Towards Global Citizenship: Muhlenberg Students in Bangladesh

Shortly after gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh was described by U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as a “basket case.” The new country faced tremendous obstacles including massive poverty, a war-ravaged infrastructure, runaway population growth and political instability. Despite the tremendous gains Bangladesh has made in addressing these developmental challenges, the country has continued to confront the significant social and environmental consequences of climate change. Bangladesh is the “ground zero” of climate change even though its contribution to the rising prevalence of greenhouse gases has been miniscule.

Since 2009, the MILA-Bangladesh program directed by professors Jack Gambino and Mohsin Hashim has taken four cohorts of Muhlenberg students to study how the country has dealt with the environmental vulnerabilities and developmental dilemmas posed by climate variability. The semester-long course, culminating with a two week study-trip, exposes students to the remarkable resilience and innovative capacity of the Bangladeshi people, as well as the role played by national and international governmental and non-governmental agencies. Since achieving independence, the country has made significant strides in population control, gender empowerment and poverty reduction. More recently, it has become a showcase for its environmental and economically sustainable approaches to development.

The students of the MILA-Bangladesh program meet with world-renowned Bangladeshi environmental scientists, policy makers, leaders of NGOs and grass-roots members of microfinance programs, as well as slum dwellers in Dhaka, the capital city. The trip includes a 4-day boat trip to the Sundarbans, the world’s largest mangrove forest. Students also visit the northwestern part of the country, where some of the poorest Bangladeshis live on Chars (low lying flood and erosion prone areas in or around major rivers). In their interactions with the Bangladeshis across social strata, our students gain a sophisticated understanding of the complex linkages between our production and consumption patterns and their impact on the livelihoods of the Bangladeshis.

The trip allows students to directly witness how climate concerns have been mainstreamed into sustainable development strategies of governmental and non-governmental agencies. The coursework and the trip have inculcated a deep sense of cosmopolitan citizenship among our students. Jack and Mohsin have drawn heavily on student reflective essays across the years in their article “In Their Own Words: Assessing Global Citizenship in a Short-Term Study Abroad Program in Bangladesh.” Their paper is being published in Journal of Political Science Education. In Spring 2016, they are leading a faculty development seminar on the contested identities of Bengalis. At the conclusion of the seminar, which is made possible by a Mellon Foundation grant given to the College, several Muhlenberg faculty members will join them in a visit to Bangladesh and Kolkata, India.
Pi Sigma Alpha Welcomes New Members

Congratulations to the following students who have been inducted into the Eta Upsilon Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society.

Class of 2015:
Christopher Bascelli
Nicholas Farmer
Christopher Gallagher
Patrick Molloy
Craig Welker

Class of 2016:
Erin Bohmiller
Chayoot Chensupanimit
Matthew Dacher
Gabriela De Frutos
Nicole Goe
Erin Gistaro
Jacob Hill
Cynthia Pereira
Recent Alumni News

Christopher Bascelli ’15 is attending Rutgers Law School.

Idil Baysal ’15 is attending the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.

Chelsea Britten ’15 will be working for the French Government Program TAPIF (Teaching Abroad Program in France) from October 2015 until April 2016 in the Aix-Marseille region of France.

Julia Cagin ’15 is attending Cardozo Law School.

Chris Chaky ’15 is attending the Government Ph.D. program at Harvard University.

Sarah Chimino ’15 is an Executive Recruiting Specialist at Andiamo, in New York, NY.

Jonathan Feder ’15 is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Elementary / Special Education at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY.

Christian Ferlan ’15 is attending the University of North Carolina School of Law.

Mel Ferrara ’15 is attending the University of Arizona as part of the University Fellows program to receive her Ph.D. in Gender & Women’s Studies.

Michele Freesman ’15 is working as the Deputy Campus Engagement Director at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington, D.C.

Leah Messler ’15 is attending Villanova School of Law.

Patrick Molloy ’15 is attending Widener University School of Law.

Haley Reed ’15 is pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry at the University of Delaware.

Craig Welker ’15 is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Spanish Linguistics at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Student Awards 2015

Christopher Baumgartel ’17 was awarded a Student Summer Research Grant.

Erin Bohmiller ’16 received the Russell Fulford Award.

Chris Chaky ’15 was awarded the Dr. Charles S. Bednar Award in Political Science.

Kaitlin Errickson ’17 received the Dr. John J. Reed Scholarship and the Dr. Victor L. Johnson Scholarship.

Nicholas Farmer ’15 was awarded the Citizen Exchange Council Award in Russian Studies, as well as the James W. and Barbara H. Herrick Award.

Mel Ferrara ’15 was selected as a finalist for the J. William Fulbright Program. Mel also received the Sojourner Truth Award.

Erin Gistaro ’16 was awarded the Dr. Robert S. Ochner Award as well as the President’s Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement and Promise for Postgraduate Work by a Junior. Erin was also selected as a Finalist for the Harry S. Truman Scholarship.

Sophia Goodfellow ’17 received the Frederick E. Hanson Scholarship Award.

Haley Reed ’15 was awarded the Muhlenberg Goodwill Prize.
Gaby De Frutos ’16 interned for the State Department at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations this past summer. She worked on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and many humanitarian projects while also getting to know the world of diplomacy. She also met Ambassador Samantha Power, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN and a member of the U.S. Cabinet.


Representative Mike Schlossberg ’05 signs copies of his book “Tweets and Consequences” in the Berg Bookstore.
Faculty Highlights

Dr. Chris Borick has continued his research on energy and environmental policy issues over the last year, including co-directing the National Surveys on Energy and the Environment (NSEE). During the 2014-2015 academic year the NSEE found an increasing percentage of Americans indicating a belief that global warming is occurring and that experiences with climate conditions such as sever drought are contributing to this growth in acceptance. The results of the NSEE studies have also been incorporated into a recently accepted publication in the journal Climate Change Economics entitled “Individual Discount Rates and Climate Change: Is Discount Rate Associated with Support for a Carbon Tax?”. The lead author of the article is the late David Amdur of Muhlenberg’s Department of Accounting, Business and Economics. David developed a battery of questions for the NSEE related to the effect of discount rates on support for a carbon tax but never had the opportunity to complete the study. His colleague Don Dale, along with Dr. Borick and Barry Rabe from the University of Michigan completed David’s work with a recent acceptance by the well-regarded Journal Climate Change Economics. Borick also presented NSEE findings on public perceptions of the Keystone XL pipeline at the American Association of Public Opinion Research annual meeting and a paper at the Midwest Political Science Association meeting that examined the effects of climate change beliefs on perceptions of experienced weather.

On the teaching front Borick joined Professor Mark Sciutto from the Psychology Department in the development and offering of a cluster on mental health policy. The course which ran during the Spring 2015 semester integrated research on mental illness with public policy development and implementation. During the fall of 2015 Dr. Borick is on sabbatical and working on a number of projects related to public opinion and climate change as well as research with David Rosenwasser on populism and the works of Bruce Springsteen.

Dr. Jack Gambino co-authored with Dr. Mohsin Hashim a peer-reviewed article In Their Own Words: Assessing Global Citizenship in a Short Term Study Abroad Program in Bangladesh that is forthcoming in Journal of Political Science Education. The article is based on the successful MILA Bangladesh program that he and Dr. Hashim have organized and led for four separate groups of students since 2009. Dr. Gambino and Dr. Hashim will be presenting their work on teaching global citizenship and sustainability at the Twelfth International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic, and Social Sustainability to be held at Portland State University in Portland in January 2016. During the spring semester 2016, they will conduct a faculty seminar Bangladesh: Contested Identities that will culminate with a 2 week study trip to Bangladesh and India. The seminar and study trip are sponsored by the Mellon grant Achieving Muhlenberg’s Civic and Global Mission. Dr. Gambino also presented a paper titled Citizens and Exiles in Judith Shklar’s Liberalism at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Political Science Association, Boston, November 2014. He currently serves as co-chair of the Steering Committee of the College’s self-study for the Middle States Accreditation review process. He has developed and is currently teaching a new first year seminar on George Orwell and the art of political writing and will teach a course on utopian political theory as part of a cluster course on politics and literature. Finally, Dr. Gambino will develop a new course on the Italian American experience that will be listed among the offerings for the College’s new Italian Studies minor.

Dr. Michele Deegan presented a paper with Dr. Mathews-Schultz, “Estimating the Effects of the Affordable Care Act on Health Equity” at the Urban Affairs Association meeting in April 2015. She was invited to give a presentation at the Muhlenberg Women’s Auxiliary on the Lehigh Valley on September 15, 2015. She will present a workshop with colleagues from Cedar Crest College and Lafayette College on the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium at the Eastern Regional Campus Compact Conference in October 2015. Dr. Deegan also received an innovation grant from LVAIC, along with colleagues from Cedar Crest College and DeSales University to create a college admissions mentoring program, which will partner college students and Allen High School juniors interested in applying to college and in need of help with the application process. This fellowship is co-teaching a cluster sequence on poverty with Dr. Donna Kish-Goodling, which will incorporate a yearlong service learning project for the Allen-town Promise Neighborhood. The project will map neighborhood assets in light of public policies to reduce poverty.

Dr. Hashim co-authored an article titled “In Their Own Words: Assessing Global Citizenship in a Short-Term Study Abroad Program in Bangladesh” with Dr. Jack Gambino. The article is being published in Journal of Political Science Education. He presented a paper titled “Russia’s International Security Calculus: Road to Grandeur or Perdition?” at the 2015 Annual Conference of the American Political Science Association. He also served as a discussant in the panel titled “The Continuing Balance of Power” at the same conference. Dr. Hashim and Dr. Gambino are presenting a paper based on their MILA-Bangladesh course at the 12th International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Hashim was invited as a plenary speaker at the 56th US Air Force Academy Assembly, where the theme was US-Russia Relations. He continues to serve on the National Faculty Committee of the AP Comparative Politics exam, and as Country Manager for Bangladesh of the international research project Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). Dr. Hashim was promoted to the rank of Professor of Political Science.
Chris Herrick was elected to a three-year term on the board of ASIANetwork. This is a consortium of approximately 170 undergraduate institutions. Serving approximately 500,000 U.S. college students, ASIANetwork is the leading organization in the U.S. for enhancing the teaching of Asian Studies at undergraduate colleges and universities. It was founded in 1992 and its membership includes some of the finest liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States. The initial draft of his co-authored book China’s Peaceful Rise was submitted to the publisher, Manchester University Press, in August for publication in late January 2016. During the current academic year, he will be chairing the International Student Advisory Committee, which is overseeing the dramatic rise in the number of international students (30+ in the incoming first-year class) on campus.

This past summer 2015, Dr. Lanethea Mathews-Schultz taught the first on-line course offered by the Muhlenberg Department of Political Science. The class, Introduction to American National Government, was one of six online classes offered college wide. Dr. Mathews-Schultz participated in workshop with other faculty, sharing Muhlenberg's particular approach to online teaching and learning in the context of the library arts at the International Conference of Online Learning this October in Orlando, FL. In other conference-related news, Dr. Mathews-Schultz was recently elected Second Vice President for the Pennsylvania Political Science Association and she continues to chair the Northeastern Political Science Association’s Section on Teaching, Learning, & the Profession. Dr. Mathews-Schultz published two articles over the past few months. The first is a review of the biography, Price of Fame: The Honorable Clare Booth Luce, forthcoming in the Women and Social Movements in the United States. The second, "See Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Sara Palin Run? Party, Ideology, and the Influence of Female Role Models on Young Women," co-authored with colleagues Mack Mariani (Xavier University) and Bryan Marshall (Miami University), is forthcoming this December in Political Research Quarterly.

Brian Mello spent Fall of 2014 on sabbatical, working on research on the Arab Spring in preparation for an edited volume on political theory and the Arab Spring. In addition, he participated in a research conference in Hamburg, Germany on political radicalism in Turkey during the 1960s. His paper on the labor movement during this tumultuous decade is being published as part of an edited volume based on the conference proceedings. He also helped organize conference on peace building in the Lehigh Valley in conjunction with four other colleges as part of the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges. Currently, he is working on a research project the Islamic State.

The 2014-2015 academic year was another busy one for the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion. In its thirteenth year of operation the Institute engaged in an array of research projects that focused on political, environmental and health related topics at the local, state and national levels. Even numbered years usually indicate the MCIPO will be active in polling political races in Pennsylvania and 2014 was no exception. The Institute regularly polled the 2014 Pennsylvania gubernatorial election, accurately predicting a large victory by Tom Wolf over incumbent Tom Corbett. The MCIPO polling on the race was widely cited by media both inside and outside of Pennsylvania and noted once again for its accuracy. The Fall of 2014 also found the Institute conducting it’s annual survey of Americans on energy and environmental issues with a particular focus on President Obama’s Clean Power Plan. The results of this survey show Americans generally in support of the President’s initiative to reduce emissions from coal-burning power plants as a means of improving ambient air quality and reducing carbon emissions. The Institute ended 2014 with another look at Pennsylvania reactions to the Affordable Care Act. This was the third in a series of polls on the health care legislation commonly known as Obamacare and showed Keystone State residents remaining highly divided on this major health care reform.

2015 started with the annual Pennsylvania Quality of Life Survey which found evidence that Pennsylvanians are more optimistic about the state of the economy than at any time since the start of the Great Recession. In particular, for the first time since 2007 more Commonwealth residents rated the economy positively in comparison with those giving negative evaluations. During the Spring Semester of 2015 the MCIPO also partnered with the Public Health Program with an annual survey of Pennsylvanians on health related issues. This year’s poll focused for the first time on mental health issues with results indicating substantial concerns about the quality and quantity of mental health services in the state. The final project conducted last spring was the annual Lehigh Valley Quality of Life Survey that closely examined public reactions to the opening of the PPL Arena in downtown Allentown. The study found local residents giving high marks to the changes in downtown Allentown and increased interest in visiting the city for recreational purposes.

As always the Institute’s student staff did tremendous amounts of quality work during the last year. Student Director Elizabeth Tannen, Supervisors Angela Grassi, Rachel Wolf and Emma Bownes, along with dozens of interviewers produced high quality work that helped to reinforce the Institute’s reputation as an industry leader. The Institute’s Webmaster and Office Manager once again excelled in keeping the MCIPO functioning despite the usual inefficiencies of it’s longtime Director Chris Borick. With the 2016 Presidential election approaching the next year promises to be a busy and exciting one for the Institute team.
Chris Chaky, Class of 2015

I’m currently a first-year student in the Government (Political Science) PhD program at Harvard University. While it is too early for me to officially say what I will be studying here, I’m looking at the American Politics subfield, with a focus on political economy and inequality, as well as race, ethnicity, and gender politics.

The professors in the Muhlenberg Political Science Department definitely shaped me and pushed me to be the scholar I am today. I am lucky to have actually had all of the professors for at least one class, which exposed me to a wide variety of perspectives and issues in political science. The classes in the political science department also helped transform my critical thinking and writing skills and helped me begin to produce substantive research, which was undoubtedly helpful for my graduate school applications and continues to be useful today. Perhaps most important, though, was the personal advising and sense of community I received not only from my advisor but from the entire department. I can’t count the times I wandered up to the third floor of Ettinger to ask for advice on jobs, grad school applications, what classes to take, or simply just to say hello. The support, encouragement, and academic rigor instilled in me by the political science department at Muhlenberg has been enormously helpful, and I am very thankful to all the professors there.

Lindsey Doane, Class of 2013

I currently work in local government for a woman in political office, so my major and minor in college turned out to be a perfect fit. My boss represents 1.1 million people as Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in Northern Virginia. I serve as her Communications Director working with the media and writing speeches, press releases and articles. Muhlenberg’s Political Science Department prepared me to be a solid writer and researcher – skills I use in my job every day. During my senior year, working as a focus group leader for Envision Lehigh Valley helped me gain valuable community development experience, which prepared me well for my first job out of college and beyond. I gained new perspectives about issues surrounding education, economics and environmental policy through the MILA Bangladesh program (a highlight of my college experience)! My political science professors prepared, challenged and encouraged me all four years at ‘Berg. I couldn’t have asked for a better college experience that led me to a career I am knowledgeable and passionate about.
Alumni News

Mel Ferrara, Class of 2015

Currently, I am a first year PhD candidate at the University of Arizona in the Gender and Women's Studies department. I am also a member of the UA Fellows Program. My research interests include trans and intersex studies, body politics, medical ethics, and comparative models of health care. At Muhlenberg, I was a double major in gender and sexuality studies (self-design) and philosophy/political thought. Given this interdisciplinary background, I consider myself very lucky to have had a great deal of interaction with the political science department as both a student and a writing assistant. The faculty were, and continue to be, some of my most influential mentors. Our conversations inside and outside of the classroom provided opportunities for deeply critical engagement helped me to develop myself as an intellectual. Further, as a first generation college student, their guidance during the graduate school application process was vital to my success.
In DC, “Beltway insiders” are convinced that it is not what you know that counts, but who you know. There is a kernel of truth to this adage, but networking alone will not get you very far in the field of international relations. In my experience of applying for graduate schools and careers in the field, my interviewers were more eager to test my skills as a critical thinker on foreign affairs rather than parse through my references. Fortunately, the International Studies program at Muhlenberg prepared me to face this challenge as no other institution could.

True to the mission of liberal arts education, Muhlenberg’s curriculum exposed me to the paradigms of international relations theory and law, while requiring I branch out into the disciplines of sociology and economics, among others. This interdisciplinary approach as taught by Muhlenberg’s outstanding faculty gave me the analytical tools I needed to publish on a variety of subjects from terrorist finance to insurgent dynamics, and prepared me to take on the task of educating the forthcoming generation of strategic leaders at the National War College.

I received my MA from Georgetown University’s Security Studies Program in 2014. I currently work as a research assistant at the National War College in Washington, DC.
Nikki (Rhoads) Gum, Class of 2008

Being a Muhlenberg political science major had a huge impact on the trajectory of my life. My diverse experiences in the department helped me become a more informed citizen, and readied me for a career in public service and beyond.

With the guidance and support of mentors like professors Borick, Gambino, Hashim and Mathews-Schultz, I was able to begin my career as a D.C. staff member for a U.S. Senator, a position which required quick, critical thinking, precisely the type of skills that were cultivated in my political science classes. Thanks to faculty members’ rich, interdisciplinary liberal arts methods, I was also well-prepared for several career path twists and turns that eventually led me back to Muhlenberg as Director of College Communications.

My current position is incredibly rewarding in that it allows me to promote the top-notch experiences Muhlenberg students have in departments across campus, including my own major. I cannot think of a more engaging or supportive place to learn critical thinking, reading, writing, research and life skills than the Muhlenberg political science department, or better people to teach those skills than the experienced, committed mentors that make up the department’s faculty.

Kathleen Rogers, Class of 2014

I am a first year Political Science PhD student at Rutgers University. While at Muhlenberg, I wrote an honors thesis about the underrepresentation of women in the PA General Assembly, and I plan to continue working on research related to women’s representation in American politics. By virtue of my work at the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, I was also offered a position as Graduate Assistant for the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll. I am immensely grateful for my experiences at Muhlenberg, all of which prepared me well for a research and teaching career. My studies were enriched by travels to Bangladesh, Turkey, Spain, Morocco, and Ghana, participation in the Lutheran College Washington Semester, and opportunities to present research at several professional conferences. And, of course, so many wonderful and supportive Muhlenberg faculty members in the Political Science Department and beyond have contributed to my development as a young scholar.
Greetings to our current students, alumni, and friends! It’s an exciting time to study politics at Muhlenberg. This fall our classes are exploring a wide range of topics pulled from the daily news including Dr. Mello’s course on the Arab Spring, and Dr. Hashim’s course on Russia, that are closely examining the events in Syria and the Ukraine.

The implementation of our revised General Academic Requirements has created the opportunity for faculty to teach new courses. Several faculty are teaching sophomore cluster courses, which cross disciplinary boundaries and share a common theme. Clusters are designed to challenge students to integrate knowledge from multiple perspectives in order to understand and solve today’s complex problems. For example, Drs. Mathews-Schultz and Ouellette (History) are teaching a cluster that connects gender and global politics with an exploration of gender, race, and globalization in Latin America. Next spring Drs. Gambino and Bloom (English) will teach a cluster that explores the complex relationship between literature and politics from the disciplinary perspectives of literary criticism and political theory. Our Culminating Undergraduate Experience (CUE), which is our new senior capstone experience, pulls together seminal works from leading scholars in the four subfields of political science to critically examine key theories and perspectives in light of the current status of our discipline today.

Outside of the classroom we are also busy engaging with our students. Our program planning for this academic year includes the continuation of our brown bag research lunch series, where faculty share their research in progress with students and colleagues. We are also planning a celebration of the 50th year of the formation of our department’s chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the Political Science Honor Society.

Thanks to all of our alums who stopped by to say hello at our open house in September. We had a great turn out! We want to hear from all of our alumni and build stronger connections between our alums and current students. Please keep your contact information current. You can email me at deegan@muhlenberg.edu with your information or use Linked-In to connect with other faculty. You can also stay connected by “liking” us on Facebook.

Michele Moser Deegan
Department Chair and
Associate Professor