

In Memoriam: Russell L. Hanson

Russell L. Hanson (February 21, 1953-November 9, 2022), emeritus professor of political science at Indiana University, Bloomington, recently passed away in Minneapolis, Minnesota as a result of complications from severe early onset dementia. An accomplished scholar working at the intersection of political theory and American politics, Hanson's teaching and researching chiefly focused on the history of American liberalism and its impact on public policy.

A Minnesota native who regularly returned to his cabin "up north," Hanson earned a B.S. in political science at St. John's University (Minnesota) in 1975. He then pursued graduate study at the University of Minnesota, where he worked under Terence Ball and earned a Ph.D. in 1982. In 1991, he was awarded a Distinguished Alumnus Award from his PhD alma mater. While Hanson held prestigious fellowships from, among others, the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Science and University of London, he spent his entire career at Indiana University. He was initially hired as a Lecturer in 1980, was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1982, Associate Professor with tenure in 1987, and then Full Professor in 1995.

The political science department's first winner of the prestigious campus-wide Outstanding Young Faculty Award, Hanson was a legendary teacher whose courses on political theory and especially American political thought were consistently overenrolled and among the department's most popular. He taught thousands of undergraduates, and for well over 30 years was one of the political science department's best teachers. He was also eagerly sought after by generations of graduate students, in a variety of subfields, who appreciated his extraordinary talent for helping students better formulate their own ideas.

Beyond his extraordinary pedagogical achievements with both undergraduates and graduates, Hanson was a valued member of the Indiana University community who served in an array of top-level administrative positions, including: Inaugural Associate Dean, School of Global and International Studies, 2014-15, Chair, Department of Political Science, 2009-2015; Acting Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, 1999-2000; Executive Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, 1997-1999, and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, College of Arts & Sciences, 1992-95. Hanson consistently excelled in these positions: he combined a mastery of administrative detail and institutional procedure with a broad and deep commitment to core intellectual values and an even-keeled, respectful, and collegial way of dealing with all issues and all colleagues. Hanson was often the “go to guy” at vital junctures in Indiana University’s recent history, frequently chairing important campus-wide task forces and high-level search committees.

Hanson was a major scholar of democratic theory, American political thought, and American political development. His first book, *The Democratic Imagination in America: Conversations with Our Past* (Princeton University Press, 1985), remains a landmark study of the evolution of democratic ideas in US political history that continues to be cited by scholars working in this area. He published many other important works on the history of political thought, the evolution of the US welfare state, and contemporary welfare policy. He had a special interest in how US federalism impacted social welfare policy by generating divergences between and among states. Although his medical condition prevented him from completing the larger project of which it was part, his final publication (for the *Cambridge Companion to Civil Disobedience* [Cambridge University Press, 2021]) focused on the transnational diffusion of ideas about civil disobedience and centered on one of his intellectual heroes, Henry David Thoreau.

Hanson's teaching, scholarship, and administrative activities always rested on a deeply rooted, fundamental commitment to public education as a civic responsibility. He conducted extensive outreach in the public schools; he played a major role in many rounds of curricular revision at the department, college, and university levels; he served as a role model for both students and colleagues. As part of his lifelong attempt to bring political science to students and to help educate future citizens, he also co-authored an award-winning text book, *Politics in the American States*, 11th edition (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2017), winner of the Mac-Jewell Enduring Contribution Award of the APSA's State Politics and Policy Section.

Hanson will be greatly missed as a valued colleague, friend, mentor, and teacher to so many both in Bloomington and elsewhere.

--Jack Bielasiak, Jeffrey C. Isaac, Jean Robinson, Bill Scheuerman
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