The traditional rationale for creating a research outfit, such as the Institute for Policy and Governance (VTIPG) at a major university such as Virginia Tech, has long been that these entities provide a locus for faculty and students to address compelling concerns in their fields of interest. Land Grant higher education institutions, of which Virginia Tech is one, have sought to produce new or basic knowledge through research and to provide findings and understanding that citizens may use in their everyday pursuits. VTIPG was created for these purposes as well, and in our nearly decade-long existence our associated faculty, students and staff have offered findings and insights to researchers and policy-makers at all scales, while also working with government agencies and nonprofit organizations dealing with the challenges of public policy implementation. That is, we are daily involved in inquiry concerning policy and governance issues internationally, nationally and locally, and we are engaged each day in working with individuals wishing to apply that knowledge in their professional settings.

As a part of our commitment to engage with all interested stakeholders across the university and beyond, the Institute began in January 2013 to offer graduate students the opportunity to share the fruits of their ongoing investigations into policy and governance-related concerns in an online essay series dubbed, RE: Reflections and Explorations. That effort, which continues as I write, publishes students’ articles each week of the semester across the academic year.
Late last year, as I considered the growing corpus of thoughtful essays produced for the initiative, I hit on the idea of editing a series of volumes based on those efforts, both to highlight the excellent work of the University’s graduate students in multiple programs across six colleges in the policy and governance domain, and as a way of showcasing the vitality of the VTIPG intellectual community. As I mused, I contacted Lyusyena Kirakosyan, now an affiliated research faculty member of the Institute, who first proposed the series as a PhD student, and asked if she would help me co-edit the first volume. She kindly agreed and we organized and edited a collection of 56 Reflections essays entitled, RE: Reflections and Explorations: Essays on Politics, Public Policy and Governance. The Institute published the volume in early August and it is available electronically through the Virginia Tech libraries and the VTIPG website to anyone anywhere in the world.

As I wrote in the introduction for the book, I believe this collection and series serve participating students and the Institute in multiple ways. First, I hope that they give each author opportunities to develop their capacities as well as to obtain insights into their own strengths, weaknesses and proclivities as writers:

As writing of virtually any sort is at once a demanding, exhaustive and exhilarating enterprise, one of my goals for Reflections at its inception was that its participants could gain a glimpse of the ardor, discipline and labor it takes to produce and polish writing for public consumption, and begin to develop their own voices. As editor, I have challenged those who have written for the series to produce clear, concise prose in their own mode of expression. When successful, this process of editorial give-and-take can result in important opportunities for intellectual growth and learning. In a way, this to-and-fro between editor and authors can be viewed as an important mentoring opportunity as students work to realize or refine their own authorial identities. As such, this process surely embodies the educational mission of the Institute and university.¹

Second, I argued in the introduction that the Reflections articles have treated a dizzying array of topics germane to VTIPG’s mission and to students’ evolving research interests:

That fact reflects the ongoing realization of a central founding aspiration of this initiative, that students would take ownership of it and use it to share their evolving views and research on pertinent matters. To date they have surely done so, and we sample only the first fruits—the 2013-2014 year—of their work here. To the extent that the series reflects student curiosity and zeal for sharing their discoveries, it may be said to have grown naturally from and reflect the research mission of the Institute and the university. Perhaps more deeply, it also suggests the most basic rationale for creating and sustaining higher education institutions in free societies: to open possibilities for vigorous minds to quest for deeper understanding of phenomena that engage them, irrespective of their domain or expected utilitarian portent.²

Finally, I suggested the volume and series represent opportunities for participating students to learn to write for broader audiences and to view their involvement and contributions as

… an organic metaphor of the sometimes messy, sometimes fretful and sometimes uneasy process of the gestation of ideas at universities. In truth, ideas know no boundaries of department or discipline and they recognize no sovereign as their lone owners or claimants. Rather, they are the product of fertile minds in conversation encouraged to consider possibilities freely and openly. In this sense, this series revels in and represents the catholicity of perspective characteristic of the university of which
it is a small part. To the extent it has played this role, it mirrors and encourages the essence of free inquiry in a modest but notable way.\^2

In these ways then, this new series embodies the aims of the Institute and of Virginia Tech, and of major research universities of which our own is an exemplar. The series also provides an example of how higher education institutions endeavor to serve their communities by encouraging students to exercise their imaginations on behalf of inquiry aimed at the betterment of society. This aim is surely as old as the idea of the university, but it is refreshed daily by the minds and energy of those privileged so to serve. The Institute is proud to continue to play a role in furthering this ideal in this way. Our Reflections book series is new, but the aspirations for universities and their students it embodies are as old as those institutions themselves. We are, I think, in very good company.

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

Notes

3 Stephenson, RE: Reflections, 2015, xvii.

Opportunities

Call for Papers and Submissions for the next issue of SPECTRA: The ASPECT Journal (Issue 5.1):

Initial abstracts due: October 15, 2015

All abstracts should be submitted online at spectrajournal.org

Abstract guidelines, topic guidance, submission formats, and more details can be found on the SPECTRA Call for Submissions Issue 5.1 announcement page.

If you have questions, please contact lead editors Jordan Laney and Anthony Szczurek at editor@spectrajournal.org
Call for Proposals for Book Chapters: The Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance invites 400-word abstract submissions from interested current Virginia Tech Ph.D. and Master’s degree students and Community Voices graduates describing possible chapters for a new ebook to be published on or about August 1, 2016 titled, *Social and Political Imaginaries, Cultural Claims and Community Change*, to be edited by Max Stephenson Jr. and Lyusyena Kiraksoyan. Abstracts are due by close of business on October 22, 2015.

Call for Presentations: The 27th Annual Environment Virginia Symposium invites submissions from business, government, academia, and non-profit organizations. This is a conference where the regulators meet with the regulated as well as industry and non-profits who are solution providers to discuss best practices, policies and regulations - including preparing for changes. The deadline for submission is October 23, 2015.

Call for papers -- “Chaos and Governance in the 21st Century: Prospects and Challenges to Peace and Justice in an Age of Uncertainty”

On February 18-19, 2016, Florida Atlantic University will host this conference, revisiting Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly Silver’s Chaos and Governance in the Modern-World System (1999). Organizers welcome paper presentation proposals that critically engage with four core areas of inquiry laid out in Chaos and Governance:

- Financialization, Geopolitics and Global Governance in the 21st Century
- New Strategies of Capital Accumulation, New Modalities of Domination
- Anti-Systemic Movements: Land, Labor and Environmental Struggles
- Hierarchies of Wealth and Power: Global Inequality and the North-South Divide

Submit proposals (1-2 page) by October 30, 2015 to phough2@fau.edu.

Call for Proposals: The Public Administration Theory 2016 conference theme embraces the need for public administration to continue attempting to understand the importance of immeasurables—and immeasurability—for its praxis.

The 2016 Program Committee invites panel and paper proposals that track along the conference theme. Proposals should be submitted by November 16, 2015.
Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

Dr. Sabith Khan (PGG) successfully defended his dissertation, “American Muslim Philanthropy in Flux: Effects on Community Building and Identity Formation” over the summer on July 22, 2015. Sabith already has had four articles from his dissertation work accepted for publication (or already published). His dissertation committee included: Joyce Rothschild (Government and International Affairs) as Committee Chair, Patricia Nickel (ASPECT and Government and International Affairs), Marc Stern (Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation), and Rachel Scott (Religion and Culture).

Dr. Kimberly Scott Hodge (Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation) successfully defended her dissertation on September 8, 2015, entitled “Impacts of (uncivil) discourse by organized groups on local governance in sustainable development projects.” Her dissertation committee included: R. Bruce Hull (Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation) as Committee Chair, Frank Dukes (Director, Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia), John Munsell (Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation), Max Stephenson Jr. (Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance, School of Public and International Affairs), and Marc Stern (Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation).

Dr. Whitney Knollenberg (Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management), Max Stephenson Jr. (Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance, School of Public and International Affairs), and Kathy Andereck (Director of School of Community Resources and Development, Arizona State University), have been awarded a $150,000 grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a summer teaching institute focusing on veterans issues.

Jim Dubinsky (Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of English), Principal Investigator, and colleagues Bruce Pencek (College Librarian, Social Sciences & History) and Eric Hodges (PhD, PGG 2014), have been selected as a participant in the inaugural class of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Leadership Fellows program. Read more from the VT News Article on 9/15/15.

Jon Catherwood-Ginn (Partnerships and Engagement Manager for the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech) has been selected as a participant in the inaugural class of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Leadership Fellows program. Read more from the VT News Article on 9/15/15.

Jim Dubinsky

Jon Catherwood-Ginn

John Catherwood-Ginn
Community Voices Fall 2015 Season Begins

In conjunction with the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, 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.


Next Up: An opportunity to meet again one of our former Community Voices speakers, Francesco Manca. Manca is an independent political analyst and Former Deputy Director (ret.) for the Political and Civil Affairs office of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). He will be visiting Virginia Tech through October 25th to have talks and meet with students. Community Voices will get together with Manca for a roundtable luncheon on October 9th. Contact Regina Naff (VTIPG) for details regarding location, lunch orders, etc.
Conference & Print Representation

**Anna Erwin** (PGG) presented at the Agriculture Food and Human Values Annual Meeting and Conference held June 24-28, 2015 in Pittsburg, PA. Her presentation was titled *Farmworker Food Insecurity and Sustainable Agriculture: Connections in the Nuevo South* and was part of the panel session called *Give Us Bread and Pickles: Equity, Food.*

**Rachael Kennedy** (Agricultural & Extension Ed) and **Betty Anderson (Watts)** (MPIA) presented *Three Cups of Conflict: The intersection of reputation, revenue, and redemption of NPOs* at the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) 2015 Conference on July 15th in Chicago, IL. Their presentation detailed a pedagogical approach to teaching about the roles and responsibilities of non-profits.

**Sarah Hanks** (Agricultural & Extension Ed) had her proposal entitled *The Dialogue on Race: Exploring the Implication of Frame Alignment When Leading Across Boundaries* accepted to the International Leadership Association’s 17th Annual Global Conference to be held October 14 - 17, 2015 in Barcelona, Spain.

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**International Conference of the Arts in Society**


Conference Contributions:

*Exploring the Nexus of Aesthetics, Agency and Peacebuilding* - **Max Stephenson** and **Laura Zanotti**’s (Political Science)

*Investigating the Nexus of Cultural Development, Peacebuilding and ‘Local Ownership:’ The Case of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland* **Max Stephenson** and **Lyusyena Kirakosyan** (VTIPG Senior Project Associate)

*Opening Session, Tenth International Conference on the Arts in Society*  
Imperial College London, London, UK  
**photo credit:** [http://artsinsociety.com/](http://artsinsociety.com/)
Lyusyena Kirakosyan had her proposal entitled *Cultivating moral imagination in the special education teachers in Brazil: the role of continuing teacher education* accepted for presentation at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Association for Moral Education to be held November 5-7, 2015 in Santos/Brazil.

Laura Zanotti, Nancy McGehee (Department Head and Professor of Hospitality and Tourism Management), and Max Stephenson’s article *International Aid, Local Ownership, and Survival: Development and Higher Education in Rural Haiti* has been published by *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*.

Lyusyena Kirakosyan’s manuscript entitled *Promoting Disability Rights for a Stronger Democracy in Brazil: The Role of NGOs* was published in the *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

Scott Tate’s essay, *Reflections from a conversation on democratic practice and community development*, was published in Volume 46, Issue 3 of *Community Development, the official journal of the Community Development Society (CDS)*.

Anna Erwin’s commentary, *Pondering Farmworker Justice: The Visible and Invisible Borders of Social Change* has been accepted for publication in the forthcoming winter issue of the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*. This issue focuses in particular on labor in the food system.

Maya Berinzon (VTIPG Research Associate) and coauthor Ryan Briggs (Political Science) had their paper, *Legal families without the laws: The fading of colonial law in French West Africa*, accepted for publication in the American Journal of Comparative Law.

*Arts and Community Change: Exploring Cultural Development Policies, Practices and Dilemmas*, edited by Max Stephenson and Scott Tate (VTIPG Research Associate), is part of the *Routledge Community Development Research and Practice Series*. This series serves community developers, planners, public administrators and others involved in practice and policy making in the realm of community development. The series seeks to contribute to the growing and rapidly changing knowledge base as a resource for practitioners and researchers alike.
Announcing New eBook and eBook Series

The Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance (VTIPG) announces the first volume in a new book series entitled: RE: Reflections and Explorations: Essays on Politics, Public Policy and Governance edited by VTIPG Director Max Stephenson Jr. and affiliated research faculty member Lyusyena Kirakosyan. The editors have selected and organized essays from the Institute’s ongoing Reflections series to which an interdisciplinary group of graduate students contribute weekly during each semester of the academic year. The new book is available in PDF and ePUB formats below. Thank you for your interest in this series and text!

- PDF
- ePUB

These files are also available for download from VTechWorks at http://hdl.handle.net/10919/56499. VTechWorks publicizes and preserves the scholarly work of Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and students: journal articles, conference papers and presentations, technical reports, theses and dissertations, and more.

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. Vol. 4, No. 2 was published on August 31. Find the latest issue and previous volumes here: https://spectrajournal.org/index.php/SPECTRA/issue/archive
Recent Events on Campus Related to Governance

July 8 “Virginia Way” Forward Roundtable Event, facilitated by Chris Saxman (Executive Directory of Virginia FREE), with participants Ron Rordam (Mayor of Blacksburg), William Fralin (President, MFA and former member of the Virginia House of Delegates), Dr. Charles Steger (Virginia Tech’s Global Forum on Urban and Regional Resilience and the 15th President of Virginia Tech), and Professor Karen Hult (Chair of the Center for Public Administration and Policy in SPIA, and Professor of Political Science).

September 2 Dr. Naomi Oreskes (Harvard historian and author) gave a lecture entitled Should We Trust Science? Perspectives from the History and Philosophy of Science as a part of Virginia Tech Global Change Center’s 2015 Distinguished Lecture Series.

September 9 Nneoma Nwankwo (Political Science) gave a presentation entitled I miss school because there are no latrines – Exploring the real costs of poor sanitation facilities for school girls in Africa, as a part of the Fall 2015 Women and Gender in International Development (WGD) Discussion Series.

VT Honors Residential College Hosts “The Exchange” for Incoming Students

On August 20, the Honors Residential College (HRC) at Virginia Tech hosted “The Exchange” for incoming HRC students and the Honors community alike. The event serves as a kick-off to the academic experience offered through the HRC; Virginia Tech’s first residential college (founded in 2011). Students and faculty offered insight on the first-year experience, traditions of VT, and tips geared toward helping students become competitive for national scholarships. The HRC’s faculty principal, Dr. Eric Kaufman, was in attendance and the event concluded with remarks by VT’s president, Dr. Timothy Sands. PGG’s (Planning, Governance and Globalization doctoral program in the School of Public and International Affairs) own Danny White (UEDP track), who also serves as the Virginia Tech Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development, provided the keynote address. White’s remarks, entitled “Leadership: A transcending language”, challenged the HRC community to consider character and values of historical leaders, and urged the students to use their example as a template as they seek to address today’s social justice issues.
Recent Events on Campus Related to Governance

September 15 The Middle East Working Group at Virginia Tech held a panel discussion, *Iran Nuclear Deal: Physics, Politics & Diplomacy* with faculty members as panelists, including Paul Avey (Political Science), Patrick Huber (Physics), and Djavad Salehi-Isfahani (Economics). Bettina Koch (Political Science) served as moderator.

September 18 Professor Simin Davoudi (Newcastle University) spoke on *Resilience and Governmentality of Unknown* as a part of the Global Forum on Urban and Regional Resilience Fall 2015 Seminar Series.

September 23 Chad Van Schoelandt (Philosophy Department, Tulane University) spoke on *Constructing Distributive Justice* as a part of the Fall 2015 Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Speaker Series.

September 25 Ananda Abeysekara (Department of Religion and Culture) presented on *Modern Decision of Time and Life in Religion* as a part of the Fall 2015 ASPECT Working Paper Series.

September 30 Elizabeth Streb (American choreographer, performer, and teacher of contemporary dance) was present at the Lyric theatre in Blacksburg for a screening of the film Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs.Gravity, followed by a group dialogue. This event kicked off the Fall 2015 Community Voices Season.

VT Graduate School Helps Celebrate New eBook

On Friday, September 11, Virginia Tech Graduate School helped celebrate the launch of new e-book, *RE: Reflections and Explorations*. All 56 essays in the book were written by graduate students and first appeared in the blog by the same name, published by Virginia Tech’s Institute for Policy & Governance. Max Stephenson (VTIPG Director), Karen DePauw (Graduate School Dean), Jack Davis (CAUS Dean) and Anne Khademian (SPIA Director) were speakers at the event honoring the writers.
Upcoming Policy and Governance Related Events

**Big Lick SOUP: a micro-grant community meal**

**Thursday, October 8, 2015**, 6:00pm, Soaring Ridge Brewery - Big Lick SOUP: a micro-grant community meal. Attendees are asked to make a small $10 donation at the door, but no one is turned away. Four presenters with innovative community ideas will briefly share 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 the donations made at the door.

**Fall 2015 Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) Speaker Series**

The Program in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Virginia Tech is offering a speaker series this semester. The talks are tailored to appeal to both students and faculty, with plenty of time for discussion and interaction with the guest speakers. You are cordially invited to attend!

**Wednesday, October 14th, 2015**

**Institutional Moral Reasoning and Secession**

*David Lefkowitz*, Associate Professor, University of Richmond [profile]

Pamplin Hall Room 30
4:00 to 6:00 pm

**Wednesday, November 11th, 2015**

**Rational Choice in Deontic Contexts**

*Barry Maguire*, Research Assistant Professor in Philosophy at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill [profile]

Pamplin Hall Room 30
4:00 to 6:00 pm

**Fall 2015 Women and Gender in International Development (WGD) Discussion Series**

The WGD discussion series aims to educate and promote awareness of gender issues, increase visibility of gender research carried out by members of the Virginia Tech community, and provide opportunities for graduate students to present their work and experiences.

**Wednesday, October 14th, 2015**

**Women, gender norms, and natural disasters: examples from South Asia**

*Dr. Luke Juran*, Assistant Professor, Geography Department, Virginia Tech

Newman Library
First Floor Multipurpose Room (Room 101)
12:30 to 1:30 pm

**Wednesday, November 18th, 2015**

**No Relief: Poor women’s everyday experiences of sanitation in urban India**

*Dr. Kathleen O’Reilly*, Associate Professor, Geography Department, Texas A&M University

Newman Library
First Floor Multipurpose Room (Room 101)
12:30 to 1:30 pm

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The Women and Gender in International Development Program is situated in the Office of International Research, Education and Development (OIRE). OIRE is part of Virginia Tech’s Outreach and International Affairs (OIA).

**Save the Date!** A writing workshop with **Cathy Grimes** (Communications Manager, Virginia Tech Graduate School) and **Jim Dubinsky** (Director of Undergraduate Studies, Virginia Tech English Department) will be held on **February 5, 2016** from 10:00am-12:00pm. More details and RSVP information to follow.
My name is Lorien E. MacAuley, and I am currently in my second year of a PhD program in the Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education at Virginia Tech. My many academic interests center around viability in agricultural communities, including barriers facing beginning farmers, labor needs in alternative agrifood systems, and the analysis of power structures within agriculture. My dissertation will likely focus on aspects of social implications of on-farm apprenticeships and internships, but it is, needlessly to say, still in the works. I will certainly, at the least, be able to describe it fully in May of 2017, my predicted date of completion (fingers crossed).

I grew up in Herndon, Virginia, which many do not know actually has a robust farming history, one that my family helped to author. The corn and dairy farm that my mother grew up on had to “donate” land to become part of Dulles Airport, and it ran plot tests for Virginia Cooperative Extension. My great aunt, Edith Rogers, after my grandfather Holcomb Rogers died, took over sole management of the farm, and also adopted my mother, the teen rebel, Susan Rogers MacAuley. Edith was a sworn spinster until the day she died, and instead became one of the only female officers of the Floris Grange, and in 1935, even became the first woman on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, overseeing one of the first strategic plans that downplayed the role agriculture in the county. My mother left the farm to become a traveling flower child in the 1960s and 1970s, and hasn’t stopped singing, dancing, and loving since. Because the history of agriculture in the United States is woven through my family’s past, I feel the need to remember that story, reflect upon it, and use it to help me understand the complex web circumstances, individual choices (like my mother’s), powerful players (like my great aunt), and everyday folks that have crafted the world into what it is today. Also, I count myself as insanely lucky to have these strong women in my family, from which I may continually draw resolve and courage.

I attended Northern Virginia Community College while working as a temporary administrative assistant for several years in the late 1990s, then completed my Bachelors of Science in Biological Sciences at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, in 2003. Although my academic background was in Biology, it was my hobby and passion that led me to become employed for three years as a primitive living skills instructor in Washington State. This experience helped me find my voice as an outdoor educator, augmented my primitive living skills, and taught me how to garden with youth and adults. During this time, I lived in a tent or survival hut for six to nine months out of the year. I also had the opportunity to visit Istanbul in December 2014.
year, whereby I learned the full meaning of the term, “temperate rainforest.”

After each season teaching wilderness survival skills, I sought a month or two of temporary employment in Washington State in order to fund my meandering road trip back across the country to spend the holidays with my family in Virginia. This wild seasonal variation is what first led me to work on a huge organic farm, run by a young couple with a young son. We workers always got paid minimum wage (being in Washington) to pick corn and pumpkins, but the migrant workers living in trailers on the property were always looking for more work, in order to make ends meet for their families. The wife of one of the migrant workers living on the farm would watch the farmers’ young son for extra income. In the spring after the first season, I got a call from the farmers, who remembered me and asked if I might watch their son for the duration of the planting season. I agreed, since I was broke and needing money before the wilderness survival season started. Over the next month, however, it was slowly revealed to me that I had taken the job of the migrant worker’s wife, because the young farmer couple wanted a native English speaker to watch their child. Being their nanny, and thus allowed in their home, I soon discovered that they themselves were on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, a.k.a. food stamps). I understand the decisions of the farmers, but I can still relive the slow, almost imperceptible, revolutions of events and decisions that led to different expressions of privilege on the farm. I still reflect on this situation, and realize that there are many layers to issues in order to make agricultural communities truly viable. This and other farm experiences I have had remind me of the complexity of the situations the current state of agriculture presents to beginning farmers.

After my third season teaching wilderness survival skills, one of my “off-season jobs” became, in fact, year round, as I found an AmeriCorps position working with at-risk high schoolers for Project Discovery, a college prep program in Alexandria. We started a youth garden at the high school, spent the season gardening together and learning about agriculture, and even won an award for “outstanding” garden. Those teenagers became excellent gardeners, but they wanted to be college-bound, and I bore witness to their many struggles to realize the dream of continuing education after high school.

Next season found me in an AmeriCorps VISTA position at New River Gorge National River in West Virginia, where I coordinated programming
for at-risk youth, and more community gardens were started. I then took a job at Southern Appalachian Labor School in Beards Fork, West Virginia, where I coordinated a large market garden with youth, and experimented with season extension. We took the youth to sell their products at the farmers market, and they would get a cut of the profits. Working with this low-income community gave me an unexpected perspective on the logic of coal towns, the intimacy of the holler, and the timeless ever-presence of the past. In my opinion, cutting to the heart of issues of poverty in the region will require a whole lot of listening, patience, and a huge rekindling of hope.

My decision to go to grad school happened gradually, as it slowly dawned on me that structural conditions, nationally and globally, were not conducive to the actual success of the programming goals to which we aspired. In short, we had to think bigger. I decided to throw myself back into the world of ideas for a while to think things through these heavy dilemmas facing the communities within which I had worked. Luckily, AmeriCorps provided enough tuition grant money for me to work my way into grad school by taking several classes in 2010-2012, through which I was lucky to stumble into Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education. At Virginia Tech, I first worked with the Human, Nutrition, Foods and Exercise Department to conduct community-based participatory research into the impacts of a garden education program on at-risk youth’s attitudes towards healthy eating. I then worked on a SARE project called Mapping Sustainable Farm Systems, to map the web of community capitals used by small, diversified, and direct marketing farmers. Since, I have taken on an assistantship with the Virginia Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Coalition, through which I have broadened and deepened my understanding of viability in agricultural communities.

My passage through the world of ideas has not left me unchanged, because this a “real education.” But I often balance the theoretical, academic knowledge against what I myself have lived, in order to make sense of it all. In the end, I hope to come out with a far more reflective, critical, and nuanced outlook on development work, which will drive my future efforts. My work with my advisor, Kim Niewolny, and advisory committee member Max Stephenson, has given me a much clearer way to do this.

I think here, then, it is appropriate to conclude with a quote from Max Stephenson, and he will hopefully forgive me. As Max says, “there is nothing more useful than a good theory.” In my work at Virginia Tech, and in light of my past professional work, I have come to know this to be true. Because we create our environs based on our theories of how the world works, whether they be good theories or bad theories, examined or unexamined, stated or unstated, the theories themselves matter more in our professional work than we can ever possibly be aware. So, through critically examining, dialoguing through, and reimagining the theories behind my work, I hope to hone my efforts on areas that matter most in the future of agriculture.
Faculty Spotlight: Yannis Stivachtis

Yannis Stivachtis (Ph.D. in Politics & International Relations and MA in International Relations & Strategic Studies, Lancaster University, UK; Graduate Certificate in International Law and BA in International Studies, Panteion University, Greece) joined Virginia Tech in August 2005. Dr. Stivachtis is an Associate Professor of Political Science and serves as Director of the International Studies Program. He is also a Faculty Affiliate of the Government & International Affairs (GIA) Program at the School of Public & International Affairs (SPIA), as well as Associate Chair of the Department of Political Science and VT Coordinator of the Department of State’s Diplomacy Lab.

Stivachtis started his career as a Research Fellow (1994-97) at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva (Switzerland), where he later served as Project Consultant (1997-2001). Initially, he worked within the framework of the Middle East Research Program, which allowed him to get actively involved in second-track diplomatic activities pertaining to the Middle East peace process. Later on, he joined the Weapons of Mass Destruction Research Program, which provided him with the opportunity to observe the deliberations of the Disarmament Conference and participate in workshops organized by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). After UNIDIR, Stivachtis served as Research Fellow at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna (Austria), where he focused on projects pertaining to early warning. During his presence in Austria (1997-2001), he also served as Senior Analyst for the Austrian Institute for Strategic Studies as well as consultant for the Austrian Government on political and security issues in Southeastern Europe.

Between 1994 and 2001, Stivachtis taught at various academic institutions, such as The American College of Switzerland, Schiller International University (Paris campus), American University (Paris campus), International Christian University (Vienna campus), European Institute of the University of Geneva, and the Vienna Diplomatic Academy. From 2001 to 2005, Stivachtis served as Professor of International Relations at the Geneva School of Diplomacy.

In 2013, Stivachtis received a grant from the Department of Defense to investigate how the U.S. Army can become more effective when involved in peace operations, and, in October 2014, he was named National Security Scholar by the U.S. Air Force-Department of Defense. As a result, between 2013 and 2015, he served as External Research Associate of the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the U.S. Army War College. His recently published monograph, entitled The State/Society Relationship in Security Analysis: Implications for Planning and Implementation of U.S. Intervention and Peace/State-building Operations, outlines conditions for effective planning and implementation of peace/state-building operations following military intervention.

Stivachtis’ current professional service includes: Head of the English School section of the International Studies Association (ISA); Director of the Social Sciences Division and Head of the Politics & International Affairs Unit of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER); and Senior Advisor of the Research Institute for European
Faculty Spotlight: Yannis Stivachtis

and American Studies (RIEAS). He also serves as co-editor of the Critical European Studies Book Series published by Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

Stivachtis’ research has a dual focus: International Relations Theory and Security Studies. His first book, entitled The Enlargement of International Society, examines the role that international anarchy and culture play in world politics. Stivachtis argues that while anarchy determines the entry of states into international society, culture determines the position of the states within international society. In his Cooperative Security and Non-Offensive Defense in the Zone of War, Stivachtis identifies the constraints and dangers associated with the adoption of cooperative security and non-offensive defense policies in world regions facing protracted conflicts. In his book, entitled Human and State In (Security) in a Globalized World, he attempts to provide a clear link between International Relations and Security Studies arguing at the same time that international security is much more than the sum of the national securities of the various states. In addition, Stivachtis has published several articles and book chapters and has edited or co-edited several books and special journal issues.

Currently, Stivachtis is working on two book projects. The first, entitled European Union and Global Order: An English School Approach to the Globalization of Regional Orders, adopts the international society framework of the English School of International Relations to examine and illustrate the ways in which regional actors seek to promote a global order of their preference. In Membership Conditionality: The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in Contemporary International Society, Stivachtis seeks to demonstrate how past European and Western practices that have fallen in disrepute continue, under a different name/title, to play an important role in creating global hierarchies.

Blogs & Commentaries

Soundings - a commentary from VTIPG Director Max Stephenson
September 28, 2015: On Perfidy, Penury and the Danger of Depravity
September 14, 2015: Trumpism: The Politics of Fear and Fecklessness
August 31, 2015: ‘Ascription by Assumption’ and Democratic Politics
August 17, 2015: Rediscovering the Democratic and Economic Possibility Inherent in Imagination
August 3, 2015: A Portrait of a Cruel Imaginary and a Sketch of an Alternative
July 20, 2015: The Shared Roots of Genocide and Systematic Persecution
July 13, 2015: A Pope’s Plea for the Commons, Democratic Governance and Social Justice

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, July 1, 2015 – The Vagaries of Changing Popular Perspectives for Politics and Vulnerable Groups
Blogs & Commentaries

RE: Reflections & Explorations - a graduate student commentary

October 1, 2015: The Effects of Greenbelt Policy in Seoul, Korea
- Yehyun An (PGG)

September 24, 2015: Shifting Signals in the “Two” Chinas
- Jamie N. Sanchez (ASPECT)

September 17, 2015: What the Eurozone crisis can tell us about Sino-American relations
- Sascha Engel (ASPECT)

September 10, 2015: Keeping our Hands on the Plow: A Personal Reflection on Organizing and Empowering Mountain Youth
- Jordan Laney (ASPECT)

September 3, 2015: Good Government, Community and Policing: Police Brutality and Civic Peace
- Mary K. Ryan (ASPECT)

August 31, 2015: Why Motivations Matter in Addressing Discriminatory Hiring Practices
- Sarah Halvorson-Fried (MURP)

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!