



The public is cordially invited to the
International Relations Lecture Series (IRLS) 2025

Ethical Society of St. Louis
9001 Clayton Road
St. Louis, MO 63117

10:45 am Second Tuesday of January, February, March and April

The TWA and AAUW invite you to learn from experts about the most critical issues affecting our global community. The 45-50 minute lectures begin promptly at 10:45 am in the upper auditorium and are followed by a question and answer session. Admission is free, but donations are gratefully accepted. Free parking is available behind the building. In case of inclement weather, please call 314-991-0955, ext. 224.

*Sponsored by the Tuesday Women's Association (TWA) of the Ethical Society of St. Louis
and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Metro St. Louis Branches*

Usha Sathe, Chair

January 14, 2025 Our Planet's Plastic Crisis

Dana Ripper, M.S.

There is growing awareness of the plastic crisis amongst people around the world. What we previously thought of as simply unsightly, plastics - particularly single-use disposables - now pose serious climate, water, and air quality threat as well as being detrimental to human health. This presentation will consist of an in-depth discussion of our planet's plastic crisis. From the extraction of component materials to various manufacturing processes, to its end destination in human bodies, waterways, and incinerators, plastic is one issue that needs to be tackled immediately. We'll talk about the various points in plastic production and waste management where change can be made and how you can become involved in that change.



Dana Ripper is the Executive Director and Co-founder of the Missouri River Bird Observatory and a wildlife ecologist who focuses on conservation via ecosystem health. She has an MS in ecology from Arkansas State University (2002) and worked on wildlife research projects across the U.S. before making Missouri home in 2008. In 2010, Dana co-founded the MRBO, a nonprofit organization dedicated to conservation via science, education, and advocacy. Since plastic production and waste mismanagement pose significant threats to climate stability, biotic and abiotic natural resources, and human health and quality of life, one of Dana's major emphases in her work with MRBO is systemic reduction in single-use plastics. MRBO is an affiliate organization of Break Free From Plastic and Beyond Plastics.



Committee: Kathryn Meyer

February 11, 2025 Water Security in a Changing Climate

Jason Knouft, Ph.D.



Access to clean water is essential for all aspects of society. As the climate changes and access to water becomes more uncertain, perceptions of water security may also change, leading to social, economic, and political instability, and even conflict. This conflict could be addressed through cooperation, or, alternatively, result in the weaponization of water to oppress individuals or gain advantage over rivals. This lecture will explore water security in a changing climate and examine the implications of perceived declines in water security for society.



Jason Knouft is a Professor in the Biology Department at Saint Louis University and the Director of the Freshwater Policy Institute at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center. He has served as a Climate and Water Security Analyst for the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), an INR deputy representative to the Climate Security Advisory Council, an INR ex officio deputy representative to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Climate Security Roundtable, a member of the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and a Scientific Review Committee member at the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center. His research focuses on the investigation of freshwater system responses to environmental perturbations, with a particular interest in water security, climate change, contaminants, land use change, and adaptation strategies to address these issues. Knouft received a Ph.D. in biology from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Committee: Sue Williams, Kari Estes



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Usha Sathe, Chair

March 11, 2025 Modern Geopolitics: The Ghost of Sir John Mackinder Kevin Jon Fernlund, Ph.D.

Kevin Jon Fernlund is a Professor of History at the University of Missouri - St. Louis and is the author of *Lyndon B. Johnson and Modern America* (2009) and *William Henry Holmes and the Rediscovery of the American West* (2000). From 2001 to 2002, he was a Fulbright Scholar in Vietnam and between 2006 and 2012, he directed the Western History Association. His most recent book is *A Big History of North America, from Montezuma to Monroe* (2023).



Dr. Fernlund's presentation is "Donald Trump, America First, and the Ghost of Sir Halford John Mackinder, the Father of Modern Geopolitics," an evaluation of US foreign policy in the second Trump Administration.



Mackinder is often credited with introducing two new terms into the English language: "manpower" and "heartland." The Heartland Theory and more generally classical geopolitics and geostrategy were extremely influential in the making of US strategic policy during the period of the Cold War. Dr. Fernlund spoke earlier this year of how geography shapes global politics, echoing Paul Kennedy's insights on "how distance and terrain and climate affect the affairs of states and men." *Committee: Kathryn Meyer*

April 8, 2025 Food Insecurity: Hunger and Famine Now, and in the Near Future Patricia Wolff, M.D.



Pediatrician Patricia Wolff founded the U.S. non-profit *Meds & Food for Kids (MFK)* in 2003 and served as Executive Director until 2020. Since its inception, MFK has saved the lives of almost 1,000,000 children seen in over 50 clinics in Haiti and with Haitian-made Ready to Use Therapeutic Food exported to 17 countries. The MFK approach is to use local labor and local resources to manufacture Medika Mamba, a treatment for malnutrition, which in turn develops the local economy.



For many years, Dr. Wolff spent half her time in Haiti to develop *Meds & Food for Kids*. She is a pediatrician, endocrinologist, and served as President of Forest Park Pediatrics. Dr. Wolff's many awards include the St. Louis Women of Achievement (May 2017) and the St. Louis Bar Foundation Humanitarian Award (October 2015).

Meds & Food
For Kids 
mfkhaiti.org

Committee: Elaine Miller