduate School recruitment efforts in coordination with the university's graduate programs. He also will manage inclusion and diversity initiatives and programs, such as Diversity Scholars, underrepresented students' events, and the university's Bouchet Graduate Honor Society chapter. "We are pleased to have Dr. Matheis join the Graduate

School," said Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education [Karen P. DePauw](#). "He will help us continue our strong efforts to build an inclusive, welcoming graduate community." Matheis received his Ph.D. in ASPECT at Virginia Tech in 2015.

The findings of the **Loudoun Nonprofit Needs Assessment** were reported to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors on September 20<sup>th</sup> by **Mary Beth Dunkenberger**, IPG Senior Program Director and **Liz Allen**, IPG Research Associate. To support and inform considerations for restructuring Loudoun County's nonprofit grant program, an IPG research team began an assessment process in late 2016. The assessment has included a review of priority human service needs of Loudoun County, the extent to which Loudoun County's nonprofit grant program supports the effective and efficient delivery of human services, and recommendations on strategies to achieve a cross-sector continuum of care for human services. The assessment process has been overseen by

# Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

## (Continued)

a project team representing the Loudoun County Department of Management and Budget and by a steering committee representing county human services agencies and the non-profit community.

This spring, VTIPG senior research faculty member **David Moore and Dr. Robin Lemaire of the VT Center for Public Administration and Policy** released the Roanoke Valley Family Self-Sufficiency Network Analysis Report. The report was sponsored by the United Way of Roanoke Valley to assist in its efforts to build regional collaboration and collective impact around a goal of lifting 10,000 Roanoke Valley families out of poverty by 2030. The United Way has circulated the report broadly among Roanoke Valley nonprofits to help them identify opportunities to build on and expand coordinated anti-poverty work. The report provides a snapshot of where relationships already exist and reveals opportunities for new and expanded relationships and formal partnerships.

**Jeremy Elliott-Engel**, a PhD student in Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education (ALCE), successfully passed his oral defense on Sept 18, 2017. His committee includes: Dr. Donna Westfall-Rudd, Committee Chair (Associate Professor, ALCE), Dr. Karen Vines, Assistant Professor and Extension Professional Development Specialist, ALCE), Dr. Rama Radhakrishna, Professor in Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education, and Assistant Dean of Graduate Education, Penn State, Dr. Max Stephenson, Professor of Public and International Affairs and Director, Institute for Policy and Governance.

the Institute for Planning, Governance, and Globalization PhD student **Jake (Jared) Keyel** successfully defended his dissertation proposal on Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>. His proposed research is entitled: *Silent Refuge? An exploration of Voice and Authorship through Democratic Iteration Among Resettled Iraqism in the United States*. His advisory committee includes Chair, Patricia Nickel, Associate Professor (SPIA), Co-Chair Max Stephenson (Professor, SPIA and Director of Policy and Governance), Deborah Milly (Associate Professor Political Science), Katrina Powell (Professor of English) and Christian Matheis (visiting Assistant Professor, SPIA).

Congratulations to **Brad and Sarah Stephens** on the *birth of their daughter, Evelyn Langford Stephens*. Evelyn was born on August 16<sup>th</sup> and weighed in at 5 lbs. 3 oz. The proud Papa reports that she is doing very well and already growing. Brad Stephens is the Executive Director of the CoLab at Grandin Village and CityWorks (X)po in Roanoke, VA. Brad received his Master of Science Degree in Forestry from Virginia Tech in the Spring of 2016. He was an active member of Community Voices at VTIPG while pursuing his graduate degree and still collaborates with Max Stephenson on various projects.

**Dr. Rebecca Powell-Doherty**, who recently completed her MPH in infectious disease and 2 certificates programs at VT, is excited to report that she will be the TB Vaccine Project Manager within Oxford University, Nuffield Department of Medicine, Jenner Institute in Oxford, England. She will be working with Professor Helen McShane to coordinate and manage the clinical trials associated with the tuberculosis research group. She states that it is a great fit for her previous experiences, and she very, very excited!!

## Acknowledgements & Accomplishments (continued)

### Beloved Community Initiative

Dr. Virgil Wood will join SPIA as a Ridenour Faculty Fellow this year beginning in the Fall. Dr. Wood, a veteran civil rights activist and former lieutenant to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will lead the *Beloved Community Initiative*, a partnership between Virginia Tech's School of Public and International Affairs, University Distinguished Professor Marc Edwards and Professor Amy Pruden (both of Civil and Environmental Engineering) and the Office of the Provost. The initiative will focus on environmental justice, inclusive economics, and community change, linking key partnerships in Flint, Michigan, Roanoke, Richmond, and several towns

in Virginia and West Virginia, to innovative scholarship to explore and pursue Dr. King's ideal of the Beloved Community. Professors Ralph Hall and Max Stephenson of SPIA, and Professors Edwards and Pruden, along with Dr. Wood, will provide leadership for this initiative. Throughout this year, and years to follow, this effort will serve as a platform for engagement and change through partnerships, praxis, and research. It will be integral to our efforts to promote strong public and civil society leadership and scholarship. An audio recording of Dr. Wood as a guest on the Institute for Policy and Governance *Trustees Without Borders* podcast series can be found [here](#).

### From the classroom to the field: NRV Academy of Dance Grand Opening July 22, 2017



It is an oft-repeated sentiment that good things can come from unexpected places. It is precisely this that led Sarah Orren to the role of President of the New River Valley's first nonprofit dance studio, the NRV Academy of Dance. This unexpected event resulted from two seemingly unrelated parts of her life, her love of dance and her interest in nonprofits.

It is undisputed that Sarah is a lover of dance, and has been for pretty much as long as she can remember. And so, when it came time to enroll her three-year-old stepdaughter, Dylan, in an after-school activity, she couldn't imagine what could be better than dancing! She liked the studio, which was one of the more affordable options in the area. So, it was heartbreaking for both

## Acknowledgements & Accomplishments (continued)

of them, when after the final recital that first year, the director announced that the studio would be closing down.

Just as Sarah has always loved dance, she has also been interested in helping her community. She thought it was important to encourage Dylan to volunteer as well. For example, every year, Sarah and Dylan pack school lunches for a local nonprofit, Micah's Backpack, as a way of teaching Dylan about doing things for others. Her interest in the nonprofit world wasn't just a part of her home life. She has also completed SPIA's certificate in Nonprofit Management, and plans on enrolling in the coming masters program. The certificate classes opened her eyes to all kinds of nonprofits, and made her want, more than ever, to be more heavily involved in the nonprofit world.



When Dylan's dance studio closed, Sarah's first thought wasn't to look for another studio, it was to think about how important this studio had been to the families involved, and how she didn't want to lose those bonds. So, she contacted the director and all the parents about reopening the studio: as a nonprofit. That first year, she got a response from six women. She resigned the lease for the studio space, had furniture donated, and hired dance instructors. And, most importantly, she kept the doors open and the kids dancing through that year. On top of that, she filed all the forms to transform the studio into a nonprofit. She would bring notes from her classes for the Nonprofit Management Certificate to meetings and read them aloud to help explain things like how committees or the board should be structured, or the benefits of 501(c)(3) status. She then filed all of the paperwork at both the state and federal level. Managing her time and the finances were the biggest challenges that year. They ended the year with a recital and while they were only "in the green by \$800," they were at least in the green, jokes Sarah.

The dream is to grow the nonprofit and begin developing scholarships for kids who might not otherwise be able to dance, but who should. Because maybe they love dance as much as Sarah, and Sarah wants those kids to be able to dance without limits at the NRV Academy of Dance.

## Conference & Print Representation

**City Works (X)po** is holding its 7<sup>th</sup> annual gathering in Roanoke, Va at the historic Grandin Village on Oct. 5-7, 2017.

It is a national idea exchange and festival conference for anyone who is passionate about the work of placemaking and creating stronger communities. You can get more information and/or tickets by going to: [city-worksxpo.com](http://city-worksxpo.com)

Vanessa Guerra, who is a member of VTIPG Community Voices, will be one of the presenters.

**Lyusyena Kirakosyan** had an article accepted for publication that she co-authored with a Brazilian colleague Manoel Osmar Seabra Jr., from the State University of Sao Paulo -UNESP. The article is titled, "**Exploring the social legacy of Paralympic Games for disabled people**", to be published in the Brazilian Journal of Education, Technology and Society (ISSN 2316-9907) by the end of the year.

On September 6, 2017, **Lyusyena Kirakosyan** presented at the 25th annual conference of

the European Association for Sport Management (EASM) that took place at the University of Bern, Switzerland. The title of her presentation was "**Sport For All in Brazil: The Evolution of Discourse and its Impact on Social Inclusion**". In it, she examined how the underlying discourses associated with the Sport For All efforts evolved in Brazil since the 1970s to present days and analyzed their impact on social inclusion of disabled people in sport and leisure.

The 25th EASM conference took place Sept 5-8 and featured a scientific program with 300 contributions (keynotes, thematic symposia, workshops, paper presentations and posters) of academics and practitioners from over 30 countries (US, Canada, Brazil, South Africa, UAE, Germany, UK, Sweden, Norway, Japan, etc.) of all continents. The social events during the conference sought to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to experience "Swissness" alongside the official conference program. These experiences included a walking tour of Old Town Bern, an appreciation of alphorn performance, watching the local team practice of ice hockey at the PostFinance arena and closing banquet at the top of the Bern's local mountain Gurten, with surprise fireworks.



## News and Events

### Save Our Towns 'Strategic Positioning' Study Underway



Max Stephenson at Pennington Gap



Andy Morikawa conducting a workshop in Montgomery, WV.

The Institute for Policy and Governance is presently involved in a study to chart major governance trends and opportunities in two small towns in Virginia and West Virginia: Pennington Gap and Montgomery, respectively. Professor Stephenson, along with Institute Senior Fellow Andrew Morikawa, an expert on community change processes and experienced community development professional, and Scott Tate, Associate Director of the Virginia Tech's Center for Economic Development are leading the study team. The project group also includes Sarah Lyon-Hill, a

## News and Events (continued)

Program Director for the Center for Economic Development and Neda Moayerian PhD candidate, Planning, Governance and Globalization.

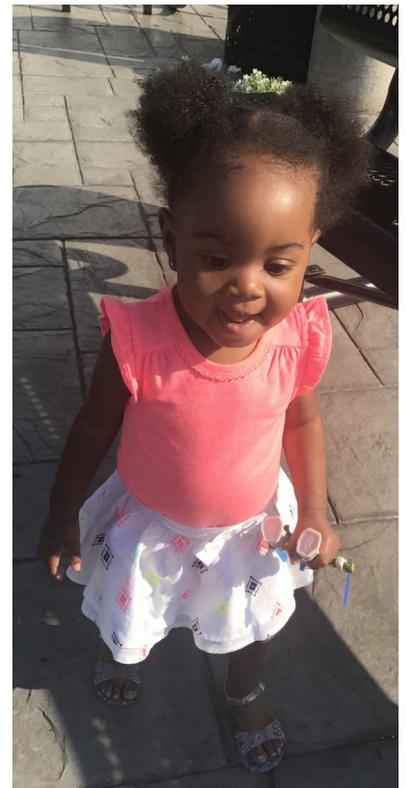
The team visited Montgomery on July 24<sup>th</sup> and Pennington Gap on August 8<sup>th</sup> to conduct two community-based workshops in each town. The study team also toured each community with local officials so as to become familiar with the challenges and assets of each. The workshops in each town encourage participating citizens to identify opportunities and ways to re- imagine their community to become a place to which young people and families would be attracted.

In 30-60 days, a 2<sup>nd</sup> half-day session will occur to present the study group's summary of its discussions in the communities and to engage the participants in identifying tangible action projects that could result from their thinking. VTIPG Director Max Stephenson observed recently that this project, "offers a rich opportunity to listen and learn and hopefully thereafter provide leaders in these communities a slate of suggestions that they can consider as they move ahead to try to encourage political and social change as well as economic vitality in their jurisdictions."



### FRU baby celebrates Birthday.

Zhariyah Angel Rose Luster bounced into the world on May 3, 2016 weighing 5lbs, 12 oz. and 19.5 inches at 5:43 a.m. in Novant Health Prince William Hospital. The proud parents are Tanisha Capers and Hasaaun Luster. Tanisha is the Project Specialist for the Federal Reimbursement Unit (FRU) in the National Capital Region. "Baby Z", as the FRU very affectionately calls her, is the apple of our eye!



## News and Events



### Welcome!

IPG welcomes Chunxue Mu. She is a visiting PhD student for the 2017-2018 academic year from Dalian University in China. She is fully sponsored by the China Scholarship Council and will participate in a joint mentoring program where Dr. Max Stephenson will serve with her Chinese Advisory committee chair to help her develop her dissertation. She received her BS from Northeastern University in China in Public Management and her Masters from Dalian University in Public Administration. She will be conducting research on Conflict Management Strategies for administrators engaged in public resource management. Please stop by and say hello when you have a moment.

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### *Photography Exhibit and Best of Show Palouse Empire Fair, Whitman County, WA*

From July 19- August 5<sup>th</sup>, **Melony Price-Rhodes**, the PI and Project Director for the Federal Reimbursement Unit (FRU) in the National Capital Region, exhibited three of her photographs at the **DC Urban Explorers Photography Exhibit** at the Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Gallery, Lorton, Virginia. The DCUE is an organization that connects local explorers – historians, photographers, and many others – with unique places to discover throughout the mid-Atlantic region. The Vulcan Gallery is historic itself as it formerly housed the Suffragists incarcerated in the building in 1917 while fighting for women’s right to vote

In September Melony’s photograph of the Milky Way won the **Best of Show** ribbon at the Palouse Empire Fair, Whitman County, WA.

Congratulation Melony!



## News and Events

### (continued)

#### Peace Corps China update



Hello all this is Nathan Corso reporting in from China with an update on my Peace Corps service so far in China. First a little refresher into the Peace Corps and the timeline of service. Right now, I think there are around 7,000 volunteers serving around the world in the fields of education, health, environment, and community development. Almost all Peace Corps volunteers serve in country for 27 months. The first 3 months is usually training language, culture, and professional and then 2 years in field as a Peace Corps Volunteer. In my case, as it is with all of Peace Corps China, the first three months were spent in the city of Chengdu the capital of Sichuan province, home of the giant pandas, for training. We were placed into 4 training sites at universities around Chengdu and lived with host families for the 3 months of training. We trained 6 days a week usually 4 hours of language training and 4 hours of professional and cultural training everyday but Sunday.

After training we were placed at universities in one of 4 provinces in western china Sichuan, Chongqing, Gansu, and Guizhou. I was placed at Southwest University in the mega city of Chongqing. The university is large around 50,000 full time students, I teach in the College of International Studies to mainly English majors or English teaching majors. Compared to other volunteers in China my students have higher English levels than most, as they have one of the highest scores on the Chinese university entrance exam out of the schools where volunteers are placed. I will say that working with my students is often the best part of my service. I have taught one year so far; my main class is Oral English to freshman students. However, I also teach Basic Writing to sophomores and an elective course to juniors called Audio-visual English. I also sometimes visit middle schools and high school students in Chongqing to talk with younger students and to encourage them to practice English and to talk about American culture.

During the last winter break I traveled parts of Southeast Asia with a few other volunteers. Two of that's trips highlights were Cambodia and Vietnam. This summer my father and aunt came to visit me and we travel around China a bit after I had Mid Service Training in Chengdu. First, we saw the pandas in Chengdu, then I showed them Chongqing and my university. After Chongqing we went to Xi'an to see the Terracotta Warriors and other historic places in Xi'an. The final leg of the trip was a few days in Beijing walking The Great Wall, going to the forbidden city, Tiananmen Square, and a few other places. After my dad and aunt went returned to the United States I took some culture leave to learn about the sea side Chinese city of Qingdao where some of my students are from. Qingdao was the home of the 2008 Olympic sailing venue and once a German colony, so it has a unique architecture and culture compared to other cities in China I have visited.

As I write this update the fall semester is just starting at the beginning of September. My Freshman students won't start class until October due to their mandatory month of military

## News and Events (continued)

training. So, my course load is a little light the first month with 1 writing course and 2 audio-visual courses. I will also attend free Chinese language classes that the university has for foreign students and teachers at our school. After Peace Corps training I achieved the language score of intermediate low, which was one level above what Peace Corps wanted novice high. However, there is always room for improvement and by the end of Peace Corps service I hope to speaking Chinese at intermediate high or advanced low level. My reading will probably progress more slowly since the Peace Corps spends most of their support on speaking and I have learned reading Chinese mainly on my own.

Looking forward I hope to build upon relationships with students and colleagues and have a great second year of service. This coming winter break I am planning to travel to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and possibly some places of interest on the Chinese mainland as well. I also may take an intensive language course for a week to improve my Chinese. Overall the first year has been challenging but also rewarding. I would definitely join Peace Corps again and come to China, and may even volunteer to serve again in the future. Here's to another great year of service before I return to the United States next year.

See Nathan's amazing blog at: <https://nathancorso.wordpress.com/>

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### *Engagement Announcement*

**Peter Flint**, a Case Analyst for the Federal Reimbursement Unit (FRU) in the National Capital Region, proposed to his girlfriend in July. Being an avid photographer, he surprised her by proposing at sunrise in one of DC's famous fields of sunflowers under the pretense of photographing him and her among the flowers. A May wedding is planned. We are all very excited for Peter and Laura.

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## News and Events (continued)

### Visiting Chinese scholar and her family experiences America and Virginia Tech



My name is Yunyun Chen, and I come from China. Before starting my residence at Virginia Tech I worked for Nanning Committee of China National Democratic Construction Association (NCCNDCA), participating in research of policy proposals for local government in areas of affordable housing policy, innovative society administration mechanism and so on. Experience over the past decade inspired my interest in cooperation patterns between the third sector and local government in China, and focus on the relationships between Foundation and local administrative authorities based on long-term projects.

In the 2 years I have been in Blacksburg, Virginia, my family and I have experienced a diverse and multicultural life. The variety of Non-profit Organizations (YMCA, NRU, BSA, VTSP, and The Bridges etc.), support groups and workshops make us feel the communities' friendly and interactive nature. Lots of NPOs, mostly organized by community residents with great passion, engage in improving and promoting local life, which put me in mind of a time of flourishing social organizations that created a 'co-governance' society between empire and common people in Song Dynasty that was 1000 years ago in China.

The opportunity at VTIPG has given me insight into the different origins of NGO/NPOs and civil society between America and China. I am grateful for the experiences in Blacksburg and the exposure to cultures and life style different from my own. All of this makes me rethink how NGO/NPOs, which China learned from the Western world, play a role in the process of China's development. Also, how do the traditions of politics and culture combine with NGO/NPOs to achieve an aim of 'self-governance' in modern civil society, as well as to revive 'self-governance' within China's traditional context.

## News and Events

### Visiting PhD student returns home after a year of residence at Va Tech Institute for Policy and Governance



Yingxuan Huang, has been in residence for a year at the institute as a visiting PhD student in Public Policy from Xiamen University in China. The China Scholarship Council provided support for her stay to conduct research concerning “Government Contracting: A Cooperation Mechanism between Local Government and Social Organizations.” She has used her time at Virginia Tech to collect data and documents about how NGOs are created developed, and operated in the United States so that she has a foundation on which to compare and contrast their contexts and operations with those of civil society entities in her native country. Dr. Max Stephenson, the Institute’s Director, has assisted her during her stay by providing guidance and ideas as she has crafted her research. In addition to developing her dissertation, Yingxuan crafted a paper entitled “Exploring the Relationship between Government and Social Organizations---A Perspective-Based on the Theory of Resource Dependence.”

She has also taken advantage of her time in the United States to visit Washington, D.C., New York, Boston and Las Vegas to experience the diversity of this nation. She has indicated that she was struck by the arresting visual beauty of the landscapes wherever she traveled. Yingxuan especially enjoyed the museums and libraries in the eastern cities she visited. As she put it recently, “they are like windows into America and I learned a great deal about American history through them.” She returned to China in early September to complete her doctoral studies for graduation in the summer of 2018. Of her entire year in America, she suggests she was most struck by the highly developed public infrastructure and public service facilities in the country, the level of freedom individuals enjoy and the friendliness of those whom she encountered. She says she will treasure her year of living and studying in the United States as a very sweet memory. We shall miss you Yingxuan and wish you the best!

## Faculty Spotlight: Ralph Hall

Dr. Ralph Hall joined the Urban Affairs and Planning (UAP) program in 2009 after completing a two-year postdoc at Stanford University. In 2016, Ralph became an Associate Professor and was appointed as the Director of the Undergraduate Program in the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA).

Ralph's areas of expertise lie in several domains that are connected by the underlying goal of making progress towards more sustainable forms of development. His first research area focuses on the provision of sus-



tainable water supply services in developing countries. Since arriving at Virginia Tech, Ralph has co-led two major research projects that studied the emerging concept of multiple-use water services (MUS) in Colombia, Senegal, and Kenya for the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), and evaluated a rural water program in Nampula, Mozambique for the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). This research has been published in various journals, including *Water Alternatives*, *Sustainability*, the *Journal of Development Studies*, the *Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development*, and *Science and Engineering Ethics*.

His second research area focuses on sustainable transportation in developed countries. In this area, Ralph co-authored a book with international scholars entitled *Sustainable Transportation: Indicators, Frameworks, and Performance Management*. He also serves as a member of the National Academies Transportation Research Board's (TRB's) Transportation and Sustainability Committee, and led its research subcommittee from 2012 to 2016.

His third research area focuses on strategies to transform the industrial state towards sustainable development. In this area, Ralph gives specific emphasis to nurturing disruptive innovation and addressing inequality, developing meaningful and well-paid employment, and expanding earning capacity (leveraging ideas such as binary economics) while ensuring human activity remains within ecosystem limits. In this area, Ralph is currently preparing a second edition of his co-authored textbook entitled *Technology, Globalization, and Sustainable Development: Transforming the In-*

## Faculty Spotlight: Ralph Hall (continued)

*dustrial State*. He also plans to advance his research focused on inclusive economics through SPIA's Beloved Community Initiative that will be launched this fall.

Over the last two years, Ralph has been actively engaged in Virginia Tech's Beyond Boundaries and Destination Area (DA) strategic initiatives. He has served on the Beyond Boundaries Steering Committee and Advisory Group, and has been a member of the Steering Committee for the Global Systems Science Destination Area. In addition, Ralph has led a SPIA taskforce charged with creating a new school-wide undergraduate program that builds on the core strengths of the school while realizing the ambition of the university's strategic initiatives. SPIA plans to launch its new undergraduate program during the fall of 2018.

Since 2016, and following the tragic loss of a library at Mzuzu University (Mzuni) in Malawi,

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## Student Spotlight: Beth Olberding



I am originally from Richmond, Virginia and graduated from the University of Virginia with a B.A. in Biology and a Concentration in Environmental and Biological Conservation. In my last year of my undergraduate degree, I decided to minor in Global Sustainability which was what led me to pursue a degree in Urban Planning at Virginia Tech. Upon graduating from UVA, I spent time working at a non-profit called Montpelier Center for the Arts and that experience contributed to my interest in pursuing graduate study as well a certificate in Global Planning and International Development Studies with a focus on non-profit or-

ganizations at VT. In 2014, I began a dual Master's Programs in Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) and Natural Resources (MNR) at Virginia Tech. Through the MURP I was also able to participate in the Peace Corps Master's International Program.

## Student Spotlight: Beth Olberding (continued)

I was fortunate as an undergraduate to study abroad in Brisbane, Australia at the University of Queensland. I was also able to participate in an International Field Experience through the MNR degree in Northern India, and I recently returned from serving in the Peace Corps in Costa Rica for a little more than two years. The people, places, food (especially in India) and cultures of all of these countries have touched me and prompted me to grow in sometimes unforeseen ways. For example, I have learned about acceptance and patience from my experiences abroad. In Costa Rica too, I discovered new passions—photography and knitting.

While in In Costa Rica on my Peace Corps assignment, I worked as a Community Economic Development Volunteer with a cooperative that I helped to begin to market coconut-based products, such as coconut oil, dehydrated coconut pieces, and coconut jewelry. We completed a feasibility study and worked jointly on recordkeeping and product development. One of my fondest experiences was spending time with Doña Ana. I helped her secure grant funds, that were originally targeted to a group of women who decided they did not wish to move forward with building a greenhouse. Ana worked hard in their places to build what is now a flourishing greenhouse. Near the end of my service in Costa Rica, she took a canning class. Since I moved back to the United States, Ana has sent me photos of her canned salsas for sale that she makes with vegetables from her garden. This was one of my favorite projects during my time in Costa Rica because it felt sustainable. Ana has a special place in my heart for her friendship, warmth, and hospitality. I am very grateful to all the people who trusted me and welcomed me into their homes during my time in Costa Rica. Hospitality is woven deeply into the fabric of their culture and I was surely the beneficiary of that fact throughout my Peace Corps service.

## Commentaries & Essays

**Soundings** - a commentary from VTIPG Director **Max Stephenson**

September 11 - Rationalizing Away the Imperative of Deliberative Self-Governance. (<http://soundings.spia.vt.edu/rationalizing-away-the-imperative-of-deliberative-self-governance/>)

August 28 - Freedom for all: Principle on a Precipice (<http://soundings.spia.vt.edu/freedom-for-all-principle-on-a-precipice/>)

August 18 – When a President Embraces, and Celebrates Hate (<http://soundings.spia.vt.edu/when-a-president-embraces-and-celebrates-hate/>)

August 14 – “Voices from the Appalachian Coalfields” (<http://soundings.spia.vt.edu/voices-from-the-appalachian-coalfields/>)

July 31 - A Clear and Present Danger <http://soundings.spia.vt.edu/a-clear-and-present-danger/>

July 5—The Struggle to Control America’s Identity <http://soundings.spia.vt.edu/the-struggle-to-control-americas-identity/>

**Tidings** - a quarterly reflection from VTIPG Director Max Stephenson, now featured as the Director’s Letter in our Quarterly Newsletters beginning October 2014.

**RE: Reflections & Explorations** - Online essay series hosted by VTIPG, written by graduate students across the University to reflect on their ongoing work in governance and policy related concerns.

September 28—[What lessons can Hurricane Harvey teach us?](#) , by Mary Semaan, PhD student in Environmental Design and Planning.

## Commentaries & Essays (continued)

September 21—[WWII Nazi Germany and White Supremacy in America: Father and Son?](#) by Rebekah Molloy (MPIA).

September 14 - [The Spatial Politics of Regime Security in Umm Al-Dunya](#) by Robert Flahive (ASPECT).

September 7 - [Academic Freedom and Shared Governance: Does one protect the other?](#) by Jerald Walz, Higher Education. (<https://blogs.lt.vt.edu/reflectionsandexplorations/2017/09/07/academic-freedom-and-shared-governance-does-one-protect-the-other/>)

[www.ipg.vt.edu](http://www.ipg.vt.edu)

Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance (VTIPG) builds strategic relationships between the university and community by linking academic research and outreach efforts to address significant public policy issues. VTIPG, a university level institute, was created to blend theory with practice by a variety of policy-related services.