



ERIC VOEGELIN INSTITUTE

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

www.lsu.edu/voegelin

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2017

From the Director:

Like many a university professor in recent years, I've found myself struggling to persuade (the buzzword is "incentivize") students to read assignments longer than a phone screen, so I was at once astonished and delighted by the response when the Voegelin Institute offered to buy students a few classic texts of political philosophy and political economy if they would agree to read them and discuss them among themselves. I figured we'd struggle to find fifteen takers; instead, we have two dozen.

When in college I first read what were then called "Great Books," I expected stuffy recitation of tired ideas. Instead, I found vibrant inquiry that challenged everything I took for granted. Nobody likes all the classics, and it sometimes takes hard work to crack them open, but they are a sure antidote against complacency and conformity. At the core of the mission of the Voegelin Institute is passing along the experience of encountering great ideas by asking serious questions—and developing the scholarly virtues that help one think them through. Reading books carefully and thoroughly can never comprise the whole of an adequate education, but no education is complete until one masters that skill — and learns its value.

James Stoner
Hermann Moyses, Jr., Professor of Political Science & Director of the Voegelin Institute
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“Millennial Classics” Lecture and Reading Series Launched in October, November

Norma Thompson, Senior Lecturer in the Humanities and Associate Director of the Whitney Humanities Center at Yale, inaugurated the Millennial Classics Lecture Series on October 17 to an attentive audience in the Grand Salon of the French House, home to LSU's Ogden Honors College, our co-sponsor in the event. "Can You Learn More from a Person or from a Book?" was her topic, and she made the case for reading great literature as central to a liberal education.

A week later we held the first organizational meetings for our Millennial Classics reading groups, student-directed conversations of leading texts on the theme of "Philosophy, Politics, and Economics," or "PPE," as the cluster of topics is popularly called in the Oxford degree by that name. Within a month we had distributed two-dozen copies of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, the first book on this year's list, to Honors and other undergraduates and to interested graduate students from several different disciplines, who have organized themselves into three distinct groups—invited to gather and share thoughts at a session with faculty in January.

"Millennial Classics" continues this term with a lecture by Anthony Grafton of Princeton on January 30 and a lecture and conference on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* featuring Catholic University's Michael Pakaluk on March 31-April 1.

Faculty Seminar Grows

This term the Interdisciplinary Humanities Faculty Seminar expands to include a “Shakespeare (Reading) Festival,” as Anthony Grafton of Princeton leads a discussion of “Julius Caesar” and visiting History lecturers Peter Lake of Vanderbilt and Thomas Cogswell of UC-Riverside discuss plays by Shakespeare’s contemporaries Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton. Meanwhile, seminars on this year’s theme, “Beyond Secularism?,” continue with History Professor John Henderson on “European and Chinese World Histories of Astronomy” and Assistant Professor of Religious Studies Bradley Storin discussing “The AutoHagioBiography of Gregory of Nazianzus.”

Phi Beta Kappa Lecture Draws Big Crowd

Princeton History Professor Daniel Rodgers filled the Grand Salon on October 20 for his Phi Beta Kappa visiting lecture, “Age of Fracture,” co-sponsored by the Honors College, the Voegelin Institute, and PBK. Rodgers addressed deep sources of political division in the U.S., singling out changes in social and economic analysis in the 1980s. During his visit, Rodgers also met



with undergraduates and grad students — including a lunch-time discussion in the Voegelin room on how to study past thought, attended by students in four different grad programs.

Voegelin Graduate Alumni Network Website Opens



Hoping to facilitate professional connections among LSU graduate degree holders whose fields of study include political theory, we launched a webpage last fall containing photos, bios, homepage links, and contact information for over forty former students. One alumna, Dr. N. Susan Gaines, now a Lecturer at the University of Leeds in England, spoke to current students about political theory and methodology in October, too. Visit www.lsu.edu/voegelin/alumni-network to see the network and learn about the interests and activities of our MA and PhD graduates.

Political Theory Hire

Alexander Orwin (Ph.D, Chicago) will begin as assistant professor of political science at LSU in August. His first book appears this spring: *Redefining the Muslim Community: Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in the Thought of Alfarabi* (U Penn Press).

EVI Plans Joint Events in Louisiana

Twice this spring the Voegelin Institute will partner with other universities in the state, including ULL, UNO, Tulane, Loyola, and Dillard, to share visiting speakers:

- Panel, “Freedom of Speech on Campus,” featuring Peter Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, and Prof. Thomas Cushman of Wellesley College, Thursday, January 26, 7:00 pm, in the LSU Union Capital Chamber (329).
- Panel, “Castro’s Legacy and the Future of Cuba,” featuring two Cuban exiles, Rosa Maria Paya and John Suarez, Wednesday, March 8, at noon, in the LSU Union.

In addition, the Voegelin Institute will co-sponsor a lecture by Rod Dreher on March 24, 3:00 pm in Hill Memorial Library, part of the Ciceronian Society conference meeting at LSU, March 23-25.

Collaboration with LSU Law Center Continues

Building on our successful events last fall co-sponsored by the LSU Law Center—Hadley Arkes’ Constitution Day lecture on Justice Scalia and a panel discussion on the affirmative action case, *Fisher v. University of Texas, Austin*, featuring attorney Allan Van Fleet, who filed a brief on the winning side in the case, and LSU Law Dean Thomas Galligan—the Voegelin Institute will co-sponsor a lecture on “Natural Law and Constitutional Law” by Santiago Legarre of the Universidad Católica Argentina, on Tuesday, January 24, 2:00 pm, in the Moot Courtroom at the Law School. Prof. Legarre, an authority on comparative law, lectured last winter at Harvard Law School and is teaching this winter at Notre Dame Law School. He has also taught at LSU.



Other Recent EVI Activities

- Luncheon for grad students with Bernd Kortländer, Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf
- Movie Night for POLI 7995 students: “Vita Activa: The Spirit of Hannah Arendt”