

# STATES, POWER, & SOCIETIES



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dana R. Fisher  
American University

I intended to write this chair's letter to reflect on the importance of political sociology as our democracy teeters on the edge of the transition of power to a second Trump Administration. However, having studied the political maneuvering of the first Trump Administration and the American Resistance that pushed back against the Trump regime and its policies last time around, I have been frozen, spending many hours staring at the screen thinking about everything I've read and heard from colleagues and friends working in the federal government. Although nothing about what is coming in the next

Trump Administration is certain, what we can be certain of is that political sociology will be even more important in the coming years. Our field can help ask and answer important questions that will be of value to sociologists and the broader public including, but not limited to:

> Will the coalition of left leaning groups and individuals who pushed back against the first Trump Administration (aka the American Resistance) rise again? What tactics will they take and how will they engage in politics as insiders and outsiders to the institutional system to push back against the Trump Regime?

> How will the bureaucratic state shift under the next Trump Administration? How might conflicts between members of the Administration (i.e. those elected and appointed) clash with civil servants in the federal government and what will be the outcome of those battles?

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## IN THIS ISSUE

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**2025 Annual Meeting Section Sessions** (p. 2)

**Political Sociology is on Bluesky** (p. 3)

**Call for Awards** (p. 3)

**Featured Essay** by Tomás Gold (p. 6)

**Q&A with 2024 Award Winners** (p. 10)

**Q&A with New Council Members** (p. 21)

**Political Sociology Section Web Series on the 2024 Election** (p. 26)

**Tales from the Field**  
Meera Choi (p. 29)  
Jackie Fetter (p. 30)  
Shunan You (p. 31)

**New Publications** (p. 33)

**Section Information** (p. 38)

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> How will our democracy fare under this administration (and will it survive)?

By the time we meet in August 2025, some of us will likely be knee-deep in questions like these. Please take a look at our section's open call for proposals for the 2025 ASA (see below) and consider submitting an

abstract. I look forward to

learning from all through  
these uncertain times!

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## 2025 Annual Meeting Section Sessions

For the 2025 ASA Annual Meeting, the Section will sponsor the following panels. Submissions are open and will close on February 26, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern. Find [full descriptions on the ASA website](#).

The Political Sociology Section Council (in collaboration with Daniel Laurison who is chairing the regular Political Sociology sessions) is running an OPEN CALL FOR PAPERS FOR ALL OF OUR SESSIONS at the 2025 ASA Annual Conference. All submissions will be reviewed for inclusion on our section and regular panels together and sorted into thematic sessions after the submission deadline.

In practice, what this open call means is that we are asking everyone to submit their political sociology papers with the following order of priority: 1) political sociology SECTION sessions; 2) political sociology REGULAR sessions. If everyone follows this order, it will make reviewing and sorting of submissions into amazing sessions much easier for the committee (so, thank you!).

All papers that are not selected to be presented in a section or regular session will be considered for inclusion in our roundtables, which will take place for 60 minutes and will be followed by our business meeting. If you would prefer only to be included in a roundtable session, please submit your paper directly to the roundtables, which are being chaired by Nicholas Joseph Occhiuto, Hunter College – CUNY.

We look forward to reviewing your submissions –the 2025 Program Committee: Dana R. Fisher, American University (chair); Daniel Laurison, Swarthmore College; Caroline W. Lee, Lafayette College; Josh Pacewicz, Brown University; Nicholas Joseph Occhiuto, Hunter College – CUNY

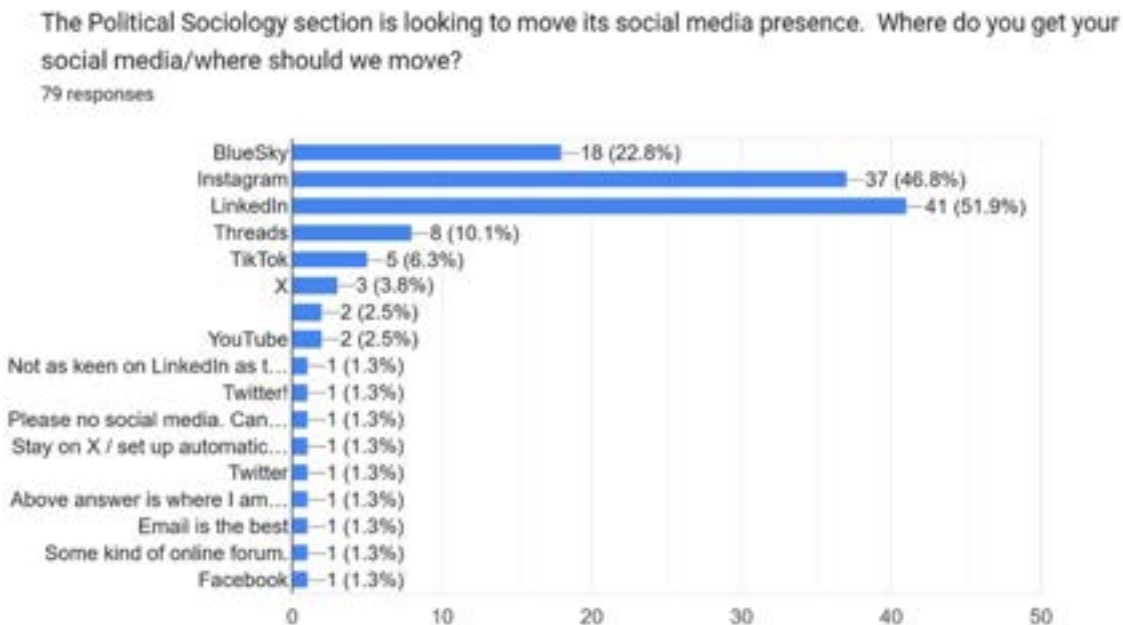
In addition to our open sessions, the section is co-sponsoring two additional sessions with other sections (these are chaired by people from the other sections so contact them if you have any questions about them).

- Right-Wing Politics, Mobilities, and Immigrant Conservatism (with the Section on International Migration)
- New Directions and Emerging Studies of Politics in Science and Technology: Changes in Governance, Political Economy, Labor, and Work (Co-sponsored by Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology)

## Political Sociology is on Bluesky

At the end of the summer, we polled the section members about their social media preferences since we were uncomfortable continuing to have a presence on Twitter/X. At the time, only about a quarter (23%) of respondents suggested we move to Bluesky; LinkedIn and Instagram were both more popular options (52% and 47% respectively). Below is a figure of the distribution of responses to the question fielded in August/early September. Since ASA 2024 ended, however, Bluesky has exploded and now is the fastest growing social media site. In fact, ASA itself, along with a number of ASA sections (including ours) has shifted its

presence to the site. To encourage communication and community among political sociologists, we have been building a starter pack that anyone can use to connect with political sociologists. As of this writing in early December, the starter pack has around 50 political sociologists. You can access our starter pack or be added to the list, by going to our Bluesky profile: @asapolisoc.bsky.social. You can also access the starter pack, clicking the link below or paste this into your browser: <https://bsky.app/starter-pack-short/QaLr2JG>.




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## Call for Political Sociology Awards 2025

The call for Award Nominations is open. The Political Sociology Section will present the following awards at the 2025 ASA Annual Meeting. Information about awards is available [on the ASA website](#).

### **The Distinguished Career Award in Political Sociology**

**Deadline: March 15, 2025**

The Distinguished Career Award recognizes and celebrates a lifetime of contributions to the area(s) of political sociology. Nominations will be judged on the depth and breadth of the scholar's impact on political sociology over the course of their career. Nominees must be at least a quarter of a century beyond graduating with their Ph.D. Section members may nominate a distinguished scholar by sending:

- A letter (PDF or MSWord) of nomination, which outlines the candidate's scholarly contributions to the field and provides assurance of the candidate's willingness to be nominated;
- A copy of the candidate's most recent curriculum vitae, and
- The full contact information for the nominee (including email address), to the nominating committee below with the email subject heading "2025 Political Sociology Career Award."

The Distinguished Career Award Committee:

Dana R. Fisher (chair), drfisher@american.edu

Caroline Lee, Lafayette College, leecw@lafayette.edu

Ching Kwan Lee, CKLee@soc.ucla.edu

### **The Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award in Political Sociology**

**Deadline: February 15, 2025**

This award is given annually to an outstanding recent book in political sociology (edited books are not eligible for this award). To be eligible, submissions must have a 2024 publication date. A nomination letter is not necessary. The selection committee encourages either self-nominations or nominations of work by others but nominations from publishers will not be accepted. Please send a hard copy of the book to the following committee members, with the note indicating that it is to be considered for the 2025 Political Sociology Book Award:

Daniel Laurison (chair)  
dlauris1@swarthmore.edu  
Sociology & Anthropology  
Swarthmore College  
500 College Ave  
Swarthmore PA 19081

Bart Bonikowski  
bb3239@nyu.edu  
Department of Sociology,  
NYU  
383 Lafayette St, 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10003

Leslie Gates  
lgates@binghamton.edu  
Department of Sociology  
Binghamton University  
4400 Vestal Parkway East  
PO Box 6000  
Binghamton, NY  
13902-6000

Julian Go  
jgo34@uchicago.edu  
Department of Sociology  
The University of Chicago  
1126 E. 59th St.  
Chicago, IL 60637

Bo Yun Park  
bpark@richmond.edu  
Jepson School of  
Leadership Studies  
Richmond University  
Jepson Hall 236  
221 Richmond Way  
Richmond, VA 23173

Shivani Choudhary  
shivani.choudhary@yale.edu  
Department of Sociology  
Yale University  
493 College St  
P.O. Box 208265  
New Haven, CT 06520-826

### **The Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship for an Article or Chapter Award for Political Sociology**

**Deadline: March 15, 2025**

This award is offered annually for an outstanding recently published article or chapter in political sociology. To be eligible, submissions must have a 2024 publication date. The selection committee encourages either self-nominations or nominations of work by others. (Please note that each author may have only one article nominated.)

Please submit:

1. A brief nomination letter, and
2. A copy of the article or chapter

All materials should be sent to the chair of the selection committee at the chair's e-mail address below, with the subject heading "2025 Political Sociology Article Award":

Mohammad Ali Kadivar, Boston College, (chair) kadivarm@bc.edu  
Hajar Yazdiha, University of Southern California (chair), hyazdiha@usc.edu  
A.K.M. Skarpelis Department of Sociology, CUNY Queens College, anna.skarpelis@qc.cuny.edu  
Kristopher Velasco, Department of Sociology, Princeton University, kvelasco@princeton.edu

### **Best Graduate Student Paper Award**

**Deadline: March 15, 2025**

This award is offered annually for the best graduate student paper in political sociology. Persons who were graduate students at any time during calendar year 2024 are invited to submit published or unpublished papers for this award. To be eligible, papers must be either single authored or co-authored by two or more graduate students. Articles co-authored by a faculty member are not eligible. Please note that each author may have only one article nominated.

Please submit:

1. A brief nomination letter, and
2. A copy of the paper, article, or chapter

All materials should be sent to each selection committee member at the e-mail addresses below, with the subject heading “2025 Political Sociology Grad Student Paper Award”:

Lynette Ong, University of Toronto (chair), Lynette.Ong@utoronto.ca

Mathieu Desan, University of Colorado, mathieu.desan@colorado.edu

Zheng Fu, Columbia University, zf2205@columbia.edu

Livio Silva-Muller, Geneva Graduate Institute, livio.silva@graduateinstitute.ch

The winners will be notified and announced prior to the ASA Annual Meeting.

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## Featured Essay

### **Think Tank Advocacy and Illiberal Projects: Some Insights from Latin America**

Tomás Gold

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Brown University

Donald Trump has consistently denied any ties to the Heritage Foundation, the conservative think tank in Washington, D.C., that published “Project 2025,” a blueprint for sweeping policy reforms ahead of the recent presidential election. However, investigative reporting has revealed several key links between the authors of Project 2025 and the Trump administration.<sup>1</sup> This type of political influence has been increasingly common outside the U.S. In Europe, for example, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has assembled a network of think tank professionals to support his agenda—a model also adopted by Spain’s far-right Vox party and its affiliated think tank Dissensus, as well as by Poland’s Catholic conservative movement, headed by the Ordo Iuris

Institute.<sup>2</sup> In Latin America, leaders like Argentina’s Javier Milei, Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro, and Chile’s José Antonio Kast have relied on think tanks to cultivate elite alliances and galvanize grassroots support during elections.<sup>3</sup> Even in India, Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi has leveraged the technocratic NITI Aayog, a state-backed think tank, to centralize power.<sup>4</sup>

The strategies employed by advocacy think tanks offer a crucial lens for understanding the current political landscape, highlighting the long-term role that civil society

<sup>2</sup> Buzogány, A., & Varga, M. 2021. Illiberal thought collectives and policy networks in Hungary and Poland. *European Politics and Society*, 24(1), 40–58.

<sup>3</sup> Fischer, Karin, and Dieter Plehwe. 2017.

“Neoliberal Think Tank Networks in Latin America and Europe: Strategic Replication and Cross-National Organizing.” In *Think Tanks and Global Politics*, 159–86. Palgrave Macmillan US.

<sup>4</sup> Sengupta, M. 2015. Modi Planning: What the NITI Aayog Suggests about the Aspirations and Practices of the Modi Government. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(4), 791–806.

<sup>1</sup> Shao, E. and Wu, A. “The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump’s World.” *The New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2024.

organizations can play in paving the way for illiberal political forces. In this essay, I draw on examples from my own research in Latin America to illustrate three key insights.

First, to understand the influence of think tank professionals on contemporary illiberal political movements, we must broaden our definition of civil society. In the language proposed by Klein and Lee,<sup>5</sup> think tank professionals “infiltrate” various social fields to advance their political agendas. And once they gain access to state power, they can use civil society organizations to consolidate their influence in a top-down manner. This dynamic makes think tank professionals crucial, as they can reshape the boundaries between different fields,<sup>6</sup> including those of the state itself.<sup>7</sup>

A current example of this is the libertarian government of Javier Milei in Argentina, which is aggressively pursuing deregulation. Given the legal and economic complexity of such reforms, Milei appointed Federico Sturzenegger—an MIT-trained economist with deep ties to local think tanks—as his key architect. Sturzenegger had already designed these reforms before Milei’s election, drawing on his extensive experience in policy reform. Once Milei took office, he provided the necessary partisan backing to implement them swiftly.<sup>8</sup> This mechanism, which echoes the approach of Project 2025, is not new. A

similar strategy was employed by the Chilean “Chicago Boys” in the late 1960s, who drafted a set of radical economic reforms ahead of Augusto Pinochet’s regime and later implemented them once they secured positions within the military government.<sup>9</sup> Crucially, the timing of these reforms often precedes the election of illiberal leaders, demonstrating the long-term planning behind such political transformations.

Additionally, think tanks often serve as elite-driven initiatives providing illiberal political projects with the organizational capacity they need—particularly in times when traditional political parties are weak or hollowed-out.<sup>10</sup> By doing so, they can amplify and legitimize these projects within civil society, offering a clear reform agenda or ideological direction for the government.

A notable example of this occurred in Peru during the early 1990s, when Hernando de Soto, head of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (IDL), became the chief economic and legal advisor to dictator Alberto Fujimori. De Soto’s work emphasized the importance of the informal economy to Peru’s development, and IDL drafted sweeping policy reforms aimed at reducing poverty through the establishment of individually titled property rights. This initiative aligned with the prevailing Washington Consensus but also helped to legitimize Fujimori’s regime, presenting it as a government committed to improving the lives of ordinary Peruvians.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Klein, S., & Lee, C.-S. 2019. Towards a Dynamic Theory of Civil Society: The Politics of Forward and Backward Infiltration. *Sociological Theory*, 37(1), 62–88.

<sup>6</sup> Medvetz, T. 2012. *Think Tanks in America*. Chicago University Press; Eyal, G. 2012. “Spaces between Fields.” In *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, 158–82. Duke University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Mayrl, D., & Quinn, S. 2016. Defining the State from within: Boundaries, Schemas, and Associational Policymaking. *Sociological Theory*, 34(1), 1–26.

<sup>8</sup> “The Minister Taking a Chainsaw to Argentina’s Statute Book” *Financial Times*, Nov. 4, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, S. 2023. *The Chile Project. The Story of the Chicago Boys and the Downfall of Neoliberalism*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>10</sup> De Leon, C. 2019. *Crisis! When Political Parties Lose the Consent to Rule*. Stanford University Press; Mair, P. 2013. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. Verso.

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell T. 2005. The work of economics: how a discipline makes its world. *European Journal of Sociology*. 46(2): 297–320; Gilbert, A. 2002. On the mystery of capital and the myths of Hernando de Soto: What difference does legal title make?

In a forthcoming piece co-written with Benjamin Bradlow, we show that a similar dynamic unfolded during Jair Bolsonaro's rise to power in Brazil.<sup>12</sup> A coalition of free-market think tanks helped Bolsonaro build a broad political base in the absence of a strong political party, allowing these professionals to secure key bureaucratic positions once in power. Many of these think tanks preceded Bolsonaro for decades, but took advantage of the disillusionment with the left to help him knit a broad coalition of free-market elites, evangelical leaders, and low-income voters disillusioned with the country's slow economic pace under the last years of the Worker's Party's ruling.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, these examples suggest that the contemporary political moment in the U.S. may have more in common with countries like Brazil or Hungary than with the traditional "model cases" of Western Europe, which still constitute the core of American political sociology.<sup>14</sup> The special issue coordinated by Deisy del Real and Cecilia Menjivar is a step forward in terms of challenging this prevailing emphasis on Western cases.<sup>15</sup> However, more research is

still needed to move beyond methodological nationalism, and towards the study of how illiberalism is constituted of multiple "transboundary entanglements."<sup>16</sup>

Based on data collected during my fieldwork, I contend that the study of think tank advocacy offers a particularly fruitful avenue for such a transnational approach to illiberalism. One prominent example might help to illustrate this point. Diogo Costa, the new President of the famous Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) – one of the oldest conservative American think tanks, founded in the 1960s by Leonard Read, a close friend of Ayn Rand – is a Brazilian think tank entrepreneur that served as the head of the National School of Public Administration under Bolsonaro's tenure.<sup>17</sup> Costa had worked at and received training from the libertarian think tanks Cato Institute and Atlas Network in the U.S. during the early 2000s before returning to Brazil, where he became one of the leaders of the movement bolstering support for Bolsonaro. As this case illustrates, the relationship between "north" and "south" is often recursive and blurry, and Costa's trajectory and expertise can only be captured through a transnational lens.

Costa is just one out of hundreds of conservative entrepreneurs that become trained in, and share affiliations with, advocacy institutes across countries. Many of them lie at the center of coalitions spanning various continents, such as the Political Network for Values – led by far-right Chilean leader José Antonio Kast in coordination with

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*International Development Planning Review*, 24(1): 1-19.

<sup>12</sup> Bradlow, B., and Gold, T. Forthcoming. A Processual Framework for The Rise of The Populist Right: The Case of Brazil (2013-2018). *Social Forces*.

<sup>13</sup> Rocha, Camila. 2021. *Menos Marx, mais Mises: O liberalismo e a nova direita no Brasil*. Sao Paulo, SP: Todavia Editora; McKenna, E., & O'Donnell, C. 2024. Satellite Political Movements: How Grassroots Activists Bolster Trump and Bolsonaro in the United States and Brazil. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 68(13), 1782-1803.

<sup>14</sup> Krause, M. 2021. *Model Cases: On Canonical Research Objects and Sites*. The University of Chicago Press; Jacobs, J.A., Mizrachi, N. 2020. "International Representation in US Social-Science Journals." *Am Soc* 51, 215-239

<sup>15</sup> Del Real, D., & Menjivar, C. 2024. The Tools of Autocracy Worldwide: Authoritarian Networks,

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the Façade of Democracy, and Neo-Repression. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 68(12), 1559-1577.

<sup>16</sup> Go, J. and Lawson, G. Forthcoming. Vision and Method in Global Historical Sociology. *Social Science History*.

<sup>17</sup> Olson, W. "Diogo Costa Named 12<sup>th</sup> President of the Foundation for Economic Research." *Foundation for Economic Research*, Feb. 21, 2024.



Eastern European and American politicians – or the Madrid Forum – initially hosted by the Spanish far-right think tank Dissensus and thereafter boosted by a broad coalition of Latin American think tanks. Similar in this respect to CPAC or other global conservative summits, these coalitions reveal that illiberal actors and strategies thrive in transnational spaces that are hard to study empirically, but have a crucial role in fostering a learning process across borders.

Yet, we know relatively little about such international coalitions. Contemporary mainstream media tends to portray these networks as fostering a unidirectional diffusion process from North to South. For example, the recent CPAC meeting in Argentina was described by the New York Times as an event through which “Trump’s allies go global.”<sup>18</sup> However, I argue, most illiberal projects have been interconnected for a relatively long time, and the strategies of the Trump coalition are themselves a result of these complex transnational interactions.<sup>19</sup> As I discovered during fieldwork, not only Republican politicians appear as keynote speakers in CPAC-Argentina, but Argentine think tanks have also been training the youth of the Republican party in the state of Florida for the last few years. A similar pattern can be observed in other countries, such as Chile, Hungary, or Spain.

As should be evident at this point, think tanks play a crucial role in this transnational dynamic by operating across borders and fostering connections between illiberal political movements in different countries. Their influence extends beyond national contexts, creating networks of shared knowledge, resources, and strategies that transcend national boundaries. Adopting a truly global and transnational perspective is essential to assess how American think tanks operate in both similar and distinct ways to their counterparts around the world.



**Tomás Gold** is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs. His work applies a cultural and historical lens to the study of political strategy-making, with a focus on right-wing and free-market advocacy.

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<sup>18</sup> Bensinger, K. and Cholakian Herrera, L. “Trump’s Allies Go Global: ‘Make Argentina Great Again’.” *The New York Times*. 6 Dec, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> For a similar take on neoliberal diffusion, see Bockman, J, and Eyal, G. 2002. “Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism.” *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (2): 310–52.

## Q&A with 2024 Award Winners



**Ching Kwan Lee**

### **Distinguished Career in Political Sociology**

Committee: Caroline Lee (chair);  
Gianpaolo Baiocchi; Dina Okamoto;  
Yasemin Soysal; Mathieu Desan

**SPS: What has most influenced your overall research agenda? What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

I have always been interested in two questions: power and development. For both, contemporary China is like an endlessly interesting laboratory. How do power and resistance work under a communist party-state? How did a state-centric economy thrive in a capitalist world economy? Does China's outward expansion portend a new era of global south development, or a repeat of colonialism?

I was fortunate that my graduate school years at Berkeley coincided with the historic opening of China, for business but also for sociologists. Every stage of China's development in the past three decades has inspired intriguing sociological questions for me. First, when China became the workshop of the world in the early 1990s, I was puzzled by its factory regimes – how gender, class and migration politics were organized by the Communist state at the point of production. Then, in the early 2000s, as the working class pulled off large scale protests in both the sunbelt and rustbelt, the question became one of working class mobilization and the regime's capacity to absorb dissent and threats to its rule. Since the turn of the millennium, as overcapacity and state nationalism drove Chinese capitalism abroad, the phenomenon of “global China” presents itself as a new puzzle. On the one hand, I tracked the politics of Chinese state investments in Zambia, asking “Is Chinese capital a different kind of capital”? On the other, I looked at popular resistance to global China through the case of Hong Kong's decades-long decolonization struggle.

All these are not just “China” questions, but more general ones of global development, authoritarianism, colonialism, and popular resistance.

**SPS: How has the field of political sociology changed throughout your career, and how**

**do you see it evolving in the future? Alternatively, what can political sociology contribute to current academic and public debates?**

The most salient change is that our field, and the discipline as a whole, has become much more global, much less US- and Euro-centric. This reflects not just the reality of intensified globalization and the internationalization of students and faculties in sociology. Their experiences, perspectives and interests have inspired critical rethinking and broadening of our theoretical repertoire, assumptions and sensibilities. Here I am thinking of the several intellectual “turns” in sociology – cultural, global, postcolonial, decolonial, Du Boisian, etc. Political sociology will always respond to and co-evolve with politics and society. Two eminent examples are environmental political sociology and studies of the global far right.

**SPS: How would you describe your research process? How has it changed over the years?**

As a graduate student in Berkeley, I was exposed to something called “ethnography”; not any ethnography but a particular style that calls for linking the macro and the micro, the scientific and the hermeneutic, and data with theory. It has now become an instinct for me to ask myself these questions almost simultaneously when starting a research: what does this or that empirical curiosity mean conceptually? What are the larger forces constituting or shaping it? What are some of the theoretical tools I can mobilize to understand it? Why is it puzzling? What are the ethnographic access points for me to go inside the phenomenon?

**SPS: You’ve had a remarkable career in sociology. What advice would you give graduate students/early junior faculty working in political sociology?**

I have been fortunate that I have found a vocation I truly enjoy. Sociology is an analytical and empirical science, so one wants to develop the intellectual skill sets to do it well. But I have come to realize that ultimately the drive to do it comes from the heart – a passion to know, understand and write. When I look at scholars I admire, they simply keep doing sociology whether they are retired or not, winning awards or not. They live and breathe sociology in all its variety. So my advice, if any, is really cliché -- identify research agendas that move and inspire you, without regard to trendiness or hype.

*Ching Kwan Lee is a Professor in Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles.*



**Anna Skarpelis**

**Distinguished Contribution to  
Scholarship for an Article**

Committee: Bart Bonikowski (chair),  
Daniel Laurison, María-Fatima Santos,  
Weirong Guo

“Horror Vacui: Racial Misalignment,  
Symbolic Repair, and Imperial Legitimation in  
German National Socialist Portrait  
Photography.” *American Journal of Sociology*,  
129(2):313-383.

**SPS: How did you start working on the research project that led to the article? How did the project evolve over time?**

I drafted a first version of the article during a graduate history of science course on scientific visualization with Peter Galison at Harvard in spring 2020. COVID disrupted my plans to revisit Tokyo archives for my book, leaving me in a postdoc with no major publications and an expiring contract. I retrained by taking computer science courses and figured I would submit a paper or two to journals before applying to non-academic jobs. Liberated from job anxieties, I no longer felt that I had to “be sociological” or “make a well-delimited contribution” to a subfield. So I read a lot about classics (thanks to Adrian Stähli), art history, and the history of science, and began writing in a way that I felt was able to do justice to the material. I wrote a couple of drafts over the course of 6 weeks, got some feedback from people dear to me (an afternoon of smoothies with Paige Sweet at Life Alive in Cambridge sticks out), and submitted *Horror Vacui* to the *American Journal of Sociology*. The paper received an R&R after just three months. After positive yet challenging reviews, I spent over a year collecting data and revising due to limited archive access.

So this is really a story of two troubles and two boons: A tight job market coupled with restricted data access, but also constructive reviews by anonymous reviewers and support from my writing group (Maryam Alemzadeh, Moira O’Shea, Hanisah Sani, Sneha Annavarapu and Paige). I think the key for me was to realize that the paper had a sociological contribution to make, that it was not simply a piece about a mediocre female photographer, but instead an insight into how culture gets roped into authoritarian state projects; and a way to empirically show

how art, science, and politics consort to sustain abominable projects.

My advice to fellow sociologists working on non-US cases would be to not pay heed to those asking “how is this sociology?”, and forge your own path: You know that your case is relevant, and why. It might not connect to current debates in US sociology, which undoubtedly makes publication harder. And yet: Trust in your case’s relevance.

**SPS: What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

My current research focuses on two areas: embodiment of political subjectivity after the generative turn in Artificial Intelligence, and critically examining liberal principles through a comparative lens. This includes asking uncomfortable questions that decenter overwhelmingly positive concepts like “inclusion” by studying how authoritarian regimes selectively implement these. I think that legal scholars like Aziz Rana, whose “Two Faces of American Freedom” was incredibly formative for me (thanks to Chris Muller for the recommendation), were way ahead of us sociologists and I am excited to see some of their questions spilling over and being retrofitted by the field.

**SPS: Where do you see the political sociology subfield heading? What do you think are some of the key ways that political sociology can contribute to current academic and public debates?**

The obvious answer to the second question is, of course, for political sociologists to contribute to public analyses of right-wing turns in politics. I am heartened to see much excellent scholarship in the US on Christian nationalism, but also by STS and media scholars on how new media technologies and platforms are contributing to the spread of propaganda. Unfortunately, nuanced

scholarship may struggle to influence policymakers who may engage in defensive or knee-jerk reactions. Overall, I am heartened to not see a singular and narrow “turn” in political sociology, but to witness different subfields taking up political questions and contributing to them, which makes political sociology even richer.



### Zheng Fu

#### Co-Winner, Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship for a Paper by a Graduate Student Award

Committee: Hajar Yazdiha (chair),  
 Mohammad Ali Kadivar, Wendy Y. Li,  
 Thomas Davidson

“Missing Binds: How Absent Ties Unshackles Labor Militancy Under an Authoritarian Regime.”

**SPS: How did you start working on the research project that led to the article? How did the project evolve over time?**

I started working on this project as a junior in undergrad. I was initially interested in a strike that occurred near an university campus that attracted a lot of student support, who really helped the workers to spread their message. I noticed at the time that while many student activists surmised that the local workers were the backbone of the strike, when I interviewed the workers they pointed out that the migrant workers were the key leaders. I did not think too much about this difference at the time and instead focused on investigating the rhetoric that workers used. It was only later when I encountered another strike with both locals and migrants and the locals were the key weak link that contributed to the ending of the strike that I decided to investigate this phenomenon more thoroughly.



Caption: “Germany’s sculptor.” Source: *Kladderadatsch*, no. 49, issue 86 (1933). Figure in possession of the Berlin State Library and reproduced with their kind permission.

**Anna Skarpelis** is an Assistant Professor, Richard Lachmann Chair of Sociology at the Queens College in the City University of New York.

**SPS: What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

I am interested in the intersection of politics, culture, and knowledge, with a particular focus on the work of legitimacy that underpins often naturalized authorities and social arrangements. While my regional focus is on China, I also conduct global comparative research focusing on China-U.S. comparisons and China-U.S. relations. My work on labor protests and the implementation of labor law in China advances a network-based understanding of state legitimacy. Relatedly, my next project explores the work that goes into identifying misinformation. By comparing international fact-checking paradigms, I demonstrate how different doubt methodologies identify different types of misinformation and address their implications on the public debates in different societies.

**SPS: Where do you see the political sociology subfield heading? What do you think are some of the key ways that political sociology can contribute to current academic and public debates?**

This is such a big question! Nobody can really tell the future so this is more of a current concern that I will project onto the future. I am slightly worried that political sociology, especially in the U.S., will focus on more U.S. centered topics, especially given the likelihood of rising political instability in the U.S. in the years to come. This means that our best journals will prioritize on publishing papers that either directly address an American political issue or publish issues that have relevance to pressing issues that the American society will care about. And since our best journals are American journal of Sociology and American Sociological Review hosted by American departments, this will unfortunately leads to an effect of colonizing

the sociological agenda for other countries. This is especially true for developing countries that do not host leading sociology journals. It will be difficult for scholars there to develop research agendas that address important social questions of their countries that are not a big concern for developed nations, since these agendas will not be broadly recognized in the sociology discipline. Instead, to publish in a top journal, you would have to frame your research question as one that could resonate with an American or European audience. I am afraid that such research will be relegated to the realm of regional studies just because they cannot directly speak to the concerns of American or European sociology.

I think this is a time to reaffirm the value of both comparative work that compares different countries and comparative perspectives that studying countries outside of the West can bring. While our sister discipline political science separates the study of American politics from Comparative politics, the need to study other countries outside of the US is institutionalized. While we do not espouse American exceptionalism, we run the other risk of the other extreme: thinking research insights from American can be applied to the rest of the world. Without comparison (or at least an international perspective), we run the risk of generalizing U.S. exceptionalism as universal law.

Relatedly, I think political sociology scholars with international perspectives can make unique contributions to public debates. While many pundits often only immerse themselves in one single political context and only have shallow knowledge of other countries, with a comparative perspective, we can bring more solutions that have proven to have worked in other contexts to the table and challenge some superficial lessons drawn from superficial comparisons. As my comparative

work on the expert narrative around COVID-19 showed (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/socf.12819), while many pundits talked about the authoritarian advantage in imposing control over the society at the beginning of the pandemic, the real story is more complicated. Hong Kong, a society that enjoyed a lot of freedom at the time, was able to impose tough and fast quarantine precisely because the civil society mobilized itself to achieve that goal.

**Zheng Fu** is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at Columbia University. Learn more about her work here: <https://fuzheng10.github.io/>



**Livio Silva-Muller**

**Co-Winner, Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship for a Paper by a Graduate Student Award**

Committee: Hajar Yazdiha (chair),  
 Mohammad Ali Kadivar, Wendy Y. Li,  
 Thomas Davidson

“Pathways of the Environmental State: Global Climate Politics in the Amazon Rainforest.”

**SPS: How did you start working on the research project that led to the article? How did the project evolve over time?**

I ask most of my interlocutors, who tend to be natural scientists or environmental bureaucrats, a similar question: how did you

start working with forests? It always comes down to a story about nature in their childhood... Sometimes, I think my case is not that different; my mother is a landscape gardener, and we would always spend a lot of time in botanical gardens or the Atlantic Rainforest in São Paulo, where I grew up. So, in a way nature was a big part of my childhood as well...

As I repeatedly saw the Amazon Rainforest hit global headlines, I thought this was an excellent case to study environmental state-building. I am not from that region and first went there in 2018. I followed bureaucrats who implemented environmental cash transfers in protected areas. It was a short visit, about a month. When I left, I was fascinated that one of the most successful cases of decarbonization we know of took place in the Brazilian Amazon.

The goal of my dissertation, pretty much from the start, was to explain that outcome. I’m thrilled that my interlocutors, supervisors, and I eventually came up with an explanation, which is what “Pathways of the Environmental State” tries to do.

There was a lot of luck and privilege involved in this as well... When I designed my fieldwork in early 2020, I considered comparing the Brazilian and Peruvian Amazon. But COVID hit, access to the field was complicated, and I had to shift strategies quickly. I decided only to study Brazil, go back in time, and build computational components into my project. I scrapped and systematized climate finance data, presidential speech data, and administrative data. I built an extensive archive with recently digitised documents. When the pandemic loosened up, I returned to the field a few times for interviews and ethnographic observations, which were deeply informed by what I learned from the material I collected

from my lockdown apartment in Geneva, Switzerland.

**SPS: What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

As I remain deeply interested in questions of transnationalism, I want to work on state-building beyond the nation-state. Is the global economy only a structural constraint, or can it be leveraged for national climate and redistributive projects? Can international organizations ever build climate and redistributive capacities? I guess a good part of this interest hails from being very close to the United Nations in Geneva, where I'm currently finalizing my Ph.D.

Empirically, I'm thinking about the decarbonization of the Brazilian economy. On the one hand, strong deforestation supply chain regulations emerge from the European environmental state, which builds on ties with the Brazilian environmental state. On the other hand, strong ties between the Chinese and Brazilian developmental states can undermine the endeavour. It will be state versus state, with the "transnational" contradicting national and global goals. My next project will study this by leveraging sub-national variation in Brazilian states holding different transnational ties over time.

**SPS: Where do you see the political sociology subfield heading? What do you think are some of the key ways that political sociology can contribute to current academic and public debates?**

I would like to see more comparisons across issue areas. I love the traditional 2x2 cases we have, but 2x2x2—two countries, two periods, two issue areas— would be cool to tease out the distinctiveness of different problems. Does redistribution transnationalize as easily as decarbonization? What are the scope conditions? Why are some states strong in

specific tasks and weak in others? While costly regarding data and time, this design would give us solid analytical leverage to theorize.

I'm also excited to see more cross-fertilisation between computational approaches and political sociology. The former brings new and cool opportunities for novel data collection— scrapping tools, newly digitized archives, digital trace data, etc.. I'm sure both qualitative and quantitative political sociologists are well positioned to make great use of this.

*Livio Silva-Muller is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Geneva Graduate Institute interested in how states, society, and markets can decarbonize and redistribute. You can read his work here: [www.silvamuller.com](http://www.silvamuller.com)*



**Leslie Gates**

**Co-Winner, Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award**

Committee: Lauren Duquette-Rury (chair), Nella Van Dyke, Yao Li, Lynette Ong, Bo Yun Park

*Capitalist Outsiders: Oil's Legacies in Mexico and Venezuela.* University of Pittsburgh Press.



**SPS: How did you start working on the research project that led to the book? How did the project evolve over time?**

I turned to the election of former Coca-Cola executive Vicente Fox in Mexico mostly as a foil for the anti-neoliberal backlash interpretation of Hugo Chávez' victory in Venezuela. Why, I wondered, had a similar anti-neoliberal candidate not taken the presidency in Mexico, Venezuela's near political double? Early on, I identified differences in the degree to which anti-corruption cultures exposed corporate power (or pierced class hegemony) as a key imminent source for their divergent outsider politics. I was, nonetheless, dissatisfied with the limits of a story focused so narrowly on such imminent sources. I wanted to get to the root of their divergence. On a hunch, I dug into each country's incorporation into oil production earlier in the 20th century and discovered just how entwined they were. From this revelation came the empirical basis for my world-historical approach to outsider politics.

**SPS: What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

I'm curious about why the oil industry in Latin America had a marked preference for making significant investments, especially in refineries, on Caribbean islands like Aruba and Curacao under Dutch colonial rule. How and why did this close relationship between old-world colonial power and some of the world's biggest oil companies form? How did this relationship inform the industry's future investment strategies, labor relations and arrangements with authorities around the world? I'm interested in the political legacies of this relationship not just for neighboring oil producers in the Americas, but also for the evolving partnerships forged by oil companies with authorities in the

oil-producing parts of the Middle East. In its most ambitious form, the project would re-center our understanding of Middle-East politics on the region's vicarious relationship to the Caribbean via their mutual oil incorporation.

**SPS: Where do you see the political sociology subfield heading? What do you think are some of the key ways that political sociology can contribute to current academic and public debates?**

Political sociologists, at our best, lean into lineages that are skeptical of the dominant framings for what ails our political systems. We pause when Washington and the assemblage of political and economic elites around the world aligned with it coalesce around a diagnosis, be it the fraying of democracy and/or the rise of "populists." After all, some of our own scholarship teaches us that such diagnoses likely serve the interests of those private enterprises most benefited by the U.S.' current array of neoliberal economic and social policies. Rather than focusing on the nature and extent of increased repression exerted by leaders within their nation, we might hone in on the nature and political impacts of interventions, often by the U.S. in other countries, in the name of "promoting democracy" (Gill 2023). Rather than delineating the strategies and tactics of "populist" leaders as if they were rarified aberrations to liberal democracies, we might inquire into their social bases of support and opposition, from both popular and business segments (Kaup 2013, Ellner 2017, Monthly Review), just as we have for democratizing politicians (Trevizo 2011).

**SPS: Did you have a "lightbulb moment" where a theory or book sparked your sociological passion or caused a vital**

**epiphany in your experience as a junior scholar? If so, please say more!**

I came to sociology, as a graduate student in the 1990s, sobered by two convictions. Anti-imperialist national liberation movements were no match for U.S. political influence campaigns. The workers of the “Global Assembly line” seemed best positioned to antagonize the ascendant power of transnational corporations, but, as my humbling foray into labor organizing taught me, faced daunting obstacles. The path to effective labor resistance on Mexico’s northern border, I came to see, ran through Mexican politics. But blaming Mexico’s corrupt politicians and coopted labor stooges struck me as conveniently obfuscating the role of transnational corporations, their subcontractors, and the highest echelons of global power brokers that favored the neoliberal turn. How had the latter’s interests prevailed in Los Pinos (Mexico’s presidential home) by the 1980s? I found inspiration from political sociologists attentive to state-capitalist relations (e.g. Harland Prechel, Kathleen Schwartzman, William G. Domhoff), many extrapolating insights from the Greek Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas. I found particularly generative Poulantzas’ often overlooked *The Crisis of Dictatorships*. It inspired the questions that guided my research then and since: How do global economic forces (re)structure the internal social bases of politics? How do the institutions forged by such internalized global processes help explain the outcomes of subsequent political struggle?

**Dr. Leslie Gates** is Professor of Sociology at Binghamton University.



**Julian Go**

**Co-Winner, Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award**

Committee: Lauren Duquette-Rury (chair), Nella Van Dyke, Yao Li, Lynette Ong, Bo Yun Park

*Policing Empires: Militarization, Race, and the Imperial Boomerang in Britain and the US.*  
Oxford University Press

**SPS: How did you start working on the research project that led to the book? How did the project evolve over time?**

I first became interested in militarized policing during the Ferguson unrest in 2014, when residents rose up to protest the police shooting of Michael Brown. What struck me was how the police looked like an occupying army. At the same time, what also struck me, as a scholar of colonialism and empire, was how much Ferguson resembled an occupied colony. I began to think about connections. I already knew about some connections between colonial interventions overseas and domestic policing, and soon enough a larger project developed in my mind. What became most evident is that, when you look at the history of policing in the US, which goes back to Britain, it was not supposed to be way. The

modern police forces we have today were originally meant to be a “civil” rather than a militarized forces. I then became fascinated with the question: how did we get here?

**SPS: What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

My main interest lies in how empire structures the present, not just in the ex-colonial world but also in the heartlands of imperial powers. So the questions that have motivated my research, and which continue to occupy my mind, are about the relations between imperial past and seemingly postcolonial present, as well as the connections between metropole and colony. What exactly are those relations? I am likewise interested in the theories and concepts that might help illuminate those relations, as well as why and how our extant conceptual apparatus has prevented us from fully recognizing them before. I am interested in politics, the state and power in an imperial and global frame, but I am also thinking about the theoretical lenses which impede or help us understand those things. How are “the imperial”, “the colonial” and “the domestic” mutually constituted? And what are the best concepts and theories by which we can understand them?

**SPS: Where do you see the political sociology subfield heading? What do you think are some of the key ways that political sociology can contribute to current academic and public debates?**

Political sociologists are well poised to contribute to current academic and public debates. Of course, given the recent election, political sociologists should continue to illuminate the social bases of political ideologies and affiliations; but there are also other issues of import. Most crucially, I think political sociologists might do well to not just look beyond the US but to also examine

connections, relations and flows between the US empire and other territories and polities. They would also do well to rethink our theoretical toolkit, and question their provinciality.

**SPS: Did you have a “lightbulb moment” where a theory or book sparked your sociological passion or caused a vital epiphany in your experience as a junior scholar? If so, please say more!**

It’s so hard to say because I feel like I’ve had so many “lightbulb moments” from various books and theories when I was a graduate student and as I became a junior faculty. But if I had to pick one, it would definitely include Dipesh Chakrabarty’s articles that eventually became published in his book *Provincializing Europe*. His claim in that work that social science is both “indispensable” and “inadequate” resonated strongly with me and still does, touching upon both the limits but also the promise of the mode of thought that we work in.

*Dr. Julian Go is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago.*



**Anjuli Fahlberg**

**Honorable Mention, Distinguished  
Contribution to Scholarship Book  
Award**

Committee: Lauren Duquette-Rury  
(chair), Nella Van Dyke, Yao Li, Lynette  
Ong, Bo Yun Park

*Activism Under Fire: The Politics of  
Non-Violence in Rio de Janeiro's Gang  
Territories*

**SPS: How did you start working on the research project that led to the book? How did the project evolve over time?**

The book is based on fieldwork I conducted in Rio de Janeiro, a city where my family moved to from the US when I was three. We lived there until I was 12, and during most of this time, we lived on the border of Cidade de Deus, a ‘favela,’ or informal settlement that has been governed by armed drug traffickers for decades. Cidade de Deus, like Rio’s many other favelas, has become well-known for the violence from local drug traffickers, as well as significant poverty. When I decided to get a PhD in Sociology to better understand violence and how to address it, I returned to Cidade de Deus as an ethnographer. But the focus of the dissertation, and eventually the book—how people mobilize for social change in a context of violence and repression—was motivated by what the residents themselves told me. Early in the project, I asked them what they wished other people knew about their neighborhood, and I was told time and again that they wanted people to know about the good things in their neighborhood. So I transitioned away from studying violence to studying non-violent mobilization strategies. I am so glad I did. We need more stories about resilience and mobilization. And along the way, I had the privilege of meeting and building relationships with some amazing people who have managed to do incredible things for their community despite facing enormous risks and having very few resources. It gave me incredible pleasure to

write about, and later with, Cidade de Deus’ remarkable activists.

**SPS: What do you see as the core questions motivating your research going forward?**

The core question that continues to motivate my research is how people organize for rights and resources in contexts of violence and political repression, particularly in low-income urban neighborhoods governed by criminal gangs in Latin America. My research is also very committed to using a Participatory Action Research, or PAR, approach, which tries to decrease some of the epistemic violence that traditional (western) research reproduces by ensuring that research is collaborative and attends to the needs, concerns, and knowledge of the vulnerable populations we study.

I am currently using PAR to study violence and mobilization in El Salvador and Honduras, whose current regimes are deploying security strategies that on paper look similar but in practice have had very different impacts on civic engagement and community organizing in gang-controlled neighborhoods. I am also working with a team of community-based researchers in Rio de Janeiro through the Building Together Research Collective, which I helped to co-found in 2019 to create collaborative research projects with residents of urban peripheries. My colleagues there are studying how local artists are helping to promote mental health and well-being among vulnerable populations.

**SPS: Where do you see the political sociology subfield heading? What do you think are some of the key ways that political sociology can contribute to current academic and public debates?**

The vast majority of the world’s population lives in “not free” and “partly free” political

contexts, and there have been some great advances recently to understand what this looks like and how people can organize in these contexts. But I would love to see political sociology dig deeper into the different forms of political repression that are emerging across the world, from traditional forms of political repression in authoritarian states to repression at the regional, urban, or even neighborhood level from both state and non-state armed actors. And now, with the centrality of social media not just in our everyday lives but among politicians and activists, we need better theories to make sense of mobilization and repression in the digital sphere. I also believe we need to engage in more collaborative research guided by the people harmed by repression and violence. Political sociologists have a unique set of knowledge and skills, and access to powerful stakeholders who can influence politics at a range of levels. But for us to use these tools effectively, we need to make sure we are in conversation with the people affected by political violence, and direct our resources to aiding these efforts in the ways those on the ground find most helpful.

**SPS: Did you have a “lightbulb moment” where a theory or book sparked your sociological passion or caused a vital epiphany in your experience as a junior scholar? If so, please say more!**

Oh my gosh, so many! But as a scholar of violence, the work that has really stuck with

me was the literature on masculinity, which argues that the constant pressure to “achieve” masculinity often incentivizes violence and political dominance. The work by Angela Harris on heteropatriarchy and the carceral state, Connell and Messerschmidt on the ‘resources’ for enacting masculinity, Alba Zaluar’s work on gangs and masculinity, and Cynthia Enloe on masculinity and militarism have really helped me understand what leads people (usually men) to commit violence in a way that I never could before. These theories really help me better understand all types of violence, from gang and intimate partner violence to the political repression by state leaders and security officers. This has also helped me appreciate the feminization of non-violence, which more recent scholarship from people like Marie Berry and Selina Gallo-Cruz has really helped to theorize.



*Image of Cidade de Deus*

**Dr. Anjuli Fahlberg** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and co-director of the Building Together Research Collective.

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## Q&A with New Council Members



### **Josh Pacewicz**

Chair-Elect // Associate Professor of  
Sociology, Brown University

**SPS: Please tell us about your work and your plans during these unusual and uneasy times. How will you be spending your time on research and teaching this year?**

I'm completing work on a new book manuscript, a political ethnography entitled *Architects of the Divided States: Doing Federalism in Red and Blue America*, which aims to put American federalism and state politics in a new comparative perspective. Much of it focuses on the administrative state, especially the implementation and interpretation of federal policies and rights by state governments. The book shows that groups aligned with the Democratic party often enjoy advantages in this administrative realm due to support structures that provide them with models that come with progressive assumptions baked in, a situation that results in laws in action that are less conservative than laws on the books in many states. It's an interesting time to be working on this topic, because the book paints a picture of American political development as supported by fragile legal conventions, which some elements in the Trump administration want to challenge--project 2025, for example, calls for using the DOJ to prosecute

state and local officials over their implementation of the law. So I'm either working on a political sociology or a history of American federalism—we'll soon see which.

**SPS: What are you looking forward to doing on the council? What do you think are some of the priorities for the section going forward?**

I'm most excited to work on an open submission system for the political sociology section, which has been under discussion for a while and we're finally implementing this year. So instead of pre-determining the session topics, we'll invite open submissions and then work together to assemble panels. We're envisioning this as more democratic, as we'll be able to align panels with the interests of those in the section. But there's also some opportunities for conversation-shaping. For instance, I think that political sociology has an advantage vis-a-vis political science in that we have less of a division between scholarship on the united states, the global north, and the global south. That's especially critical now, as Americanist should be looking at the experience of other nations that have passed in and out of authoritarianism and degraded democracy. So I'll be pushing to make panels that integrate scholarship on different parts of the world. If this works out, we'll eventually want to plan mini-conferences around topics that regularly emerge through open submissions. So everyone should definitely send a paper in this year so that we get an accurate baseline of interest in different topics.



### **Matt Desan**

Council Member // Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Colorado Boulder

**SPS: Please tell us about your work and your plans during these unusual and uneasy times. How will you be spending your time on research and teaching this year?**

In the immediate future, I hope to finish my book project on what I'm calling "political conversion," or the radical reversal of political commitments, particularly from left to right, among public political figures. The book traces the transformation of a group of heterodox socialists, i.e. the "neo-socialists," in interwar France into ideologically committed Nazi collaborators during World War II. My main argument is that political conversions are phenomena fundamentally defined by discontinuity and thus can't be reduced to the threads of ideological continuity that appear to tie past and present together. While I'm wary of cheap historical analogies, I think the book can speak to how we might make sense of such conversions in our own volatile political scene. Beyond this, I plan on continuing my collaboration with Michael McCarthy on reorienting Marxist theorizing on class formation away from what we call "class abstractionism" and toward a framework more adequate to the complex organizing landscape in which socialist politics finds itself. I'm also developing a new

project with Wisam Alshaibi on notions of political responsibility and judgment and how those relate to how we think about politics as a vocation, looking particularly at Democratic support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. As for teaching, I will continue to teach graduate and undergraduate courses in sociological theory and political sociology.

**SPS: What are you looking forward to doing on the council? What do you think are some of the priorities for the section going forward?**

With the likely intensification of bad faith attacks on higher education in general and sociology in particular, and with the demoralizing institutional silence on the ongoing scholasticide in Gaza, I think a priority for the council should be to do what it can to foster a sense of professional pride, solidarity, and collective purpose among political sociologists. I don't think this means just chasing short-term relevance—more importantly, it means defending our colleagues, near and far, and the conditions necessary for doing scholarly work.



### **Nicholas Occhiuto**

Council Member // Assistant Professor of Sociology, Hunter College — CUNY

**SPS: Please tell us about your work and your plans during these unusual and uneasy times. How will you be spending your time on research and teaching this year?**

As an economic and political sociologist, I will be spending the next year working on my book project, which examines the work of lobbyists in Washington DC – showing how lobbying is both the product of and a crucial mechanism in the reproduction of socioeconomic inequality in the United States.

As the new director of the Master's Program in sociology at Hunter College, I will be spending the next year supporting and mentoring our wonderful Master's students – as they do their research, traverse the program, and prepare to compete in the contemporary labor market.

**SPS: What are you looking forward to doing on the council? What do you think are some of the priorities for the section going forward?**

As a member of political sociology council I am looking forward to continuing to grow our section, to building community among political sociologists, and to having a productive ASA meeting in Chicago.

In terms of priorities, I am going to spend my time advocating for a sub-discipline journal for political sociologists. Political sociology is one of the larger sections of the ASA, yet, surprisingly, has no dedicated journal that can bring the various studies that fall under the umbrella of "political sociology" together. I would love to be a catalyst to bring about what I think is a much needed journal – for the section and the discipline more broadly.



**Lynette Ong**

Council Member // Distinguished Professor  
of Chinese Politics, University of Toronto

**SPS: Please tell us about your work and your plans during these unusual and uneasy times. How will you be spending your time on research and teaching this year?**

I am completing some articles related to my last book, *Outsourcing Repression: Everyday State Power in Contemporary China*, published in 2022 by Oxford University Press. During the course of a decade of field research, I collected a lot of data that the book cannot accommodate. I am drawing on those data to publish articles related to the theme of *Outsourcing Repression*. In addition, I am completing a project that extends my existing work on state mobilizing nonstate actors to repress the society. I am returning to teaching this year after a sabbatical spent at Columbia University last year. I am enjoying teaching graduate seminar courses, namely *Authoritarianism in Comparative Perspectives*, and *Comparative Politics Field Exam*.

**SPS: What are you looking forward to doing on the council? What do you think are some of the priorities for the section going forward?**

My work is inherently interdisciplinary; I often draw on inspiration from sociology. As



a political scientist by training, I hope to bridge the gap between the two disciplines by carving out the areas of political sociology unique to both disciplines. One of such areas is the conceptualization of the “state” – what it animates, its scope and landscape, and what it means for the study of political sociology. Additionally, I hope to spearhead some initiatives in mentoring graduate students – providing them with resources in concept building, methodologies, and networking. Graduate students with ideas on this please feel free to reach out to me.



**I-Lun Shih**

Council Member (Student) // PhD  
 Candidate in Sociology, University of  
 Michigan

**SPS: Please tell us about your work and your plans during these unusual and uneasy times. How will you be spending your time on research and teaching this year?**

My research focuses on energy policymaking and the interactions among political parties, environmental movements, and bureaucratic actors during pivotal crisis moments from the 1970s to today. This year, I am dedicating

much of my time to developing my dissertation prospectus, tentatively titled “The Dilemmas of Decarbonization: Party Power, Crisis-Making, and Imaginaries of a Green State.” Drawing on a rich mix of sources—including archival documents, in-depth interviews, government statistics, and published materials—I examine Taiwan as a canonical case of the developmental state to explore the complexities of decarbonization efforts. In addition to my research, I am organizing an Interdisciplinary Climate Social Sciences Workshop at the University of Michigan.

**SPS: What are you looking forward to doing on the council? What do you think are some of the priorities for the section going forward?**

As a new member of the council, I am excited to focus on fostering greater collaboration and engagement within our section. One of my primary goals is to strengthen ties between graduate students and faculty through initiatives such as mentorship programs, workshops, and informal networking events. Drawing on my experience organizing workshops at my home department, I hope to promote an inclusive environment, particularly for first-generation and working-class students, that will enable our student members to not only expand their personal and professional networks but more intellectual and professional exchanges between folks working on the US and non-canonical cases in the world regions. I hope to help design opportunities that encourage meaningful exchanges of ideas and create lasting connections.



## Political Sociology Section Web Series on the 2024 Election

Organized by Jennifer Dudley, Jen Heerwig, Daniel Laurison, and Wendy Li, the ASA Political Sociology Section is hosting four web panels on topics related to the 2024 U.S. Election. Two of the four planned events took place in Fall 2024. Below, Jennifer Dudley summarizes the discussions at these last two events.

### Elite Politics Panel

September 25, 2024

#### Panelists:

Sarah Bryner, [OpenSecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org)

James Jones, Rutgers University

Wendy Li, Johns Hopkins University

In the third event in the series, the discussion covered topics including the influence of money in politics, racial dynamics in legislative processes, the revolving door between government and lobbying, and strategies for researching elite political power.

Bryner's work focuses on understanding the influence of money in politics, particularly tracking top donors through OpenSecrets. She highlighted how many wealthy donors, like Timothy Mellon, contribute millions to conservative causes but often remain obscure. While their donations may not translate into immediate material benefits (such as ambassadorships), they maintain significant influence over political narratives. Bryner noted that understanding who these donors are and what they aim to achieve remains a challenge, as the outputs of their contributions are not always visible.

Jones examines how race and exclusionary practices shape the U.S. Congress, particularly through hiring practices and the

experiences of staffers. He emphasized that Congress is "the last plantation," where racialized processes constrain the agency of non-white staffers and the Equal Right Amendment does not apply. These practices contribute to a predominantly white political workforce, guiding legislation that often reflects white interests. Jones also pointed out that studying Black workers within Congress is crucial for challenging inequality and promoting inclusivity in the legislative process.

Li's research focuses on the "revolving door" between government and lobbying. She analyzed the movement of individuals within the U.S. Office of the Trade Representative (USTR) between 2001 and 2020, revealing that over 50% of staffers transitioned to lobbying roles. This movement raises concerns about regulatory capture, as industries, particularly law and business, concentrate political influence. Li stressed that political elites should be viewed as a workforce, and political organizations as employers, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between government and lobbyists.

The panelists were asked what strategies they would recommend for studying elite politics and what challenges they have faced. Bryner discussed the challenges of working with publicly available data, noting that it is

often difficult to draw clear conclusions about the relationship between political donations and actual power. Jones emphasized the difficulty of accessing Hill staffers for research, as they are often resistant to social science researchers. In fact, it was his experience with think tanks, not his academic affiliation that established his credibility. Li stressed the usefulness of insider status. Politics, she noted, is not a "black box," and many insiders are willing to share their experiences with someone they trust.

The next question centered on political giving. Bryner noted that while money may not directly determine election outcomes, it can keep candidates in the race longer and shape political narratives, indirectly influencing elections. Li echoed that money alone does not guarantee influence, but must be combined with other factors to be effective. Rather, political influence requires a mix of resources, political will, and favorable context. Building on C. Wright Mills' work, Jones emphasized that money in politics fosters relational networks that perpetuate inequality in subtle, often invisible ways. Political donations are not just about financial support, but about cultivating social relationships that further entrench power.

The panel ended with future directions for elite politics research. Bryner called for more research on the intersection of race, gender, and class in political giving, noting that current data on these topics is limited. Jones advocated for more transparency in Congressional employment. He suggested that exploring the roles of behind-the-scenes workers, such as cafeteria staff, could offer valuable insights into political inequality. Li highlighted the need to explore how life courses shape political careers. She also suggested examining the roles of

non-political institutions, like universities and nonprofits, in shaping elite political trajectories.

This panel offered a comprehensive look at the various ways elite political dynamics operate, the challenges involved in studying them, and directions for future research in this critical field.

Watch the panel at:

<https://youtu.be/yDzRQlq8zNU>

## **Opinion, Participation, and Turnout**

October 29, 2024

### Panelists:

Bart Bonikowski, New York University  
 Daniel Laurison, Swarthmore College  
 Julian Wamble, George Washington University  
 Amber Wichowsky, University of Wisconsin  
 Madison

In the fourth and final event of the series, several key themes emerged around the intersection of political movements, voter behavior, and social dynamics, especially in the context of recent political developments.

Bonikowski opened by discussing the rise of far-right political movements, including Trump, Brexit, and Le Pen's campaigns, which are rooted in nationalism and the exploitation of political cleavages. He argued that structural changes, such as economic crises and demographic shifts (e.g., immigration), have been leveraged by political elites to fuel the appeal of the radical right. These movements tap into fears that the dominance of the majority, particularly white voters, is under threat and use the blame of elites and minorities as a rallying cry for restoring national "glory." This has led to increasing questions about national identity and the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Bonikowski also noted a shifting political

landscape, with women increasingly leaning toward the Democratic Party and Latinos showing signs of supporting Republicans, although voter turnout remains a critical factor.

Laurison focused on the issue of voter turnout, noting historically high participation in recent elections but also highlighting significant disparities. While turnout among the wealthy has increased, working-class voters, particularly people of color, remain underrepresented. He emphasized that while much research targets structural barriers to voting, deeper issues such as political alienation and a lack of connection to the political process also contribute to low turnout. Laurison also mentioned the increased attention to working-class neighborhoods, particularly in Philadelphia, where organizations founded after Trump's election have matured and become more effective at mobilizing previously disengaged voters.

Wamble discussed the complexities of Black voter behavior, noting that Black candidates struggle to replicate the success of Barack Obama, as Black voters seek a "sure thing" in candidates who demonstrate a genuine, sometimes costly, commitment to their issues. He pointed out the gendered dimensions of Black political engagement, where Black women are held to higher standards and are expected to show even more commitment than Black men, which can paradoxically reduce their support. Wamble also pointed to the intersections of identity—such as gender and class—when understanding how voters align with political messages, especially Trump's aspirational vision, which appeals to some individuals

outside of traditional working-class definitions.

Wichowsky brought attention to the growing economic pessimism and shifting partisan loyalties, particularly in the suburbs and among younger voters. She noted that issues of race and class have become more pronounced, with deep red suburbs trending blue, especially in areas with a higher concentration of college-educated voters. She also discussed how economic hardship has been linked to voter behavior, citing research on social comparison processes where individuals compare their economic situation to those wealthier than themselves, which often leads to support for policies aimed at reducing inequality. Wichowsky raised concerns about the limitations of polling, particularly regarding the representation of working-class voters and voters of color, and stressed the need for more qualitative research approaches that capture the nuances of voter sentiment.

Throughout the conversation, there was a recurring theme of the complexities and variations in how voters experience political issues, from economic hardship to racial and gender identity. The group agreed that political alignment cannot be simply reduced to traditional categories of class or education, and that identity and experience intersect in ways that defy easy categorization. As the meeting concluded, it was clear that understanding voter behavior requires looking beyond surface-level data and considering deeper issues of political engagement, societal change, and identity.

Watch the panel at:

<https://youtu.be/30DbJ8ln9UE>

## Tales from the Field

### Gaining Trust in the Face of Feminist Backlash

Meera Choi

Yale University

In my dissertation, “The Rise of Heterosexual Refusal? Gender Politics and Family Change in South Korea,” I examine how evolving gender dynamics shape heterosexual intimacies among young adults in South Korea, a social landscape marked by world’s lowest fertility rate. Drawing on in-depth life histories of 130 young women, I argue that “heterosexual refusal”—a rejection of normative romantic and sexual relationships with men—has emerged as a distinct gendered and sexual practice, as well as a potential identity, amidst the rise of popular feminism and the intensification of anti-feminist backlash.

I was a sociology student at a women’s college in South Korea during a pivotal time when popular feminism gained significant momentum following the Gangnam Station femicide in 2016, an incident in which a man murdered the first woman to enter a public restroom, claiming he was motivated by feeling ignored by women. I witnessed firsthand how the college’s online forum underwent a dramatic transformation. Discussions that once centered on topics like how to dress and apply makeup to impress boyfriends shifted to impassioned debates about the pervasive dangers of being a woman in South Korea. These debates soon centered on how heterosexual relationships act as key sites for reproducing misogyny and patriarchy.

Having experienced this phase of social change firsthand, I was able to forge meaningful connections with many women who were willing to share deeply personal stories about their intimate partnership histories. In fact, many of these women reached out to me, expressing a desire for their personal life decisions to be understood and analyzed within a broader societal context. I vividly recall one woman telling me, “I want you to feel free to tell my story without feeling worried about reducing it in any way. I want the society to know where we are coming from.”

However, connecting with women who identify more closely with “radical” ideologies—particularly those practicing 4B (rejecting sex, dating, marriage, and childbearing as acts of resistance)—proved to be more challenging. I reached out to fifteen 4B communities through their social media accounts and email addresses, but I didn’t receive any responses during the first month. I began to worry that my lack of identification as 4B might have been a factor in their reluctance to engage with me.

This difficulty stemmed largely from the movement’s online and anonymous nature, which emphasized privacy and often avoided public participation. It was further compounded by the intense anti-feminist backlash and daily attacks these women faced. Many also participated in the “anti-corset movement,” rejecting conventional femininity and beauty standards, which heightened societal scrutiny and hostility, especially in conservative regions. These factors made

identifying 4B women challenging and gaining their trust to meet in person and share their personal stories even more difficult.

A fortunate turn of events during my struggles came when I was introduced to a U.S.-based journalist visiting South Korea to write about 4B activists. She was able to connect with 4B women through her visibility as a journalist and her perceived distance from South Korean society, which made it easier for them to open up. She needed someone to help interpret the interviews, presenting me with the perfect opportunity to immerse myself in the 4B communities. This role allowed me to move beyond online interactions and establish a physical presence among them.

Despite these women being aware that I did not share all of their feminist ideologies, they were willing to engage with me. Through these connections, my network expanded exponentially. I volunteered in protest organizing, gave a talk on applying to U.S. graduate schools within 4B communities, and attended trials—sometimes six hours away from the Seoul metropolitan area—to help monitor cases on gender-based violence.

I learned that more than simply sharing the same values, being transparent about my research motivations and aligning with their shared political and feminist agenda was crucial. For each interview with 4B women, I dedicated significant time to sharing my journey as a feminist and explaining what inspired this research. I emphasized my commitment to critically addressing the “epistemic marginalization” of women’s voices, particularly in the context of the nation-state and academia sensationalizing the lowest fertility rate as a social problem. Repeated iterations later became integral to my framework, which critically examines the

impact of “the politics of lowest fertility” on heterosexual refusal. These conversations also helped integrate my identity as a feminist activist and scholar. At the end of the day, knowledge production is inherently political.

*Meera Choi is a sociology Ph.D. candidate at Yale University. She investigates how evolving gender dynamics and politics shape gendered and sexual identities, relationship formation, intimacies, and care work in South Korea, a social landscape marked by low fertility.*

## **Understanding Non-Participation in Water Conservation and Water Policy Efforts**

Jackie Fetter

Colorado State University

What do you do when your research uncovers disengagement from critical issues? For scholars focusing on environmental concerns, such “null results” challenge not just methodology but our very assumptions about civic behavior. Exploring non-participation in water conservation and policy, I faced intellectual roadblocks and unexpected breakthroughs that redirected my analysis and refined my strategies.

**The Accessibility Challenge** One of the earliest hurdles in my project arose from understanding why so many people disengage with water policy. Initial investigations revealed a persistent theme—the “inaccessibility” of water policy and conservation materials. Participants often described these

resources as overly technical and disconnected from their everyday concerns. Recognizing this gap, I redirected my methods to incorporate questions about how

individuals interact with educational materials. By reframing my study, I shifted toward identifying actionable strategies to make conservation and policy more digestible and relevant.

**Discovery Along the Way** Amid these adjustments, I uncovered a crucial insight—cultural perceptions significantly shape public attitudes about water conservation. Many participants classified water crises as distant problems relevant only to drought-stricken or developing areas. Identifying this localized detachment led me to explore narratives that tied conservation directly to participants' personal and community well-being, reshaping my approach to motivating public action.

**Complexity and Apathy** Perhaps the most unexpected discovery came from participants' expressions of apathy, which they often attributed to the complexity of water policies. While I initially assumed lack of information was the primary barrier, disempowerment emerged as a larger factor. Many individuals felt that water policy was beyond their control, leaving little room for personal impact. This insight directed me toward emphasizing individual empowerment through accessible and actionable messaging.

**Moving Forward** This experience has illuminated the nuances of how the public perceives and interacts with environmental issues like water conservation. My findings have already informed the development of practical tools and educational campaigns targeting community engagement. I

want these insights to empower others creating educational resources in critical fields. This past fall, I was honored to receive one of the three Scholarly/Research-Based Top Scholar Scholarship Award for the Liberal Arts College at Colorado State University's Graduate Student Showcase for

this work. The recognition underscored the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to local and global challenges.

Through these challenges, my research sheds light on public disengagement and highlights the power of reframing narratives to foster collaboration and inspire civic engagement and effective action. Importantly, it also reminds me—and all of us working on civic engagement—that meaningful impact comes from addressing disconnection with clarity, empathy, and practical solutions.



**Jackie Fetter** is a MPPA student at Colorado State University and a researcher with interdisciplinary expertise in environmental sociology, public policy, and political science. Her work examines the intersections of human perception, resource management, and civic engagement.

### **Accessing Chinese Elite Interviews in High-Tech Industries via Public Sociology on WeChat**

Shunan You

Northeastern University

In this brief essay, I present a case of accessing Chinese high-tech elites in the biopharmaceutical industry for qualitative research. The author shared a public sociology piece on a leading Chinese healthcare media outlet via WeChat, which surprisingly gathered a huge amount of

public attention and also attracted various kinds of elites reaching out for further conversations and interviews.

My dissertation project explores the US-China circulation of scientific labor and technology and its consequences in the biopharma sector, drawing on multi-sited qualitative fieldwork in key biopharma hubs in the US and China, namely the Greater Boston Area and the Yangtze River Delta region. The reflection is based on my fieldwork in China between March and November 2023 after I completed my fieldwork in Boston. I conducted over 60 interviews with stakeholders, including scientists, policymakers, headhunters, and venture capitalists. However, the initial months were fraught with difficulties in securing interviews. The pandemic disrupted transnational networks, limiting referrals from U.S.-based contacts. Chinese returnee professionals' demanding work schedules made arranging interviews difficult, even with prior agreements. Political elites were even harder to access; emails often went unanswered due to heightened caution amidst tense US-China relations. As a result, I secured only six interviews during my first two months in Shanghai.

A breakthrough came when I embraced public sociology. At a biopharma industry summit in Shanghai, I connected with a journalist from Badian Jianwen, a prominent Chinese healthcare media outlet. The journalist invited me for an interview about my research and later published an article on their WeChat official account. The piece presented my preliminary findings, personal observations, and compelling stories in an accessible style. At the end of the article, I left my WeChat contact ID and QR code and invited readers to reach out if they wanted to share their experiences.

The response was overwhelming. The article was retweeted on WeChat's Moments feature and major platforms such as Tencent News, Sina News, and Huxiu News. Within weeks, over 50 individuals reached out to connect, including professional, political, and economic elites.

Professional elites from both the U.S. and China resonated with my observations and were keen to share their migration stories. Political leaders from the Suzhou High-Tech Industrial Park contacted me to discuss strategies for recruiting overseas talent. Venture capitalists offered valuable viewpoints on how geopolitical tensions influence their investment strategies. These interactions added diversity to the perspectives of my interviewees and expanded my access to elite networks.

In retrospect, this approach increases the visibility of research, attracts diverse stakeholders, and sparks public discussion. Unlike traditional reliance on referrals or personal connections, this method reduces sampling bias by broadening access channels. However, since WeChat is subject to state surveillance, this method cannot be used to study politically sensitive topics. Still, this case highlights how engaging with public sociology and industry media can be particularly helpful in accessing elites in a complicated industry with multiple stakeholders.

**Shunan You** is a sociology PhD candidate in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Northeastern University. Her research interests center on international migration, global and transnational sociology, intersectionality (gender/race/class), nationalism and cosmopolitanism, global China studies, Asian and Asian American studies, science, technology, and society studies (STS), and qualitative methods.



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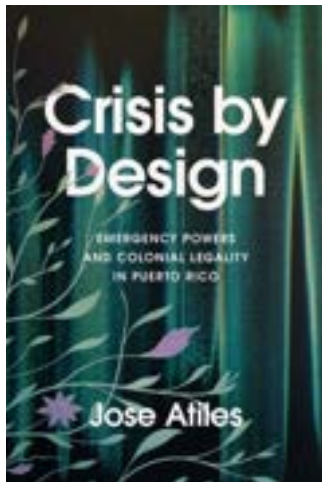
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## Books

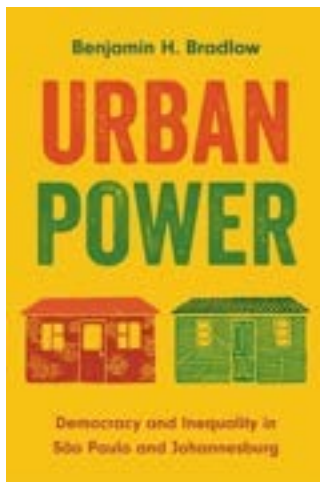


### **Crisis by Design: Emergency Powers and Colonial Legality in Puerto Rico**

Jose Atilés. 2024. Stanford University Press. Save 20% with code: ATILES20

Devastating hurricanes, deteriorating infrastructure, massive public debt, and a global pandemic make up the continuous crises that plague Puerto Rico. In the last several years, this disastrous escalation has placed the archipelago more centrally on the radar of residents and politicians in the United States, as the US Congress established an oversight board with emergency powers to ensure Puerto Rico's economic survival—and its ability to repay its debt. These events should not be understood as a random string of compounding misfortune.

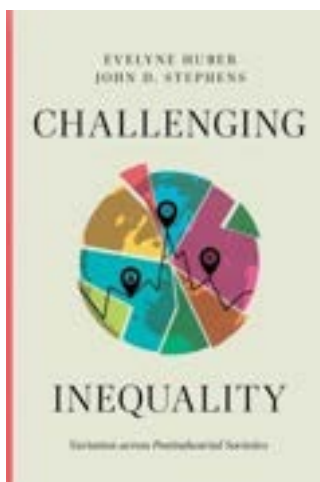
Rather, as demonstrated by Jose Atilés in *Crisis by Design*, they result from the social, legal, and political structure of colonialism. Moreover, Atilés shows how administrations, through emergency powers and laws paired with the dynamics of wealth extraction, have served to sustain and exacerbate crises. He explores the role of the local government, corporations, and grassroots mobilizations. More broadly, the Puerto Rican case provides insight into the role of law and emergency powers in other global south, Caribbean, and racialized and colonized countries. In these settings, Atilés contends, colonialism is the ongoing catastrophe.



### **Urban Power: Democracy and Inequality in São Paulo and Johannesburg**

Benjamin H. Bradlow. 2024. Princeton University Press.

For the first time in history, most people live in cities. One in seven are living in slums, the most excluded parts of cities, in which the basics of urban life—including adequate housing, accessible sanitation, and reliable transportation—are largely unavailable. Why are some cities more successful than others in reducing inequalities in the built environment? In *Urban Power*, Benjamin Bradlow explores this question, examining the effectiveness of urban governance in two "megacities" in young democracies: São Paulo, Brazil, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Both cities came out of periods of authoritarian rule with similarly high inequalities and similar policy priorities to lower them. And yet São Paulo has been far more successful than Johannesburg in improving access to basic urban goods. Bradlow examines the relationships between local government bureaucracies and urban social movements that have shaped these outcomes. Drawing on sixteen months of fieldwork in both cities, including interviews with informants from government agencies, political leadership, social movements, private developers, bus companies, and water and sanitation companies, Bradlow details the political and professional conflicts between and within movements, governments, private corporations, and political parties. He proposes a bold theoretical approach for a new global urban sociology that focuses on variations in the coordination of local governing power, arguing that the concepts of "embeddedness" and "cohesion" explain processes of change that bridge external social mobilization and the internal coordinating capacity of local government to implement policy changes.

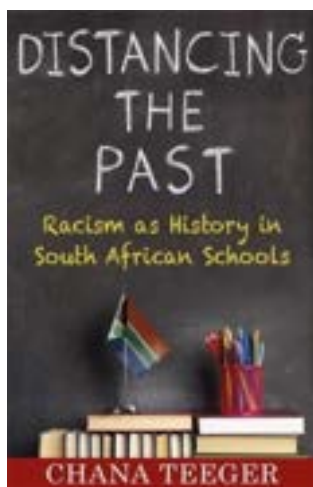


### **Challenging Inequality: Variation across Post-Industrial Societies**

Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens. 2024. University of Chicago Press.

Inequality has risen in post-industrial societies over the past four decades, but not all unequal countries are unequal in the same ways or to the same degree. *Challenging Inequality* analyzes different patterns of increasing income inequality in post-industrial societies since the 1980s and assesses the policies and social structures best able to mitigate against the worst effects of market inequality. Combining statistical analysis of data from 22 countries with a comparative historical analysis of Germany, Spain, Sweden, and the United States, the book identifies the factors that are driving increases in inequality, as well as those that shape persistent marked differences between countries. The book shows that the combination of globalization and skill-biased technological change has led to dualization of the labor market and to rising levels of unemployment, which in turn have had important direct and indirect effects on inequality and poverty. Labor strength—at both the society level and the enterprise level—has helped to counter

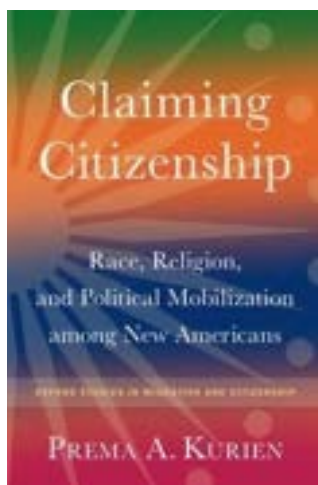
rising market income inequality, as has a history of strong human capital spending. Generosity of the welfare state remains the most important factor shaping redistribution, while incumbency of left parties is the common denominator behind both welfare state generosity and human capital investment.



### **Distancing the Past: Racism as History in South African Schools**

Chana Teeger. 2024. Columbia University Press

How are histories of racial oppression dealt with in contexts of diversity? Chana Teeger tackles this question by examining how young South Africans, born into democracy, confront their country's racist apartheid past in high school history lessons. Drawing on extensive observational, interview, and textual data, *Distancing the Past* vividly chronicles how students learn that racism is a thing of the past, even as they experience it in their everyday lives. Teeger shows how teachers' desire to avoid conflict between students mirrors a national focus on racial reconciliation, leading to the historical distancing of the recent apartheid past. This historical distancing allows schools to present a façade of transformation. Beneath the surface, however, the lessons reproduce unequal power relations at school and legitimize inequality at the societal level. In documenting these processes, *Distancing the Past* illuminates the subtle reconfiguration of racism in the era of civil liberties. It shows how acknowledging the racist past is not enough. When the past is remembered—but its legacies ignored—racism can continue unabated in the present. *Distancing the Past* is a timely account of the remaking of race and inequality in the aftermath of de jure discrimination. It offers vital lessons for other societies grappling with their own racist histories.

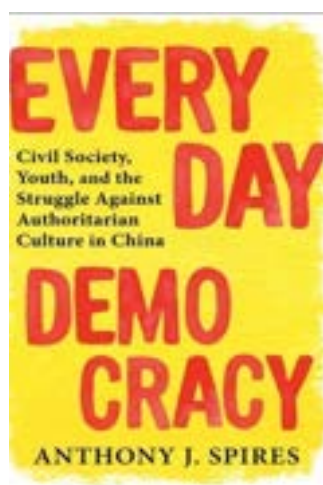


### **Claiming Citizenship: Race, Religion and Political Mobilization among New Citizens**

Prema Kurien. 2024. Oxford University Press. Receive a 30% discount with promo code AAFLYQ6

*Claiming Citizenship* focuses on Indian American civic and political activism in the U.S. public sphere around U.S.-based and India-based issues. Indian Americans are a rising political force whose patterns of activism do not follow the unified model of mobilization of other powerful American ethnic groups. They have multiple types of advocacy organizations: those mobilizing around an Indian American identity; a South Asian American identity; organizations for Indian Americans of Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist backgrounds; organizations representing Indian American Democrats and Republicans; and even combinations of these such as the Republican Hindu Coalition that mobilized around Donald Trump's candidacy in 2016. There are also generational differences between second-generation members and the immigrant

generation. Unified ethnic mobilization is rare and does not take place through a single professional advocacy organization, or even through well-coordinated campaigns. The book examines the dialectical process through which immigrants conform to the structures and cultures of the society they have immigrated to, but also work to transform it to accommodate their unique needs. It shows the relative roles played by domestic and international influences on the political mobilization of immigrant groups in the United States as well as the importance of social media in shaping these mobilizations. *Claiming Citizenship* presents an excellent template to understand how religion, national identity, race, and pan-ethnicity interact in ethnic politics, in addition to examining the role that generational status plays in determining some of these patterns.



### **Everyday Democracy**

#### **Civil Society, Youth, and the Struggle Against Authoritarian Culture in China**

Anthony J. Spires. 2024. Columbia University Press.

Bottom-up voluntary associations, it is commonly thought, are among the fundamental building blocks of democracy, preparing people for engaged citizenship. A great deal of interest in Chinese civil society is premised on the idea that such groups might foster the emergence of democracy. But in a society where virtually all major institutions—from schools to workplaces to government—bear the deep imprint of authoritarian rule, can voluntary associations still spur social and political change? *Everyday Democracy* is a groundbreaking study of bottom-up organizations in China, arguing that even in an authoritarian state, they nurture the skills and habits of democracy. Anthony J. Spires offers an in-depth look at two youth-based, youth-led volunteer groups, showing how their values and practices point the way toward the emergence of new, more democratic forms of association. In mainstream Chinese organizational life, even in grassroots civil society groups, hierarchy and autocracy are pervasive. In these groups, however, ideals of equality, mutual respect, and dignity have motivated young people to invent new practices and norms that contrast greatly with typical top-down organizational culture. Drawing on more than a decade of field-based research with a diverse array of participants, *Everyday Democracy* pinpoints the seeds of a democratic culture inside an authoritarian regime.

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## **Section Information**

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