

ERIC VOEGELIN INSTITUTE

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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NEWSLETTER

Summer/Fall 2017



“Millennial Classics” Series Concludes with Spring Conference on Aristotle’s *Ethics*

Forty-two people, ranging from undergraduates at LSU, Louisiana Tech, and University of Louisiana at Lafayette, to philosophy and political science faculty from Louisiana, Alabama, and Washington, DC, including a Southern University professor of studio art, crowded around a table in the French House on Saturday, April 1, to discuss Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Professors Samuel Baker, Bryan-Paul Frost, Jeremy Mhire, and Rachel Parsons took turns describing their “favorite book” in the *Ethics*, covering topics such as the relation of virtue to happiness, free will, the nobility of virtue, and the relation of prudence and science, with keynote lecturer Michael Pakaluk⁴ offering a concluding session on friendship and sociability.

The conference was the capstone to the year’s series of lectures and reading groups on “Millennial Classics,” examining formative texts in philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE). Student reading groups discussed books by Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, as well as Aristotle, meeting on their own and bringing to these classic texts their own perspective and concerns. This fall the PPE reading groups chose their own texts—Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, with more planned for the spring—to culminate (pending funding) in a conference on the social contract today: Is it broken? Can it be re-negotiated? Whatever the answers, the first clause of our contract is in place: another crawfish boil!

From the Director:

As yet another summer brought reports of clashes in American streets and bitterness throughout the polity, one was gratefully reminded of the ideal of academe, the grove outside the city of Athens where Plato taught. Here the urgencies of daily life could be suspended and students could gain perspective on the needs of the city by seeing them in the light of nature and history, not bound by a narrow time and place.

While many colleges and universities have found their enterprise disrupted by social and political pressure—indeed, some of them seem to invite it—we at the Voegelin Institute are committed to preserving a place for rigorous and independent thought. The point is not to promote idle speculation; rather, we think that cultivation of the wisdom and judgment needed to make genuine contributions to human well-being depends on those who take a moment to step out of the fray and learn how to think for themselves by studying great thought. I hope you agree as you review our activities in spring 2017 that we are honoring that commitment.

James Stoner

Hermann Moyse, Jr., Professor of Political Science & Director of the Voegelin Institute
<http://www.lsu.edu/jamesstoner>



Cuban Exiles Discuss Communist Atrocities & the Possibility of Democracy on the Island Nation ①

The Victims of Communism Foundation of Washington, DC, brought to campus with EVI sponsorship two Cuban exiles, Rosa Maria Paya and John Suarez, who shared their experience with repression by the Castro regime and their hopes for democracy in Cuba's future. Moderated by VCF's Murray Bessette, the panel attracted a wide cross-section of the LSU community and was featured the next day on the front page of the *Reveille*.



Grafton Lecture Delights

Honors College

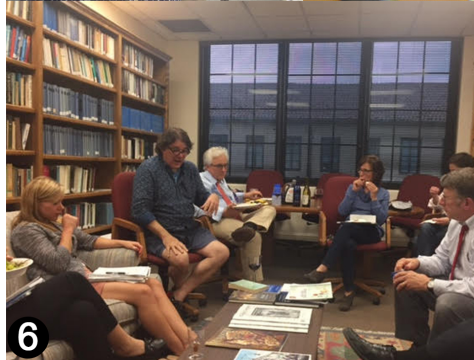
Princeton Humanities Professor Anthony Grafton ⑦ spoke to a large, attentive and enthusiastic audience at the Honors College on January 30, on "Past Belief: The Fall and Rise of Ecclesiastical History." Grafton also spoke to an Honors class on Classical Traditions and to a Faculty Seminar, making time as well for a swamp tour!



Universidad Catolica Argentina Professor Santiago Legarre ② gave a talk at the LSU Law Center on "Natural Law and Constitutional Law," where he received a warm welcome from former colleagues. Later the same week National Association for Scholars President Peter Wood and Wellesley Prof. Thomas Cushman addressed the issue of free speech on campus on a panel moderated by LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope. ③

Fall Events

No pictures yet, but this fall's events began with a memorable Faculty Seminar discussion of Sophocles' play *Antigone*, led by Cambridge University Professor Simon Goldhill, who also lectured at Honors. Four papers by LSU faculty will be given at the Interdisciplinary Humanities Seminar, Georgetown's John McNeill lectures in February, and more is being planned. Prof. Alexander Orwin joined our faculty in Political Theory; we'll profile him next issue. Post-doc Josh Bowman is back for the year.



Faculty Seminar Inaugurates Shakespeare (Reading) Festival with "Julius Caesar"

The Interdisciplinary Humanities Seminar brought faculty from various fields together to discuss plays from Renaissance England, under the guidance of visiting lecturers Anthony Grafton, Peter Lake of Vanderbilt and Thomas Cogswell of UC-Riverside ⑥. Scholarly papers were presented in the spring by retiring Historian John Henderson and by Religious Studies Professor Bradley Storin.



Bestselling Author Dreher '89 offers "Benedict Option" ⑤

LSU alumnus Rod Dreher delivered the keynote address at the Ciceronian Society's annual conference, held here March 23-25. Dreher's lecture, co-sponsored by the Voegelin Institute, discussed his new book, *The Benedict Option*, exploring how Christians might strengthen their own communities and faith now that they no longer define the common culture.