

## Symposium

### Contemporary Political Issues

As the US prepares for the 2012 Presidential election, daily news coverage of political issues has taken on the “who is up, who is down” flavor that leaves aside many of the larger issues that shape prospects in the contemporary world. To help provide the needed context to ongoing political developments, the contributors to this issue’s symposium were given a very open-ended invitation to reflect on current events, issues, or developments that are causes for concern or optimism. In this sense, the symposium serves as a stock-take of things that one might consider when weighing the stakes in political developments in the US.

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## Energy Politics in 2012

Fred Block

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The only things most voters know about Obama’s energy policies is that he wasted money on a bankrupt solar company—Solyndra—and that he blocked the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada. But the real story is that the Administration successfully directed tens of billions of dollars from the 2009 stimulus act—the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—to accelerate the movement to clean energy, especially wind, solar, and electric vehicles. Using a broad range of policy instruments, the Department of Energy made a big difference both in the deployment of clean energy technologies and in creating a domestic industrial supply chain to support continuing growth. *Continued on page 2.*

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As a result of these efforts, installed capacity for generating electricity from wind has almost doubled since 2008 and new solar installations doubled in both 2010 and 2011. And despite Solyndra's failure and trade disputes with China, the US solar industry has been successful in increasing output while bringing prices down. Moreover, firms in the US are now producing both electric cars and the advanced batteries that power them.

To be sure, shifting the US economy away from its dependence on oil and coal is not a three year project; it will take decades. The number of plug-in electric vehicles that have come off domestic production lines is still tiny, and wind and solar installations will have to keep doubling for years before renewables account for even half of all electricity generation. But the point is that the Obama Administration finally took steps to end our dependence on fossil fuels that we should have taken three decades ago.

But this new direction in energy policy also makes it easier to understand the ferocity of the right-wing opposition to Obama. It is not accidental that the Koch brothers are the largest funder for a range of right-wing causes and their fortune is rooted in a privately held firm that makes its money in both coal and oil. For them, defeating Obama is not just about ideology; a durable shift to clean energy threatens their future profits. Their plan is to install another Republican in the White House who will pull the plug on all of the clean energy initiatives.

Business interests usually approach politics with a long-

term perspective knowing that they will win some elections and lose others. But the Koch brothers, in contrast, see the current fight in apocalyptic terms because if Obama is re-elected with a Democratic Congress, the next election might come too late to stop the institutionalization of clean energy.

This doomsday mentality makes it easier to understand the eagerness in the last few years with which right wing politicians and Supreme Court justices have embraced extreme measures designed to tilt elections against the Democrats. This logic underlies the Supreme Court's infamous *Citizens United* decision and animates state-level efforts to disenfranchise minority, student, and older citizens by requiring photo identification for voting. It also accounts for extremely aggressive reapportionment maps adopted in a number of states and the anti-union efforts pursued by governors and state legislators in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Arizona. Since unions are a key funding source for Democratic campaigns, reducing union memberships will make it easier for opponents to outspend Democratic candidates.

While the aggressive tactics of the Koch brothers and the Tea Party were very successful in the 2010 midterm elections, the outcome of the 2012 election is still uncertain. But there is a distinct possibility that the Koch brothers' success in driving the Republican Party to extremes could result in an historic defeat for that party. It would be ironic indeed if the battle for clean energy and to protect our air, water, and land also has the side effect of defeating the forces that have been making our politics even dirtier and uglier.

## The GOP's Best Friend? The European Model in Crisis

Seán Ó Riain

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Economic and employment trends are likely to be crucial in shaping the outcome of November's Presidential election—if Obama ends up campaigning less against the Republican candidate and more against his own economic record, the prospects for re-election are slim. Any recent improvements in the US economy could easily be undermined, by domestic budget-cutting but also by trends in the world economy. The crisis of the eurozone therefore remains one of the crucial factors shaping the US economy and politics in 2012.

Furthermore, Europe's crisis remains volatile. The peripheral countries continue to struggle with massive debt, bank-

ing remains flawed and fragile, austerity policies are being implemented across the region and growth is either negative or minimal across the entire eurozone. There is open disagreement in the core countries (and even within the German government itself) about whether to let Greece go bust and leave the euro. The chances of further tumultuous events before the US election remain high.

Despite the widespread criticism of European blundering and apparent indecisiveness, in practice the dominant policy response has been consistent since early in the crisis. The most immediate strategy has been to build a "firewall"

around the European financial system, by providing funding to Europe's banks but also by pushing the responsibility for banking debt firmly onto states and, therefore, citizens. It is not that Europe has been slow to develop a bank resolution scheme to manage the process of banks going bust; rather, *avoiding a bank resolution process has been the point of policy*. Changes in financial sector regulation have focused on capital requirements rather than trading activity, and some limited write downs of debts to private sector creditors (in Greece) have been combined with massive injections of cheap money into Europe's banks in recent months.

This safeguarding of banking has been twinned with the promotion of a variety of austerity policies across Europe, in the interests of reducing state debts and deficits and reducing the threat posed to the euro by the rising costs of borrowing for governments (or "sovereigns"). Funds have been mobilized through the development of the European Stability Mechanism rescue funds. Alongside this a series of policy initiatives (including the "six pack" and "two pack" of new regulations and the fiscal compact itself) have toughened budget rules, implemented deeper and more powerful EU Commission oversight of national budgets and economies, imposed automatic sanctions for violation of rules and increasingly sought to embed all of these as firmly as possible in national legislation and even constitutions.

### **A European Model?**

These policy initiatives have been consolidated in recent months into a clear political project for the future of Europe, with a strong legal basis. The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union was adopted on 31st January 2012, without the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic—and potentially subject to a referendum in the Republic of Ireland, France and elsewhere. The treaty is more popularly known as the "fiscal compact," as it was referred to in the dramatic days in early December when the French and German "Merkozy" alliance flexed its muscles to push through the compact and David Cameron vetoed the new agreement in defense of the City of London.

In recent speeches to her Christian Democratic Union party, Angela Merkel has argued that such policies, combined with efforts to improve competitiveness, represent a strongly pro-European response to the crisis. She argues that such measures will rebuild trust in finances and between governments and will require greater strengthening of the center

in Europe and deeper political union. This approach has caused some frustration in the US and UK, "liberal political economies" which have ironically taken what is apparently a more Keynesian approach to the crisis, making greater use of quantitative easing (increasing the money supply) than in continental Europe.

Nonetheless, Merkel can make a strong case that fiscal discipline has been a central plank of the European model in the past—the continental and Nordic economies have always been less likely to run budget deficits than the liberal political economies. However, in these Christian Democratic and Social Democratic economies, this fiscal rectitude has historically been part of a much broader social and economic compact—the other elements of which are missing in the current European fiscal compact.

A crucial element in those models was a focus not on austerity but on prudent egalitarian productive investment (the less widely recognized, and more radical, side of Keynes' economics). Where the bailout programs have emphasized competitiveness through cost cutting and weakening social protections, the European model was based on quality production, worker participation, and strong social protections and investments. Where the successful European economies were characterized by a diverse network of governance institutions, centralization and technocracy are the dominant modes of governance in the fiscal compact. Rather than promoting the "European model" anew, the compact promotes a single piece of the cluster of policies and institutions as the key policy for securing Europe's future.

### **Prospects for the Compact**

The fiscal compact is anchored in part in the ideologies of the dominant parties in France and Germany and may well shift if the French socialists or German social democrats return to government (with both parties expressing deep skepticism about the strategy). It is also, however, based on a profound uncertainty and fear about how Europe's financial system might fare if the system of liabilities built up in the open capital markets of the 2000s begin to unravel. The compact then is an attempt to manage Europe through the short term crisis by imposing discipline on government finances, betting that the process of deleveraging of debts will be easier to manage through states and citizens than through a restructuring of the financial system.

But there are still significant problems with this strat-

egy. The most obvious is the threat to the euro through the pressure on government finances and the unwillingness of private lenders to finance government borrowing in the European periphery. The violent confrontations in Greece are only the most visible sign of serious damage to the image of the EU, especially outside the continental “core” (Eurobarometer surveys). Nonetheless, in the absence of alternative projects for European recovery, it may be that the fiscal compact will enable the core European countries to get through 2012, despite the fragile financial system, the threats to the euro and the problems of public opinion.

In the longer term, however, the prospects for the fiscal compact are gloomy. As Fritz Scharpf (1999) noted, there are challenges with both output-based and input-based legitimation in the EU. Legitimation based on outputs turns on the benefits derived from a policy—and the problem here is that it seems unlikely that the fiscal compact will work. The fiscal rules in place in the 2000s have already notably failed to prevent the current crisis. Four years into the crisis, the pro-cyclical austerity policies seem almost certain to continue to deepen recession and delay recovery. In the medium to long term, the fiscal rules in the new treaty lock out counter-cyclical measures and go a long way to making Keynesian economic management illegal.

Legitimation based on inputs is based on the support for the process that generates policy decisions. But the compact is based largely on increasingly naked inter-governmental inequalities in power and intensified technocratic domination—neither wildly popular with Europe’s citizens. Recent decades have seen a significant shift in the relations between governments and bureaucracies within Europe. From 1985 to 1994 the European Commission under Jacques Delors was arguably the central actor in the European Union and widely seen as a champion of the smaller states. However, the Commission bureaucracy has been marginalized in the past decade by the growing assertiveness of the major powers within the Union. In the aftermath of the crisis, the Commission is now being brought back in but as the disciplinary arm of an inter-governmental set of rules. More broadly, agencies such as the European Central Bank are playing a key role, officially outside the control of European citizens. In Italy, technocrats are directly installed in government while Greece, Ireland, and Portugal are all under direct technocratic oversight through bailout programs.

The legitimacy of technocratic domination rests upon ex-

pertise and objectivity. However, there is significant scope in applying this expertise—schedules of repayment can be changed and definitions of obligations to creditors can be created, contested and changed. Furthermore, the fiscal rules themselves build into law economic concepts and explanations that are in practice both contested and extremely difficult to operationalize, even within international accounting and statistical norms. “The rules” cannot substitute for political construction of social compacts.

### Creating the Future

The compact then is a bet that austerity and technocracy can outlast these economic, political and legitimation problems long enough to allow the eurozone economy to begin to grow once more. The rules may become the first block in Merkel’s “bridge to the future,” becoming the basis of new relations of trust across Europe. But the other elements that might make such an outcome more likely are missing, or suppressed. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that the peripheral countries fear that the fiscal compact will simply quarantine the healthier economies in Europe from the difficulties across the eurozone as a whole.

There are real dilemmas here—uneven development in the European Union is a serious problem and interacts disastrously with liberal capital markets and state deficits. But it is striking how small a role has been given to European institutions such as the structural funds program or the European Investment Bank in promoting an investment-led recovery. The marketization of continental European banking has fuelled a turn away from productive investment and there is significant evidence that the funds provided to European banks are still as likely to be used for financial trading as for productive lending. Policy decisions that could provide national governments with fiscal space to generate economic recovery, including rescheduling debt repayments, are largely ignored.

Nonetheless, policies and institutions exist that could be mobilized. The problem lies in the ability of politics in Europe to generate what Stinchcombe (1997) calls a “solid enough future” that could be the basis for recovery. The tensions between core and periphery are clear. But the tensions within the core itself are also significant—the French project of Europeanization as a model of projecting influence on a global stage is potentially significantly at odds with the German projection of its model of a competitive exporting econ-

omy onto the European Union as a whole. Within Germany itself, the political tensions are also serious—while their once staid banks partied in international capital markets in the 2000s, German workers and citizens saw some of the lowest increases in living standards across the EU. Little wonder their appetite for funding European recovery is poor.

Nonetheless, there may be some good news for President Obama here. It may well be that the prospect of a fiscal compact and early moves in that direction will stabilize banking, bond and stock markets, and the eurozone economy long enough to avoid a disastrous meltdown before the November elections. In the not so long run, however, the European approach will need to go well beyond the fiscal compact to become a motor of recovery in the world economy.

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# Sovereign Debt and Nationalism: Normalizing the European Right

Mabel Berezin  
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Republican politicians routinely accuse Barack Obama of trying to bring European style socialism to the US. As a sociologist who studies culture and politics, I can imagine why "European-style socialism" evokes fear among those likely to vote in Republican primaries. As a political sociologist, I cringe at how far removed this label is from anything that is currently occurring on the European continent. American prime time and cable news media have featured riots and strikes from Spain to Greece. Yet, socialism is not the dominant feature of contemporary European politics. Socialist and progressive left politicians (albeit the two are not the same) have fared poorly in recent European electoral politics. The dominant political visions in Europe today are neo-liberalism and resurgent nationalism embodied in right wing political parties, which lead the European right to criticize "Europe" in ways quite distinct from their counterparts in the US.

After European leaders agreed to create the European Monetary Union (EMU) in the late 1990s, the European Council in Brussels established a competition among graphic artists to design the new currency. The competition protocol requested that euro bills have non-specific images that might suggest any venue that appeared generically European. The

coins were the exception. One side of the coins would have the denomination; the other side would have an easily recognizable national symbol.

The design schizophrenia built into the *euro* coins is manifest in the political dimensions of the European sovereign debt crisis that has been a match in the tinderbox of neo-liberalism and extremism of various forms. The struggle between national interest and plans to conserve the EMU plagues ongoing attempts to adjudicate the full blown crisis that emerged in 2010 when Greece began to head toward default. In this climate of economic volatility, European right nationalist parties and their ideas have gained increased political traction and notable electoral successes. Even in Sweden, a right populist party, the Swedish Democrats, received 5.7% of the vote making it eligible for a seat in the Congress. In the April 2011 Finnish legislative elections, the right nationalist True Finn Party came in third place and achieved the same percentage of votes as the Finnish Social Democrats. Resistance to bailing out defaulting EMU members and a general antipathy to Europe unite diverse right parties. The economic events that constitute the crisis have made it legitimate for nationalist politicians to argue that Europe is a dangerous economic and political project. French National

Front leader Marine Le Pen bases her current campaign for the presidency on exiting the *eurozone*.

During this period, nationalist rhetoric and policy proposals have become part of center-right and, in some instances, left political discourse. In October 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel told a gathering of the youth members of the Christian Democratic Union party that Germany's attempt to build a multicultural society had "failed, utterly failed." *Normalization of the right* is the term that I develop to capture the twin phenomena of the electoral surge of the European right and the mainstreaming of nationalist ideas and practices (Berezin 2011; Forthcoming). The *normalization of the right* has evolved in tandem with the global financial crisis.

In *Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times* (Berezin 2009), I argued that expanding Europeanization which included the EMU posed a security threat to the ordinary citizen that fueled the electoral salience and public visibility of right political parties. By security, I meant the perception and, for the most part, fact that persons felt safe in their political, social, economic and cultural environment. Security shaped the contours of everyday life in post-war Europe. Through the end of the last century, national institutions from unions to political parties to citizenship requirements served as guarantees of practical security for ordinary Europeans. The expanded European Union which favors market competition and supports multicultural inclusion was never popular among those who benefited most from the solidarity and identity that the national state guaranteed.

The sovereign debt crisis underscores the nationalist sentiments that have always lurked in the interstices of the European project. Europe writ large is facing the contradictions inscribed in the two faces of the euro coins. Europe appears to be heading toward another weak economic year with a possible recession on the way. Citizens have taken to the streets of just about every European capital to protest austerity measures. As of January 1, 2012, the center-right Hungarian Prime Minister has pushed through a new Constitution whose preamble evokes 19th century ethno-nationalism. A collective sense of insecurity is pervasive in Europe today. Collective insecurity weakens the social largesse that forms the core of democratic sentiment and normalizes ideas that many Europeans previously viewed as unacceptable.

How these forces will play out politically in Europe remains to be seen. Similar forces have been in play in the

United States since fall 2008 with somewhat different results. At first, the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the ensuing financial crisis propelled Barack Obama into the White House. It did not take long before a Republican right, at first embodied in the Tea Party movement, began to dominate American politics and process. Remember the debt crisis fiasco of this past summer. One could argue that the fractionated and contentious Republican primary battle that is still going on as of this writing is also a by-product of the crisis.

But the right in the United States differs from its European counterparts in important ways. In Europe, it is the right that wants to keep the state in its citizens' lives in contrast to the United States where the mantra of the right in all of its iterations is to limit the state. This contrast is on display in various ways in different European national states and deserves more nuance and sustained analysis than a short piece such as this can provide. In France, the case I am following most closely at the moment, a Presidential campaign is currently in process. The Socialist candidate who is running against the sitting center-right President, Nicolas Sarkozy, is hardly distinguishable from him on big fiscal issues including France's relation to the *eurozone*.

In the meanwhile, some one should tell the Republican Presidential candidates that the "spectre" that is "haunting Europe" today is decidedly not socialism, but rather what some Europeans like to call "American" style market society. Who knows? The U.S. Republican candidates might actually feel right at home in today's Europe.

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## Abstracts

### BOOK ABSTRACTS

Smithey, Lee A. 2011. *Unionists, Loyalists, and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In Northern Ireland, a once seemingly intractable conflict is in a state of transformation. Lee A. Smithey offers a grassroots view of that transformation, drawing on interviews, documentary evidence, and extensive field research. He offers essential models for how ethnic and communal-based conflicts can shift from violent confrontation toward peaceful co-existence.

Smithey focuses particularly on Protestant unionists and loyalists in Northern Ireland, who maintain varying degrees of commitment to the Protestant faith, the Crown, and and Ulster/British identity. He argues that antagonistic collective identities in ethnopolitical conflict can become less polarizing as partisans adopt new conflict strategies and means of expressing identity. Consequently, the close relationship between collective identity and collective action is a crucial element of conflict transformation. Smithey closely examines attempts in Protestant/unionist/loyalist communities and organizations to develop more constructive means of expressing collective identity and pursuing political agendas that can help improve community relations. Key leaders and activists have begun to reframe shared narratives and identities, making possible community support for negotiations, demilitarization, and political cooperation, while also diminishing out-group polarization.

As Smithey shows, this kind of shift in strategy and collective vision is the heart of conflict transformation, and the challenges and opportunities faced by grassroots unionists and loyalists in Northern Ireland can prove instructive for other regions of intractable conflict.

For more information:

<http://amzn.to/ul-ct-ni-us>

<http://bit.ly/ul-ct-ni-ou>

### ARTICLE ABSTRACTS

Spires, Anthony J. 2011. "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs." *American Journal of Sociology*, 117 (1): 1–45.

In the study of civil society, Tocqueville-inspired research has helped illuminate important connections between associations and democracy, while corporatism has provided a robust framework for understanding officially approved civil society organizations in authoritarian regimes. Yet neither approach accounts for the experiences of ostensibly illegal grassroots nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in an authoritarian state. Drawing on fieldwork in China, I argue that grassroots NGOs can survive in an authoritarian regime when the state is fragmented and when censorship keeps information local. Moreover, grassroots NGOs survive only insofar as they refrain from democratic claims-making and address social needs that might fuel grievances against the state. For its part, the state tolerates such groups as long as particular state agents can claim credit for any good works while avoiding blame for any problems. Grassroots NGOs and an authoritarian state can thus coexist in a "contingent symbiosis" that—far from pointing to an inevitable democratization—allows ostensibly illegal groups to operate openly while relieving the state of some of its social welfare obligations.

Swank, Eric and Breanne Fahs. 2011. "Pathways to Political Activism among Americans who have Same-Sex Sexual Contact." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 8: 126–138.

Empirical studies on political activism among self-identified sexual minorities are sparse and underdeveloped. When using three waves of a random national survey of respondents who have sex with people of the same sex (N=184), this study tested the predictive capabilities of "resource," "framing," and "network" theories of political participation. After running discriminant analysis regressions for electoral and protest activities, the potency of eclectic and integrative models became apparent.

With many resource, framing, and network variables reaching statistical significance, the results suggest that activism is partly contingent upon changing political environments and the educational attainment of the respondents, as well as their interpretations of heterosexism, authoritarian principles, the collective efficacy of citizens, the number of civic groups they joined, and the embracing of activist precepts as their own.

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 Interview with Section Award Recipient
 

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# Gregory Hooks and Brian McQueen

Interviewed by Jesse Wozniak  
University of Minnesota

Gregory Hooks and Brian McQueen were co-recipients of the Political Sociology Section's Article Award in 2011 for their article "American Exceptionalism Revisited: The Military-Industrial Complex, Racial Tension, and the Undeveloped Welfare State" (2010, *American Sociological Review* 75(2): 185–204).

*I find it really interesting that you argue militarism and national security profoundly affected the New Deal, even though that's thought of as a domestic policy. I'm curious what brought you to looking at these international programs in relation to the New Deal.*

GH: I did a dissertation on World War II economic planning and had a book on the topic. That research focused on industrial planning for the war and the rise of the Pentagon, but after completing it, I went around saying the New Deal wasn't debated and defeated, it was swept away in a flood of Pentagon money. But I'd never really done the research to back up that impression. Edwin Amenta published a book—*Old Relief*—that really framed the question for me in a way that was researchable. He did two things: one, he made the claim that the United States didn't lack a welfare state, it actually had a surprisingly robust one that didn't survive. And second, he articulated an argument in terms of political geography of where support came for a social democratic policy agenda. I thought the way that he framed the question lent itself to actually document the impression that I had about the New Deal being swept away in a lot of money from the military side of the house.

BM: My interest in this came from the idea of the racial tensions. There's a wide range of

research looking at how racial tensions were rising at this point in time with immigration of non-white populations into northern urban centers. This had been addressed in terms of inequality, but I was thinking that it must have some impact on the decisions that Democratic legislators were able to make in preventing progressive legislation from

developing, and that's intersected nicely with the rise of the New Deal and World War II spending at this point in time. So how did all these factors work together to wash away the New Deal state?



Gregory Hooks

GH: The dependent measure for our analysis is the change in democratic representation from the mid 1930s to the late 40s.

The mid 1930s because that was the crest of democratic influence over Congress and when much of the New Deal policy agenda was put in place. In the late 40s, we're talking about the Congress that passed the Taft-Hartley Act and made the US welfare state anemic. The most robust finding that we had is where they built the military-industrial complex (facilities making aircraft for military purposes) Democrats lost heavily in those regions. In simple terms, the older states in the U.S. tended to be hesitant about a social welfare agenda. The South was resistant to social welfare initiatives especially if they would include non-whites. In the Northeast and the older cities, there were patronage politics that were pretty localistic and weren't happy about shifting resources to federal distribution. Basically, in simplistic terms, east of the Mississippi there was not momentum toward a social welfare system and the real energy came from west of the Mississippi.

Although it's easy to talk about it in terms of a plot given the way it played out, the military-industrial complex was



Brian McQueen



## Interview with Section Award Recipient

overlain with the varying jurisdictions that were most supportive of social welfare. For example, Boeing was headquartered in Seattle. In the 1930s, I think every member of Congress from the state of Washington was a Democrat. In 1948 only one was: Scoop Jackson, who was known as the Senator from Boeing. In terms of being swept away, a lot of the activities in Washington had to do with natural resource development. Those were just less interesting when you had such an enormous employer in Boeing. So that was the biggest finding in terms of a flood of money washed it away, it was actually a flood of jobs more precisely.

BM: The importance of race was a shift in the basis of the working class as it went from a homogenous white working class that was concerned with working class issues to a working class that was more heterogeneous. Majority group members became less supportive of social policies that appeared to benefit minority groups disproportionately. It also created a situation where whites for the first time began to ask racially charged questions and see African Americans as taking jobs, taking over schools, taking over neighborhoods. And this racist agenda largely undermined the ability of Northern Democratic legislators to make progressive policy changes to increase access to civil rights as well other social programs.

*In the article you talk about how the post-World War II period was of central importance and a critical juncture in what you're talking about. Could you give a description of the difference between path dependency and a critical juncture and also explain what made the post-World War II period such an important critical juncture?*

GH: If you're familiar with Paris and the Arc de Triomphe, there's all kinds of streets that come in, you go around the traffic circle then you go off in a different direction, and

if you're not familiar with it, it's wildly chaotic. And so a critical juncture is something like this traffic circle at the Arc de Triomphe where everything comes together and mixes around, and once you leave and start off on these avenues, it's hard to get back. The critical juncture is a time where decisions will loom large for a long time. It's hard to say exactly why it's critical, and this is one of the criticisms of it, that it's almost always defined post-hoc. "Oh that was a critical juncture because these things happened and they were a big deal." So it's not an entirely satisfying concept in that way, but given the tools that are at our disposal and the fact that history runs in one direction, you don't get to have a repeated trial. Stevens and Huber make the case looking cross-nationally; they document that if you have a left-labor coalition in power immediately after the war, they

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put in place a more robust welfare state that became institutionalized and hard to remove. Where you have conservative alliance in power at that period, they tended to put in place an anemic or absent welfare state.

Path dependency is the second part. Once you start down those paths it's difficult to reset and say you made a mistake, you really wanted a robust social welfare state. I don't know of a single instance where that happened, where there was a profound reset, and so the notion of path dependency, as you take a step down the path it's hard to reverse, come back, and go down the second path.

*I'm interested in what the both of you see as the contribution from this study. How does this change our understanding of the welfare state and social policy, or racial migration patterns or the like? What do you see as the big contribution this piece brings to the literature?*

GH: One of the challenges of this research was to methodologically find a way to overlay the economic regions, which for us was the military-industrial complex over congressional districts. I think overlaying those sorts of things

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## Interview with Section Award Recipient

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provides an opportunity to really look at some of the big questions about over time change in the political landscape. In the military-industrial complex literature, it's not hard to find accounts that talk about conservatives conspiring to roll back various things. And most studies found that not to be true. And certainly in our study there's no evidence that conservatives met in Washington DC during WWII and said "I know. Let's build up Boeing in Seattle and that way there will be fewer Democrats left in Washington." But the outcome was very powerful. So finding a way to look at over time change in the political landscape is challenging, but I think it would be very interesting with this kind of over time look at the political landscape to be able to look at what the prospects are for the welfare state going forward.

If you think about it, we're basically claiming that after WWII a profound economic change was induced by this war

[W]e're basically claiming that after WWII a profound economic change was induced by this war mobilization, which set in motion migration patterns, which changed the political landscape under the feet of powerful, influential, and smart political actors.

mobilization, which set in motion migration patterns, which changed the political landscape under the feet of powerful, influential, and smart political actors. But they were unable to rewrite the script just because they were connected. I think this is a good segue to turn over to Brian, because his research was on the civil rights movement which is not really about the military-industrial complex but actually tried to make use of the same methodological approach to look at a different but related question.

BM: And that's really more where my interest lies in looking how this has given rise to different types of inequality and embedded inequality in the political structure of the United States. What I looked at with my dissertation was how racial tensions within local areas, within economies, prevented or shaped support for the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. This came out strongly in the research that areas where racial tensions were higher were far less likely to sup-

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## Mobilizing Ideas

Mobilizing Ideas (<http://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com>), a blog about social movements and social change, has added an important addition to our February essay dialogue on the Tea Party and the Republican Primaries. Theda Skocpol has written a fascinating perspective on how the Tea Party has shaped the race for the Republican nomination, and more importantly, how the movement has become a "gravitational force" within the Republican Party (click here to view her post). We invite you to read her essay as well as the other great posts in this dialogue that were posted earlier this month, including essays by Neal Caren, Tina Fetner, Richard Lloyd, David Meyer, Chris Parker, Steven Tepper, and Jenni White.

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## Journal Profiles

# Political Power & Social Theory

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Political Power & Social Theory (PPST) was first published in 1980 in response to a perceived lack of scholarly venues for interdisciplinary work on class, power, and history. Its mission today is largely the same but reflects developments that have changed the gaps that PPST fills. First, PPST defines “class” broadly, and consequently seeks manuscripts about a wide range of social categories, not just socioeconomic class. Second, at a time when many journals are tightening word length restrictions on manuscripts and adopting increasingly uniform formatting conventions, PPST recognizes that good scholarship sometimes comes in more extended and less conventional formats. Finally, every volume of PPST to date features a “Scholarly Controversies” section. In contrast, most conventional journals only hold such debates every once in a while.

Originally conceived as an annual journal to address concerns about selectivity, PPST has found that a single annual publishing cycle has disadvantages. First, there have been some years where the journal could not publish as many manuscripts as the editors would have liked (and it was not feasible to hold on to manuscripts pending the next issue). Second, it is difficult for the journal to provide special-themed issues. Therefore, starting in 2012, PPST will be published bi-annually: one issue will be themed; the other will be a standard issue. For those interested in submitting manuscripts to PPST, it may be helpful to know that the journal intends to publish a themed issue on “Post-colonial Sociologies” in 2012, followed by “American Decline” in 2013.

PPST seeks manuscripts relating to a broad definition of “politics” and most of the manuscripts reviewed and published by PPST do not focus on elections or political institutions. Although most articles published in PPST thus far tend to be empirically-driven qualitative work, PPST also invites theoretical or quantitative work. Manuscripts that are valued highly by PPST are those that make substantial theoretical contributions, as well as those that present novel

## Findings and Ideas from Political Power & Social Theory

In “Monetary Orders, Financial Dependence, and Idea Selection: The International Constraints on American Monetary Policy, 1961–1963” (21: 49–92), Aaron Major used a case study of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) between 1961 and 1963 to understand why the US adopted monetary policy favored by OECD’s European participants over domestic concerns for economic growth. The article makes a substantial contribution to understanding how ideas gain influence in decision-making. Major begins with a review and critique of constructivist theory, finding that although new ideas are more influential during times of uncertainty, the theory does not adequately explain why certain new ideas are more influential than others.

In response to this shortcoming, Major develops an “institutionally centered materialist model of idea selection” based on both resource dependency and institutional theory. The OECD’s European participants were able to convince the US to adopt their policy ideas because of their unique position at the time: European private investors and public financial officials were running a balance of payments surplus with the US, which provided European countries with the leverage to increase (or decrease) international confidence in the US dollar. Although the US appeared to be acting against its own self-interest when it chose to increase short-term interest rates (potentially stunting domestic economic growth), these actions were in fact undertaken to safeguard other more-vital interests—namely, warding off the collapse of investor confidence in US currency.

empirical problems and research. Additionally, PPST values work that focuses on international or global issues.

Editor Julian Go noted an important caveat: while social theory is valued highly by PPST, authors should refrain

## Journal Profiles

from submitting manuscripts based purely on political philosophy—in other words, papers with little to no empirical research. Another oft-recurring related problem is that many manuscripts submitted to PPST do not effectively link theory to empirical research, resulting in mismatches of theory to data—in other words, “forcing” the theory to fit the data, or vice-versa.

Since PPST’s first issue was published, it has gained a reputation as a space for innovation and risk-taking,

### Findings and Ideas from Political Power & Social Theory

2011 was an eventful year in the realm of US politics as political parties and other interested groups and organizations prepared to challenge President Obama in the 2012 general election. As such, PPST devoted much space in Volume 22 to issues relevant to contemporary electoral politics; one of these articles is “The Tea Party in the Age of Obama: Mainstream Conservatism or Out-Group Anxiety?” (22: 105–37) by Barreto et al.

Through a mixed-methods study incorporating content analysis of websites, interviews with Tea Party actors and sympathizers, and quantitative analysis, Barreto et al. found that—rather than stemming from any single event—the Tea Party’s genesis was a response to the many social, demographic, and political changes that took place in America over the past few decades. President Obama’s election victory served merely as the catalyst that inspired people to mobilize.

Additionally, Barreto et al. found that the Tea Party is, in many ways, the latest iteration of right-wing extremism in the United States, rather than being a brand new phenomenon. Contrary to conservative pundits’ description of the Tea Party as the “conservative wing of the Republican Party,” the Tea Party is not so much concerned with conservative values as they are with changing the distribution of goods and rights in America articulating a general disdain for minority groups and immigrants, and a desire to deprive these groups of opportunities equal to that of other groups in American society.

### Findings and Ideas from Political Power & Social Theory

A unique feature of PPST is its “Scholarly Controversy” section, which appears in every issue. What follows is a summary of an article debating Volume 21’s controversy, “Configurations of the Middle Class,” which took Diane Davis’ work as a point of departure.

In “Revolution ‘From the Middle’: Historical Events, Narrative, and the Making of the Middle Class in the Contemporary Developing World.” (21: 299–312), Celso Villegas (2010) refutes the widely-held view that the middle class is a hallmark of modern democracy. He advocates a “temporal” approach to the study of middle class formation, one that accounts for the use of historical events in the formation of a middle class collective narrative in each country.

To illustrate his point, Villegas describes the different forms of middle-class political revolution in the Philippines, Venezuela, and Ecuador, their grounding in the histories of class formations, and their subsequent effects.

These examples demonstrate that, in certain national contexts, the middle class has had a combative, and not cooperative, relationship with democracy, despite middle class populists consistently framing their struggles as democratic.

- Marie DeRousse-Wu

tackling issues and positions that are marginalized in the mainstream disciplines. For instance, it is becoming increasingly common today to conduct research on empires and colonialism; in contrast, PPST has been covering these two themes for quite some time. Another example would be PPST publishing critical studies on race based on Foucauldian perspectives on power (Vol. 11, 1997) long before such perspectives were embraced by conventional journals. Demonstrating its position at the leading edge of scholarly innovation, numerous authors have received awards from a wide variety of organizations for their PPST articles.

## Teaching Political Sociology

# Engaging in Classic Questions through Contemporary Case Studies

Alexandra Hrycak  
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Teaching undergraduate political sociology classes without a textbook can be a challenge. The main arguments in the field are inaccessible to most college students because many landmark studies presume familiarity with global history. I learned this lesson the hard way the first time I taught *Political Sociology* fresh out of graduate school. I rooted the course in the debates on state trajectories inspired by Barrington Moore and Theda Skocpol. I vividly remember a student's stunned reaction to my discussion questions: "How can we answer the question of which sociologist's account of French and Russian history is more persuasive? We don't even know our own [US] history."

Over the years, I have reworked my course to build on my students' enthusiasm for issues of great concern that draw them to political sociology: in particular, issues of empowerment and disempowerment. I have continued to feature contemporary sociological research, debates, and concepts as the foundation of my course, but I have learned how to show how these relate to my students' interests and convictions. I believe that this approach has not only made my students more interested in the drier topics in the field, but also, it has made them better understand the conditions under which their desires for a just society can be achieved. Furthermore, it has inspired them to take a more serious interest in the theoretical and methodological tools they need to rigorously address their questions.

My current version of the class gradually develops the theoretical and historical knowledge students need to dive into classic debates. I bookend the class by exploring new forms of civic engagement (Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen 2003). To provoke discussion of how the US differs from other countries, I proceed with classics that set a theoretical

agenda for further discussion and debate on the role local civic associations, political entrepreneurs, economic elites, and cultural hegemony play in accounting for the peculiarities of the American political system: the meagerness of state guarantees of social welfare, our growing incarceration rates, and our struggles with exclusion based on race, gender and sexual orientation (Dahl 1961; Domhoff 2002; Gaventa 1980; Tocqueville 1988). I pair this theory block with a documentary on Harvey Milk, a figure whose career in politics helps dramatize the "three faces of power" (Epstein 2004). Next, we read case studies of the civil rights movement

**My favorite assignment [is to have students] . . . use ethnographic methods to explore the operations of power in a research site that involves surveillance-based power. This assignment has generated . . . some truly exceptional essays on surveillance conducted by American nonprofits and privatized social service providers.**

(McAdam 1982), AIDS activism (Gould 2009) and unionization (Kurtz 2002). I then turn to readings on neoliberalism that serve both to introduce the class to issues of surveillance raised by the French school of sociology and to cycle back to

revisit the issues of urban development and city-level politics raised by Dahl at the onset of the course. We consider two sites in the contemporary moment, the prison (Foucault 1995; Haney 2010; Wacquant 2009) and the city (Gendron and Domhoff 2009; Soja 2010; Zukin 2010).

Fostering an environment within which my students use theory effectively remains a challenge. I have incorporated several assignments into my class that teach students to write research papers. My favorite assignment—one that I urge others to take out for a spin—is based in Foucault's theory of the Panopticon. Students are given the assignment to use ethnographic methods to explore the operations of power in a research site that involves surveillance-based power. This assignment has generated not only what one might consider expected themes (e.g. digital surveillance and self-scrutiny through Facebook), but also some truly exceptional essays

## Teaching Political Sociology

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on surveillance conducted by American nonprofits and privatized social service providers. Through such work, the class remains rooted in the enduring questions about democracy that the classics inspired in me as a student, while allowing my students to explore these issues as they are manifested in the present day.

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## Call for Contributions

### States, Power, and Societies Recent Ph.D. Profile Feature

As announced in the previous issue of the newsletter, *States, Power, and Societies* will be including a feature to profile Section members who are on the job market. This annual feature will be part of the summer newsletter, scheduled to come out prior to the ASA meetings. In addition to providing exposure for Section members who have recently completed a doctorate, the feature can be of assistance to Section members whose departments are in the process of hiring (by giving the opportunity to identify promising candidates in advance of the ASA meetings).

To be included in the feature, please send a brief profile that includes the following information:

- Your name and institution
- Dissertation summary (200 words)
- Dissertation committee (optional)
- Other research interests (50 words)
- Your email address / website (optional)

To make certain of inclusion, please send the profile by May 10, 2012 to Erik Larson (larsone@macalester.edu).

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