

Perspectives on Politics: A Political Science Public Sphere

Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Editor in Chief, with the assistance of James Moskowitz, Managing Editor*

I am happy to report that *Perspectives on Politics* continues to thrive. In the almost six years since we assumed editorial control of the journal in June 2009, we have succeeded in strengthening journal operations and procedures and in projecting a new and growing excitement about *Perspectives* and the role it can play in contributing to the invigoration of the discipline.

We have a highly talented, energetic, and well-organized staff, and we continue to fine-tune a strong set of procedures for dealing with authors, reviewers, and each other. As a consequence, we have continued to work efficiently and stay on production schedule with APSA, Cambridge, and the compositors. I continue to receive a great deal of positive feedback from authors and from readers about the journal, its quality, its special sections, and its accessibility and responsiveness. More importantly, we continue to receive a growing flow of manuscripts of an increasingly high quality from “major” scholars eager to place their work in our journal and from more junior scholars who regard *Perspectives* and its mission as hospitable to their view of political science. In the past year we have received a record number of article submissions, and have published a wide range of authors from a variety of institutions. According to the 2013 Journal Citation Reports® by Thomson Reuters, the journal has an Impact Factor of 3.035 and ranks second among 156 journals categorized as political science.

In 2014, *Perspectives* published 20 articles and reflections (with 33 authors and coauthors combined), two reflections symposia (including responses by nine interlocutors), eight review essays, six book review symposia (with 21 contributors), five critical dialogues, and 229 book reviews (treating 266 titles by a collective 360 authors)—plus one presidential address, and one Praxis essay (a newly introduced format). We thus published the work of more than 300 political scientists. If you add to that the number of manuscript reviewers with which we have corresponded, in 2013 the journal networked with more than 1,000 political scientists. Through our extensive and substantive correspondence, and through the

product of that correspondence—the journal itself—we believe we are succeeding in our goal of fostering a **political science public sphere**.

The Appendix to this report includes some basic publication and production data. We will be happy to answer any questions about this data to the best of our ability.

In what follows, I would like briefly to outline a range of accomplishments worthy of note, which together help to explain our success thus far. In doing so, I will reiterate some of the themes of last year’s report, since they are essential to our ongoing operations, and also since each year new members join the Council, and my goal is to keep every member of the Council maximally informed about our journal operations.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Perspectives is a collaborative effort, and the journal works well because it has a terrific staff. James Moskowitz is an exceptional Managing Editor. He combines business experience, strong communication and computer skills, a real aesthetic sensibility, and the scholarly perspective of an advanced and published political science PhD student. James has contributed immeasurably to the success of the journal along every dimension, from the efficient operation of the Editorial Manager (EM) system to the journal’s terrific new design, and he is responsible for the extraordinary covers we have featured in the past year. James works full-time on the journal.

James is joined by six equally terrific editorial assistants whose contributions are immense. Brendon Westler and Katie Scofield work on the journal’s front end, reading every article submitted for publication, and participating with James and me in weekly “conference reviews” where we decide which pieces to send out for external review. They then divide up labor to find reviewers for the manuscripts and to stay on top of all communication with reviewers. They also work closely with James to prepare for publication those articles eventually accepted for publication. Peter Giordano, Rachel Gears, Fathima Musthaq, and Katey Stauffer work with James on the Review section, helping

me find reviewers for each book, corresponding with reviewers, and working to move all reviews to publication. In addition to these salaried graduate student editorial assistants, two other former editorial assistants remain as active members of our team who participate in our weekly meetings. Rafael Khachaturian serves as our social media coordinator (he is employed as a 10-hour a week hourly employee, paid from my own research account), and Laura Bucci attends our meetings, brainstorming with me about ideas, and offers “institutional memory” to our newer assistants.

The staff works very well together. We meet weekly to discuss all aspects of the journal, to prepare manuscripts for copy-editing, and to plan ahead. We also typically have lunch (supplied by me). It is a very upbeat work environment. All editorial assistants are encouraged to take initiative and to make sure that their work on the journal complements their academic work and long-term scholarly plans. And I subsidize every staff member (approximately \$500 per person) so that the entire staff can attend the annual MPSA meeting and participate in our editorial board meeting. Much of the work of academic journals is done by staff, consisting almost entirely of graduate assistants. I am very proud of my staff and proud of the work environment we have cultivated in our office.

I am also proud of the scholarly progress that my staff has made in advancing their own intellectual agendas. In the past year Margot Morgan secured a tenure-track assistant professor position at Indiana University Southeast; Adrian Florea served as a visiting assistant professor at Oberlin College and was recently hired as a tenure-track assistant professor at University of Glasgow; Brendon Westler had a piece published in *Journal of the History of Ideas* and a second piece accepted for publication in *Review of Politics*; Rafael Khachaturian published an article in *Polity*; and our other assistants are also making great progress toward their dissertations. These young scholars do the lion’s share of the work of our discipline’s journals, and it is very important that their work is recognized as valuable and that it enhance their professional development. Along these lines

I note with particular pleasure that Elizabeth Markovits is not simply a current board member who is also the coauthor of a published research article; she is a former *Perspectives* editorial assistant, having worked on the Book Review when it was located at University of North Carolina. I regard this trajectory as a model for my staff.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The journal has a terrific Editorial Board. We stay in fairly regular communication with the board as a whole, and communicate very often with individual board members, to consult on difficult decisions and to seek additional reviews of manuscripts when this becomes necessary. Board members have been very responsive and helpful, and many of them have been proactive in encouraging authors to submit their work for review. I believe that a journal like *Perspectives* can only succeed if a diverse group of excellent and highly respected political scientists are willing to make a commitment and to link their credibility to the credibility of the journal. Sustaining this kind of connection has been an important accomplishment, and it remains an ongoing commitment.

I am proud to say that the entire board that began with my tenure continues to serve, along with some newer and equally exceptional colleagues. Last year we added six new board members, with APSA Council approval (a full list of our board members appears on our masthead). This year we hope to add an additional seven new members:

Cristina Beltran, associate professor, New York University: Cristina is a well-published scholar working at the intersection of political theory, American political thought, and the study of race, gender, and ethnicity. Her 2010 book, *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*, won two APSA best book awards. She is very active professionally, is involved with a number of important journals, and has served on the APSA Council. She is also a regular guest on MSNBC's The Melissa Harris-Perry Show.

Archon Fung, Ford Foundation Professor, Harvard University: Archon is an exceptionally well-published scholar of democracy and citizenship who also is deeply committed to civic engagement and is involved in a number of related activities. He was one of the coauthors of the 2005 APSA Report/volume *Democracy at Risk*, and he serves on the editorial board of *Politics & Society*.

Cas Mudde, associate professor, University of Georgia: Cas is a prolific scholar of comparative politics who specializes in the study of right-wing populist movements and parties. He employs mixed methods; he is exceptionally active professionally; and he serves as an important and active link between American political science and European political science and the IPSA. He is an active public intellectual who writes regularly for *OpenDemocracy*. He was recently appointed co-editor of *European Journal of Political Research*.

Daniel Nexon, associate professor, Georgetown University: Dan is a well-published scholar of international relations and world politics. He has an exceptional record of professional service. He was one of the founders and principals of the important international politics blog Duck of Minerva and was an active blogger and commentator until he was appointed lead editor of *International Studies Quarterly* (2014–2018).

Erin O'Brien, associate professor and department chair, University of Massachusetts, Boston: Erin is a well-published scholar of US politics who also serves as codirector of the Scholars Strategy Network (Boston). Her recent *Perspectives* article (with Keith Bentele), "Jim Crow 2.0: Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies," went viral and has gotten enormous public attention.

Deborah Yashar, professor of politics, Princeton University: Deborah is a well-published scholar of comparative politics who specializes in the study of Latin America with a focus on indigenous politics. She has an exceptional record of professional service and currently serves as lead editor of *World Politics*.

Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, professor, University of Connecticut: Cyrus is a well-published scholar of comparative politics and political theory. He has an excellent record of professional service and has served for the past five years as editor in chief of *Polity*, the journal of the Northeastern Political Science Association.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

We continue to have excellent working relationships with the principals with whom we work to produce the journal.

At the same time, there have been many changes.

At APSA, we work directly with Barbara Walthall, APSA's director of publications, and Steven Rathgeb Smith, APSA's executive director.

At Cambridge University Press we continue to work smoothly Mark Zadrozny, Journals Editor; Jonathan Geffner, who is the Cambridge point person on all production issues; and Janice Lazarte, who works to help promote our issues and special articles, and helps us to ungate material. Cambridge continues to be exceptionally wonderful to work with.

At the end of 2013, the long-time compositor of *Perspectives*, Beljan, Ltd., went out of business. *Perspectives* is now being composited by a new company (TNQ), located in India. Both APSA and Cambridge have been extremely professional and supportive. The new company has been terrific to work with.

James does an excellent job in staying in touch with all of these people, being responsive to their concerns, and obtaining their help when it is necessary. I can't say enough about the synergy between Cambridge and APSA and how essential this kind of relationship is to the success of the journal. We are also fortunate to have the help of two excellent copy editors: Linda Lindenfelser, who worked with Jim Johnson when the journal was at Rochester, and Phyllis Berk. While we do some copy editing in-house, we have budgeted to have almost all of it done externally by experienced professionals. This is important for a journal in which broad intelligibility, and thus excellent prose writing, is essential.

We are also very fortunate to have the exceptional support provided by Indiana University, its College of Arts and Sciences, and its political science department. IU has provided course release for me and support for graduate assistance for the four years of my tenure as Book Review Editor. It also has housed our editorial office and furnished state-of-the-art computer support. It is committed to continuing this support for the duration of my tenure as editor in chief of the journal (the only change is that IU tripled our office space when we took over the entire journal). By this June, IU will have supported and housed the journal for ten years. This support, and the scholarly and collaborative spirit in which it is provided, has been indispensable to the success of the journal. In an age where such support is increasingly hard to come by, this is worth noting.

COMMUNICATION WITH AUTHORS AND REVIEWERS

We have maintained excellent and efficient communication with authors, reviewers, and people in the field more generally. We try—and almost always succeed—in completing our internal review of each submitted research article within 10 days of submission. We move promptly to identify external reviews for all suitable manuscripts. I also write substantial and constructive letters to every author whose paper we decide not to send out for review. I try to send these letters within 10–14 days of submission, and when there are delays, I try to explain them to authors in personal letters. I have received a great deal of appreciative feedback from many of the authors whose papers we choose not to send out for external review. We also stay in close touch with authors through the publishing process, from external review through revision through preparation for publication. I write careful, clear, and substantive letters to each author offering guidance. If there are delays, we write to authors explaining them. I write follow-up letters to authors from whom we really wish to see a revised paper, encouraging prompt revision and resubmission. I also write often to scholars in the field, inquiring about interesting-sounding conference presentations and inviting article submissions. I am especially interested in cultivating connections with junior scholars whose work has merited official recognition or seems particularly interesting. We are always looking to reach out to new authors and readers, and to attract new and exciting work for review and publication. At the same time, all research articles are subject to our strict, double blind external review process.

As a matter of general policy, we prize efficient, prompt, and kind communication. Every letter is an opportunity to explain the journal's distinctive mission and to make a friend for the journal. We also keep excellent records of all communication. Every official letter is sent through EM, and copied to the *Perspectives* e-mail account and my own e-mail account, and all letters are backed up.

PEER REVIEW PROCESS

For the past many years, we have worked hard to make our peer-review process for all research article submissions more serious and systematic and to make clear to all readers that every single research article published in *Perspectives* has been through a demanding blind internal review process followed by a double-blind external review process.

Our review process—which includes careful editorial selection of reviewers and directions to all authors regarding revisions, and also includes very careful line editing of every sentence by the editor in chief, in addition to careful copy editing—is as serious, if not more serious, than that of any other peer-reviewed political science journal.

I believe we have succeeded in this effort.

We thus continue to receive a growing number of excellent article submissions, many of which, it turns out, are authored by top scholars in the field. By being very serious about our review process, we hope to continue to increase the number of truly excellent articles submitted and, over time, to continue to build the journal's reputation as a peer-reviewed journal so that increasing numbers of junior colleagues think of *Perspectives* as a first option for their best work when this work is framed broadly and so that departmental personnel and tenure and promotion committees will accord peer-review research articles published in *Perspectives* the measure of recognition they are due.

Along these lines, I am especially happy to report that the journal has built a very strong queue of accepted articles. Our June 2015 issue is in press; our September issue is completely filled and ready for production; and our December 2015 issue is already nearly filled with accepted articles. This queue is growing, and it speaks volumes for the journal moving forward.

JOURNAL THEMATIC FOCUS

As we have reported in the past, we have become adept at developing a reasonable publication schedule that provides a measure of focus to our planned issues. Our March 2014 issue was a very special issue that featured the theme of “gender and politics.” (The March issue was the topic of the *Perspectives* annual theme panel at the 2014 APSA meetings in Washington, DC.) Our forthcoming September 2015 issue will be a special issue on the theme of “the politics of policing and incarceration,” and it may turn out to be our best special issue yet published.

We are a general journal of political science, and the articles we publish represent the best of the submissions that make it through our review process. But by thinking strategically about timing and production schedule, proactively soliciting “Reflections” essays, and developing special Book Review theme sections, we are able to call attention to some of the “big topics” that touch on all areas of political science—as it is our mission to do. *I regard this kind of editorial “visioning” and*

planning as a central aspect of my job as editor in chief of this particular journal. The themes that I decide to feature are developed on the basis of my own extensive reading, conversations with board members and other colleagues, and extensive staff deliberations. At the same time, I am always listening to and indeed soliciting feedback, from Editorial Board members and from colleagues more generally, about what we are doing, about themes that are worthy of attention, and about how we can do what we do better.

SPECIAL REVIEW FORMATS AND SECTIONS

Perspectives seeks to nurture a **political science public sphere** that allows scholars to move beyond their normal comfort zones and reach broadly, beyond conventional methodological and subfield divides, and to the discipline as a whole. Toward this end, in the past eight years we have instituted a number of innovative formats to our Review section—book review symposia, critical dialogues, and creative categorizing of certain books (the rationale for these changes was explained in my March 2006 “Statement from the Book Review Editor,” since our philosophy for the Book Review section has not changed, and indeed the perspectives laid out in that text anticipated what we are now trying to do with the journal as a whole). Two years ago we added an additional innovation: each issue now typically contains, in addition to the “standard” four-subfield sections, a special “theme” section highlighting books that address an important substantive theme irrespective of field or approach. In recent issues we have featured the following themes in special sections: Gender and Politics, Contestation, and Rethinking US Politics.

It is worth underscoring that the overwhelming majority of the book reviews that we publish appear under one of the standard four subfield categories, and that while we have made important innovations in the book review section, the basic mission of the review section remains unchanged: to publish careful, constructively critical, and interesting reviews of political science books that feature important scholarly research and writing.

It is also worth underscoring that every aspect of the Review section—its innovations and its more conventional features—is designed to serve our journal's core mission, which is the promotion of a **political science public sphere**. We believe that the book form represents an invaluable genre for the scholarly development of sustained,

integrated analyses and arguments, and that scholarly books are thus an essential component of scholarly publishing. We thus seek to highlight the importance of political science books and to feature interesting discussions of books with the hope that this will help sustain a book culture within political science and the social sciences more generally.

Indeed, one of our goals is to give full due to the entire range of genres and formats in which scholarly work in our discipline is published, from scholarly research articles and reflective essays to books, book reviews and review essays, and dialogues.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTIONS AND “EXPLAINING” THE JOURNAL

We continue to work hard to project the journal as an important site of serious thinking about the future and purpose of our discipline. My Editor Introductions to each issue, composed as titled, synthetic, and thematic essays, represent one part of this effort. Beyond those introductions, I do a significant amount of writing intended to promote the journal and to better explain it to readers and potential readers. (My essay “Political Science and Publicity” was published in the June 2013 issue of *Political Studies Review*, a journal of the British Political Studies Association, and my essay “Restructuring the Social Sciences? Reflections from the Editor of *Perspectives on Politics*,” was published in the April 2014 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*.)

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Last year our journal was encouraged by APSA to develop a systematic social media campaign. I am thrilled to report that we have both developed and initiated a social media campaign, and it is flourishing.

The campaign is spearheaded by Rafael Khachaturian, our new social media coordinator. Rafael is a senior doctoral student who has worked on staff as a book review editorial assistant for the past three years. In June, 2014 he assumed his new position, in which he works 10 hours per week as an

hourly employee. Rafael, working in tandem with James Moskowitz, has (a) created and maintained a *Perspectives* Twitter account; (b) tweeted regularly about *Perspectives* articles, essays, and reviews that relate to items “in the news”; (c) posted announcements about the journal on Facebook; and, most importantly (d) worked with Janise Lazarte of Cambridge University Press to regularly ungate *Perspectives* articles in connection with special promotions and press releases and especially in conjunction with the blogging of our authors.

Table 1

Sample of Author Blog Posts

AUTHOR	OUTLET	BLOG TITLE
Alexander Hertel-Fernandez	LSE Blog	Understaffed State Legislatures Can Give Business the Opportunity to Gain an Upper Hand in the Policymaking Process
	PR Watch	ALEC Bills Quash Public Sector Unions, New Study Finds
Tali Mendelberg and Christopher Karpowicz	Washington Post’s Monkey Cage	Is An Old Boys Club Always Sexist?
Seva Gunitsky	Washington Post’s Monkey Cage	Social Media Helps Dictators, Not Just Protestors
Harris Mylonas	Washington Post’s Monkey Cage	The Political Limits of Recovery
Deborah Boucoyannis	Washington Post’s Monkey Cage	Adam Smith is Not the Antidote to Thomas Piketty
Wendy Wong	The Duck of Minerva	The Politics of Some One? by Charli Carpenter

Table 2

Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page’s Article Coverage

OUTLET	EXPOSURE/ARTICLE TITLE
Jon Stewart’s “The Daily Show” April 30, 2014	Authors appeared on the popular Comedy Central show.
Paul Krugman, New York Times (April 21, 2014)	“Class, Oligarchy, and the Limits of Cynicism”
Jeff Nesbit, US News & World Report (April 21, 2014)	“Oligarchy Nation: Political Scientists Find Wealthy Elites Control Politics in America”
Brendan James, Talking Points Memo	“Princeton Study: US No Longer and Actual Democracy”
Slate (April 24, 2014)	“The Silver Lining to Our Oligarchy”
Tom McKay, PolicyMic	“Princeton Concludes What Kind of Government America Really Has, and It’s Not a Democracy”
Larry Bartels, Washington Post’s Monkey Cage	Rich People Rule
John Cassidy, The New Yorker	“Is America an Oligarchy?”
BBC News report	“Study: US is an Oligarchy, Not a Democracy”
Hamilton Nolan, Gawker.com	“Study: The US is an Oligarchy”
Patrick Leary, Daily Kos	“Too Important for Clever Titles – Scientific Study Says We Are an Oligarchy (Update)”
Sara Bondioli, Huffington Post	“U.S. Policies Favor The Wealthy, Interest Groups, Study Shows”
Reddit (accumulated had over 2500 comments)	“Study Concludes that US is an Oligarchy, Not a Democracy”

Table 3

Keith Bentele and Erin O'Brien's Article Coverage

OUTLET	ARTICLE TITLE
Washington Post's Monkey Cage	"States with Higher Black Turnout are more Likely to Restrict Voting."
Talking Points Memo	"Study Finds Voting Restrictions Linked to Minority Turnout"
The Daily Kos	"Targeting the Right to Vote"
Washington Monthly	"The Most Disgraceful Practice"
The Atlantic	"If I Need ID to Buy Cough Syrup, Why Shouldn't I Need ID to Vote?"
Melissa Harris-Perry (MSNBC)	"A Low Point for Voting Rights"
Steve Kornacki (MSNBC)	"Analyzing the Pattern of Voting Access"

We have been actively encouraging our authors to write blog posts, and have worked with them to time the un gating of their pieces. A sampling of posts over the past year can be seen in table 1.

Most importantly, two of our 2014 articles received major attention in the mass media and the blogosphere, and in both cases we worked very proactively with authors to make this happen, both prior to and after publication.

First, Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page's "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens" (September 2014) generated substantial attention as reflected in table 2.

Second, coverage of Keith Bentele and Erin O'Brien, "Jim Crow 2.0: Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies" (December 2013) also garnered significant attention (see table 3).

APSA ANNUAL MEETING PANELS

A few years ago we instituted the practice of organizing a special *Perspectives* theme panel at every APSA Annual Meeting. In recent years these panels have featured Editorial Board members in roundtable discussions of important themes relevant both to the discipline broadly and to the editorial challenges and directions of the journal. Our inaugural panel, at the 2010 meetings in Washington, DC, was on the theme of "Perspectives on Subfields in Political Science." It featured Dan Drezner, Paul Pierson, Stathis Kalyvas, Dara Strolovitch, and Lisa Wedeen, with me serving as moderator. The panel was very well attended (our informal count put the number of attendees at around 100). In 2012, we planned a major panel around our special 10th anniversary issue, but the panel was canceled, along with the entire New Orleans Annual Meeting. In 2013, our

theme panel focused on a discussion of our March 2013 issue on "the politics of inequality in the face of financial crisis," and featured seven authors discussing each other's work: Richard Boyd, Dan Drezner, Jacob Hacker, Margaret Kohn, Ben Page, Thomas Oatley, and Dara Strolovitch. Our 2014 panel, chaired by board member Elizabeth Markovits, featured contributors to our March 2014 special issue on "gender and politics." And our planned 2015 panel will feature a range of prominent colleagues speaking on the topic of "Between Past and Future: Perestroika and the Future of *Perspectives on Politics*."

To sum up, the journal is thriving, due to the terrific work of many fine people and the support offered by APSA, Cambridge, Indiana University, and especially by the colleagues who, as authors, reviewers, and readers, are our primary constituency.

Appendix 1: Book Review

The *Perspectives on Politics* Book Review received 1,300 books in 2014 and identified nearly 400 of them for review or treatment in one of our special formats. We contacted over 1,000 potential review authors, over 350 of which agreed to write a review, author a review essay, participate in a critical dialogue, or contribute to a book symposium. (Note: some of these have yet to appear in our pages.)

Table 2

Reviews, Books Treated, and Authors Featured by Section, 2014

SECTION	REVIEWS	BOOKS TREATED	BOOK AUTHORS
Political Theory	42	46	53
American Politics	41	42	60
Comparative Politics	42	51	72
International Relations	49	63	92
Special Sections: (Gender, Contestation, Rethinking US Politics)	55	64	83
VOLUME 12 TOTALS	229	266	360

Note: Data in the table 2 reflect books treated in standard (single, double, and triple) reviews. They do not include symposia, review essays, etc.

Appendix 2: Decision Rates for 2014 and for 2010–2013

2014

FINAL DECISION TO DATE

Accept	8%
Do not externally review	61%
Decline upon review	23%
Revise	4%
Under Review (V1-R1)	3%
With Editor (R2+)	1%

SUBMISSIONS

Decline external review	61%
Review externally	39%

FIRST DECISION UPON EXTERNAL REVIEW

Decline	66%
Major revision	18%
Minor revision	11%
Conditional accept	5%

2010–2013

FINAL DECISION TO DATE

Accept	8%
Do not externally review	58%
Decline upon review	23%
Revise	6%
Under Review (V1-R1)	4%
With Editor (R2+)	1%

SUBMISSIONS

Decline external review	58%
Review externally	42%

FIRST DECISION UPON EXTERNAL REVIEW

Decline	61%
Major revision	26%
Minor revision	10%
Conditional accept	3%

Note: A comparison of data from the last volume year against the previous four volume years indicates a slight increase in the percentage of manuscripts declined upon external review. We believe this to be a function of reviewers' increasingly high regard for the journal and the greater number of submissions overall. Other decision rates remain relatively steady. Total article submissions continue to show a positive trend (see table 1). (Reflections pieces are excluded from data.)

Table 1

Article Submission Trend

YEAR	SUBMISSIONS	INCREASE FROM PRIOR YEAR
2014	260	22%
2013	213	6.5%
2012	200	2.5%
2011	195	5.4%
2010	185	-