



## FROM THE POLITY Robes in Seminar



Photo by Evan Hamilton

Last week, I wore an academic robe to seminar. Why did I do this?

Seminar is the source and summit of our academic life at St. John's. It is a liturgy (*λειτουργία*) in the original sense—a work of the people, a ritual, a public ministration. While for all other classes a certain informality is acceptable, at the seminar table it is fitting for a Johnnie to show up at the top of his game not only in his intellectual preparation, but in his raiment. In doing so he shows forth a certain seriousness regarding the task at hand, as well as a pride in himself which augments both the respect he renders and receives. We are not angels, and thus are incapable of pure intellection without the use of bodily mediation. This being the case, we do well to embrace the embodied character of seminar, specifically by dressing up.

I have been proud to see the new freshman embrace this. You are a well-dressed bunch! Every blazer and long skirt I see on a Monday and Thursday evening fills me with joy.

But why an academic robe? I have three reasons. First, it is traditional. Originating in Medieval Oxford and Cambridge, the academic robe or gown was first worn by scholars to keep them warm while reading during the cold British winters. Today in most places robes are

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## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION HOLDS MEETINGS OVER HOMECOMING WEEKEND

In conjunction with this year's homecoming celebrations, the St. John's College Alumni Association convened for a Board Meeting on Friday, September 27th, and an All-Alumni Meeting on Sunday, September 29th. Both meetings were chaired by Katarina Wong (A'88), President of the Alumni Association Board (AAB), who oversaw updates from working group leaders and officers on the past year's initiatives.

A major focus of the meetings was the new strategic plan for 2024-26. This plan seeks to enhance collaboration across the Association's five key areas: alumni support, student support, community engagement, fundraising, and governance. By improving communication between stakeholders, the AAB aims to increase its overall effectiveness. Wong noted that moving forward, communication with alumni will be sent out tri-annually. The AAB is also encouraging more alumni to become active volunteers, offering their time and expertise to support these efforts.

With the college transitioning to a philanthropic funding model, alumni engagement in fundraising has become even more critical. President Demleitner emphasized that tuition alone can no longer sustain the college's high academic standards. Alumni contributions are essential, and Wong stressed that every donation, regardless of size, makes a difference. Hayden Pendergrass (A'14) reported that 30% (114) of first-time donors in 2024 were reached through Alumni Giving Council events. Fundraising efforts this year included Giving Tuesday, which brought in 489 gifts totaling \$121,000, the Day of Giving, which raised \$204,738 from 789 gifts, and the Croquet Giving Tent, which generated 175 gifts.

As part of the new strategic plan, the AAB is also increasing its focus on supporting international students and introducing a senior writing period support structure. Richa Bhattarai (A'18), from the Career Services Working Group, highlighted the success of the Odyssey Program, which paired 30 alumni volunteers with 39 students for career mentoring. This year it has been expanded to include sophomores and juniors. In light of the creation of a new website called "Careers for Johnnies" the program will adopt a new approach utilizing eight wide career fields to organize resources. Demleitner empathized that this is by no means an attempt at excluding certain

career paths or to pressure students into specific careers. Alumni present at the meeting were particularly keen to point out the importance of structured guidance on careers in STEM and medicine.

The Student and Recent Alumni Group (SARA) reported on a new project to provide diploma tubes for the graduation ceremony. SARA aims to improve messaging to avoid past confusion where their presence was misinterpreted as a fundraising solicitation. Looking ahead, the Association is preparing for its bicentennial in 2027. A special committee will be formed to coordinate the celebration.

The weekend also saw changes to the AAB. Interim Board member Nani Detti was confirmed, replacing Matt Pryatel, who stepped down due to work commitments. At the end of the All-Alumni Meeting, election results for new officers and at-large directors were announced. Beth Martin (A'94) was elected Secretary, Richa Bhattarai (A'18) Treasurer, and Ginger Kenney (A'67) the BVG-Alumni representative. Newly elected and re-elected directors at-large include Hayden Pendergrass (A'14), Jacob Greenstine (A'10), Aishwarya Scharma (A'20), Charles Bieneman (SF'89), Hannah Stires Ard (A'92), Joseph Larson (A'90), and Shannon Lynch Albitton (SF'20). The Board also announced the recipients of the Award of Merit, which will be presented to Malik Gillani, Rose Carmen Goldberg, Thomas More Donnelly, and Tia Pausic at a ceremony next term in Washington, DC. The Volunteer Service Award was given to Brian Becker, Leslie Kay, and Steve Virgil. Additionally, five individuals were named honorary alumni in recognition of their service to the college: Victoria Campbell, John Cornell, retired tutor Henry Higuera, Julie Romero, and former president Mark Roosevelt. The next board meeting will take place virtually in December.

Helen Felbek

## From The Mitchell Museum:

"The biggest hindrance to wanting to understand a work of art is wanting to understand."  
—Bruno Munari (1907–98), Italian artist, designer, and inventor

*courtesy of /m*

### This Week in Seminar

Freshman:

- Thursday, October 3: Plutarch: *Lives*, Lysurgus; Solon
- Monday, October 7: Herodotus: *History*, I; II 50–53, 112–120; III 37–38, 66–87

Sophomores:

- Thursday, October 3: Virgil: *Aeneid*, V–VIII
- Monday, October 7: Virgil: *Aeneid*, IX–XII

Juniors:

- Thursday, October 3: Hobbes: *Leviathan* (selections)
- Monday, October 7: Spinoza: *Ethics*, Book 1 through proposition 29, marginal pages II/45–II/71

Seniors:

- Thursday, October 3: Marx and Engels: *The German Ideology*; "Theses on Feuerbach" (selections)
- Monday, October 7: Marx and Engels: *Capital* (selections)

### Upcoming Events:

Friday, October 4

- Long Weekend begins

Saturday, October 5:

- Poets in the Conversation Room: Carolyn Forché, 2pm, Mellon Conversation Room

Monday, October 7:

- Long Weekend ends (seminars meet)

A WEEKEND WITH THE RUSTY WICKETS: Homecoming’s Alumni Croquet Match

Homecoming weekend started off with a bang—some alumni chose to attend the opening of the new bookstore and coffee shop in Edensword. but others ditched the formality and joined the St. John’s croquet team for practice. It was intended to be a tournament of sorts, but that quickly fell apart. Instead, alumni and freshmen were paired up and played against upperclassmen.

On courts 1 and 2, current students fared pretty well. Court 3 is referred to as the party court, due to its decline and other frustrating landscaping. Magnus Oberg and Caden Marshall were placed at this court, against Rusty Wicket Sam Collins and yours truly. Collins was a truly remarkable player, getting to the alley (the opposite side of the court) significantly faster than Oberg and Marshall managed to do. This was without the aid of me, his partner, due to my inability to hit the ball.

Unfortunately, Collins and the other alums left early for dinner around 6, leaving me to finish the game. While it was filled with good sportsmanship, it was evident that I need to work on my croquet skills. The Rusty wickets appeared to miss croquet in their post-college lives—a fact made evident when they arrived on the field bright and early Saturday morning. Unlike Friday, it was a much more pleasant day to play croquet. Like Friday, it wasn’t much of a tournament, but good practice for current students and a way of connecting with alums.

They seemed to get a great deal of joy out of it, most likely due to the inaccessibility of croquet outside of

ON VOTING: A Letter from Ms. Locke

Here’s a plain question: Are you registered to vote? As college students living in Maryland, you American citizens are eligible to register here, even if you already registered elsewhere. Or you can register with your permanent address in your home state. It takes 10 minutes, at **vote.org**. This website links to each and every state, can give you the rundown on what will show up on your ballot, and alert you to deadlines before the November 5 election day. You will need to know your social security number and driver’s license (or state ID), depending on your state.

If you think you are registered to vote, please confirm. Have you requested an absentee ballot? Go straight to **vote.org**. They will easily mail a ballot to you, but on-campus addresses must read:

Name  
60 College Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 41401

Please don’t put it off: your vote truly matters. Just as you have taken your education into your own hands in an intentionally (ideally) democratic classroom, exercise your right to vote. Scan the QR code for a brief video overview of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. If you have questions or would like me to walk you through the process, email me at pmlocke@sjc.edu.  
Thanks,

Patricia Locke, Tutor



St. John’s. It serves as a good reminder to appreciate the gifts we have at the college while we are still here. I’m looking forward to seeing the Rusty Wickets at the Annapolis Cup in April!

Willa Rothenberg

Aphorism of the Week

Cold water is fleeting.  
Caleb Briggs

Student Committee on Instruction: Wednesday Forums

11:45, Private Dining Hall. All Are Welcome!

Wed. Oct. 2nd: Are the essays we write here pointless?

Wed. Oct. 9th: Do we need moments of silence in seminar?

Wed. Oct. 16th: The Algebra Exam: Does it work?

Wed. Oct. 23rd: What are the rules of seminar?

Wed. Oct. 30th: What if my class is DEAD?

BUDGET UPDATE: Club Budgets Approved by the DC as of October 1 Meeting

- 3D Printing- \$319
- Alexander Hamilton Society- \$400
- Board Games Club- \$325
- Christian Fellowship- \$363.94
- Cinema Club- \$1,260
- Darkroom- \$700
- Filmmaking Club- \$885
- Historia- \$450
- Historical European Martial Arts- \$2,030
- Johnnies of Color- \$1,855
- Jiu Jitsu- \$1,935
- King William Players- \$4,150
- Law Club- \$650
- Project Polity- \$40.28
- Purls of Wisdom- \$172.39
- Rock Room Club- \$446.44
- Spanish Speakers- \$500
- String Ensemble- \$300
- Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind- \$85
- Video Game Club- \$250



Photo from the SJC archives, submitted by Jackson Green

Seminar Robes Article, Cont’d

used as sorts of secular vestments for convocation and graduation ceremonies.

We at St. John’s are the New Oxford. We have inherited and preserved traditions such as Don Rags which have fallen by the wayside everywhere else, and it is incumbent upon us to not allow the distinctive garment of the learned man go the way of all flesh. Second, it is simple—in fact, simpler than usual formal attire! You can buy an academic robe on Amazon for as little as \$14.98. Even if you wear it over a T-shirt and sweatpants, you will look the part of a scholar. Third, it just looks really cool.

I am a strong proponent of all garments which are robe-like, traditional, and cool. Cassocks, kimonos, togas, monastic habits, agbadas, thawbs—they all fit the bill. If you find yourself in agreement with the sentiments expressed above, please join me in robing up for seminar Monday of next week (Oct. 7).

Jackson Green

BOOKSTORE HAIKU

Bookstore in Campbell  
I fear’d a thing and it came  
No Warrior cats

Nate Burke

ABOUT THE ST. JOHN’S COLLEGIAN

The St. John’s Collegian is the weekly newspaper of St. John’s College Annapolis. We work to bring quick and timely coverage of important events going on, to help develop a more informed student body. If you’re searching for more in-depth investigations and reporting, as well as essays, art and culture, check out the Gadfly, our affiliated publication, which is published once every three weeks.

Want to submit an article? We always need more writers, whether for opinion or reporting! Submissions for news articles should be between 400-600 words, while opinion should be kept short at 350 words. Just email sjca.collegian@gmail.com with your article, and we will work to get it in print! Longer form articles and more in-depth exploration of ideas should go to the Gadfly, which accepts submissions at eanicholskaufman@sjc.edu.

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