

THE SENIOR COLLEGE MESSENGER

Issue 17: March, 2023

This is an organ for members of Senior College to submit short articles that share news, letters to the editor, reactions to the program and anything that they feel will be of general interest. Its regular appearance will allow for an exchange of opinion of topics of interest to the members. In particular, it would be interesting to record reactions to the talks, colloquium topics and books discussed.

Please submit contributions to the editor, Ed Barbeau at barbeau@math.utoronto.ca

UNWELCOME PERSPECTIVES

On Thursday, February 9, the weekly calendar of events from Senior College had some attachments that included an article by Bruce Gilley that pointed to some redeeming features of European colonialism. This article proved so offensive to some that there were vociferous calls for its retraction despite that it did not appear, to my layman's eyes, to transgress any scholarly norms. An article entitled "Is retraction the new rebuttal?" by Colleen Flahery in the September 19, 2017 issue of *Inside Higher Education* gives a fair account of the situation. The next item reports on the Colloquium discussion. It seems that the nub of the matter is not to focus too much on the details of governance, but on whether the democratic principle that each individual and each cultural community has due autonomy, a say in its own fate and the opportunity to thrive on its own terms. Both colonial and postcolonial governments have often failed on this score, but is the record for either uniformly unsatisfactory?

At the same time, I learned about the disruption of a scheduled lecture by Dr. Frances Widdowson at the end of January at the University of Lethbridge. Bowing to an angry mob, the University rescinded the space reserved for her lecture, but she showed up anyway, only to be shouted down. Her sin was to aver that there were in fact some educational benefits in the residential schools. In following up on this story, I learned that she was a respected scholar, but was astonished to discover that her tenure at Mount Royal University in Calgary was revoked. Readers can find the details online and draw their own conclusions.

We are living in fraught times. It is important that researchers be free to ask awkward questions that challenge accepted doctrine. If the answers turn out to be unwelcome, but are supported by sound protocols, then the academic community must stand up to those who would censure them. *Ed Barbeau*

COLLOQUIUM ON COLONIZATION

Report on the February 16 proceedings

The subject of the colloquium was an article by Bruce Gilley, a political scientist at Portland State University, which argued for recolonization of former colonial empires. Gilley argued that decolonization had been a disaster, that most former colonies were poorly governed and that nationalist elites were responsible. He argued that these elites actually had limited support and were often corrupt and inefficient in their mismanagement of the post-colonial state. He credited the colonial state with abolishing the slave trade, expanding education, establishing female rights, enfranchising excluded communities, and establishing universal democratic values. He called for a program of recolonization, suggesting that some government functions be turned over to European states or that an island off the West African coast be turned over to Portugal with the hope of creating an African Hong Kong that would shape adjacent areas of the Guinean coast.

The latter idea was treated as absurd given Portugal's record as a colonizer. Discussion went from there to a range of ideas, perhaps covering too many aspects of colonialism, such as racism, the nature of the colonial state, the logic of colonization, the number of Africans who worked for colonial regimes and parallels to other forms of colonialization such as in Canada and other parts of the American continent. Though the discussion was generally critical of Gilley and the cancellation of the article, which nevertheless was widely circulated.

Present: Trevor Lloyd, Vijay Agnew, Mary Finlay, James Hunter, Giuliana Katz, Martin Klein, William Logan, Daphne Maurer, Bibhu Mohanty, Margaret Procter, Cynthia Smith. *Martin Klein*

COLLOQUIUM ON EDUCATING VOTERS

Report on the January 19 proceedings

The Colloquium on "Educating Voters" was very lively and touched on several points ranging from people eager to obtain the right to vote (woman and black people) to people unwilling to vote because of their belief that the government does not care for them. Various suggestions were put forward on the issue of how to educate voters. We all agreed on the need to inform them about the political structure of their country and to tell them about the importance of casting their ballot, but we went further on the subject of their education. Some of us suggested that students from an early age should be encouraged to cooperate in school and work in the community; others pointed out that students should be taught how to think rationally and evaluate the materials that are presented to them, without jumping to unproven conclusions.

Present: Peter Russell, Philip Sullivan, Daphne Maurer, Charles Johnson, Derek Allen, Giuliana Katz, Thomas Scott, Bill Logan. *Giuliana Katz*

UPCOMING COLLOQUIUM ON HEALTHCARE

There is a general consensus that our healthcare system is not functioning well. There seems to be no consensus as to what is needed to fix it. Private healthcare facilities have been proposed as part of the solution. There are several questions that should be considered:

- What is required to fix our current healthcare system?
- Will expansion of private healthcare facilities be helpful for the overall healthcare system or just for those who can afford them?
- What are the pros and cons of private healthcare facilities?
- How much private healthcare do we currently have?
- How can public and private systems work well together, if at all?
- What country or region has a good and functioning healthcare arrangement?

If you have informed opinions about these and similar questions, please share them with us in the next *Messenger*. Meanwhile, you might be interested in the Senior College Colloquium on March 16 on “Can public and private healthcare systems work well together? If so, how? If not, why not? *William Logan*

IN MEMORIAM

Natalie Kuzmich (May 22, 1932 - January 7, 2023)

Department of Music Education, Faculty of Education (OISE)

Brenda Mallouk (d. February, 2023; age 83)

Faculty of Management

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

Events marked with **F** are for fellows and external fellows. Registration a few days ahead is necessary for each event. This can be done in response to a weekly email from Senior College to its members that describes the events or by going on line at www.seniorcollege.utoronto.ca .

The 18th Annual Symposium

Thursday, April 19: All day at the Faculty Club

Surveillance, Privacy, Artificial Intelligence

The Promises and Challenges of Our Digital Age

Look for details on the Senior College website or in the weekly message from Senior College.

Talks: Wednesdays, 2 pm

Talks will take place at the Faculty Club **and** on Zoom.

March 1: Bence Viola, *Neanderthals and Denisovans in Central Asia*

March 8: Mark Osbaldeston, *Unbuilt Queen's Park and the University of Toronto*

March 15: J. Gottfried Paasche, *The German aristocracy and their resistance, or lack of, to Hitler and the Nazis*

March 22: Konrad Eisenbichler, *A different sort of Italians: Julian-Dalmatian immigrants*

*Colloquia: Thursdays 2-4 pm **F***

March 16: Can public and private healthcare systems work well together? If so, how? If not, why not? (Chair: William Logan)

*Book Club: Mondays 2-4 pm (Zoom only) (**F**)*

March 6: Scott Weidensaul, *A world on the wing: the global odyssey of migratory birds* (Leader: Sara Shettleworth)

April 3: Thomas Savage, *The power of the dog (1967)* (Leaders: Mary Jane Ashley, Linda Hutcheon)

May 1: Kyle Harper, *From shame to sin: the Christian transformation of sexual morality in late Antiquity* (Leader: David Milne)

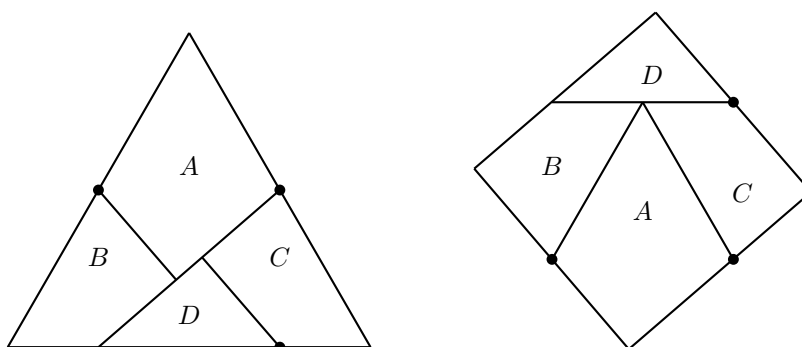
June 5: Steven Johnson, *The ghost map: the story of London's most terrifying epidemic – and how it changed science, cities and the modern world* (Leader: William Logan)

July 3: Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince (1532)* (Leader: David Milne)

Aftermath

A popular pastime among amateur mathematicians is dissections, taking two figures of equal area (or volume) and then with a finite number of straight cuts, take one apart into pieces that can be rearranged to produce the other.

This is illustrated by the “squaring of the equilateral triangle” on the left. The four pieces marked A, B, C, D can be rearranged to form the square on the right. This particular situation is rather special, because you can hinge the pieces at three vertices indicated in bold so that the pieces making up one figure can be swung around to form the other figure.



However, one has to be a little careful in ensuring that there is no deception. Here is a situation in which a square of side length 8 units and area 64 square units is decomposed and the pieces arranged to form what appears to be a triangle whose base is 10 units and height is 13 units. Since the area of the triangle would be $\frac{1}{2}(10)(13) = 65$, these diagrams would show that $65 = 64$. However, each “side” of the triangle is actually a pair of line segments meeting at an angle very close to 180° .

