



ERIC VOEGELIN INSTITUTE

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

www.lsu.edu/voegelin

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

From the Director:

“Virtually normal” is the best term to describe the past academic year. We held all our traditionally in-person events in person, and we sponsored a full array of lectures, seminars, talks, movie nights, colloquies, and even our annual spring conference.

But then again, most of our events were live-streamed on Zoom as well, and some were principally designed for an online format. This greatly expanded our reach, and we preserved our commitment to natural presence by anchoring our discussions in person-to-person exchange, which we did both by conducting our Zoom series as dialogues and by ensuring a live audience at all our events.

Still, one feels the natural world slipping away in academia, with only vague awareness of what is being lost. A few years ago we bragged about maintaining our collection of in-print journals. Now that option is closing, as APSA journals have moved exclusively online and Cambridge University Press puts all its journals online next year.

I suppose that on the model of natural science, where discoveries are piecemeal and soon superseded, this makes sense. But if the study of politics is so ephemeral that its science barely outlasts the election cycle, one wonders what it really adds. In the fall, I’ll begin my theory course with Thucydides, who wrote what he called “a possession for all time.” Thus far he has not been proven wrong.



James Stoner

Hermann
Moyses, Jr.,
Professor of
Political
Science &
Director of the
Voegelin
Institute
[www.lsu.edu/
jamesstoner](http://www.lsu.edu/jamesstoner)



“Who Was Eric Voegelin & What Did He Think?”

Taking advantage of academia’s newly acquired familiarity with Zoom technology, the Voegelin Institute hosted a five-part introduction to the thought of its namesake, now [archived](#) on the Institute’s website. Featuring five widely-known scholars who incorporate Voegelin’s insights in their own work, some of whom knew Voegelin himself and have published about him, the series was organized around the five parts of *The Eric Voegelin Reader*, edited by Charles Embry and Glenn Hughes and published by the University of Missouri Press.

Leading off was Barry Cooper of the University of Calgary, who spoke on Voegelin’s intellectual biography and autobiography. Lee Trepanier, who earned his PhD at LSU with EVI founder Ellis Sandoz and teaches at Samford University, spoke on Voegelin’s *New Science of Politics*, followed by Carol Cooper of the University of Houston, who discussed several essays from Voegelin’s middle period and offered insight on what he meant by the term “symbol,” an issue raised in all three of the first sessions. David Walsh, Professor of Politics at Catholic University and president of the Voegelin Society, discussed his mature essays on “equivalences,” classical reason, and the Gospels, explaining how Voegelin understood Christianity in relation to Greek philosophy and other cultures. Wrapping up the series with a discussion of Voegelin’s five-volume *Order and History* was John von Heyking of the University of Lethbridge.

Up to seventy squares appeared on our Zoom screens, with participants from several continents; each session began with forty minutes of dialogue between the host and the day’s guest, followed by as much time for questions and exchange. About a dozen LSU graduate students and faculty joined live from the Voegelin Room (the sessions suspended our weekly colloquy for five weeks), always speaking up in the question period. Watch!



Tulane's Ronna Burger Keynotes Spring Conference

Ronna Burger, Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies at Tulane University and author of *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates: On the Nicomachean Ethics*, gave the keynote address April 22 for our spring conference, "Re-reading Aristotle's *Ethics* Today." Carefully parsing the differences between the philosopher's *Ethics* and *Politics*—noting our continued appreciation of the one and growing doubts about the other—she suggested Aristotle himself signaled the troubling character of political life and ambiguity about the best regime.

Following our usual format of three sessions the following day, including four presentations and ample time for discussion, we heard from Robert Berman of Xavier University of New Orleans, Alexander Duff of the University of North Texas, Robert Koons of the University of Texas, and Usha Nathan of LSU, on topics ranging from metaphysics and the emotions to Heidegger's reading of Aristotle. Our new undergraduate cohort in the PPE reading group and of course our grad students and other faculty joined the conversation, too.

Apgar Workshop for Honors Faculty Continues, Expands

For the third year, the Voegelin Institute organized a workshop for faculty teaching in the Honors sequence of courses on European Civilization. Guest speakers included Stuart Irvine, recently retired from LSU, who led a literary reading of several chapters of Genesis, and Carol Harrison, Professor of History at the University of South Carolina, graduate of LSU Honors, and former Rhodes Scholar, who introduced us to Diderot's 18th century speculations on South Pacific islanders. Other sessions included reading texts together and discussing them, for example Aristotle's account of courage along with Robert Bolt's "Man for All Seasons," and nineteenth-century German *lieder* with 20th century poetry.

Next year's workshop will complement curricular reform in the Honors College designed to enhance the study of cornerstone texts, thanks to expanded funding from the Apgar Foundation. Stay tuned to learn about our big plans!

Voegelin Film Series Rolls On

The Voegelin Film Series for graduate students completed a full year of programming, with three films in the fall chosen to align with Dr. Stoner's graduate seminar, pairing Plato's



Laws with the movie "Troy," Montesquieu with "Amazing Grace," and Tocqueville with "Lincoln." The spring series entailed three historical films about Jesuits and colonialism: "The Mission," "Black Robe," and "Silence." LSU faculty and other experts led discussions after each film.

Faculty Seminars, Aristotle Plus

EVI gathered ten faculty and graduate students from nine different fields to read together Darwin's *Descent of Man* and Aristotle's *Ethics*—contrasting ancient and modern accounts of human nature.

The interdisciplinary seminar, now in its seventh year, included talks by Don Chance in Finance, Wesley Shrum in Sociology, John Pizer in German, and Aaron Beek in Classics—concluding with faculty reading together and discussing Ibsen's play "Enemy of the People."

Live Lectures Resume!

Lectures resumed in person this year, starting with Notre Dame Law Professor Stephen Smith's Constitution Day account of Justice Clarence Thomas' debt to Malcolm X (below left). Paul Rahe of Hillsdale spoke on Montesquieu's praise of sea power (below right) and chatted with grad students about the events at Cornell in 1969, which he witnessed. Lecturing and teaching a class (below center) on Mary Wollstonecraft was Erika Bachiochi, author of *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*. Other talks were given by Richard Velkley and Neil Rogachevsky. See www.lsu.edu/voegelin/events.

