From the Director: *Tidings* Quarterly Reflection

“Policy for youth from troubled families: what sort of society do we wish to be?”

The Institute’s faculty has long researched or been involved in child support programs of one sort or another, including carrying out studies of foster care policy implementation. So, I was more than a little curious when I learned of a book that chronicled the troubled childhood and rise to fame of country music singer-songwriter, Jimmy Wayne. Wayne published his autobiography, *Walk to Beautiful*, to critical acclaim and wide success in 2014. Indeed, the volume was a *New York Times* bestseller. I had never heard of Wayne before learning of his book and I knew nothing of his music, but I was intrigued by his account and the ways in which he had interacted with the foster care system in his native state of North Carolina during his journey to adulthood. I therefore read his book with deep interest.

His story reminded me of the poverty and human misery chronicled in another book published in 1996, *Angela’s Ashes*, by Frank McCourt. Both evidenced the dramatic arc that captures an audience’s attention and empathy. Jimmy Wayne’s difficult life has been the subject of a television movie, and *Angela’s Ashes* was the basis of a Hollywood feature film.

Wayne’s father abandoned his wife and child when he was born and the singer therefore never knew his dad, although he lived only miles away. The songwriter’s mother was bipolar and never truly assumed responsibility for her four children by two different fathers. She frequently abandoned the children for protracted periods, either leaving them with relatives, who offered them

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nothing, or to fend for themselves as homeless urchins or to become wards of the state. To rid herself of the responsibility of caring for her daughter, Wayne's mother pressed the girl (the singer's older sister) to marry at 14. While on the lam with her then husband, who had shot and permanently disabled the wife of her oldest son in an altercation, she abandoned Jimmy in Pensacola, Florida with just enough money (which he had earned himself) for a bus ticket home to Gaston and without food or any additional funds. This occurred following three weeks of living in a car that had left the child filthy and completely unkempt. Wayne's mother did not indicate when or whether she might return as she left her 11-year old son in Florida, but simply told him to seek out his sister when he arrived in North Carolina. On another occasion, Wayne's mother was sent to the state penitentiary for aggravated assault when she stabbed her lover in the chest.

Perhaps predictably, this “family” lived in squalor and moved often and its households, such as they were, were routinely filled with drifters, grifters and drug users. When left to his uncle’s “care” during one of his mother’s periodic disappearances, Wayne, then in middle school, was consigned to live in a long vacant and derelict mobile home without heat or other utilities during the winter and was expected to earn any food he might obtain. His uncle took no interest in him and assumed no responsibility for him. Wayne's grandfather (his mother’s father) treated him the same way. Regardless of who was nominally caring for Wayne, he often went hungry except for meals he obtained at school.

Moreover, his mother routinely physically abused the boy, and her drunken spouse beat him mercilessly and without provocation and just missed shooting him in the head by inches during one such binge. Ironically, at one point, his mother was not content simply to abandon her child for weeks or months to “kin,” but went further and arranged, perversely, to blame him for her then husband's obvious illness and asked the court formally to allow her to “give up” the 12-year old to the state because he was a menace to her spouse. The judge agreed to place Wayne in a group home. Despite the lie that sent him there, it seems clear in the songwriter’s narrative that his experience at the facility and thereafter, while parlous and too often sad, gave him opportunities to overcome the tragedy that had marked his previous years.

I was struck by Wayne's story not only for its own sake as a lens into the realities and brutality of poverty and of the implications of irresponsible parenting, but also for what it reveals about our current policy dialogue and assumptions concerning child welfare and foster care particularly. I share three brief reflections on these issues here.

First, Wayne's book and experience reveals the brutishness and inaccuracy of our culture's now dominant stereotypic conception of poverty and the poor. Ronald Reagan popularized an enduring view of the poor in the early 1980s as lazy, dependent on public largesse and largely African-American. In contrast and much closer to reality than Reagan's assertions ever were, Wayne's family was white and many of his relatives, including his sister, worked in textile mills for very low wages. More, his mother was mentally ill and was never treated for that condition appropriately. Wayne's description makes clear that whatever else may be said of her character, his mother did not possess the resources from a government or anywhere else to sit in a comfortable living room and watch television and eat chocolates as Reagan had argued was regularly true of the impoverished.

Indeed, Wayne's experience illustrates the fallacy of Reagan's depiction, and provides a compelling and empirically accurate portrayal of the wild variety of conditions in which the poor seek to survive. In any case, no child should be left homeless or in the hands of “blood kin” or anyone else who regularly ensures they are treated as detritus and worse. As an innocent youth, Wayne did not deserve to be abandoned more than 800 miles from his “home” by his mother in the middle of the night with nothing but a bus ticket, or to be left homeless or to be compelled by an adult in his family to live in conditions not fit for habitation.

This point raises a second policy concern illustrated by Wayne's experience. The North Carolina
foster care system regularly returned the youngster to his mother whenever she requested and permitted her to leave him with relatives for prolonged periods, including her stint in prison. The youth’s case workers apparently either did not check on him or were too over burdened to learn of the abuse he daily suffered from these supposed “loved ones,” including his mother. But the disposition to favor relatives over group homes or foster placement as a matter of policy is deeply ingrained in child support agencies across the United States. As a result, caseworkers are regularly enjoined to turn over every rock to find a relative, any relative, with whom to place children in peril, rather than to entrust them to group homes or foster care.

That is, legislative and agency leaders do not inquire very deeply into whether such “kin” placements make sense or are in the best interests of the affected youths, as they clearly were not in Wayne’s case. Instead, these organizations’ assignment policies are too often without subtlety or nuance and therefore often fail to grapple with the realities confronting the children they purport to help. Lawmakers and the citizenry alike appear to be uncomfortable acknowledging that parents and relatives can be denizens of darkness, and rather than account for that possibility, simply wish it away. Wayne’s experience suggests that not all foster care providers are faultless either, but that fact only underscores my point. By failing to address the realities confronting these youths we often heedlessly and needlessly expose them to additional horrors in the name of our own psychological ease and comfort. We would prefer to pretend collectively that all kin are interested, capable and caring, rather than address the fact that many are not. In this sense, this policy predilection and our grotesque popular caricature of poverty are joined at the hip; both are wildly misleading.

Finally, Wayne’s experience reveals just how difficult it is for our society to provide any sort of safety net in the name of the preservation or furtherance of human dignity. Youth support social workers are routinely asked to handle far too many cases while our criminal justice system is geared overwhelmingly to punishment and not to prevention. Wayne’s book raises the question of how any American child could have been permitted to live in such deplorable and dangerous conditions, and returned to them as a matter of policy on multiple occasions. We pride ourselves as a citizenry on our willingness to care for our own, but routinely we fail to secure that result for our nation’s youth, as many of our leaders daily disparage the institutions charged with helping to secure that result. We cannot have it both ways and not expect to wreak havoc and injustice in many lives. The larger questions Wayne’s experience raise are not whether we should celebrate his luck, pluck and success, but how many other individuals have not been so fortunate, and how we should collectively work to stanch the social bleeding their lives and lost opportunities represent. Here at the Institute we will strive to continue to make those human costs apparent and to help to identify ways society may effectively and equitably address them.

Max Stephenson Jr.
Professor of Public and International Affairs
Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy & Governance
Opportunities

**Call for Proposals:** The International Leadership Association's 2016 Global Conference will be held November 2-5, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta, GA. The conference theme is “The Dynamics of Inclusive Leadership.” The call for proposals for this conference is now open with a deadline for submissions of **February 1, 2016.**

**Call for Paper and Panel Proposals:** The 3rd International Conference on Democratic Governance in the Developing World, Advancing Democratic Governance in the Developing World: The Role of Conflict, Complementarity, and Collaboration in Fostering Democratic Ideals, Practices, and Institutions, to be held July 18-19, 2016 in Washington, DC, is now accepting paper and panel proposal submissions until **March 1, 2016.** Check out the full **Call for Papers** post for more details.

**Call for Papers:** The European Group for Public Administration (EGPA), in close collaboration with Utrecht University, is organizing the 2016 EGPA Annual Conference to be held from August 24-26 in Utrecht, The Netherlands. There are a variety of study groups from which to choose a paper topic. Read more on the **Call for Papers page.** Proposals can be uploaded through the submission website by **April 15, 2016.**

**Call for Articles:** Forced Migration Review issue 53, to be published in September 2016, will include a major feature on Local communities: first and last providers of protection. Deadline for submission of articles: **May 16, 2016.**

Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

Congratulations to **Patrick Burke** (MURP), who will be an Intern Architect at **Harrell & Co. Architects.** Patrick will build experience making corrections to drawings and designs, looking up building codes, eventually getting involved in client and site visits, design work, and site documentation. These skills and experiences will aid Patrick in earning his architecture license.

Congratulations to **Whitney Knollenberg**, PhD, who received the 2015 Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award from the College of Business!

**Lyusyena Kirakosyan** has been accepted as a research member of the Brasilian Paralympic Academy. It is a part of the Brazilian Paralympic Committee that deals with research and researchers. They organize research conferences, and which Lyusyena will be able to participate in as a member. Being a member allows Lyusyena to conduct research and interview the Paralympic committee and movement member organizations and individuals.

Patrick Burke
Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

Congratulations to Elizabeth (Eli) Jamison, who successfully defended her PhD dissertation on October 28, 2015 entitled *Circuits of Power in Alabama’s Immigration Politics: Labor Justice and Corporate Social Responsibility*, in completion of the requirements for her doctorate in the ASPECT program. Professor Barbara Ellen Smith (Sociology) served as chair and Professors Richard Wokutch (Management), Patricia Nickel (GIA/SPIA and ASPECT) and Max Stephenson (UAP/SPIA) as committee members. Congratulations to all and especially to Eli on this milestone! Eli is the 26th PhD student affiliated with VTIPG (an active Community Voices member and Reflections essay contributor) to complete their doctorate since our founding on July 1, 2006.

New Bouchet Society Inductees

Congratulations to Anna Erwin (PGG), Michele Deramo (ASPECT), and Jamie Sanchez (ASPECT), who have been accepted to Virginia Tech’s chapter of the prestigious Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society.

The Bouchet Society commemorates Edward Alexander Bouchet, the first African American to earn a doctorate degree from an American university (Physics, Yale University, 1876). The Society “seeks to develop a network of preeminent scholars who exemplify academic and personal excellence, foster environments of support, and serve as examples of scholarship, leadership, character, service, and advocacy for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in the academy.”

Anna, Michele, and Jamie are recognized as scholars who exemplify the Society’s mission and values. Congratulations to Anna, Michele, and Jamie on this remarkable recognition.

Lindy Cranwell (PGG) successfully completed her Qualifying Review on November 4, 2015 as a member of the Planning, Governance and Globalization (PGG) doctoral program. Special thanks to Committee members David Knight (Engineering Education), and Ralph Hall (Urban Affairs and Planning). Max Stephenson serves as Committee Chair along with Co-Chair Denise Simmons (Building Construction and Civil and Environmental Engineering).

Anna Erwin (PGG) successfully defended her preliminary examination for the Planning, Governance and Globalization (PGG) doctoral program on November 5, 2015. Special thanks to Committee members, Kim Niewolny (Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education), Barbara-Ellen Smith (Sociology) and Andrew Scerri (Political Science). Max Stephenson serves as Committee Chair.

Jordan Laney (ASPECT) successfully defended her dissertation proposal defense, “Where We Gather”: A Study of the Cultural and Sociopolitical Significance of Bluegrass Festival Sites and Experiences on December 7, 2015. Jordan’s Committee includes Dr. Emily Satterwhite (Religion and Culture) as Committee Chair, and Committee Members Dr. Elizabeth Fine (Religion and Culture, Emeritus Professor), Dr. Anthony Kwame Harrison (Sociology and Africana Studies) and Dr. Barbara Ellen Smith (Sociology and Women’s and Gender Studies).
Carmen Bogg-Parker (PGG) successfully defended her preliminary examination for the Planning, Governance and Globalization (PGG) doctoral program on December 15. Her committee includes John Browder (UAP), Nicole Sanderlin (Office of the Dean of Engineering), Dale Wimberley (Sociology), and Max Stephenson (VTIPG) as Committee Chair.

On Friday, January 22, Garland Mason (Master’s Degree candidate in Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education and active Community Voices participant) successfully defended her thesis, entitled *A Critical Analysis of Participation and Empowerment in Community Development: An Ethnographic Case Study from Chiapas, Mexico*. Congratulations to Garland as well as her Committee: Kim Niewolny (Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education) the Committee Chair, and Committee Members Thomas Archibald (Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education) and Max Stephenson (VTIPG).

**Community Voices**

In conjunction with the [Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech](http://www.vt.edu), Community Voices held a dialogue after a screening of film *Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs.Gravity*, with artistic director Elizabeth Streb, on Wednesday, September 30, 2015 at the Lyric Theatre in Blacksburg. Streb is the third MacArthur award winner to visit the Institute in recent years: Liz Lerman, Joanna Sherman (and Bond Street Theatre) were winners too.

A recording of recent Community Voices roundable luncheon with Francesco Manca (Independent Political Analyst and Former Deputy Director [ret.] for the Political and Civil Affairs office of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) is now available on SoundCloud. Manca, who also spoke in a fall 2014 Community Voices event, met this time with Virginia Tech students, faculty and community members for conversation and lunch.

A recording of recent *Trustees Without Borders* interview with Francesco Manca (Independent Political Analyst and Former Deputy Director [ret.] for the Political and Civil Affairs office of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) is now available on SoundCloud. Interviewing Francesco were Max Stephenson (SPIA, Director, VTIPG), Laura Zanotti (Political Science), D’Elia Chandler (Community Voices Member) and Lorien MacAuley (Agricultural Leadership, and Community Education).
### Upcoming Policy and Governance Related Events

**Thursday, January 28** SPIA will kick off the Ridenour Faculty Fellowship with a lecture in Blacksburg by Jose Antonio Vargas on *Evaluating the Conversation around Immigration and Citizenship in America*. This year the Ridenour Faculty Fellowship will feature a series of events highlighting inclusion, diversity and policy innovation.

**Friday, January 29** The public portion of Mason Garland's my thesis defense was cancelled last week due to the snow storm. A public presentation will be held at 2:00pm in Litton Reaves room 1810.

**Monday, February 1** will mark publication of Max Stephenson’s 200th *Soundings* commentary. VTIPG is having a reception with refreshments from 12:00-1:30 in the community room of the Alexander Black House at 204 Draper Road (two houses up from IPG and next door to the Thomas Connor House) to celebrate the day. We hope you can attend! There will be brief remarks at 12:40. Please RSVP to Regina Naff (regina50@vt.edu) by Thursday January 28th so we can plan on approximately how many will attend.

**Monday, February 1**, 7:00 pm, Torgerson 3100 - Pamela Scully (Emory University) to speak on “History and Sexual Violence in the South African and Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports”

**Wednesday, February 10**, 4:00pm-6:00pm, Surge Room 117a - Christopher Freiman (Assistant Professor, William & Mary Department of Philosophy) on *Should States Allow Markets in Citizenship?* (PPE Speaker Series for Spring 2016)

**Thursday, February 11** – Community Voices guest Patricia Parera (Economic and Social Development Consultant for The World Bank) will participate in a roundtable luncheon with CV members.

**Friday, February 12**, 10:00am-12:00pm A writing workshop will be held with Cathy Grimes (Communications Manager, Virginia Tech Graduate School) and Jim Dubinsky (Director of Undergraduate Studies, Virginia Tech English Department). More details and RSVP information to follow. *Please note New Date*

**Wednesday, March 2**, 4:00pm-6:00pm, Surge Room 117a - Kevin Vallier (Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Bowling Green State University) on *Three Concepts of Political Stability*.

**April 15-16** Sexual Violence: An Interdisciplinary Conference - confirmed keynote speakers include Ray Douglas (Colgate), Thomas Foster (Depaul), and Catherine Jacquet (LSU).
Conference & Print Representation

Anna Erwin (PGG) had TWO abstracts selected from over 1000 submissions for presentation at two sessions during the XIV World Congress of Rural Sociology, to be held August 10-14, 2016 at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. The first session is titled RC-40 Mini Conference: Global trends in Alternative Agri-food movements: seeking convergence paths (IRSA_3), where Anna will present Global justice? Explorations on farm labor agency through the case of a faith based organization. The second session is titled Food Sovereignty: Participatory, Transdisciplinary and Solidarity Based Research Approaches In-With-For Sustainable and Just Rural Transformation (IRSA_7), where Anna will present Assaying the field(s): Research methodologies for partnering with a farmworker focused FBO.

Chris Davidson (Doctoral Student in Higher Education) and Malcolm Beckett (Director of Information Technology for Administrative Services at Virginia Tech) had their article, Computer Security Incidents: The Increased Threat and Implications for Higher Education, published in the 2015 University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA) Journal (pp. 71-78).

Chris also recently had two conference paper acceptances:

(1) Veterans Transition to Higher Education: A Concurrent Mixed Methods Systematic Review was accepted to the 39th Annual Conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association to be held February 17-20, 2016 in Hilton Head, SC.

(2) Veteran Influx: Supporting Veterans in the Higher Education Pipeline was accepted to the 2016 NASPA Annual Conference, to be held March 12-16, 2016 in Indianapolis, IN.

Sarah Halvorson-Fried (MURP) presented at two conferences recently, The Engagement Scholarship Consortium held September 29-30, 2015 at Pennsylvania State University, and Imagining America, held June 12-14 in Baltimore, MD. Both presentations were about a qualitative, formative evaluation of the Islamic Worlds Festival, a collaboratively (mostly VT student and faculty) designed festival presented by the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech last April. Sarah is one of three researchers on the project -- the other two are Jon Catherwood-Ginn (Partnerships and Engagement Manager for the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech) and Dr. Anne Elise Thomas (local ethnomusicologist).

Lyusyena Kirakosyan (VTIPG Senior Project Associate) recently presented her paper, Moral Imagination of the Special Education Teachers in Brazil: Reflecting on the Role of Continuing Teacher Education, at the 41st Conference of the Association for Moral Education (AME) held November 5-7 in Santos, Brazil. This annual conference, which draws global attendance, aims to provide an international forum for the interdisciplinary study of the moral and ethical dimensions of human development and education. Lyusyena received a grant from AME and Journal of Moral Education Trust to support attendance of this conference.
Lyusyena’s collaborative proposal, co-authored with Carla Mauch and Wagner Santana of Mais Diferenças, has been accepted to the IV World Planning School Congress (WPSC), to be held July 3-8, 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Their proposal, Public Libraries and Inclusive Placemaking: A Case Study from Brazil – 409, argues that democratizing cultural access and participation of people with disabilities, governmental initiatives have a potential to reinforce democratic citizenship of this population and social cohesion of the society at large.

Additionally, Lyusyena’s film review of Body and Soul was published by H-Net (Humanities and Social Sciences Online) - check out the full review here. https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=44157

Emily Barry-Murphy (PGG) and Max Stephenson had their article entitled Recognizing and Confronting State Subjectivity in Asylum Adjudications published in Refuge 31.2 (General Issue). Link to full article text.

Max Stephenson, Laura Zanotti (Political Science), Cristina Zennaro (FondTech) and Alberto Grando (Bocconi University) had their abstract Examining the Nexus of Development, Organizational Learning and Accountability in Two Cases accepted for presentation at the 12th International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), to be held in Stockholm, Sweden June 28 - July 1, 2016.

Lisa Schweitzer (Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California) and Max Stephenson’s article titled Planning, Development, and Media: A Case Study of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge has been published in the Journal of Planning Education and Research. Read the abstract here.

Recent Events on Campus Related to Governance

January 21 Frank William Pierson (Professor, Biosecurity and Infection Control, Avian Medicine, Department of Population Health Sciences) spoke on the topic of Agro-terrorism and the Art of War as a part of the spring 2016 Public Health Grand Rounds.

December 16 The Virginia Tech Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, Institute for Policy and Governance, and the Public Health Program hosted a discussion of violence prevention with Ziggy Kozicki and Stephanie Baiyasi-Kozicki, producers of the documentary Saginaw Rising. This documentary is a representation of the ongoing problem of urban violence in America, and provides information as to why urban violence exists and what can be done to stop the outbreak in American cities.

December 12 Conversation NRV held a forum on Addressing Violence in Our Community.

December 3 The Disaster Resilience Symposium, co-organized by VirginiaTech’s Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Program in Disaster Resilience (DR-IGEP), and by the Interdisciplinary Coastal Hazard Research Team (ICHRT), featured Dr. Julie Maldonado (UC-Santa Barbara), Dr. Julie Rosati (US Army Corps of Engineers), and Dr. Joanne Bourgeois (University of Washington). Each of them discussed their research on coastal resilience.

November 21 The Virginia Women’s Conference 2015 on Leadership & Lifelong Learning took place in Roanoke, VA.
**November 18**  
*Dr. Kathleen O’Reilly* (Associate Professor, Geography Department, Texas A&M University) spoke on *No Relief: Poor women’s everyday experiences of sanitation in urban India* (Fall 2015 Women and Gender in International Development (WGD) Discussion Series)

**November 13**  
*Patricia Fernández-Kelly* spoke on *BEYOND ‘THE WIRE’: Why Poverty Endures in West Baltimore*

**November 11**  
*Barry Maguire* spoke on “Rational Choice in Deontic Contexts” (*Fall 2015 PPE Speaker Series*)

**November 3**  
*Dr. Michael Hamm* (C.S. Mott Professor of Sustainable Agriculture and Director of Center for Regional Food Systems at Michigan State) gave a seminar on Food Policy & Community Food System as a part of the Fall 2015 Agriculture and the Environment Seminar Series.

**October 29**  
Film screening of *A Requiem for Syrian Refugees*, followed by Q&A with the film director *Richard Wolf*. *Requiem* is a powerful documentary that conveys an up close and personal image of the daily lives and feelings of Syrian refugees. This screening was part of the Common Book Activities and sponsored by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

**October 27**  
Screening of *Lady of the Roses*.

**October 22**  
*Ralph Hall* (Assistant Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning) and *Sophie Wenzel* (Assistant Director, Center for Public Health Practice & Research) gave a seminar on their research group’s plan to transform the way rural/peri-urban water planning is approached in developing countries. This was a part of the Fall 2015 *Public Health Grand Rounds* sessions.

**October 18**  
*Dr. Luke Juran* (Assistant Professor, Geography Department, Virginia Tech) spoke on *Women, gender norms, and natural disasters: examples from South Asia* (Fall 2015: Women and Gender in International Development (WGD) Discussion Series)

**October 14**  
*David Lefkowitz* (University of Richmond) spoke on *Institutional Moral Reasoning and Secession* (Fall 2015 PPE Speaker Series)

**October 8**  
*Big Lick SOUP: a micro-grant community meal*. Four presenters with innovative community ideas briefly shared their ideas, followed by a delicious meal of donated food and a round of community voting on the projects pitched. The winning project receives the sum of donations made at the door.

**October 2**  
*Max Stephenson Jr.* and *Scott Tate* (Senior Economic Development Specialist at Virginia Tech), co-editors of the recently published *Arts and Community Change: Exploring Cultural Development Policies, Practices and Dilemmas* (Routledge, 2015), led a discussion of that volume during a panel session at the annual national conference of Imagining America in Baltimore, MD. *Robert H. Leonard* (Virginia Tech Theater Professor), *Dudley Cocke* (Artistic Director of Roadside Theater of Appalshop) and *Jan-Cohen Cruz* (Professor, Department of Drama at Syracuse University), contributors to the book, also presented and participated in the dialogue with more than 40 other individuals.

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**Recent Events on Campus Related to Governance**

...continued...
Blogs & Commentaries

Soundings - a commentary from VTIPG Director Max Stephenson
January 19, 2016: Guns, Ugly Fantasies and Democratic Politics
January 4, 2016: A House Divided: Blaming the Poor
December 7, 2015: A Tipping Point in American Politics
November 9, 2015: Outrageous Rhetoric, Political Alienation and Democratic Deliberation
October 26, 2015: A Flâneur Reflects on the Simmering Crisis in American Politics
October 12, 2015: On Imagination, Trust and Democratic Governance

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

Read Tidings from previous quarterly newsletter, October 1, 2015 – On Directions: New and Old

Thriving Places Project - http://thrivingplacesproject.com/
This project shares ideas for change, and provides resources for people interested in making positive changes in their community.

Beth Olberding (MURP-MIP) in Costa Rica - https://betholberding.wordpress.com/
IPG affiliated master’s student Beth Olberding (MURP-MIP) is in Costa Rica now in pre-service training for the Peace Corps. Beth will spend the next 2 years volunteering in the community economic development sector. Check out her blog from time to time, as she will update it when she is able!

SPECTRA: The ASPECT Journal
Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Theory Archives (SPECTRA) is a student-led online scholarly journal established as part of the ASPECT (Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought) program at Virginia Tech. The journal features work of an interdisciplinary nature and is designed to provide an academic forum for students to showcase research, explore controversial topics, and take intellectual risks. SPECTRA welcomes submissions for publication by way of scholarly refereed articles, book reviews, essays, interviews and other works that operate within a problem-centered, theory-driven framework.


Find the latest issue and previous volumes here:
https://spectrajournal.org/index.php/SPECTRA/issue/archive

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.
Each semester, graduate students from multiple academic programs continue to contribute insights on salient issues and concerns arising from their research in these papers. Topics have ranged from leadership, to the role of the arts in catalyzing potential for social change, to democratic possibility, to international development and more.

Here’s a look at our Fall 2015 contributors:

**December 10** Academic Freedom: Anarchistic Brouhaha or Ordered Liberty? - Jerald H. Walz (PhD candidate in Higher Education at Virginia Tech)

**Jerald H. Walz** is a PhD candidate in Higher Education at Virginia Tech currently researching academic freedom in colleges & universities. He has earned a B.A. from Asbury College, a M. A. from the Johns Hopkins University, and two graduate certificates from Virginia Tech. While serving as the Vice President of Operations at the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Jerald taught public policy in Pepperdine University’s Washington, DC program.

[3 Reflections Contributions]

**December 3** Extending an Olive Branch: The Oath Keepers and the Paranoid Style in American Politics - Alex Stubberfield (ASPECT)

**Alex Stubberfield** is a PhD student in the ASPECT program at Virginia Tech. His interest and research in philosophy has been in the moral and dimensions of philosophy, mostly in consequentialism and normative democratic theory. His companion interests in public and international affairs include international relations, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, capacity building, and development. Alex studies political and social theory and has an abiding interest in American politics.

[2 Reflections Contributions]
[... continued]

**RE: Reflections and Explorations**

*a graduate student commentary*

**November 19** The Youth Bulge in the Middle East and North Africa is Breaking Higher Education in the Region: How Should Governments Address the Challenge?

**Donald Back** is a doctoral candidate in Planning, Governance and Globalization in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech. He currently serves as director of the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute, where he oversees a staff of 75 employees in three locations. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Lesotho, Donald has been active in international education for nearly 30 years.

[1 Reflections Contribution]

**November 12** “Bouncing Back” to Poverty: Exploring the Meaning of Resilience in a Time of Capitalist Crisis

**Vera Smirnova** is a doctoral student in the Planning, Governance and Globalization program. Her research interests include analysis of the urban geography and political economy of cities amidst capitalist crisis. Prior to coming to Virginia Tech to work on her Ph.D., Vera was a Fulbright Scholar at Kansas State University for two years.

[1 Reflections Contribution]

**November 5** Trends in the Nonprofit Sector: A Fresh Call for Change

**Sarah Hanks** is a PhD candidate in Agricultural, Leadership & Community Education, and is a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Outreach and International Affairs. Her academic and research interests include leadership studies, problem solving, and nonprofit management and governance.

[5 Reflections Contributions]

**October 29** Ontological Reflections on the Quest for Rural Sustainability

**Anna Erwin** is a PhD student in the Planning, Governance, and Globalization program. Her research focuses on questions of labor, justice, participation, and the alternative agri-food movement. Anna received her Bachelor’s Degree in English and a Master’s Degree in Appropriate Technology, both from Appalachian State University.

[4 Reflections Contributions]
October 22 The Challenge of Heterogeneity: The Frailty of the Pan-Africanist Ideal

Saul N’Jie is from Churchill’s Town, Gambia. He is a doctoral student in the Planning, Governance and Globalization program at the Virginia Tech School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA). Saul’s dissertation examines the potential effectiveness of commercial and nonprofit, cooperative (mostly women farmers and gardeners) microfinance institutions.

[2 Reflections Contributions]

October 8 Between Conditional and Unconditional Hospitality: The Contradictions of European Union and United States Immigration Policy

Johannes Grow is a student in the ASPECT (Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought) doctoral program. His research interests include: Social and Political Theory, International Relations, Critical European Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Critical Geopolitics.

Note from Max Stephenson (VTIPG Director)
The Reflections and Explorations essay by Johannes Grow that appears today was first published in this space on April 2, 2015. We offer this encore presentation of this analysis as the refugee crisis confronting the European Union as a result of the continuing civil war in Syria and unsettled politics and situations in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East and portions of Africa continue in the headlines. We believe Grows’ reflection remains not only timely and relevant, but also an appropriately searching analysis of a key concern during an especially difficult and unsettled time. - Max

October 1 The Effects of Greenbelt Policy in Seoul, Korea

Yehyun An completed her PhD in Planning, Governance, and Globalization at Virginia Tech in May, 2015. Her doctoral research examined the impacts of capacity factors on urban infrastructure projects in twelve cities in India. She is interested in research and development efforts aimed at identifying and implementing sustainable strategies for global change.

[1 Reflections Contribution]

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