

## *Summer/Fall 2014 Newsletter*

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#### **Information**

##### **1) Message from Section Chair**

*Renée Van Vechten, PhD*

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Imagine the classroom as digital space. Teaching as “science,” not art. Impersonal but direct. No dining halls, labs, or sports. On screen, a professor and eight students interact through a pedagogical platform developed by education entrepreneurs focused on research on cognition and education. In a recent Atlantic article, Graeme Wood explores the Minerva Project (San Francisco-based experiment in for-profit higher education) and questions whether a stripped-down version of the university will lack that which is “essential to what has made America’s best colleges the greatest in the world.” Which is . . . what, exactly?

Superlatives aside, various stakeholders—faculty, students, parents, adjuncts, administrators, public policy makers, staff, the general public, alumni—undoubtedly would answer that question differently, and their answers might sum to some sort of *educational experience* that now comes at a costly premium for most students. Wood himself suggests that undergraduates in traditional institutions are “molded by the total experience—classes, social life, extracurriculars,” implying that the whole package — the daily interactions, administrative

support systems, nested and extended communities, academics, playing many parts in a larger social network—synergistically transforms a student in ways that good curricula cannot deliver alone.

While the idea of getting back to basics is enticing (how bad could it be to shave off a few overpaid administrators and team coaches?), the Minerva Project raises challenging questions about the role of faculty in such “colleges of the future.” According to Minerva’s website, their faculty are “world-renowned academics...outstanding educators...intensively trained in the science of active learning.” According to its founder, the interdisciplinary curriculum is “based on the cognitive and behavioral science of learning” (minervaproject.com).

Here, apparently, the traditional role of faculty has been sublimated: administrators (deans, entrepreneurs) direct the curriculum, and faculty employ the proprietary pedagogical platform to deliver their scintillating content. Faculty can apply for grants and retain rights over their own research, yet because they are neither organized nor congregate in the same ways as a traditional faculty, presumably they are absolved from self-governance. Ah, freedom! Ah...freedom?

Surely there’s value in designing a program of study from the ground up, constructing an interdisciplinary educational map with clarity of vision and without the complications of having to satisfy many voices and find compromise among different power centers. Yet inasmuch as we tend to bemoan the extra work demanded by curricular overhauls and periodic reviews, it’s the cooperative networks, trusting relationships, and iterated interactions — the *building of a community of scholars*—that flourishes within those traditional, humanized

efforts. What form will that community take in the Minerva Project model? Or in any school executed almost exclusively online? Without a physical meeting hub for professors (they can be anywhere in the world but can meet in virtual conference rooms), what would be their contributions to curricular development and how would they (*could they?*) remain accountable to each other? Productive networks take on new meanings in this context. What will be the dimensions of professional relationships in this academic world?

One could imagine that student-faculty relationships would also be dramatically different in an online environment where personal interaction is filtered through cyberspace. Professors might find it difficult to encourage their charges to take intellectually stimulating courses principally for curiosity’s sake and not for the purposes of augmenting their earning potential. Mentoring, advising, and recommending would be limited to what a professor has observed in one context only, that of online courses.

Although this project and similar ones intend to challenge the academy to be more nimble, reduce costs, and proceed in “tested” ways, the academy as we know it moves as quick as a behemoth, with precedents as well as innovations breathing life into its processes. New pedagogical strains are birthed either through the gradual combining of seeds or through grafting rather than through sudden genetic modification.

Online colleges will neither replace nor displace brick-and-mortar universities anytime soon, but as we watch for the measured outcomes of these altered academes, we professors should thoughtfully regard what’s “essential” to higher education, how we can improve our craft, and what we bring to it both through the delivery of

curriculum and beyond it. Regularly renewing our dual commitments as researchers and teachers, we must give each other the tools and create knowledge that will advance our collective well-being. As department members, committee participants, chairs, and in the expanded roles we fulfill, we all can help lead those discussions in the service of continually improving. Before you get to the next paragraph, take a minute and think about the “essentials” you bring to your college or university, and what you can do better this semester or quarter. Find a resource or person to help you achieve the next level.

This newsletter provides one place to learn and also share your knowledge, as do annual conferences such as the Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC, scheduled January 16-18, 2015) and APSA (as audience members as well as presenters), regional conferences where teaching and learning are likely to become a bigger part of their agendas, and the Journal of Political Science Education, among others. Many of our colleagues have created their own websites dedicated to disseminating their discoveries and collaborating in like-minded ventures, both with respect to research and teaching. Please, take advantage of these resources!

As a place to share your knowledge and keep improving, we need to ask individually and together: how best can we practice the scholarship of teaching and learning, and help disseminate it to our colleagues more widely? I ask you to creatively consider ways the national association (APSA) could do so. They (we!) are actively seeking your ideas.

As for PSE, we'll solicit your input at the annual APSA business meeting where we intend to mix the food and drink with the talk. We will present our section's award for the best paper

presented at APSA 2013 to Ellen Claes and Marc Hooghe for their paper, "Short and Long Term Impact of Different Types of Citizenship Education: Results from a Three Wave Longitudinal Panel Survey." Please join us in congratulating them, and many thanks to the award committee for their work (Ryan Claassen, Quin Monson, Bobbi Gentry, and Chad Raymond). At the meeting, members will also hear about the new award for conducting research with and mentoring of undergraduates that we've established in the name of the late Craig Brians, who was a vibrant member of our community.

In the past year we also endorsed Michelle Deardorff for APSA Council, a past president of this section and outgoing chair of the APSA Teaching and Learning (Standing) Committee. Our journal continues to thrive, and because of your support and attendance at last year's meeting, we were able to increase our presence at APSA with more panels than ever! Please make an effort to attend as many panels as you can and encourage your colleagues to join you.

We also hope you will actively encourage your colleagues to sign up for PSE. Your membership signals to the association that teaching matters — whether that occurs in online spaces, through a highly structured platform, or within the walls of a classroom. Thank you for making our voices count.

Best regards,

Renée Van Vechten  
Section President

**Sources referenced:**

The Minerva Project: [www.minervaproject.com](http://www.minervaproject.com)

Wood, Graeme. 2013. "The Future of College?" *The Atlantic*, August 13, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/08/the-future-of-college/375071/>

## 2) New Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and Mentorship: Craig L. Brians Award

The *Craig L. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and Mentorship* will be awarded annually by the APSA Political Science Education Section at the Teaching and Learning Conference, with recognition also given at the APSA annual meeting PSE section reception.

The award will be given to faculty members who demonstrate commitment to and excellence in encouraging and developing scholarship among undergraduate students, and in mentoring undergraduate students in preparation for graduate school or public-affairs related careers. Evidence for these commitments may include, but not be limited to, formal and informal supervision of undergraduate student original research, collaborating with undergraduate students on original research projects, assisting undergraduate students with public presentations and/or publication of work, and accompanying students to academic conferences. In honor of the person for whom the award is named, preference will also be given to faculty members who engage in developing undergraduate scholarship through enhancing information literacy.

Nominations and self-nominations will be accepted. Applicants should send their packets to the address below, or electronically, to the current section president (renee\_vanvechten@redlands.edu).

Nomination packets should include:

1. A CV and personal statement (written by the nominee) detailing the undergraduate research and mentoring activities of the nominee, and the perceived impacts of those activities.

2. A letter of support from the nominating faculty (if applicable), summarizing the nominee's relevant activities and their impacts, and explaining why the applicant deserves this distinction. Additional letters of support from colleagues are welcome.

3. Letters of support from undergraduate students (including those who have since graduated, if applicable) who have directly benefited from the nominee's efforts.

*Deadline: November 15, 2014*

Mailing address:

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### ***Featured Essays***

#### **3) *RU Ready - Extending Political Learning Outside the Classroom and into the Community***

Elizabeth Matto, PhD  
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As teacher-scholars of civic engagement, we always are looking for ways to offer students learning opportunities that foster the political skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are conducive to future participation. The mission of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University is to link the study of politics with its practice through research, education, and service. Through our program *RU Ready*<sup>TM</sup>, we've offered students an opportunity not only to enhance their own appreciation of politics but to share this appreciation with young people in our community.

Initiated in 2007, RU Ready™ is an effort designed to provide high school students with the tools and encouragement to be active members of their community. Since its inception, we have consistently administered the project in the area's local public high school. RU Ready™ is meant to supplement the social studies curriculum in place and provide lessons in active citizenship that often are lost due to time or curricular constraints. Working in collaboration with the social studies supervisor, the project is administered yearly to all sections of U.S. History I - including special education sections.

RU Ready™ consists of a series of in-class workshops on such themes as the unique features of the Millennial Generation, the prevalence of politics in one's life, the forms of engagement available to young people, influencing the legislative process, and participating in a campaign. Instructional techniques utilized are those that have been demonstrated to be effective such as discussion, debate, and simulation. All lessons and activities are non-partisan and focus on understanding the political system, developing leadership skills, and problem-solving. For example, in one workshop, high school students generate a list of problems they face either in their school or in their community with problems ranging from poor food choices in the cafeteria to crime and violence. After instructing them on the range of options available to them to affect change from forming a community organization, to attending a rally, to running for office, students work in small groups and devise a plan for tackling one of these problems.<sup>1</sup> They are instructed to utilize

a combination of these methods and to share their plan in an engaging way with their fellow classmates such in a skit or role-play.

The hallmark of RU Ready™ is the role played by a team of Rutgers students who prepare the workshops, work directly with the high school students, and administer the sessions. The team of students participates in the program either via a 3-credit internship offered by the political science department or a 1.5 credit topics course offered as part a learning community. As project director, I provide a great deal of supervision prior to their classroom visits and after they've administered the sessions. In preparation, students are exposed to a range of literature on youth political participation and civic education, engage in group discussion, work closely with me and each other to prepare their lessons, observe the classroom setting and hear from teachers, and practice their workshops and receive constructive criticism from each other and myself. After the sessions, we debrief as a group, students reflect on their experiences in journals and make public presentations to faculty, staff, and supporters.

Over the years, we've utilized various qualitative and quantitative tools (with varying success) to measure the impact of the program. For the most part, the feedback we receive is positive. In one evaluation, the vast majority of the students reported that they felt "very" or "somewhat" prepared to participate in the political process and "very" or "somewhat" interested in participating in the political process after experiencing RU Ready™. After being exposed to our session on voting, one student commented, *"Thanks to you guys, now that I am 18, I will vote, and I will be the 1<sup>st</sup> one in my family ever to vote!"*

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<sup>1</sup> RU Ready™ employs the typology of engagement outlined in Zukin et al.'s *A New Engagement* and utilized by the Center for Research on Civic Learning

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and Engagement (CIRCLE) that includes cognitive, civic, political, and expressive engagement.

Rutgers students also have responded positively. This past spring, the experience was particularly eye opening for the Rutgers students who expected the children with special needs to be less interested in their lessons. They were surprised to find the situation quite to the contrary. As one student noted,

*“To me this was the perfect example of how some students can be overlooked for any given reason. Perhaps because they belong to a special education program people might now feel that they would not be interested in civic engagement, but to my surprise they were very eager to hear about it, and I am pretty confident that they will attend some [civics club] meetings.”*

Needless to say, launching and administering an experience such as RU Ready™ can be challenging and time-consuming. It requires a great deal of preparation and oversight. Additionally, there are obstacles to conducting solid research regarding the effects of the project. That being said, the issuance of *A Crucible Moment* by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 2012 and the recent publication of *Teaching Civic Engagement* by the American Political Science Association reminds us that preparing students to engage in their communities and participate in the life of the body politic is our responsibility as political scientists. Hence, the hard work is well worth the effort.

#### **4) Introducing Individualist and Structural Perspectives Using Student Autobiographies**

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One fundamental question that underlies many political debates is the extent to which individuals are in control of their status in life.

In other words, to what extent are individuals a product of their own choices, and to what extent are they influenced/controlled by larger institutional and social forces like political parties, corporations, class, race, gender, and the like? One's answer to this question goes a long way toward explaining one's position on welfare, immigration, healthcare access, and many other issues.

Yet, students are often unaware of their own answer to this question. Frequently, their attitude is a reflexive uncritical one and they struggle to view the world from a perspective different than the one already deeply ingrained. The problem, then, is how we, as educators, can get students to more explicitly acknowledge their own perspective, and to learn to see from alternative ones, so they can make more informed decisions about their core values and political preferences.

One solution I created for my *Introduction to American Government* class is to have students write two versions of their autobiography. These can be short 1-2 paragraph assignments completed at home or in class early in the semester. The first autobiography is written from the perspective of individualism. This version is the Horatio Alger story of their life, focusing on the good choices and hard work that led them to where they are today. Next, they write a structural autobiography. In this version, we ask about factors outside their control, such as their family, school, socio-economic status, etc. and how these helped them get where they are. Once completed, I have students share a brief version of their autobiographies in class. As more students share, we begin to list commonalities among them. This list serves as a good introduction for these contrasting ways of seeing the social world. A good way to get students to think

about their own values is to ask them which autobiography best explains their life.

This assignment is not a solution in isolation. To be useful, I refer back to it often as we progress through class. For example, when we discuss political ideologies, I ask students to draw connections between various ideologies and their autobiographical perspective. Through discussion, we are able to make the connection between classical liberalism and autobiography from an individualist perspective, and the connection between socialist ideologies and their structural autobiography. My students also complete a semester-long service-learning project on a public problem of their choice. As students reflect on the causes of problems like poverty, it is useful to have them consider the extent to which individuals, social structures, or some combination thereof, are the cause. Their answer helps shape the problem solutions they ultimately recommend. Also, the assignment helps them think critically about individual and group efficacy for changing the social structures that contribute to their problem. Ultimately, I think this assignment can be modified to be useful in a variety of political science courses. I hope you find it helpful.

### **5) Dressing Up Our Students: Why Faculty Should Encourage Professional Attire in Undergraduates**

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To better prepare our students for life after graduation, faculty members need to highly incentivize and encourage our students to dress in professional business attire at key points during their coursework and academic experiences. Specifically, we need to require our students to wear professional attire when

they are (1) engaged in active learning exercises, such as simulations; (2) making a presentation before a class; (3) participating in mock interviews; and (4) making presentations at conferences—even local ones or those located on campus.

This type of attire will provide our students better practice for the world and increase students' opportunities, whether in terms of jobs, graduate school acceptances and funding, or succeeding in professional networking. Mock interviews—for internship providers, employers, competitive scholarship selection committees, or graduate admissions committees—must require the right attire so that students will become “comfortable” in their new clothes and illustrate how the proper tone, spoken and unspoken, must be set with external audiences.

Wearing business professional attire can also lead to students earning better grades, since many oral presentation rubrics include “attire” as a category that contributes to the student's overall grade. My own rubrics, for example, have this category and use language from teacher education standards.

Faculty members also need to be more open to having conversations about what proper attire includes—from proper shoes to the length of a dress. These discussions are particularly needed by students who have grown up in a much more relaxed culture. Journalists, for example, have relaxed their standards of attire, especially on morning shows or “on assignment.” Norms of attire in houses of worship have also relaxed, and professional dress is less likely to be followed in many employment fields.

Despite this new casual norm, research in various disciplines demonstrates that persons

are judged by their appearance and attire (Gillath et al. 2012; Heldman and Wade 2011; Howlett, et al. 2013; Rhode 2010). Thus, our students need to learn about and be exposed to proper attire and to be taught to recognize those situations when professional business attire is needed.

My own views on professional dress have evolved. I used to say that students should wear a nice shirt and pants for oral presentations. In the same vein, I used to encourage my students to “dress the part” for simulations of the National Security Council or U.N. Security Council, but not really emphasize attire. Over time, I have come to the view that proper attire is a key part of professionalism. One of the biggest reasons is that my experience suggests that students perform much better and take presentations and simulations more seriously when they “dress up.” Those students that do not dress appropriately for these experiences do not score as well on the rubric as it relates to attire, but—more importantly—they are also much *less* likely to (1) fully engage in role-playing; (2) present themselves as professionals in terms of posture and clarity of speech, and (3) later reflect upon active-learning experiences in a serious manner.

Some of our students may not have access to professional attire. Therefore, we should join efforts to make students aware of how to find these clothes and/or work with our university’s career services office to start such a closet.

We all recognize that successful people do not have to dress up. But, we also know it is best to make a favorable first impression even before the first words are exchanged—especially in a competitive job market. Therefore, we can do our students a big service by teaching more about proper attire as well as encouraging and incentivizing professional dress.

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## 6) Multi-Class Interdisciplinary Simulations: Reflections from the Frontlines of a Joint Politics-Physics Collaboration

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Wheaton College, MA

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In the past year, two physics professors<sup>1</sup> and I (a political scientist) implemented two simulations that joined our classes in order to explore the intersection of science and politics. These simulations, in fall 2013 and spring 2014, yielded important lessons on how to manage a multi-class interdisciplinary simulation (MIS): a simulated negotiation combining classes from two different disciplines. In this essay, after

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Geoffrey Collins and Dr. Jason Goodman. I give my thanks for their time and assistance in composing the historical account provided in this article.



reviewing Wheaton College's<sup>2</sup> connections curriculum (which promotes MISs), I ask and offer preliminary answers to three important questions to consider before attempting a MIS.

### **Wheaton College's Connections Curriculum**

In the early 2000s Wheaton College conducted a curriculum review. Dissatisfaction with the curriculum came from "breadth requirements" necessary for graduation. Over the years, Wheaton instituted an increasing number of course requirements, obliging students to take an array of classes across disciplines. A checkbox mentality seeped into student advising – with little room left for interdisciplinary learning. For students in some majors, the requirements pre-determined their course selection entirely.

The college addressed this problem by eliminating requirements that did not support interdisciplinary learning, a central tenant of Wheaton's educational mission. Unable to agree on an ideal method of connecting courses, the college instead offered faculty the opportunity to pair classes across disciplines in order to create "connected courses"<sup>3</sup> and thus foster interdisciplinary dialogue.

In the years since, this curricular change has been felt in both classroom and student advising, with fewer conversations about checking boxes and more about interdisciplinary learning. A new challenge has also emerged. Given the proliferation of connections, the college must now assess their quality. The following questions and preliminary

answers are my report from the frontlines of this unique form on interdisciplinary cooperation. Hopefully, this report can provide guideposts for others interested in incorporating an MIS into their courses.

### **Is there an Interdisciplinary Win-Win?**

The past year proved the importance of tackling this question head-on. First, it is important to consult closely with collaborating professors about their learning objectives. Although two disciplines may seem to overlap, each professor may want students to approach similar concepts differently. The method we used to overcome our disciplinary blinders was to review one another's syllabi, asking about and analyzing how the simulation fit within each course.

Second, we learned that creating a common learning objective is crucial. Well-developed interdisciplinary learning objectives should be useable in both classes. It is often best to keep notes from your discussions of actors, institutions, or problems that could be refined into a learning objective. From our discussions we arrived at the following objective: to have students analyze the relative importance of science, scientific rhetoric, and political interests in crafting international agreements.

Building from this objective, our spring MIS focused on adaptation strategies to sea level change in Eurasia, rather than overall climate change mitigation.<sup>4</sup> We chose adaptation as the core problem because adaptation poses students with a choice between costly alternatives, informed both by scientific facts and politics. While physics students learned

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<sup>2</sup> Wheaton College is a 4-year, private, liberal arts institution enrolling roughly 1500 students.

<sup>3</sup> POLS 109: *International Politics* and PHYS 165: *Climate Change, Past and Present* are one such example. Others include connections between figure drawing and anatomy and geology and urban economics – entitled "We Built this City on Rock."

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<sup>4</sup> We set our MIS in the near future. The United States was not invited because it has failed to ratify any of the recently proposed climate change treaties. Our fall MIS focused on governing international river basins.

about science's role in policy debates (and assessed the relative cost of different plans), my international politics students focused on how negotiators weighed individual vs. common interests, used science to advance their country's goals, and bargained for side payments.

### How Should the Classes Prepare?

Having tried to prepare the classes both with and without a technological meeting space, our experience suggests that a common web-site/wiki/blog is an effective, probably essential, tool for MIS collaboration across classes.<sup>5</sup> The web provides a common space for students to assemble information that they will use in their negotiations. In both semesters, political science students produced a country fact sheet. Yet, only when that sheet was uploaded did students grapple with their state's position in the international system vis-à-vis the simulated dilemma.

Pairing students across the classes can also provoke more nuanced preparation. In the spring, we paired students from each of our classes to represent a country, one as a diplomat and one as a scientific advisor. To our surprise, this sparked conversations about specific countries' political interests and scientific assessments, as well as the inevitable tensions between countries. Lastly, to cultivate a broader sense of community, we found it important for students to know both professors before the MIS night. We presented half-hour guest lectures on basic topics (e.g. what is a treaty?), setting aside plenty of time for Q & A.

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<sup>5</sup> Our simulation was held in the evening late in the semester. Provided with pizza and soda, 70 students negotiated in five different "Earth" groups for two hours. The first 80 minutes were spent reaching an agreement; the last 40 minutes reviewing and comparing the agreements, and debriefing the negotiations.

### How Should the Classes Debrief the MIS?

Debriefing activities reviewed the negotiated outcomes and student experiences to reflect on trends as well as recast the MIS in separate disciplines. Both MISs provided debrief sessions, reviewing the trends in outcomes and experiences. Both classes also conducted a debrief session in the class immediately following the MIS. These class sessions provided opportunities for students to focus on discipline-specific questions and for quieter students to participate.

Following the spring MIS, I assigned a paper on the topic of climate change in which students could cite their negotiation experiences. This offered a unique way for students to integrate personal experiences with international events they were unlikely to have encountered otherwise. MIS experiences provide excellent source material from which to design writing lessons on the role of personal narratives within non-fiction prose. However, a written or digital-audio recording of the negotiations would have resulted in more specific references.

In sum, interdisciplinary learning requires communication across disciplines. In addition to guest lectures and incorporating diverse readings into our courses – common and worthwhile teaching strategies – an MIS offers an innovative and low-cost way of offering students an interdisciplinary learning experience.

### 7) *Making it Work: Teaching Political Theory as a Toolbox*

Michael Laurence, PhD  
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Just imagine, as joyful or painful as it might be, that you are an undergraduate student again.

Political theory class. Always mandatory. No escape. A semester of reading antiquated texts, sitting through lectures with drooping eyes, fleshing out abstract arguments that barely seem to make sense, reproducing them ad-infinitum so you can ‘move beyond’ political theory and never look back. Is it really surprising that so many undergraduate students do everything in their power to avoid theory? Perhaps a more direct question would be: how lifeless is the political theory ‘experience’ for most undergraduate students?

A sure recipe for draining the life out of political theory, or of any discipline for that matter, is to maintain a pedagogical structure where the student is rendered a passive recipient of knowledge, and the instructor, a figure or guardian of supreme knowledge, who acts almost unilaterally upon the student. Where they are fashioned solely as passive subjects in relation to theory, there will always remain legions of the unaffected, multitudes of disinvested students who care little for the richness of thought and living relevance that political theory can offer.

As a new professor in the field of political theory, I have begun to develop a series of assignments and exercises with the aim of encouraging students to transform themselves from passive subjects of theory to agents of it -- users of theory. I believe that when students become active users of theory, they invest it with their own desires, and it becomes entangled in their lives. They begin to see the immensity of what it can offer, the potential for vision and action that it enables. Because that is what political theory is: a living cartography of who we are and what we might become.

In its basic form, the idea comes from French theorist Gilles Deleuze. In a discussion with Michel Foucault, Deleuze argued that we ought

to think of theory as a box of tools: “It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself (who then ceases to be a theoretician), then the theory is worthless or the moment is inappropriate (208).” This might sound alarming or dangerous to theorists who desire to safeguard the ‘canon’, or to those concerned with the reproduction of existing epistemic orders and their corresponding economic and social hierarchies. Yet Deleuze is making an important point, one that must be taken seriously in a democratic culture. He cites Marcel Proust, who asked readers to “treat (his) book as a pair of glasses directed to the outside... (208).” The point here is to use theory as an instrument. Deleuze goes even further, however, suggesting it should be an instrument for combat against dominant forms of power and it should multiply the possibilities for thought and action rather than totalize and imprison them. Some of us have experienced what it feels like when theory works upon us or with us in this way, as a multiplier of thought. In such moments it feels as though the world is opening up before you and that anything is possible. This is precisely the point: anything is possible, nothing inevitable.

Assignments and classroom activities constructed upon Deleuze’s idea must incite and challenge students to become agents of theory, to ‘put theory to work’ as a device for intervention in the present. In writing and in discussion, I have begun to call upon students to deploy the theories that they learn, to use theory to analyze and make sense of current events and everyday situations in their own lives, and to use it to articulate future possibilities for thought and action in relation to such events and situations. In a course I taught last year, the final paper asked students to select a theory we had studied (some

possibilities included: Socrates' conception of citizenship, Hobbes' notion of the social contract, Marx's conception of class, Nietzsche's idea of the "Will to Power," Judith Butler's notion of the performativity of gender, etc.), and to use his/her ideas to read a current event or political issue in a critical manner. The aim of the exercise, however, was not to swallow up the event or colonize it completely under the systems of Plato or Marx, but to multiply the possibilities for reading it, to produce alternative ways of seeing the present, ways often foreclosed by the media and other forms of popular discourse. Nearly all of the students reacted enthusiastically to the concrete nature of the assignment and to the sense of agency enabled by it. Many developed a strong sense of ownership and responsibility concerning the task at hand.

The papers that resulted were fascinating and full of unexpected insights. While reading them over, I recalled another of Deleuze's arguments concerning theory: "As soon as a theory is enmeshed in a particular point, we realize that it will never possess the slightest practical importance unless it can erupt in a totally different area (208)." The point of this passage is not, I believe, to discount the fact that theory always comes from a particular point or position. Concepts and ideas have histories, they are always born in a particular place, at a particular time, and from within living bodies that exist in relation to other bodies. Theories emerge from and within life. It is important to

understand the materiality of ideas in this sense. Yet Deleuze's point is that they must be made to travel across contexts if they are to function for us. They must erupt somewhere else. They must re-enter life, a different life, and in the space of difference opened up by their application, a great deal of innovative and concrete critical work can be done.

I am still working to develop these ideas and to improve my students' experience of political theory. I hope that learning in my classroom never becomes a simple matter of reiteration, of mapping a history of ideas. I want agents of theory, not just subjects of it. I prefer to see political theory as something living and working, and as the fidelity to a future that is more democratic than less. I think if more students could see it in a similar way, they would not wait until their final undergraduate semester to take that mandatory class.

### References and Suggestions for Further Reading

Deleuze, Gilles. 1980. "Intellectuals and Power." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press. Pp. 205-217.

Nealon, Jeffrey and Susan Searls-Giroux. 2003. *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

### Announcements

#### Upcoming Award Submission Deadlines

- Craig L. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research & Mentorship; awarded by PSE Section; deadline: **Nov. 15, 2014**.
- APSA CQ Press Award for Teaching Innovation; nomination deadline: **January (TBA)**.
- APSA Distinguished Teaching Award; awarded by APSA; nomination deadline: **February (TBA)**.
- Best Paper APSA 2014 Award; awarded by PSE Section; deadline: **March 1, 2015**.

- Pi Sigma Alpha Chapter Advisor Recognition and Best Chapter Awards; awarded by Pi Sigma Alpha; deadlines: **TBA**.
- Franklin L. Burdette/Pi Sigma Alpha prize (best paper at Annual Meeting); awarded by APSA; deadline: **February 15, 2015**.
- Heinz I. Eulau Award (best articles in *APSR* and *Perspectives on Politics*); awarded by APSA; deadline: **February 15, 2015**.
- Hubert H. Humphrey Award (notable public service by a political scientist); awarded by APSA; **deadline: TBA**.
- Lifetime Achievement Award; awarded by PSE; **deadline: TBA**.
- The John Gaus Award and Lectureship (scholarship in public administration); awarded by APSA; **deadline: TBA**.

\*Some deadlines have not yet been posted. Please check with organization to confirm final deadlines.

### Nominate Your Students:

- Bert & Phyllis Lamb Prize in Political Science (for writing); deadline: **March 1, 2015**

### Congratulations!

- To **Ellen Claes** and **Marc Hooghe**, both of Catholic University, Belgium, co-recipients of the 2013 APSA Political Science Education Section's Best Paper Award for their paper: "The Effect of Direct and Indirect Forms of Citizenship Education: Results From a Three-Wave Longitudinal Panel Survey in Belgium" (2013). The award will be presented at the PSE Business Meeting.
- To **Samuel Lucas McMillan**, who was recently granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor of Political Science at Lander University. His latest article is entitled "Bravo for Brevity: Using Short Paper Assignments in International Relations Classes" and appears in the February 2014 issue of *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 15, Issue 1, pages 109-120.

Past issues of the *Political Science Educator* are now archived:

<http://community.apsanet.org/TeachingCivicEngagement/additionalteachingresources/new-item>

Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to Maureen Feeley at [mfeeley@ucsd.edu](mailto:mfeeley@ucsd.edu). Submission deadlines are **March 1** for the **Winter/Spring newsletter**, and **August 1** for the **Summer/Fall newsletter**. Contributions may be as brief as 200 – 500 hundred words, but should not exceed approximately 1000 words, and should use APSA citation style. Please include "**PS Educator submission**" in the subject line of your email. Thank you!

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Maureen Feeley, Newsletter Editor