The Role of Religion in Fostering and Sustaining Civic Engagement

Over the past five years, the Henry Institute has received a number of grants from the Bradley Foundation to engage in research related to religion and civic responsibility within the American context. Henry Institute Executive Director Corwin Smidt has directed the programs, with the most recent grant exploring the extent to which religious socialization within family life fosters civic responsibility in emerging adults.

Studies of religion among teens have exploded in recent years (e.g., Regnerus et al. 2003; Smith 2003; Bartkowski 2007), and this research reveals several basic, and relatively consistent findings, some of which stand directly in contrast to prevailing assumptions about the religious character of young people today. For example, the overwhelming proportion of youth (85 percent) claims a denominational affiliation (e.g., Smith and Denton 2005). Most such ties are linked to conventional forms of religious organization, with slightly more than half claiming to be Protestant, and another one-quarter affiliating with the Roman Catholic Church. Current claims, therefore, that contemporary youth are “spiritual seekers” who are largely devoid of ties to organized forms of religion appear to be incorrect (Smith and Denton 2005).

Further, religiously active youth are more likely to express moral compassion and commitment to justice than are non-religious young people. In contrast to the latter, the religiously active group is more likely to volunteer, be civically engaged, and render service to their communities (Smith and Denton 2005, 226-232; Marcelo, Lopez, and Kirby 2007). Furthermore, those teens who attend church services weekly, regardless of religious tradition or denomination, are more racially and ethnically tolerant than those who never attend, or attend only occasionally (Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht 2003).

While studies have been conducted on religious socialization, little attention has been given to how religious life in the home may shape the civic and political participation of adolescents, or how that relationship either changes or remains constant as adolescents move into adulthood when ties to a church may wane or lapse. This uncertainty prompted the Henry Institute to engage in a systematic study of the role of religion in fostering and sustaining civic responsibility. The primary research focus was to determine whether civic responsibility was a virtue learned relatively early in life, particularly through processes of religious socialization within the family, or whether it was a virtue largely unrelated to such patterns of socialization. Thus, the research project has focused on: the sources, origins, and causes of civic responsibility; the extent to which civic and political engagement are interrelated during adolescence; and the role of religious socialization in contributing to patterns of civic responsibility among young adults.

In order to address these questions, we analyzed the publicly available National Study of Youth and Religion panel data. In 2001, this study interviewed a national representative sample of youth, along with one parent or guardian (with about 3300 youth and a parent/guardian being interviewed). These same individuals were then re-interviewed in 2005 and then again in 2008, allowing the comparison of parent-child patterns of volunteering both across differences in the religious life and practices of families, as well as across time. This research enabled us to address: (1) whether religion contributes anything of significance to the practice of volunteering, charitable giving, and civic engagement as adolescents move into adulthood; (2) if there is such a contribution, whether religion works in relatively similar or dissimilar ways across different forms of civic responsibility; and, (3) whether the relationships between religion and civic responsibility...
responsibility deriving from patterns of socialization within the family during adolescence are sustained when the adolescent enters young adulthood away from home.

A number of important findings resulted from the research. The results show that religion is an important factor in both fostering and sustaining volunteering among adolescents at home and then as young adults away from home. Parents who are religious are more likely to model volunteering and encourage their children to participate, but this behavior and encouragement have only a modest influence on youth volunteering. The most important mechanisms explaining volunteerism among youth are the young person’s religious participation in a congregation and his or her participation in a formal religious youth group. Even after controlling for various socio-demographic and parental variables, participation in a religious youth group outweighs the child’s participation in a congregation in shaping youth volunteering practices over time. Survey information appears to show that participation of teens in congregational life alters their social networks, provides them with increased opportunities to volunteer, and fosters pro-social orientations.

But religion is not simply an important factor in fostering civic responsibility, it is also a significant facet of sustaining such responsibility across time for both adults and youth. Not only does church attendance rival education in fostering different forms of civic engagement among adults, but religion also rivals education in its ability to sustain such activities over time. Findings among adults show that church attendance contributes either just as much as education or exceeds education (depending on whether membership in voluntary associations is included in the multivariate analysis) in accounting for continued volunteer activity over time. In terms of sustaining volunteer practices among young people, the level of church attendance reported by youth is far more important than the nature of their religious beliefs. When examining volunteer endeavors of emerging adults (18-23 year olds), the data reveal that earlier levels of church attendance and past participation in religious youth groups are just as important as parental education in accounting for volunteering practices two years later. Additionally, these religious influences far exceed a parent’s level of income as well as such factors as the youth’s religious tradition, gender, race, or age in their importance to sustain volunteering over time.

The findings of the study were presented by research team members at various professional conferences, including the Michigan Conference of Political Scientists, the Southern Political Science Association, the Henry Institute’s biennial Symposium on Religion and Politics, and the International Society for the Sociology of Religion.

“The far reaching effects of religious upbringing on civic engagement have largely been unrecognized,” noted Smidt. “Our research clearly demonstrates a strong relationship between religious socialization and civic engagement, both in adults and young people. We hope that our efforts will launch additional studies in this area.”

Citations


2012 Paul B. Henry Lecture

Each year, the Henry Institute sponsors the Paul B. Henry Lecture. In 2012, the event will feature former U.S. Representative Vern Ehlers. The lecture and an informal reception will be held at the Prince Conference Center, on the Calvin College campus, in March of 2012. When details are finalized, they will be publicized on the Henry Institute website (http://www.calvin.edu/henry/schedule).

For information about the 2011 Paul B. Henry Lecture, delivered by Dr. David Campbell, see page 6.
Since 2006, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation has awarded grants totaling more than $310,000 to the Paul B. Henry Institute to fund research efforts related to the relationship between religion and civic responsibility. Dr. Corwin Smidt has coordinated the grant work, and he has been joined in that research by Dr. Kevin denDulk (Grand Valley State University), Dr. Doug Koopman (Calvin College), Dr. Stephen Monsma (Paul Henry Institute), the late Dr. James Penning (Calvin College), and most recently by Dr. Jonathan Hill (Calvin College). Their research efforts have utilized existing survey data, as well as information gained in a national survey of 3,000 participants which was commissioned by the Henry Institute in 2008.

The findings have formed the basis of two recently published volumes: Pews, Prayers and Participation, published by Georgetown University Press in 2008, and The Disappearing God Gap? Religion and the 2008 Presidential Election in 2010 by Oxford University Press. In addition, this research and funding have enabled team members to present the research findings at professional conferences and publish their results in various journal articles. The researchers have been invited to give guest lectures at various universities, and the funding has also extended assistance to nearly twenty graduates students scattered across the country as they conduct research and present their own findings at professional conferences.

The Calvin College Rule of Law Endowment was established in 2008 through a generous gift made by a former student of Professor Don Pruus who taught courses in accounting and business law during his tenure with the Economics Department at Calvin. The endowment was created to honor his appreciation for and commitment to the rule of law.

The phrase “rule of law” indicates that no individual, regardless of his/her position or power, stands above the law. It reflects the principle that governmental authority is legitimately exercised only when it does so in harmony with written, publicly disclosed laws that are adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedural steps that are collectively referred to as due process. The rule of law allows individuals to foresee with some certainty how authorities will use the coercive powers of government in given circumstances, and in so doing, enables them to plan their personal affairs on the basis of such knowledge. And, while the enactment of law may limit individual freedom, to some extent by altering the means by which individuals choose to pursue their aims, government is also prevented through such rule of law from stultifying individual efforts by ad hoc actions.

Professor Pruus asserted that there was “an inadequate appreciation for the principle of the rule of law.” The endowment was established to help promote understanding of the rule of law concept through various activities at Calvin College which would reach students, faculty and staff of the College, as well as the West Michigan community and the broader scholarly and professional community when possible.

The Henry Institute serves as the “home” for the annual “Rule of Law Lecture.” In 2011, the inaugural event of the Rule of Law Endowment was held at Calvin College. Andrey Shirin was invited to speak on The Rule of Law in Russia: Problems and Perspectives on November 3, 2010. “This initial event provided an opportunity for the Calvin College and West Michigan community to become more aware of the principle of the rule of law as well as the current situation in Russia in this area,” according to Dr. Corwin Smidt, Director of the Henry Institute. “Dr. Shirin was an excellent choice for the first lecture, given his experiences in Russia and his expertise in the academic study of events and policies there.”
The Henry Institute awarded three Undergraduate Research Awards for the 2010-2011 academic year to assist Calvin College professors by funding current research projects. The grants are intended to provide an opportunity for professors to move forward on their research, as well as to encourage and enhance the mentoring of students through the development of a scholarly relationship with the faculty member. Professors are asked to submit proposals for partnerships that would allow students to be actively involved in research opportunities, including in-depth working assignments.

The three proposals selected for funding met the goals of the Henry Institute (namely, an examination of the link between the Christian faith and public life) and provided significant involvement in the overall work of the project by the selected student.

Mandy Cano Villalobos of the Art and Art History Department was awarded a grant to work with student Tianna Wierenga (senior majoring in Studio Art). The two compiled a visual arts project entitled *Voces*, which told the stories of the women of Ciudad Juarez in Mexico where, since 1993, mass femicide has been taking place. The project sought to combine a social justice focus with a visual awareness of the existing social and political distress of the area. Additional information about the project is available on the web (http://www.mandycano/CC/AZ/AZ.html).

In a report on the activities and accomplishments of her grant, Professor Villalobos noted, “The Undergraduate Research Grant was such a benefit for both Tia and myself. It allowed me to share my knowledge of a topic about which I care deeply. But more profoundly, the grant provided Tia with the opportunity to broaden her understanding of an under-recognized social justice issue and a marginalized culture through her passion for art.”

Gail Zandee (Nursing) utilized the grant to continue her research in community health, having received one of last year’s Undergraduate Research Grants as well. Andrea Lima, a junior student in the Nursing department, partnered with Professor Zandee to research disparities in health care in local Grand Rapids-area neighborhoods that have historically been underserved. As part of their research, they interacted with neighborhood members and collaboratively identified action plans to address disparities, conducted focus groups and surveys within the target neighborhood, and designed a report of the study’s findings.

According to Zandee, “The Henry grant was an integral part of continuing our nursing department’s work in community health. The learning opportunity for Andrea was very valuable, and our ongoing program certainly benefitted.”

The third recipient, You-Kyong Ahn, also from the Art and Art History Department, worked with Elliott Spronk (senior student in Architectural Engineering) to study the architectural history of the Calvin College campus. The project involved recording the architectural characteristics of the current campus and conducting a survey examining perceptions of those features. The resulting report on their research suggests significant design elements continued on page 5
related to maintaining the architectural integrity of Calvin College in the
future, as additional buildings are added and altered in the public space of the
campus. Summaries of Professor Ahn’s research are displayed below, and
pdf copies of the displays are available on the Henry Institute website
(www.calvin.edu/henry/research/index.htm).

Ahn noted, “The Henry Institute’s support was a great incentive for both
Elliott and for me. It is difficult to find time for research work during the
semester; the grant helped me to find a motivated individual to assist in the
project. It was a rewarding and enjoyable experience to work with a student.”

“The Henry Institute is pleased to be able to support projects that broaden
academic opportunities for Calvin students, provide excellent mentoring
situations, and enhance research opportunities for faculty,” noted Institute
Director Corwin Smidt.

The Paul B. Henry
Institute for the Study of
Christianity and Politics

The Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics was founded
in 1997 to continue Congressman and scholar Paul B. Henry’s work of
seeking to integrate faith with political thought and action. Since its
inception, the Institute has sponsored lectures, conferences and events to
further explore this faith/public policy interaction. Through efforts to
encourage exploration of the interplay between the two, to train new scholars
in the field, and to bring new voices and interests into the dialogue, the
Henry Institute continues its work in the community and across the world.

Currently the Institute involves the
efforts of three individuals: Director
Corwin Smidt, Research Fellow
Stephen Monsma, and Program
Coordinator Ellen Hekman, along with
a number of affiliated faculty who
work on selected Henry Institute
projects. Activities of the participants
range from written scholarly works to
presentations and conference participa-
tion, from teaching opportunities and
research, from planning events to
scheduling lectures. For more
information, see the Henry Institute
website (www.calvin.edu/henry).
Henry Institute Lecture on Amazing Grace

David Campbell was featured as the annual Paul Henry Lecturer for the 2010-2011 academic year. Campbell is currently serving as the John Cardinal O’Hara C.S.C. Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame and is the founding director of Notre Dame’s Rooney Center for the Study of American Democracy. In his lecture, Campbell drew from his recently released, and widely acclaimed book (co-authored with Robert Putnam) entitled American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us.

Campbell began his lecture by asserting that there are three unique points regarding religious life in the United States: first, America is religiously devout; second, America is religiously diverse; and lastly, America is religiously tolerant. He noted that many people would likely agree with the first two contentions, but that many would not be so certain about the third assertion.

As a basis for assessing these three contentions, Campbell drew from data collected through his and Robert Putnam’s “Faith Matters Survey.” This study randomly surveyed 3,100 Americans in 2006, and then sought to re-survey as many of them as possible again one year later, enabling them to ascertain how people’s views and opinions may change as their life circumstances are altered during an elapsed period of time. Additional information was obtained from the World Values Survey and other public sources of data.

With regard to religious devotion, Campbell pointed out that forty percent of their survey participants attended religious services at least weekly. When this level of weekly church attendance is compared to that found in other countries, the U.S. ranks in the middle in terms of frequency. However, when the U.S. is compared with other industrialized and urbanized societies, its rates of church attendance tend to be among the highest levels found—ranking much higher than countries such as Canada, Britain, Germany or Sweden. This high level for the U.S. generally holds true when other measures of religiosity are examined as well.

The religious diversity of the U.S. can be assessed by examining the denominational affiliations of Americans. The single largest U.S. religious tradition is that of Evangelical Protestant, followed by Catholic. Evangelicals comprise a little more than one quarter of Americans, with Catholics following close behind. The religiously unaffiliated represent the third largest group; it is the fastest growing group in recent years, comprising a little more than one-sixth of the population. Though the religiously unaffiliated may contain atheists within their ranks, this is not the basis of their numerical growth, since most of the religiously unaffiliated report that they believe in God and in an afterlife. Mainline Protestants constitute the fourth largest group, including about one in six Americans. The remaining religious traditions are varied (e.g., Black Protestants, Jews, Muslims) and are relative small in number; all of the non-Christian religious traditions combined together constitute less than one in ten Americans. Even when denominational affiliations are examined in terms of more narrow categories or different religious traditions that embody these different denominations, one finds that no single religious tradition dominates in terms of American religious life.

As a measure of religious tolerance in America, survey respondents were asked: “Do you think a good person who is not of your faith can attain salvation?” Surprisingly, regardless of one’s religious tradition, an overwhelming majority answered “yes.”

According to Campbell, these findings are suggestive of America’s religious tolerance: “Perhaps we could say that, as a religiously diverse country, we have found a way to make that diversity work such that we aren’t at each other’s throats.” Despite this willingness to grant salvation to those outside one’s own religious faith, Campbell continued on page 7
acknowledged that real divisions remain among Americans with regard to faith issues.

Campbell then went on to examine religious changes within American life since the conclusion of World War II, briefly sketching the ebb and flow of religiosity in the U.S. over that course of time. The 1950s were a high point in terms of American religiosity, spurred, in part, by such factors as the end of WWII, the subsequent baby boom, and the Cold War competition against an atheistic Soviet Union.

The 1960s, however, saw a dramatic decline in measures of religiosity, accompanied by a significant change in America’s social mores. In just four years, the number of people responding that sex between two unmarried persons was acceptable nearly doubled, and the change was almost entirely generational with young people far more likely to endorse the practice. The same time period saw a sharp decline in survey participants who thought the influence of religion on American life was increasing.

However, during the latter part of the 1970s and into the 1980s, more conservative religious forces, often evangelical Christians, took a strong stand against the changes in social mores, and people were attracted to these more conservative groups based on their beliefs. This dynamic continued throughout much of the 1990s, a time which found a significant mingling of religion and partisan politics.

In fact, during this period, the Republican Party made definitive efforts to portray itself as the party of religion, emphasizing conservative stances on abortion and same sex marriage, and campaigning on family values issues. In response, the “other side” raised increasing objections to religious leaders speaking out on political issues and the assertion of certain issue positions and stances as the only political positions that “true” Christians could advocate. Correspondingly, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a rapid increase in the number of survey participants placing themselves in the “none” group when asked about religious affiliation—particularly among those younger Americans who held more “tolerant” positions on the social issues of the day.

Yet, despite these divisions, survey data also reveal that Americans are in many ways religiously united. When asked whether religious diversity has been good for America, nearly all Americans answer “yes.” And, approximately 80 percent of survey respondents also respond affirmatively when asked whether there are basic truths which can be found in many religions.

Campbell asserts that this acceptance of the value of religious diversity derives from our demographic composition and patterns of social interaction. Americans live in religiously diverse neighborhoods and work places, maintain friendships that cross religious lines and have extended family members affiliated with different religious faiths. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Americans has at least one friend, family member and/or neighbor who is affiliated with a different religious faith than their own. Additionally, roughly one-third of all Americans change their religious affiliation at least once in their life, and over half of all marriages performed in the U.S. today unite couples from two different faiths.

This interaction with individuals of different religious beliefs leads to the tolerance demonstrated in the Faith Matters survey and is supported by the data from the re-interviews of survey participants a year later. As acquaintances and friendships develop with individuals from other faiths over this elapsed one-year period of time, religious acceptance expanded among those survey participants.

According to Campbell, America has managed to combine religious devotion, diversity and tolerance by creating a society with webs and connections across faith lines. “What the survey doesn’t answer,” noted Campbell in closing, “is whether this means we are watering down our religious faiths. We have yet to see what the long-term results of such tolerance will mean.”

---
Henry Institute Director Corwin Smidt was awarded the Fulbright-Dow Distinguished Research Chair by the Fulbright Commission and will spend the fall 2011 semester in the Netherlands at the Roosevelt Study Center in Middleburg. During the appointment, Smidt will work on writing a book based on his analysis of surveys of clergy in the United States, an area he has studied over the past twenty years.

The political significance of clergy derives from the distinct position they hold within American society enabling them to serve as potentially important “political intermediaries.” In part, this status stems from the fact that approximately 40 percent of the U.S. population attends church services weekly, on average. “No other group of people [other than ministers] has access to so many Americans on a sustained basis,” notes Smidt. Moreover, their potential significance derives from the nature of the groups they lead, which can be viewed in terms of moral communities. This differentiates them from leaders of other kinds of groups which are largely instrumental, strategic, or materialist in nature (e.g., professional associations, unions).

Given these differences, clergy are typically viewed by their parishioners through a unique lens and accorded a distinctive kind of status than, for example, the recognition accorded to leaders of professional associations by their members.

Over the past twenty years, Smidt has been involved in a number of studies that have surveyed randomly selected pastors across a variety of Protestant denominations (as well as Roman Catholic priests and Jewish rabbis). Among the denominations studied were seven groups that were examined at three different points in time (1989, 2001, and 2009), including the Assemblies of God, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, the Disciples of Christ and the United Methodist Church. With these comparative data, Professor Smidt will assess the social, theological, and political changes evident among American Protestant clergy over the past two decades, and will examine the extent to which such changes may be interrelated.

Three trends have already emerged from Smidt’s study, and further analysis will examine specific ways that these changes shape the political leanings of clergy. The first trend is that mainline Protestant clergy, as a whole, are apparently holding more orthodox theological views today than twenty years ago. Secondly, more women are receiving seminary education and entering parish ministry than in the past. And, finally, there are more individuals entering the ordained ministry later in life, having already worked in other vocations for a period of time before becoming pastors.

Smidt will examine the extent to which such changes in the social composition and theological perspectives of clergy relate to any differences in political attitudes and behavior of ministers today as compared to two decades ago. Examining survey responses to the same questions over time will allow an assessment of change.

According to Smidt, “Society itself has changed during this time period, and the clergy may, or may not, have changed the ways in which they see their religious faith relating to public life. As a result, part of my research will assess whether clergy perceive their political positions as reflecting those of their congregants and the extent to which any differences are diverging or converging over time.”

---

**Research Workshop of the Chinese Spirituality and Society Program**

In late July of 2011, Corwin Smidt was invited to give a series of five lectures at Purdue University to twenty visiting Chinese scholars who are currently engaged in research projects related to religion and public life in China. The scholars were participating in a month-long Research Training Workshop of the Chinese Spirituality and Society Program, directed by Fenggang Yang, the Director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University. Corwin Smidt was one of several scholars who was invited to lead workshop sessions, giving lectures during the week of July 25-29, and discussing matters related to the particular research projects undertaken by the Chinese participants. Smidt’s lectures included: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religion; Religion, Social Capital, and Public Life; Religion and Civic Engagement in the United States; Determinants of Attitudes toward Religion in American Public Life; and Religion and Opinion on American Foreign Policy.

“There are many changes occurring in China, and there is genuine interest in exploring the relationship between religion and public life in the Chinese context,” noted Smidt. “The individuals participating in the July workshops at Purdue University are genuinely interested in pursuing their research in this area, in ways that relate to the topic in both China and in other societies.”
The Rule of Law in Russia: Problems and Perspectives

Andrey Shirin, Adjunct Professor at the John Leland Center for Theological Studies, spoke at Calvin College on November 3, 2010. Shirin was born in Russia; at the age of sixteen, he became disappointed in Communist ideology and embarked on a search for truth which culminated in his becoming a Christian in the local Baptist church. He later came to the United States for seminary studies, first for his Masters degree, and later for his Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. A summary of Shirin’s comments follows.

The question of the rule of law in Russia, or of the perceived absence of such, has acquired a new importance over the last ten years. This is due in large part to the vast hydrocarbon reserves in the country and the potential for investment in developing oil and gas fields. The rule of law has weak roots in Russian culture. Society views practices of the executive branch of government stretching the law to the breaking point to further its own interests as a normal practice, and generally the public does not express outrage or demand accountability. The idea that even the highest levels of government must be accountable to the law is fairly new and without strong roots in Russian society at this point.

Shirin asserts that three factors seem of particular importance for the development of democracy, civil society and the rule of law in Russia.

The first component is simply the price of oil. According to Shirin, there appears to be a significant reverse correlation between the level of freedom enjoyed by Russian people and the worldwide price of oil. The occupation of Afghanistan, the rollback of democratic freedoms in the 2000s and the military intervention in Georgia all happened to coincide with spikes in oil prices. Perestroika and the disintegration of the Soviet Union occurred at the time of lower prices for oil. When the price of oil is high and petrodollars are rolling in, Russian rulers believe that their desire to exercise complete control over domestic capacities for extracting hydrocarbons is more important than the demand for foreign investment. The need to invest in research and development does not seem urgent, and there is a feeling that those investments can be made with incoming petrodollars. In this default mode, human rights and the rule of law often do not have the highest priority for the Russian government. When the flow of petrodollars dwindles and the Russian government feels greater need for foreign investment, matters of democracy and the rule of law receive more focus—primarily to assure foreign investors that their capital is safe and to show other governments that progress is being made in the areas of human rights and the rule of law.

The second factor shaping the rule of law in Russia is increasing globalization, which calls for a greater integration of legal systems throughout the world. In order for this amalgamation to be meaningful, leading decision-makers need to be assured that laws will be interpreted predictably. This issue becomes particularly acute in cases of foreign investment, when foreign corporations need to be certain they will not be pressured to change contracts with their Russian counterparts before they commit to substantial financial and other pertinent commitments. This confidence is especially crucial in case of long-term projects, such as extracting hydrocarbons, which is the lifeblood of the Russian economy. A stable legal system, which is independent from extrajudicial influences, would go a long way toward providing the needed degree of confidence to foreign investors.

The third element related to the rule of law in Russia is the rampant corruption within Russian society. In order to tackle the legal nihilism existing in Russia, it is necessary to acknowledge that the problem is not only extrinsic and financial, but also internal and moral. There is a broad consensus in Russian society that, even if there were no foreign investors with their demands to integrate the Russian legal system and practices with the rest of the world, Russia would be much better off without its legendary corruption. The proliferation of new social media has made this corruption even more apparent.

When asked whether there is the potential to one day have an understanding of the rule of law in Russia that would approach international standards, Shirin responded, “The pressures of globalization, the shared notion that corruption is an immense impediment for Russian society, and the moral sense heightened by increased capacities for information sharing all point to an affirmative answer in the long term. At the same time, the path to the rule of law in Russian society will not be short or easy. Addiction to petrodollars creates powerful dynamics that work against establishing the rule of law in Russian society. Fighting addictions is never easy, and fighting this one is likely to be particularly difficult. The road to the rule of law will not be smooth or easy for modern Russia, but it is my hope that she will get there eventually.”
Calvin Students Complete Internships in Washington D.C.

During the spring semester of 2011, nineteen Calvin college students lived and worked in Washington D.C. as part of the Henry Semester in Washington program. The students were from a variety of majors, including political science, German, international relations, social work, Spanish, French, and communication.

The Henry Semester in Washington D.C. program was initiated by the Henry Institute in the spring of 2000, and the program has been held annually since then, with more than 175 students participating since its inception. Prior to its inauguration, Calvin students could participate in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities’ American Studies Program in Washington D.C., but Calvin student participation was restricted to only a few students each semester given the nature of the cooperative program which involved nearly 100 colleges and universities. In addition, Calvin’s political science department offered an occasional program during January for its interim term. The department moved to coordinating its own longer spring term in order to provide additional opportunities for students to be exposed to the capitol city and its cultural, educational and employment options. With this change, the program became more feasible and attractive to students from a broader range of studies as well.

Students begin with a weekly one-hour class during the fall semester which is designed to help them secure their internship placement in the spring and to prepare for life in Washington, D.C. The students develop resumes and cover letters, research various internship openings and apply for particular internship positions. They also learn telephone interviewing skills and practice research and communication tools which will be useful in their future internship positions.

As part of the D.C. Semester program, each student identifies organizations or internships that match his or her own interests and possible future employment fields. Jenna Vande Kamp, a junior political science major who interned with the Republican National Committee, noted: “I like it that the placement process relied so much on the students. It put the responsibility on us to pick and find places we were interested in.”

The 2011 students interned in a variety of different kinds of positions: political offices on Capitol Hill, government departments, law firms, lobbying agencies, non-profit organizations, communications outlets, and the Holocaust Museum. Three Calvin College social work students also participated, completing their social work practicum requirement at social services organizations in Washington D.C.

During their time in Washington, the students also take two academic courses, taught by the Calvin professor accompanying them for the program; this past year, Dr. Beryl Hugen (Department of Sociology and Social Work) led the students. The program is structured so that, in addition to their internship, the Calvin faculty member leads the students in exploring organizations representing various religious faiths and the group’s interaction in public policy formation and implementation. The second course taught by the Calvin faculty member, which also relates to religious faith and public life, reflects the particular skills and interests of the professor directing the program. In 2011, Dr. Hugen examined government policies towards faith-based organizations working to address social service needs among citizens.

Students wholeheartedly endorsed the program and their experiences during the semester. According to Catherine Sterk VanHalsema, who interned at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “I honestly could not have asked for a better internship opportunity. It was better than I expected, and if I could, I would extend it longer than the semester. Anyone interested in history or German should consider interning at USHMM. It was a fantastic internship experience!”

Ana Stutler, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants/National Center for Refugee and Immigrant Children

“My internship met and exceeded my expectations. I knew I would have valuable work, but I didn’t realize how essential my work would be to the functioning of the organization and our service to clients. My relationships with the interns, the others in the office, and my supervisor made the environment very pleasant and welcoming for questions, learning and being challenged. I got great exposure to a potential work field and would love to return!”

Students wholeheartedly endorsed the program and their experiences during the semester. According to Catherine Sterk VanHalsema, who interned at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “I honestly could not have asked for a better internship opportunity. It was better than I expected, and if I could, I would extend it longer than the semester. Anyone interested in history or German should consider interning at USHMM. It was a fantastic internship experience!”
The Paul Henry Institute sponsored its sixth biennial Symposium on Religion and Politics in April of 2011 at the Prince Conference Center on Calvin College’s campus. The event brought individuals from across the United States and Canada, as well as Scotland, South Africa, and Romania to present their research. Symposium participants included faculty and scholars, as well as graduate students from a variety of disciplines.

Fifteen panels were included in the Symposium, with 45 research papers encompassing a broad range of topics related to the general theme of religion and politics. The focus of the research varied greatly, ranging from political philosophy to comparative politics, and from American politics to international political systems and policies.

Registrants were enthusiastic about the event and noted the unique blend of various religious faiths and perspectives, as well as the value of input from colleagues about their own work. One reported that “[At this event] one can reliably expect to find the participants to be unself-consciously earnest and candid in their religious allegiances and yet perfectly courteous and receptive to others being the same way about their different faith. There is, more simply, a high degree of ecumenical and inter-religious literacy and mutual respect here.” Another participant stated “This is my third Symposium, and for me it has become a place where I can try out ideas, get valuable feedback, and make connections. It is very valuable.” And one of the first-time participants noted at the close of the Symposium: “The diverse panels, well-informed speakers and very interesting mix of scholars were certainly strong aspects of the Symposium. I am definitely interested in participating again in the future.”

The next Symposium on Religion and Politics is tentatively scheduled for the end of April in 2013. Additional information, including the full schedule of this year’s Symposium and links to a number of the papers presented is available at the Henry Institute website (http://www.calvin.edu/henry/schedule/symposium/2011 symppgm.htm).
2010-2011 Lectures Sponsored by the Henry Institute

The Paul Henry Institute sponsored and co-sponsored a number of public lectures over the past academic year. Highlights of some of these events are included in this newsletter, and audio recordings of some of the lectures are available from the Calvin Campus store—www.store.calvin.edu—(reference the number noted after the lecture when you order).

Politics in the Reign of Saul and David by Paul Abramson, Professor of Political Science, at Michigan State University on September 16, 2010

The Causes and Consequences of Religious Minority Repression in Muslim Countries by Ani Sarkissian, Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University on October 13, 2010 [A16660]

Global Justice, Human Rights and the Rule of Law by Jeffrey Brauch, Dean of Regent University School of Law on October 19, 2010

The Rule of Law in Russia: Problems and Perspectives by Andrey Shirin, Adjunct Professor at John Leland Center for Theological Studies on November 3, 2010 [Rule of Law Series Inaugural Lecture; see “Rule of Law” on page 9]

Diminished or Diverse? An Examination of the Political Voice of Churches in Democratic South Africa by Tracy Kuperus, Professor of International Development Studies at Calvin College on November 17, 2010

Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society by Jonathan Chaplin, Director of Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics at Tyndale House on January 31, 2011 [A16786]

Globalization: Seeking to Reconcile Theological and Economic Perspectives by John Tiemstra, Professor of Economics at Calvin College on February 21, 2011 [A16789]

Masculinity, Militarism and Modern American Evangelicalism by Kristin DuMez, Professor of History at Calvin College on March 17, 2011

American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us by David Campbell, John Cardinal O’Hara C.S.C. Associate Professor of Political Science at University of Notre Dame on April 30, 2011 [Paul B. Henry Lecture for 2010-2011 academic year; see “American Grace” on page 6]