



## *Political Science Club Newsletter*



**August 2020**

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### **Political Science Club Officers**

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If you have any questions or concerns about this newsletter,  
please contact Dr. Ruth Alminas at (970) 247-6166 or by email at [raalminas@fortlewis.edu](mailto:raalminas@fortlewis.edu).

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# Welcome Back Skyhawks!

Dawson Gipp, Vice President of the Political Science Club

As we welcome in this new school year, given everything that has happened in the summer of 2020, the Political Science Club has decided to do things a little differently than we have in the past. We have always felt the need to engage in discussion about the important political events in our world, particularly given the amount of misinformation and highly polarizing communication on social media these days. Unfortunately, these discussions rarely reached beyond a handful of the same students. This year we want to bridge this gap by releasing, among other things, a monthly newsletter to show that there are people on campus talking about these topics in a serious way, seeking truth, and trying to make sense of whatever we can to the best of our abilities.

As students of Political Science we study political events, both historical and current, to try and understand the past and imagine a future. As officers of the Political Science Club, we find it our ethical duty to try to give the most objective perspective of an issue that we can, although this can often be difficult to achieve. It is not our goal to tell you what you should think, but rather to start the conversation, to inspire more political engagement, and to generate greater political awareness among the FLC community.

The first topic we have decided to try to unpack hits very close to home for us here in Durango: Should “the Chief” be taken down or not? This monthly Political Science newsletter embodies our efforts to encourage earnest conversation among students in higher education in a meaningful way. These will not be straightforward or easy topics to discuss, but we hope the sheer gravity of these subjects will emphasize the need for intellectual, passionate, and above all, respectful dialogue.

LET’S GO SKYHAWKS!

## Let’s Talk About It: From Mascots to Misunderstandings

Dawson Gipp, Vice President of the Political Science Club



In a parking lot on 9<sup>th</sup> Street near Main Avenue stands a large sign for Durango’s Toh-Atin Gallery, a sign that has come to be known locally as “the Chief.” This summer, a petition was circulated requesting that the sign be removed. In response, a second petition circulated demanding that we “Save the Chief.” [For more background on this story, please take a look at Nancy Lofholm’s \*Colorado Sun\* article here.](#)

While it might be tempting to view the whole controversy as a narrow issue unique to Durango, it is actually just one more example of a much larger

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conversation about the use of mascots or imagery that misrepresent Native Americans. As the Vice President of the Political Science Club, and being a Rez kid from the Standing Rock Reservation, it seemed fitting that I unpack this situation. In conjunction with the President of the club Jackson Berridge, a Durango local, it seemed like a good topic to hash out for our inaugural newsletter.

I have always found the idea of the use of Native American imagery to be an interesting one. With “the Chief” controversy and the recent removal of the Washington Redskins’ name, it seems a little insight on this topic might be helpful. When it comes to imagery that represents Native American people, whether it's representing a specific tribe or not, and whether it is used with or without the consent of those being represented really changes how the situation should be looked at. I’m from North Dakota and one of our big situations within this topic was the removal of the University of North Dakota’s (UND) name and mascot, the Fighting Sioux. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) expressed that the name and logo represented a “hostile and abusive” representation of “Native Americans” and UND was given three years to get approval from both Spirit Lake and Standing Rock, the two Lakota Tribes that are within North Dakota, to continue to use the Fighting Sioux. Spirit Lake, after voting, had granted UND permission to use the name, whereas Standing Rock rejected it without even allowing a vote to take place. The Fighting Sioux didn’t receive the approval necessary and the name was officially retired in 2012. This is comparable to the Florida State University’s Seminoles and the University of Utah’s Ute, but they did receive official approval. The important part with these schools is that they were required to receive official consent from the tribes they were supposed to represent.

This misrepresentation of Native American people is old and runs deep. Even this word “Sioux” is actually an Ojibwe word used by Anishinaabe people, meaning enemy. It was the French peoples in Canada who established the use of the word in reference to us. We are Lakota, Dakota and Nakota peoples, and Sioux are what others have called us. The use of the name is specific only to our tribe, whereas ‘Redskins’ is a generalizing representation of Native Americans as a whole. This is where Toh-Atin Gallery’s “Chief” comes into play. Who is it supposed to represent? From the looks of it, it’s not the Ute or the Navajo, but Native Americans in general.

In my opinion, I am not offended by this depiction and I find the term “dehumanizing” is going a little overboard. My very first reaction to when I first moved to Durango was, “woah, that’s racist!” But I immediately let it go as another one of those things that people may never understand. As a part of my cultural teachings, I have been taught that I have power over myself in the way that I choose to give, or to not give, my power to these sorts of things; that no person or thing has the power to make me feel anything I don’t want to feel. This is easier in theory than in practice, but I have chosen not to give my power to this, so I am not offended. In fact, I was a little upset when the Fighting Sioux changed their name because I enjoyed the idea of the “hostile” representation of my people. My Lakota people are very spiritual people who have cultivated a warrior culture, and I’m very proud of it. That said, I am one person, who does not speak for my entire people, nor all the Indigenous peoples of North America. Just because one Native person disagrees or agrees is beside the point with respect to Native American representations as a whole. Whether I find it personally offensive or not, images like “the Chief” and the Redskins are a misrepresentation of all Native American peoples at large. I believe this is the aspect of history that is being missed by many here in Durango.

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Before I attempt to unpack this further, I feel it is important for me to acknowledge that I'm not a Durango local, and I don't intend to become one after my education here is over. In order for me to properly write this article, I have done my research on Durango's history, and I do not have any intention of overlooking or undermining what the Chief means to some. Is it an iconic staple of the famous and historic Durango downtown area? Sure, it seems to be, and I understand that means something serious to some people. If this is a real part of Durango's history, then the whole historical circumstance must be taken into consideration and that is not happening. While it may be a nostalgic part of Durango, of many people's youth, that is only one aspect of the Chief's history, it is not the whole story. The other side of the Chief's history is the historical representation of Native Americans, which is where I see the biggest problem. A John Wayne television-era representation that has always ignorantly depicted Native Americans with buckskin pants and a bow and arrow, topped off with a red bandanna and an eagle feather for spiritual effect. Then just slap whatever tribal name you've heard most – Kiowa, Apache, Navajo - and bam, you got yourself "Indians" - now that's just silly, but that's what happens.

To compare this to something most people understand, I'm going to use our knowledge of Europe as a paradigm of reference. We use the term "Europeans" to describe every single person from Europe, yet we understand that so much history has happened between their different groups. We are taught plenty about what has happened there throughout the centuries, and we can easily differentiate the diversity of people and histories involved. The Romans did this, the British did that, Gutenberg, the Spartans, World War I, World War II, we could all go on and on. What I'm trying to say is that you know about it! Yet, not many know how Native Americans had a direct effect on so many of America's historical events. What many Native peoples know as Native history is actually the direct relationship with Western European influences and then America. There is no separation, Native American history *is* American history, but it has rarely been included. Of the 520-plus Native Tribes that are still around today, how many can you name off the top of your head? What are some of the actual cultural differences between them? How has colonialism affected those specific tribes directly? I'm sure my explanation of the origin of the word "Sioux" is more than what the average American knows. So, what is the difference between Ojibwe, Anishinaabe, and Chippewa? Or Navajo and Diné? Or the differences between Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota? These things are not known to the majority of people in America. What is known, however, is this Tonto, TV idea of what Native Americans are. That is what I think this sign represents. Not one part of this sign's imagery directly represents any one single aspect of a specific tribal culture. It is a one sided stereotypical misrepresentation of Americans' idea of an entire continent's worth of people that doesn't even give a conceptual reference of time. Yet, I will refrain from calling this racism.

Understanding intentions is critical before you cast labels like being racist. People can have pure respect, coming from a place of compassion, and wanting to be a part of what they think Native Americans represent, yet still fundamentally misunderstand who we are in a disrespectful way. Just because people are opposed to removing the sign does not make them racist. Are some racist? Absolutely. However, my first response to this is to give people the benefit of the doubt. Especially when it comes to the gallery owners, I don't feel like they had nefarious or abusive intentions. It seems their hearts are in the right place with all of this, so far. It's been my experience that some of the people who don't see this as a racial issue honestly don't have any actual negative racist views towards Native Americans. So, they ask how can this be racist, why would you take it down? It seems to me that the problem is a lack of knowledge on

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both sides of this, which leads to a gap in understanding and ultimately destructive conversations. That needs to be corrected. To make progress toward real solutions, we need to be able to discuss difficult issues like this one with an attitude of mutual respect. We need to have the space to share our knowledge, and we need to listen to the knowledge that others have to share. To each be able to ask ourselves - regardless of what we might personally believe the solution to be - some simple but difficult questions such as “What don’t I know about this situation?” and “How might I be wrong?”

In considering solutions, one situation I can’t help but be worried about is what if the Natives artists who sell their work at the gallery actually start to lose out because the sign was taken down? What if it was taken down and, to compensate for Native representation, Toh-Atin Gallery allowed Native artists to paint the outside wall much like the gas station on College Drive and East Eighth Avenue? As for painting over its stereotypical representation, I am not saying that it wouldn’t solve the immediate problem, I guess. But that solution is analogous to how the United States has always dealt with Native Americans: Avoid the real issue and just cover it up.

To conclude this article, the Political Science Club would like to invite you to join the conversation! What do you think about this situation? Do you know of any similar circumstances that you think could help shed light on this one? Does the lack of historical knowledge about Native peoples actually play a part in this? Thanks for taking time out to read this article, and be sure to let us know what you think.

## Let’s Continue the Discussion!

This semester, the Political Science Club would like to invite the FLC community to participate in a series of discussions about hot-button issues in the classroom and beyond. Our goal is to practice creating safe environments for constructive dialogue across a wide variety of differing perspectives. Above all, we ask that as you join us in this conversation, you do not try to “win” the conversation. This is not a competition. We are all here to listen and learn.

To take part in this discussion, please join the Political Science Club on the FLC app where we hope to create a space to practice engaging in meaningful dialogue about difficult issues. To make sure we can create the conditions for constructive dialogue, we ask that you please read and comply with the following ground rules.

### Ground Rules for Discussion

The Political Science Club and all of our events are open to any FLC students who are interested in political engagement and civil discourse. If you cannot not abide by these ground rules, we will ask you to remove yourself from the conversation until you can.

- 1) Be authentic and honest.
- 2) Listen (or read) carefully, especially if you disagree. Do not formulate a response until you have first taken the time to understand what is being communicated.



- 3) Ask questions to help you understand perspectives different from your own.  
Be respectful when asking for evidence supporting a statement that has been made.
- 4) Don't assume anything about one another's beliefs, ideas or identities.
- 5) Don't make generalizations about any group of people. Don't use the words 'always' or 'never'.
- 6) Recognize the difference between facts and opinions. Both are legitimate when expressed appropriately, but we need to be careful not to confuse the two.
- 7) Keep an open mind and remember that we are here to learn from each other and solve shared problems rather than to convince or win arguments.
- 8) Be patient with one another and ourselves in cases of low knowledge or awareness, remembering that our intention is to learn from each other.
- 9) Acknowledge intent and address impact. Assume that others are speaking and acting from a place of good intent. At the same time, if our actions negatively impact others, we must address, understand, and take responsibility for that impact.
- 10) Practice inclusivity and appreciate diversity of the identities, perspectives, and experiences in our community.

## Featured Campus Partner: Native American Center (NAC)

FORT LEWIS COLLEGE



DURANGO, COLORADO

We are lucky to be part of a civically engaged community here at Fort Lewis College. In each issue of this newsletter we will highlight a program, club or center on campus that is working in partnership with us to promote respectful and constructive dialogue on the topic of the month.

This month we are partnering with the [Native American Center \(NAC\)](#) which provides resources for Native American undergraduate students here at FLC. According to the NAC, our overall Native American student enrollment averages 1,100 Native students each semester, and within that a rich cultural diversity of 160+ tribal nations is represented. The NAC provides academic, cultural, social, and transitional support to this diverse population of Native American students, not to mention a very cool space where students can study, learn from one another, and create community. On top of all that, the NAC also serves as a central resource center for the Fort Lewis College community on Indigenous and/or Native focused issues.

Simon Chief, the Assistant Director of the NAC, says that conversations about mascotting and (mis)representation are realities that Native American and Alaskan Native students (and students of color more broadly) must face on a daily basis. It is crucial to ensure that those who are most directly impacted by any particular decision are consulted or involved in the decision-making process.

“An Indigenous perspective encompasses consideration for the living environment that one’s community is from,” says Chief. “These communities vary from one Indigenous identity to another based on cultural teachings, stories, and languages; this is what makes Indigenous people unique. Quite often, Indigenous people are viewed as having one identity from the perspective of a dominant culture. This is why it is important to have representation of diverse perspectives when systematic structures are being discussed.”

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# Welcome Dr. Thora Giallouri

Benjamin Brewer, Secretary of the Political Science Club

As a 13-year-old in her home country of Greece, Thora Giallouri knew she wanted to be politically engaged. It was the 1990s, a tumultuous time in the Balkans both socially and politically - rocked by the Yugoslavian Wars that lasted from 1991 to 2001.

“At the height of the conflict in the mid-to-late 90s, I was a teenager and much more aware of what was going on,” she says. “The most brutal parts that really shook Greece were the Bosnian Civil War and the NATO bombings during the Kosovo phase. I was reading a lot of political analyses of the conflict in the press and then the images of the war crimes were everywhere.”



Closely monitoring the civil strife in neighboring Balkan states, and watching the events unfold, had an enormous impact on Dr. Giallouri and later her chosen career path.

“I was no more than 13-14 myself and it affected me profoundly,” she says. “I needed to understand politics, war, conflict, international law, etc., so ending up on an international relations-political science track just seemed natural.”

In 2007, Dr. Giallouri received her undergraduate degree in International and European Studies from Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. While studying for her bachelor’s, Giallouri took many U.S. political science courses, and became fascinated by the *sui generis*, or one-of-a-kind, nature of the United States court system.

“The courts have a central position in American politics, and they are central by design,” she says. “Everyone uses them, and not just people but corporations and organizations too.”

She notes that the court’s versatility in expediently answering legal questions is a concealed power that the elected branches lack.

“The other branches of government are not quick to produce results, and so we use the courts as a way to resolve those issues [that cannot be resolved by Congress, the executive branch and/or the states].”

Intrigued by this, she decided to specialize in the U.S. legal system and pursued a master’s in political science at California State University in 2009. Dr. Giallouri later received her Ph.D. in the same field from the University of Southern California in 2019.

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The following year, Dr. Giallouri was selected among three candidates to be the Fort Lewis College Political Science department's pre-law track professor.

"The goal of the search committee was to hire a political scientist with a focus on public law and U.S. politics who could coordinate our pre-law minor, engage students in her classroom, and invite students to participate in her research," says Dr. Ruth Alminas, assistant professor in the Political Science department.

"Dr. Giallouri fits this bill perfectly, and based on input we received from students who attended her research lecture and teaching demonstration last spring, our students are excited too."

Likewise, it seems, Giallouri was impressed with the student body as well.

"Talking to students was a very nice surprise," she recalls. "I saw them engaged, and that was a nice change."

Giallouri's previous teaching positions at the University of Southern California and Cal Poly Pomona had class sizes of 100-200 students, far larger than any at Fort Lewis College. It was clear that she preferred a more personal classroom setting.

"I taught a night class once that had about 17 students," she recounts. "It was the best class I've ever been in - to be able to get to know the students and give them advice... That was a big pro for me [when coming to Fort Lewis], the small class sizes."

Dr. Giallouri will be teaching four classes this upcoming semester, all of which focus on her area of expertise. Three of these courses will be offered online, an experience that is as new to her as it is to many of the faculty on campus.

"This is my first time teaching online, and it's hard because [classroom] interaction with students is what makes me want to get up in the morning," she says. "I'm equal parts excited and a bit worried, as I'm sure everyone is."

One of these classes, PS 110 or U.S. National Government, is an introductory course for freshmen delving into Political Science. When asked what advice she would give those freshmen students entering her field of study, she thought of what she would say to herself at 18, given the opportunity.

"I would say take it more seriously," she remarks. "It's fun to be a student, it's excellent to go into a class everyday and learn, but it's also a job like anything else. You have to think, 'This is training for the rest of my life,' and you have to treat learning experiences with respect because there are some who can't go back and do it again."



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# Why is Political Engagement Important to You?

“The stakes are high and the issues complex. Meaningful political engagement is the way communities can drive change and ensure action to protect our futures.”

**Tom Stritikus**

**President of Fort Lewis College**

“Being a politically engaged citizen is important, but what about being a politically engaged student? Ours is the world of the future, and we can help shape what that world looks like. Students are activists, engines of change, seedbeds of awareness, and so this burden falls heavily on us. That is why it is not just paramount that we begin growing our political cognizance and participation as early as we can, but it is simply impossible to build our future with anything less than a fierce commitment to political engagement. The Political Science Club, it’s partners, and everyone involved in this endeavor are sincerely grateful to you for reading our newsletter, and we hope to see you again.”

**Jackson Berridge**

**Political Science Club President**

“Actively, political engagement can mean several things for the average citizen. To me, engagement looks a lot like the spread of ideals, concepts, and opinions used to develop governance and written policies under certain partisanship. In this day in age activism and social change are the root of civic participation, however engaged citizenship can range from simple voting and volunteering to direct lobbying and partisan support. Personally, I like to stay engaged by attending political rallies and

events as well as taking the time to read up on elected officials and their specific political agendas. With the immediate and recent advance in technology being politically engaged might just be as easy as it’s ever been. Despite this change in our culture it’s still wildly important that we as citizens do our best to stay informed and aware as much as possible, considering that we the people in fact have more power and control of this sovereign nation than we like to give ourselves credit for..”

**Iyahna Calton**

**Black Student Union President,  
ASFCLC Representative**

“It’s important that we are engaged in the political process so that we can support efforts that we care about and are important to our wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.”

**Dr. Missy Thompson**

**Associate Professor of Health Sciences**

“I’m politically active for a number of reasons: I know parts of our representative democracy, though flawed, do work. I also know that the things I care about most - public education, public lands, social equity, reproductive rights, the separation of church and state, environmental issues like climate change, and scientific research - GREATLY depend on government funding and support (particularly at the federal, but also at the state and local, levels). Thus, it’s critical I work to elect people that also share these interests and values..”

**Dr. Lee Frazer**

**Chair & Associate Professor of  
Adventure Education**