As we enter the home stretch of a long and exhausting campaign season here in the U.S., it is worth noting the consistency with which the American presidential race came up in discussions during our events (which were about Europe, of course) during these past few months. In October, we finally decided to embrace the moment and organize our monthly “virtual roundtable” around the topic of elections – those upcoming in Europe and in the U.S. (The video is available on our website, and one of our panelists, Dr. Miguel Simón, is featured in this issue of the newsletter.) The comparative perspective put many issues into high relief.

Participants saw how many of the same voter concerns were impacting electoral politics on both sides of the Atlantic. But it also exposed the ways in which some European systems provide a greater opportunity for individuals to exercise protest votes, for better or for worse. It was a great reminder of the ways in which an international education and a more global perspective can allow for keener insights into one’s own local conditions and individual situation.

For that reason, the ESC was proud to participate in Pitt’s International Week (October 24-28): co-sponsoring events related to the German Department’s Germany in the U.S. Campus Week, hosting our own events, and getting caught up in the general swirl of activity that involved all parts of the campus! The center led freshmen on a trip to New York City to learn more about the transatlantic relations, and led a simulation of the 1984 Helsinki Conference on Pollution in Europe. As we move past this election, whatever the result, our essential mission will remain unchanged: we bring the world to Pitt (and Pitt to the world). We’re the European Studies Center, and we approve this message.
Two Shores of the Same Ocean: U.S. Elections as Seen From Europe

by Miguel Simón

A s the U.S. presidential election approaches, it is a good moment to think about what the outcome will mean for the relationship between the United States and the European Union, and how this election is seen on the European side of the Atlantic.

If you had read the front page of the most important European newspapers on October 20th, you would find several articles (and in some cases in-depth analyses) of the debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. I think I’m not mistaken in saying that this election is being followed with massive interest from Europe, and for good reasons.

To begin with, we share some new and similar political challenges. The first is the rise of populist movements, fueled by the disconnection between institutional politics and the feelings of a large swath of citizens. Secondly, immigration and diversity are now at the center of the political agenda and have become hot topics. Also, there’s increasing backlash against globalization and trade agreements. In any case, we live in uncertain times, and the future seems uncertain.

Take for example military collaboration and national security coordination: for more than 60 years, NATO has been an unquestioned and essential field of collaboration between the EU and the U.S. Now, the presidential campaign and the situation in Europe have raised some concerns. Donald Trump’s remarks about Article 5 (which stipulates that an attack on one state is considered an attack on all), the economic founding of the NATO, and his positive remarks about Russia and President Putin (when the conflict with Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea is still hotly contested in Europe) have sounded alarms in Brussels. The EU seems determined to take account of the new international situation; after Brexit, the President of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, with the support of leaders like Angela Merkel, François Hollande, and Mateo Renzi, proposed building a European army, an idea that had been always rejected by the British government.

Secondly, trade relationships: in the last few days we have seen the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union (CETA), almost collapse because a little region of Belgium, Wallonia, rejected the terms proposed by the British government.

For the same reason, everybody was aware that the negotiations between the United States and the European Union about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) were going to be difficult. We expected problems to stem from the European side, because in the United States, both democratic and republican leaders, along with President Obama, supported the TTIP. However, as the presidential campaign went on, both candidates back-pedaled.

Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump have increasingly questioned the TTIP. In the case of Trump, he seems to think that his slogan “make America great again” implies some kind of return to protectionism and abandonment of regional trade agreements. Clinton has also criticized a similar trade agreement, (the similarly acronymized TPP) saying she would “will stop any trade deal that kills jobs or holds down wages.” This is important because the principles of the TPP are much the same as the TTIP with Europe.

The third question is the institutional crisis of the European Union after Brexit. The next few months, and above all the next year, could be one of the most important years for the EU since the 1957 “crisis of the empty chair” when De Gaulle refused to acknowledge the new process of decision. After Brexit, the electoral calendar points to new and dangerous challenges for the EU.

For example, the postponed presidential election in Austria. Norbert Hofer, from the far right and Eurosceptic Freedom Party is leading the polls. It’s true that Austria is a Parliamentary Republic and the presidential election can be seen as a second order election, but it could mark a trend in European politics. In March, there will be elections in Netherland. Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom are also leading the polls. He’s a declared Eurosceptic and, after Brexit, he announced that if he were to win, he would promote a referendum to abandon the European Union. In April and May there are the elections in France. Marine Le Pen and the National Front has been leading the polls for the first round of the elections and she has also announced a referendum for “Frexit” if she wins the election. And next September, the German elections will be held in the context of the rising of a new and also Eurosceptic party, Alternative For Germany.

President Obama and his recent predecessors in the White House have always supported the process of European integration. It’s easy to imagine what the European leaders thought when Donald Trump visited the United Kingdom, just days after the referendum, and declared that the Brexit was a “great thing” and that the people of the U.K. have “taken back their country”.

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There is no doubt. The U.S. presidential election can mark a milestone for U.S. politics, but also for our relationship with and the future of the European Union.

Miguel Simón is a visiting scholar at the European Studies Center for the 2016-2017 academic year. Dr. Simón received his Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Administration from Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Spain. He has been a visiting fellow at Harvard University, held a postdoctoral fellowship at Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris and Centre Pour l’Étude de la Vie Politique en France (FNSP-CNRS). Prior to his year in residence here at the ESC, he was a visiting scholar at the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po) before working with the Federal Executive Committee of Spain’s PSOE party. He has served in the capacity of political advisor, in addition to his work as a scholar. He is the author of Sociedad, Estado y autonomía política (Madrid, 2006) and editor of La extrema derecha en Europa de 1945 a nuestros días (Madrid, 2007), a collaborative volume on the topic of the Radical Right in Europe. While at the ESC, Dr. Simón is conducting research on the rise of the far-right in politics in Europe and the U.S.
In Review

October was a whirlwind month for the ESC, packed with new events, as well as our ongoing ones. We hosted our monthly Conversations on Europe, which focused on the upcoming U.S. and European elections, as well as the rise of populism and the polarization of the electorate. We welcomed Dr. Julia Lynch, who gave a lecture on health inequalities in Europe. Dr. Eckhard Schroeter visited the ESC to give a talk about diversity and representation in Germany’s civil service.

The ESC also participated in Pitt’s International Week by holding our first climate simulation. Students conducted an experiment and then represented the interests of different European nations in 1984 to reach a diplomatic solution regarding the effects of acid rain. The ESC also helped sponsor Germany in the U.S. Campus Week, which included roundtables, lectures, screenings, and a special visit from a representative of the German Embassy.

ESC Spotlight: Kathleen Mannard

by Kathleen Mannard

Recently, a few of our students traveled to New York City to visit the UN. Kathleen Mannard, a senior studying anthropology, was one of those who attended. She wrote about her experience.

I joined the European Studies Academic Community as a freshman to expand my own interests in European studies and attend the New York City trip. Now, for the past two years, I have acted as the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant for the European Studies Academic Community and helped chaperone the New York City trip. Before my own trip freshman year, I had never visited New York City. I went on the trip to explore the city, bond with my freshman peers, and most importantly, visit the United Nations. Since my freshman experience, the New York City trip has evolved into a two night historical and international experience: the United Nations, the Delegation of the European Union, and the Institute of International Education are the primary sites of interest and knowledge for the academic community students.

This year, our three-day stay included a tour of the United Nations, a luncheon and informal presentation from the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD), a visit to the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and a tour of the Tenement Museum. The United Nations perfectly encompasses the interests of the students who hope to embark on a career path of European and International studies or foreign diplomacy. Every year after the tour of the United Nations, at least one student mentions that they want to work for the UN some day. The IIE and DAAD are great additions to the trip because they explain and offer academic opportunities for students to enhance their intellectual experiences abroad. The students were genuinely interested in the internship and research opportunities presented through Fulbright Programs that would assist them during their studies abroad. Our visit to the Delegation of the European Union concentrated on a discussion of a post-Brexit EU in the years to follow, and how students in their position could pursue a career as an international delegator. Finally, our visit to the Tenement Museum discussed the history of the European immigrants who built new lives New York City.

Students within the community change every year with their varying majors and backgrounds, but they all share a unique curiosity and passion for international relations. It amazes the instructor and me to see such driven students with high and admirable aspirations for their futures. Even at late teen and young adult ages, they have worthwhile and specific goals. The New York City trip provides a remarkable opportunity for the students to view themselves in professional positions such as possible delegates, translators, researchers, diplomats and so much more. Even after three years with the New York City trip, seeing the student’s excitement and reactions never gets old.

Students participate in our acid rain simulation as part of International Week at Pitt. They conducted an experiment on acids and bases, and were assigned countries to negotiate on behalf of.

Dillion Asher (GSPIA) and Carolyn Rumrill (Environmental Studies) work together representing Great Britain and Ireland during the simulation.

Ms. Annika Schechinger, Deputy Director of the German Information Center, Prof. Randall Halle, Chair of the German Department, and Dr. Allyson DeJure.

Noah Coco, Economics and History major, leads a joint session as a UN Representative in our acid rain simulation.

Students participate in our climate simulation during International Week at Pitt. They conducted an experiment on acids and bases, and were assigned countries to negotiate on behalf of.

Dillion Asher (GSPIA) and Carolyn Rumrill (Environmental Studies) work together representing Great Britain and Ireland during the simulation.

Conversations on Europe, where panelists discussed election issues at home and overseas.
The ESC would like to extend a special congratulations to affiliated faculty member, Dr. Marcia Landy, who was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from Stockholm University.

From the press release:

University of Pittsburgh Distinguished Professor Emerita Marcia Landy was awarded a prestigious Honorary Doctorate from Stockholm University on September 30, 2016, in appreciation of her outstanding contributions to the Humanities.

Marcia Landy was one of the eight exceptional academics conferred with an honorary doctorate for contributing in distinctive ways to Stockholm University’s activities in research and education. She has collaborated with the Department of Cinema Studies at Stockholm University for many years, including teaching courses at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels. Prof. Landy received her award at the grand ceremony that took place in Stockholm City Hall, the venue for the Nobel Prize festivities.

Astrid Söderbergh Widding, Stockholm University Vice Chancellor, said in her public remarks that “Universities are neither local nor national, but global. Our mission is to act internationally, with the world as our horizon.” She praised the honorary doctorate recipients for their “contribution to the long-term development of our university through your research and education.”

The ceremony was made even more memorable with the participation of two Nobel Laureates. Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, the 2010 Nobel Laureate in Literature, who was awarded an honorary doctorate in the Humanities, and American professor Frank Wilczek, the winner of the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physics, who was appointed professor in theoretical physics.

Founded in 1878, Stockholm University is a world-class research university and one of Europe’s leading institutions of higher education. The annual celebration honored newly appointed professors, jubilee doctorates, honorary doctorates, and recent Ph.D. recipients. Prof. Landy and the other honorary doctorate recipients were presented with a laurel wreath, a diploma and a doctoral ring, in a ceremony that was heavy in symbolism and tradition, but also looked to the future.

Dr. Marcia Landy is Distinguished Professor Emerita of English and Film Studies with a secondary appointment in the French and Italian Languages and Literatures Department at the University of Pittsburgh. Her many publications include British Genres: British Cinema and Society, 1930-1960 (1992), Film, Politics, and Gramsci (1994), Cinematic Uses of the Past (1996), Stars (2004), and Cinema and Counter-History (2015). Her essays on cultural theory, cinema history, national cinema, genres, and Gramsci have appeared in anthologies and in such journals as Screen, Post Script, Jump Cut, Film Criticism, The Journal of Film and Video, New German Critique, French Review, American Imago, Critical Quarterly, Cinema Journal, Rethinking Marxism and Critical Studies. She was the recipient of the 2005 Chancellor’s Senior Research Award.

Congratulations, Dr. Landy!