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In PLACE: November 6, 2017

PLACE

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IN PLACE

November 6th, 2017

Welcome back to the PLACE newsletter! We will send out semi-monthly emails during the 2017-18 academic year to keep you informed about everything PLACE-related. We'll try to keep these relatively short and focused, while also providing useful information about PLACE activities happening throughout the Linfield community and ways to bring the program into your classes.

Want a primer on PLACE? Check out the description [here](#). If you want more frequent updates, follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

Spotlight On: PLACE Sponsored Events

This week's Spotlight is in two parts: a write-up on the Marshall Theater's "Ada and the Engine;" and a report on the "Policy Differences and Politics" conversation this past Thursday.

A Few Notes on the Engine, Written By Ben Bartu, PLACE Fellow and a Lead in "Ada"

It is no easy task to put into words the wild, tiresome ride that was working on, producing, and fine-tuning Lauren Gunderson's Ada & the Engine. The best way to describe the experience is probably as a frightful cocktail: one part sweat, two parts stress, and eight parts work. The result, however, seems to have turned out right.

We have continued to receive a wonderful response from the greater Linfield/McMinnville community, and thanks goes to everyone who has helped make it possible: the donors, our peers, and of course our lovely director, Janet Gupton, who has been here with us since the beginning of our time acting at Linfield College.

Ada and the Engine is a play which focuses on the fictionalized relationship between historical figures Ada Lovelace (played by theatre major Melory Mirashrafi) and Charles Babbage (played by myself), and Ada's life as her relationship with the world around her changes via technology, which subsequently influences her personal relationships. Not just with Mr. Babbage, but also with her very traditional mother, Anabelle Byron (played by Raisa Mlinski), the female mathematician Mary Sommerville (played by Arianna Strong), and the younger, slightly more handsome love interest, Lord William Lovelace (played by Marcos Galvez).

The play explores how technology affects our lives, not just in the Ada's Victorian England, but also in the generations to come: a central theme of the play is the idea of 'the future' and the millions of possibilities for computing, and thus the entire human race. The play is replete with terrific acting, music (thanks to music major Sophia Reinhardt for composing the final piece), lighting, set design, costuming, and more.

A Report on the “Policy Differences and Politics” Conversation

The Policy Differences and Politics event featured Linfield alumni and trustees Michelle Giguere and Phil Bond, both of whom have experience on the Hill. Michelle began by explaining her leap into politics after graduating with a biology major: While taking care of one of her close friends, who was paralyzed, she was offered a job working under a congressman. After a while Michelle was tired of the demanding hours and “wanted to maybe settle down with someone.” She has lobbied for progressive causes since.

Phil's path was also unconventional, as he "was always interested in sports," and graduated with a communication degree. He eventually decided to follow in his father's footsteps, however, and served as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce for Technology under President George W. Bush, as well as chief of staff to Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn. He has now lobbied on behalf of conservative causes for over two decades and is a chief executive of Bond and Associates in Washington D.C.

President Hellie asked both Michelle and Phil to discuss the changes they had observed in Congress over the years. Bond described how electronic voting changed Congress: "When Congress members had to wait in line for an hour or so, they talked and got to know each other; now it isn't unusual for an incumbent house member to never meet one-another, even though they've worked together for a decade." Media attention "politicized every moment" as well: "If you talked to a Republican as a Democrat, there were bloggers waiting outside to inquire why you did that."

In response to whether or not the United States is a functioning democracy at the federal level, Michelle replied, "It is still functional, but it might be the least functional we have seen in our lifetime. Less than half of the positions for ambassadorships have been nominated and there are a multitude of vacancies in judge and attorney positions...our democracy could be better but kids are still going to school and society is moving on."

Phil's response was more neutral: "I can't fathom why the president won't make his own appointments. Our democracy is functioning but the federal government is slouching. Congress has ground to a halt and they can't get anything passed. The states have stepped up where Congress has failed. Whether this is good or bad isn't for me to say."

When both were asked about cooperation across the aisle, Michelle stated: “You won’t change someone’s mind by being rude. You have to understand how they think and ask questions to get to a better understanding...When I worked under Les AuCoin, two congressman, a Democrat and a Republican hiked into the mountains together for three days to get to know each other and really talk about policy that would affect the area they were in. There were experts along the way in logging or park rangers to talk to the congressmen about these issues. This is the kind of interpersonal communication required.”

Phil stressed the importance of seeing opponents positively: “Don’t doubt people’s motivation. They all have the best intention in mind. I have never questioned Michelle’s motivation, even if I thought her policies behind that motivation were absurd. The old speaker of the house Tom Folley, a gentleman of the first degree, was often referred to as ‘cursed with seeing both sides’ but that was his greatest strength.”

Upcoming Events

PLACE Debate: “Climate Change Poses a Greater Threat to U.S. National Security than Terrorism.”

On Wednesday, November 8th, at 6 PM in Riley 201, the POLS 361 class is hosting another in their series of debates on current foreign policy issues. This week’s resolution, “Climate Change Poses a Greater Threat to U.S. National Security than Terrorism” is particularly salient after the Manhattan attack and the president’s response to it—held in sharp contrast with his response to the threat of climate change.

Marshall Theater: Ada and the Engine by Lauren Gunderson

The Marshall Theater continues its showings of *Ada and the Engine*, a play described by the National New Play Network as “Jane Austen meets Steve Jobs” Showtimes include Thursday, Friday and Saturday of this week, at

7:30 PM for the Thursday and Friday showings, 2:00 PM on Sunday. Follow this link to purchase tickets and see other Linfield art information.

Film Screening: Code Orange

On Monday, November 13th at 7:00 PM, we are screening the film “Code Orange: Political Psychology and Election Performance” in Delkin 145, Vivian A. Bull Music Center.

PLACE Debate: “The United States Should Accept North Korea as a Nuclear Weapons State”

On Wednesday, November 15th at 4:00 PM, the POLS 361 class is once again hosting another in their series of debates on current foreign policy issues. This week’s resolution, “The United States Should Accept North Korea as a Nuclear Weapons State,” draws from the current escalation of nuclear tension between Kim Jong Un and the western world.

PLACE in the News

Our first article enhances this past Monday’s Pizza & Politics on the internet and democracy. From The Economist, [this piece](#) argues that “Facebook, Google and Twitter were supposed to save politics as good information drove out prejudice and falsehood. Something has gone very wrong.”

A Kremlin-backed Facebook page encourages Texan secessionists, and no-one questioned it, despite a myriad of typos akin to what a non-native English speaker would make. The piece [“How the Russians pretended to be Texans — and Texans believed them”](#) again shows the impact of social media on democracy.

Are the humanities relevant in this digital age? Yes, Sarah Bond argues in our third article this week: [‘Digital’ Is Not the Opposite of ‘Humanities’](#). She remarks on the wide “range of questions that can be explored with

quantitative methods” and argues for the value of the humanities in today’s academic world.

“There Is No Such Thing as ‘the Digital Humanities’” Eric Weiskott argues, instead arguing that “the problem with the formulation ‘the digital humanities’ is that it equates a new institutional investment with a new form of knowledge.”

Both of the above articles are critiques of Timothy Brennan’s article “The Digital-Humanities Bust” which asks a simple question: “After a decade of investment and hype, what has the field accomplished?” He answers this question simply and provocatively: “Not much.” Who do you agree with him, why or why not? Let us know on Twitter!

Watch for future newsletters to learn more about PLACE events, teaching resources, and details on your PLACE Faculty/Student Fellows! Thanks for reading, and please feel free to send me questions and suggestions at pcottre@linfield.edu.