

FPA Voices



Benjamin Woo
Comics Matter

Evelyn Maeder
Race in the
Courtroom

John Nater
A Farmer Turns MP



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Welcome to FPA Voices

Message from our Dean



This is a quiet time on the Carleton campus as many of our students have left for summer jobs, internships, and other adventures. But behind the scenes, the Faculty of Public Affairs is busy preparing for next year, when we'll welcome a new crop of students and several new faculty members. These professors are on the cutting edge of their academic fields and will begin sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with FPA students in September.

They include:

Nimo Bokore, *Social Work*;

Megan Gaucher, *Law and Legal Studies*;

Pablo Heidrich, *Global and International Studies (Arthur Kroeger College)*;

Phillip Kaisary, *Law and Legal Studies*;

Hayden King, *Indigenous Policy and Administration (Public Policy and Administration)*;

Philippe Lagassé, *International Affairs*;

Minjoon Lee, *Economics*;

Meredith Lilly, *International Affairs*;

Jeffrey Monaghan, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*;

Umut Ozsu, *Law and Legal Studies*; and

Sarah E.K. Smith, *Communication and Media Studies*.

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Front Cover: Benjamin Woo, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Communication.

I am also very proud of the fact that our faculty's research is being recognized by many government and private sector funding agencies. Among our recent winners were Carleton Law and Legal Studies Professors Dawn Moore, Dale Spencer, Diana Majury, Doris Buss, and George Rigakos, who won grants totaling more than \$275,000 from the the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Ontario government is funding their research on police department responses to sexual violence and harassment cases.

They are among the many FPA researchers who are doing work that addresses regional and global challenges, which

reflects the Faculty's mission to build better societies and better democracy.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *FPA Voices*, which features some of those researchers, as well as a distinguished alumnus. Next month: our amazing graduates!

Happy reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'André'.

André Plourde
Dean, Faculty of Public Affairs
Carleton University

FPA People

Benjamin Woo

Assistant Professor,
School of Journalism and
Communication

Benjamin Woo is a lifelong aficionado of geek culture.

The evidence resides on his office shelf: a graphic novel by Joe Sacco, a figurine from the manga series *Attack on Titan*, a tin lunchbox featuring Mike Allred's Madman, and a Zapp Brannigan ray gun. Then there's his collection of *Dungeons & Dragons* manuals, left over from a recent gaming session with like-minded professors.

These days, Woo approaches geek culture with a discriminating eye. He's published several articles on the subject and is currently completing a book manuscript based on his ethnographic research in an urban geek culture scene.

What is "geek culture"?

The words "geek" and "nerd" have been used to describe uncool, unpopular people since the 1950s, though neither really took off as common usage until the 1980s—think of *Revenge of the Nerds*, which came out in 1984. Today, when we talk about geek culture, we usually mean the combination of certain media (science fiction, fantasy and other cult genres, comic books, games, and so on) and certain audience practices (collecting, making fan fiction or fan art, distinctive kinds of connoisseurship).

You say that geek culture has become big business. What do we know about the industry?

Some of the most profitable franchises in

the entertainment industries today come from geek culture, just look at the lineup at the movie theatre any given weekend. But, for many people, this is most obvious when their city hosts a comic convention, like the Ottawa Comiccon or Ottawa Geek Market. The best-known one is, of course, San Diego's Comic-Con International, but regional cons like Toronto's Fan Expo Canada and the Calgary Expo have really taken off in the last few years. Recent industry research estimates fan conventions in North America do \$600 million annually in ticket sales alone and have a total economic footprint in the billions.

On the local level, you talk about the significance of comic book stores. Why are they so important?

Practically speaking, they are where overlapping media audiences gather to purchase goods. But they're also a space where community-making happens. We hear a lot about how modern society—and modern media in particular—isolate us from one another, but I've



spent enough time in comic shops to know that isn't true. They are sites of interaction and communication as much as shopping.

In other words, it's a perfect place to ask some of communication studies' basic questions: How are people relating to one another? How do communication media—as technologies, industries, and practices—structure those relationships?

The study of comics and graphic novels is exploding in universities across Canada and the US, mostly in English departments. As a communication scholar, how does your approach differ?

Rather than thinking about comics as a form of literature, I think about it as a medium, and that means not only looking at the comics themselves but also at how they are produced and consumed. My current research is on creative work in English-language comics production. The makeup of the workforce and the conditions under which they work influence the kind of comics that are available. They are generally young freelancers, about three-quarters of them men. Despite low wages, comics creators describe themselves as very satisfied with

their work situations – in part because they are overwhelmingly comics fans.

What's next for your research?

Right now, I'm continuing to interview comics creators about their work experiences and working practices. I'm interested in what "creativity" means to commercial, rather than fine, artists. I'm also working with Bart Beaty and Nick Sousanis at the University of Calgary on a new project called "What Were Comics?" We're doing a content analysis of the entire history of American comic books, tracking a whole host of material and formal variables, from page length to panel density, from layouts to advertising. We want to re-write the history of American comics from the perspective of the industry's typical output, rather than focusing on individual, great works.



A recreation of one of the fearsome Daleks from the BBC's long running series, Doctor Who, knitted by Professor Woo.

Field Notes

Evelyn Maeder

Professor, Institute of
Criminology and Criminal
Justice

The O.J. Simpson trial of 1995 was one of the most publicized criminal trials in American history. It was also one of the most racially charged, with public opinion polls suggesting stark racial differences in the reaction to the trial and verdict.

The influence of race and racial bias on the outcomes of criminal trials has been long-established in the United States. Here in Canada, Professor Evelyn Maeder has found that prospective jurors are not immune to such bias. She studies the effects of “extralegal” information—defendant race, victim attractiveness, and defendant gang affiliation, among others—on juror decision-making in Canada, using experimental simulations.

“We have found consistent race effects on mock jurors’ decisions in Canada. But unlike in the United States, the effect is found mostly for Aboriginal defendants,” explains Professor Maeder, who serves as Director of the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice. “In certain circumstances, White mock jurors are more likely to convict an Aboriginal defendant than a White defendant. What’s interesting is that they don’t realize it.”

Professor Maeder says that lack of self-awareness means jurors are unlikely to admit to bias at the start of a trial, but be influenced by a bias nonetheless. In the United States, that phenomenon changes if racial issues are featured prominently in the case. “Generally, people don’t want to





be racist. So if race is a big issue, they will correct for that,” says Professor Maeder, who published her study in the journal of *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*.

But in Canada, there’s a bizarre twist. Professor Maeder says her research, among others, has found Canadian participants considered the effects of racism in the simulated trial of a Black defendant, but not an Aboriginal defendant.

“Canadian participants don’t acknowledge the racial tension between the Aboriginal and White communities. They see this as an American issue,” says Professor Maeder.

Professor Maeder and her students have studied outcomes of trials across Canada, as well as asked research subjects to review a trial transcript and then answer a questionnaire as if they were jurors. This spring, the researchers will begin staging mock jury deliberations in a new Legal Decision Making Laboratory with participants from the community.

“We’ll ask participants to read a transcript or watch a video of a trial and then deliberate as a jury within the lab,” she says. “We want to see how this is dealt with in a group discussion.”

Professor Maeder says they hope to test whether a more diverse jury leads to a less-biased verdict. Since it’s difficult for courts to make changes to process based on psychological research findings, she says the findings would need to be replicated several times before recommending any kind of policy change.

John Nater, MP (Perth-Wellington)

Bachelor of Public Affairs and
Policy Management (BPAPM) ('07)



At a recent Question Period in the House of Commons, MP John Nater was on hand as the representative for the riding of Perth-Wellington in Ontario. But that day, he was also serving as a mentor to two first-year BPAPM students who were shadowing him as part of a first-year experiential learning pilot intensive course entitled Kroeger College Policy Connect.

“They had great questions and already knew a lot about the policy process,” says Mr. Nater, who brought the students to a meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. “They were really looking for opportunities where they could apply what they’d learned in class to the public sector.”

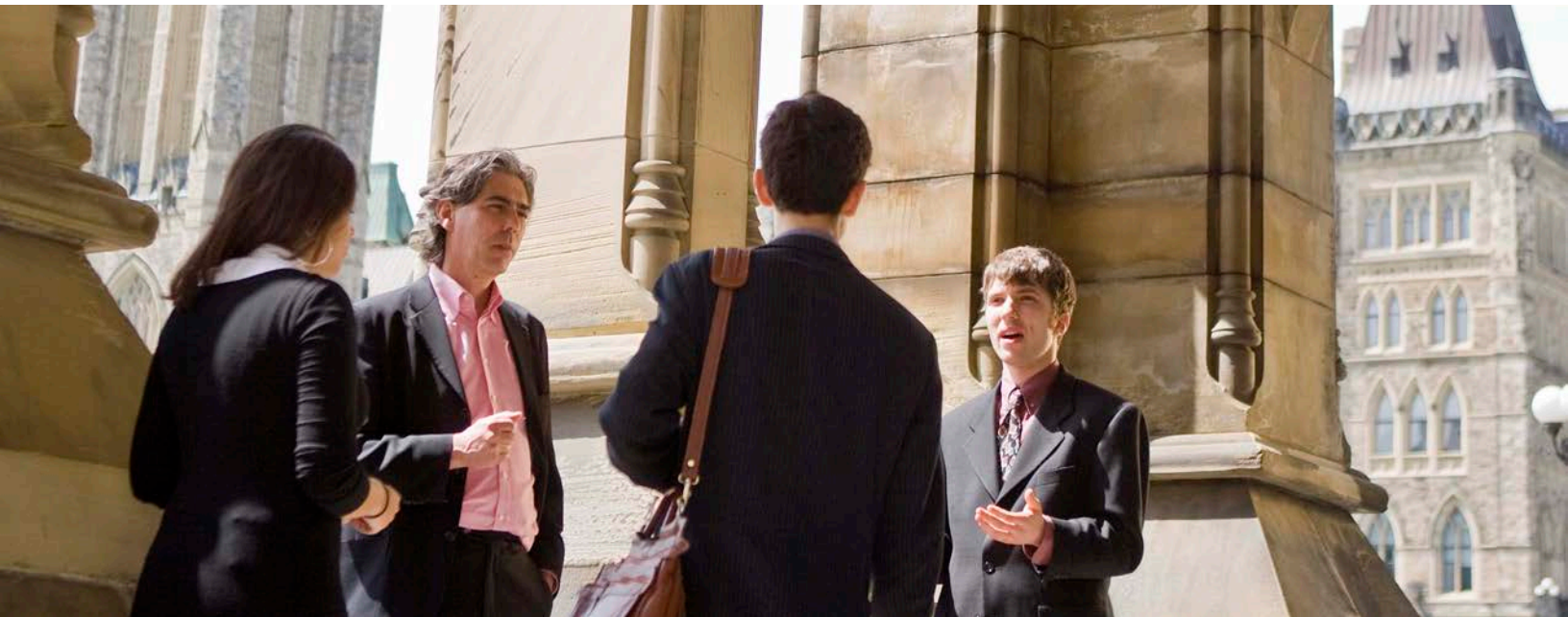
It’s a topic Mr. Nater knows something about. Just eight years ago, he graduated from the BPAPM program with political aspirations. After serving as a special assistant to Conservative MP Gary Schellenberger, he went on to serve on the West Perth council and worked in the Ontario legislature.

In 2015, with Mr. Schellenberger stepping down, Mr. Nater ran for his seat as the Conservative candidate. He won, and was sworn in as a Member of Parliament on November 16, 2015. He says his experience in the BPAPM program prepared him well.

“It was the perfect program for a career in public service. They bring in subjects from across the university so you hear different perspectives on many issues,” says Mr. Nater. “It provides future policy makers with the ability to look at issues through different lenses.”

The pilot, developed with assistance from the Kimiya Project Lab, offers interested first-year students an experiential learning opportunity and is one of many examples of BPAPM alumni ‘giving back’ to the program.

Along with job-shadowing through the pilot program, Mr. Nater offers students advice, as well: “Get involved, get involved, get involved. Take advantage of the relationships Carleton has within the public sector and Parliament. It was a superb education.”



The Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management is a unique undergraduate degree known for its interdisciplinary breadth in the study of public affairs and rigorous depth in the study of public policy.

Meet our first five



From the Foreign Service to foreign correspondents, FPA alumni lead fascinating and inspiring lives.

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carleton.ca/fpa/75-75



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Open Book

Stacy Douglas, Assistant Professor, Law and Legal Studies

The Round House

Louise Erdrich's novel, *The Round House* (2012), reminds us that sometimes the best way to think about questions of law and politics is through fiction. The novel is set on a reservation in contemporary North Dakota, and quickly introduces the reader to the devastating sexual assault of Geraldine Coutts at a roundhouse on the edge of the reserve.

Erdrich uses the event both as a platform for rendering legible the reality of this violence, but also as an example of the complex jurisdictional web of law, combined with legacies of racism, that make this

assault easy for formal systems of justice to ignore, even as it ravages Geraldine's family, especially her thirteen-year-old son Joe. He embarks on a quest to find out what happened to his mother and to bring her assailant to swift justice.

It's a very timely story about racism, gendered violence, and the limits of law, that is rendered all the more complicated and moving as it is experienced by a thirteen-year old boy. This insight has important things to tell us about the way we think about law and politics as we negotiate the ongoing effects of colonialism.

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- Digital and Social Media Communications Strategies (June 2-3)
- Telling Your Story with Data (June 24-26)

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Katherine A. H. Graham Lecture on Aboriginal Policy

Aboriginal-Canada Relations: From RCAP to 2016

Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, I.P.C.

**Wednesday
June 8, 2016**

5:30 p.m., Reception at 4:30 p.m.

River Building, 2nd floor

Admission is free

**Register at:
carleton.ca/fpa/kgf**



Paul Chartrand, *Indigenous Peoples' Counsel (IPC)* of Canada's Indigenous Bar Association and a former Professor of Law. He is the author of numerous publications about the law and policy of states respecting indigenous peoples. He is currently writing a book that is critical of the judicial development of Metis rights, and practices law part-time. He was a member of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Manitoba's Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission and Canada's Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

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