

2017 Press Release

GREAT DECISIONS 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION SERIES ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY BEGINS FEB. 17

DELAWARE, OHIO—The 2017 Great Decisions Community Discussion Series on U.S. Foreign Policy is particularly timely given the change in the foreign policy leadership of the United States with the election of a new president. The critical question is, will we see more continuity or change in our foreign policy? As Richard Haas, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, has pointed out, we are launched on a foreign policy debate “between a besieged traditional internationalism and an energized new isolationism.”

The question of continuity or change can be raised with each of our eight topics, whether it be “Trade and Politics,” “Nuclear Security” or “Conflict in the South China Sea.”

The opening talk by economist Goran Skosples will focus on “The Future of Europe.” Europe faces multiple issues, including “Brexit”—the British intention to leave the European Community. Also causing great uncertainty are slow economic growth, Russian assertiveness on Europe’s Eastern borders, the rise of right-wing radicalism in response to immigration, international terrorist attacks and the inauguration of an American president who has raised issues about the NATO alliance.

All Great Decisions discussions will be held at noon in the Fellowship Hall of William Street United Methodist Church, 28 W. William St. Attendees are welcome to bring a brown-bag lunch.

Complimentary coffee and tea will be provided. Learn more at www.facebook.com/greatdecisionsdeloh.

Distinguished speakers during the eight-session series are as follows:

- Feb. 17** **THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**
Goran Skosples, professor, economics, Ohio Wesleyan University
- Feb. 24** **NUCLEAR SECURITY**
Dennis Laich, major general, U.S. Army (retired)
- March 3** **SAUDI ARABIA IN TRANSITION**
Melinda McClimans, assistant director, Middle East Studies Center, The Ohio State University
Rand Guebert, former consultant, Oilinvest B.V.
- March 10** **LATIN AMERICA'S POLITICAL PENDULUM**
James Franklin, chair, politics and government, Ohio Wesleyan University
- March 17** **CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**
Michelle Mood, assistant professor, political science and Asian studies, Kenyon College
- March 24** **TRADE AND POLITICS**
Ji Young Choi, professor, politics and government, Ohio Wesleyan University
- March 31** **PROSPECTS FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN**
Alam Payind, director, Middle East Studies Center, The Ohio State University
- April 7** **U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND PETROLEUM**
Michael Houlahan, foreign service officer (retired), U.S. State Department

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: Following each discussion, participants will have the option of completing a quick survey, prepared by the Foreign Policy Association, to add their opinions to thousands of others across the nation. Survey results will be sent to executive and legislative policymakers in Washington, D.C., so that our voice as a community of informed citizens is heard by federal decision-makers.

SPONSORS: Grateful thanks to the following local organizations for their generous and continuing support: the American Association of University Women, Kiwanis, the League of Women Voters,

the International Studies Program at Ohio Wesleyan University, William Street United Methodist Church, Willow Brook Christian Communities, Cruise One, and private donors.

ABOUT GREAT DECISIONS

The Great Decisions Discussion Program, a free community discussion series, is designed to encourage debate and discussion of the role of the United States in world affairs. The program provides materials that help people reach informed opinions on issues and encourages them to participate in the foreign-policy process. Developed by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) in 1954, the Great Decisions Discussion Program is the longest-standing and largest grassroots world affairs educational program of its kind. It is the core of FPA's civic education outreach efforts, bringing millions of Americans together in communities across the country to discover, discuss, and decide their opinions on foreign policy issues. www.greatdecisions.org

ABOUT THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

The Foreign Policy Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring the American public to learn more about the world. Founded in 1918, FPA provides independent publications, programs, and forums to increase public awareness of, and foster popular participation in, matters relating to those policy issues. www.fpa.org

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GREAT DECISIONS SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Goran Skosples, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Ohio Wesleyan University

Goran Skosples is an associate professor of economics at Ohio Wesleyan University. He graduated with a major in economics from Lake Forest College, Illinois, and got his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His teaching focus includes comparative economics systems, macroeconomics, research methods and economic principles. His research deals with institutional changes in post-communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, banking and credit, and small business finance. He has been at Ohio Wesleyan University since 2006.



Dennis Laich, Major General, U.S. Army (retired)

Major General Dennis Laich retired from the U.S. Army in 2006 after more than 35 years of service. His last assignment was commander of the 94th Regional Readiness Command at Fort Devans, Mass., where he commanded all Army Reserve forces in the six New England states. For the last 14 years of his career, he served in command positions. He has served in Iraq, Kuwait, Germany, the Netherlands, and Honduras. He is a graduate of the Army War College, the Command and General Staff College, and the National Security Management Program. In his civilian career, Laich has served several large- and mid-cap public and private companies in manufacturing and finance roles as president, chief operating officer and plant manager. He holds a B.A. degree from Lafayette College and two master's degrees (M.B.A. and M.A.) and has completed post-graduate studies at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He currently serves as director of the Patriots Program at Ohio Dominican University and chairs the Military Advisory Committee of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. He is the author of "Skin in the Game...Poor Kids and Patriots."



Melinda McClimans, Assistant Director, Middle East Studies Center, The Ohio State University

Melinda McClimans has been assistant director of the Middle East Studies Center at The Ohio State University since July 2003. She has an M.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and is ABD (all but dissertation) for a Ph.D. in Global Education. She has lived and studied in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and studied Arabic in Cairo and Tunis. In 1994, she enrolled in Franklin College in the Italian-speaking area of Switzerland, obtaining her B.A. in 1997. After graduating, she served as an intern at the United Nations in Bangkok, Thailand. At the Middle East Studies Center, she organizes study tours to

Turkey for teachers, taught a class on Egyptian culture and took the class to Egypt, has organized and taught the center's institutes for teachers, and has co-taught online courses for teachers with Dr. Merry Merryfield. McClimans directs the teacher training program and creates or edits teacher-created instructional materials. She has research ability in Arabic and French, and is fluent in Italian. She organizes the center's outreach and engagement events, and oversees the center's internship and volunteer programs. She and the center's director co-authored "Keys to Understanding the Middle East," available through Pressbooks and Apple iBooks.



Rand Guebert, Oil Executive (retired); Staff, Delaware County Board of Elections

Rand Guebert, a retired oil executive, worked in all phases of oil refining and marketing for 17 years with Coastal States Petroleum in Houston and London and later for Oilinvest in Geneva.

Oilinvest is the holding company for downstream Libyan oil activities in Europe. He worked with the various entities in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands and Spain. Guebert received a B.A. from Rice University and an M.B.A. from the Wharton School. He became a British citizen also in

1992. He is currently working for the Delaware County Board of Elections.



James Franklin, Professor and Chair, Department of Politics and Government, Ohio Wesleyan University

James C. Franklin earned a B.A. at Auburn University and a doctorate at Texas A&M University. His primary field is comparative politics, with research and teaching interests in contentious politics, human rights, democratization, and Latin American politics. Franklin has been published in a variety of political science journals including *Comparative Political*

Studies, *International Studies Quarterly*, and *Political Research Quarterly*. His most recent publications include an article on the persistence of protest movements in Latin America and a chapter on human rights naming and shaming. His current research examines protest waves and democratic revolutions around the world, which he will present at a conference in San Diego this spring.



Michelle S. Mood, Assistant Professor, Political Science and Asian Studies, Kenyon College

Michelle S. Mood, an assistant professor of political science and Asian studies at Kenyon College, studied comparative politics and political theory at Oberlin College. Her interest in China was sparked by an honors project

there, and she went on to teach English at the remote China Institute of Mining and Technology in Jiangsu, China, before returning to study comparative politics, political theory and East Asian studies at Cornell University, receiving her Ph.D. in 1996. She was assistant professor of East Asian politics at Providence College for a few years, but since 1998 has made her home in Gambier, interrupted by years abroad, first as a post-doctoral fellow in Sweden and then as a senior research fellow in China at the Johns Hopkins-Nanjing program in 2003-2004 and 2006-2007. Since 2000, Mood has taught in Kenyon College's Political Science Department, International Studies Department, and in the new Asian Studies joint major. Her expertise includes Chinese politics, Chinese rural development, political economy of development, and globalization. Recent publications include "False Choices and Perverse Outcomes in China's Rural Development: Still Petting the Monkey and Ignoring the Chickens?" in the *Brown Journal of World Affairs* and "Opportunists, Predators and Rogues: The Role of Local State Relations in Shaping Chinese Rural Development" in the *Journal of Agrarian Change*.



Ji Young Choi, Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Government, Ohio Wesleyan University

Ji Young Choi is an associate professor in Ohio Wesleyan's Department of Politics and Government and an affiliated professor in OWU's International Studies and East Asian Studies programs. He specializes in international relations history and theories, international and comparative political economy, and East Asian security and political economy. Choi completed his Ph.D. at Purdue University. A native of South Korea, Choi earned a B.A. in Philosophy at Yonsei University and his M.I.S. (Master of International Studies) with top honors at Sogang

University, both in Seoul, Korea. Further, he went on to earn his M.A. in Political Science at the University of Kansas. His research interests are in the rise and fall of nations or great powers, the politics of economic globalization, global financial governance, East Asian regionalism, the rise of China, and Korean politics and economy. He has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals including *International Politics*, *Pacific Focus*, *the Journal of International and Area Studies*, and the *Journal of Third World Studies*.



Alam Payind, Director, Middle East Studies Center, The Ohio State University

Alam Payind is director of the Middle East Studies Center at The Ohio State University and a professor in the International Studies Program and the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures Department. He received his B.A. from Kabul University in Political Science and Islamic Studies and his Ph.D.

from Indiana University in Political Science and Higher Education. Born and raised in Afghanistan, Payind served in the Afghan government as the Director General of Cultural and Foreign Relations, and was a professor at Kabul University before the Soviet invasion in 1979 forced him to seek refuge in the United States. He is still part of the faculty at Kabul University and is a consultant to the Afghan government. Since Sept. 11, 2001, he has visited the country 13 times. A 2013 publication is "Inside Afghanistan 23 Years After the Soviet Withdrawal" in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. Payind is active on the national level in organizations such as the National Council of Area Studies Center Directors. He provides vital consultations to press and news agencies on Middle Eastern affairs and lectures widely. But he is devoted to teaching his courses on the Modern Middle East and Contemporary Issues in the Middle East and to advising Middle Eastern students adjusting to the American educational system and culture, and to American students majoring in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.



Michael Houlahan, Foreign Service Officer (retired); Resource Speaker, Community Outreach Program, American Foreign Service Association.

Michael Houlahan is retired from the Foreign Service after 28 years in the U.S. diplomatic service. He received his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth College and earned a master's degree in International Public Policy at The Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies. Following a three-year tour in the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps, he served 28 years as a Foreign Service Officer, where his overseas postings included Japan, Romania, New Zealand, Cyprus, Italy, India, the Philippines and Jamaica. Houlahan has published more than 60 articles and reviews, most of them specializing on the Philippines, including guerilla movements, the Marcos regime, and World War II. After retiring, he was coordinator of the Great Issues Lecture Series in Upper Arlington from 2002-2011 as well as a resource speaker for the Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Lecture Series (2001-2010). Since 1997, he has been a resource speaker for the American Foreign Service Association's community outreach program.