USM to Hold Presentation on Scottish Independence Vote

PORTLAND, Maine – The Scottish vote on independence from the United Kingdom has ended, and the results are clear. The people of Scotland voted firmly last Thursday to reject separation by a vote of 55 to 44 percent.

What happens next, however, has yet to be determined, and the larger issue of how a group of people achieves self-determination in a chaotic and dangerous world remains.

A group of expert panelists will discuss the vote in Scotland and what it means during a special presentation next month at the University of Southern Maine. Organized by the USM Political Science program, under the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the free, public presentation will focus on the legal and diplomatic implications of the vote and what it means for other native people around the world.

“I hope those who attend gain an understanding about how complicated self-determination issues are,” said Francesca Vassallo, USM associate professor of political science, said. “It’s not easy to be your own country, even if you already are your own nation.

“This is a major change; this is how self-determination should be done nowadays,” she continued about the Scottish vote. “It affects the rights of nations and international laws.”

The details of the event are:
The public presentation is an example of the community outreach envisioned in USM’s mission of being “Maine’s Metropolitan University.”

Scotland’s vote on whether to gain independence from Great Britain and become its own country gained international attention and was watched closely by other countries and native people.

Vassallo said she wanted to organize the presentation because “I wanted the students in my European politics course to move away from the textbook and into the real world. I want them to understand how we got here and what the options are and to connect the real doers with the students and the citizens of Maine,” she said.

Vassallo’s students are preparing explanatory fliers for those who attend the presentation. The students also will attend and ask questions, she said, “trying to understand in their own way what they have learned and what the speakers are telling them.”

Student Nils Werner commented in an essay that the Scottish vote “will have far-reaching consequences not only within the United Kingdom, but the world at large.”

Student Scott Duley wrote: “The possible breakup of the United Kingdom is too historic an event for anyone to ignore, and the possible ramifications are ground breaking. All Mainers, indeed all Americans, should be watching these events unfold with baited breath.”

During the presentation, Peter Pitegoff, dean and professor of law, University of Maine Law School, will introduce the event and comment on the legal implications of the vote.

Donnie Jack, Scottish affairs counsellor for the Americas, British Embassy, Washington, D.C., will give the Scottish view of the vote outcome. Owen Traylor, consultant and former British diplomat, now living in Saco, will discuss the consequences for the United Kingdom and Great Britain.
Nancy K. Gish, USM professor of English and Scottish literature scholar, recently returned from Scotland, will share her first-hand observations of the vote process.

The event is sponsored by USM Department of History and Political Science, University of Maine School of Law, World Affairs Council of Maine and USM Title III High Impact Practices Grant.

For more information about the USM Department of History and Political Science, go to http://usm.maine.edu/history and http://usm.maine.edu/pos

For more information about USM’s College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, go to http://usm.maine.edu/cahs

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