

Introduction and Comments

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By now, most readers have a sense of the distinctive nature of *Perspectives on Politics* and have read the first issue—or at least so I hope. *Perspectives* aspires to be a general journal of political science that provides political insight on important problems, as it emerges from rigorous, broad-based research and integrative thought. We anticipate authors and readers primarily comprising political scientists, but also including journalists, policy analysts, public officials and their staff, and other social scientists—in short, we aim to “broaden out” without “dumbing down.”

In my not-altogether-objective view, Issue 2 succeeds as well as Issue 1 did in satisfying that aspiration. The lead article by Robert D. Putnam, “The Public Role of Political Science,” is a revision of his APSA presidential address of August 2002. Since publishing his phenomenally successful book *Bowling Alone*, Putnam has divided his nonteaching time between further scholarship and public activism on behalf of enhancing civil society. He has extraordinary energy and is a hard model to emulate, but his address provides motivation and guidance to all of us who believe that the best political science includes a concern about politics and the pursuit of a better public life.

Sheri Berman, however, reminds us in “Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society” that not all kinds of politics, and not all pursuits of a better public life, have equal merit. She begins with theories of social capital and civil society, weds them to theories of revolution and proto-revolution, and then uses that apparatus to analyze the intersection of political and religious life in the contemporary Middle East, especially Egypt. She shows us why Putnam’s caution about distinguishing “bonding” from “bridging” social capital needs to be taken very seriously, and depicts the dangers of a hollowed out political arena on the edge of revolution. *Perspectives* is always on the lookout for case studies that illuminate an important aspect of the world in a grain of sand, and Berman’s piece does just that—by building a theory, using it to dissect a complex case, and then using that case study to push the theory another few steps.

The third of the three articles in this issue that assume a tight link between society and polity is “Contentious Pluralism” by John Guidry and Mark Sawyer. The authors elevate an important banality—purportedly democratic societies never provide as much equality as they aspire to—into a powerful argument about contentious pluralism. In their view, the evils of democracy are best cured by more democracy; progress toward equality is most likely to come from ordinary people who

accidentally invent democratic practices while demanding something else, like cheaper food or the return of their “disappeared” children, or while turning the public arena into a venue for theatrical performance. Guidry and Sawyer develop the theory of contentious pluralism through four wide-ranging and evocative cases and along the way provide us with a typology of modes of subversion.

The next article in *Perspectives* widens the focus beyond the connection between society and polity by adding a consideration of the connection between economy and polity. Paul Teske in “State Regulation” examines when, why, and how American states regulate everything from the opening of hospitals to the qualifications of lawyers to the magnitude of your electric bill. He shows that states sometimes rush in to fill the regulatory vacuum left by a withdrawing federal government, and that state regulatory apparatuses are no longer, if they ever were, merely captured by the interests that they are intended to regulate. The fox is certainly inside the henhouse, but he has been met by powerful, autonomous actors (roosters?) seeking, with some success, to protect the hens. I’ll drop the awkward metaphor, but I trust that this article will stimulate readers to think about regulation as an important site of politics and about American states as a wide-open arena for the study of comparative politics.

The next two articles focus squarely on politics, *tout court*. In “Losers in Politics (and How They Sometimes Become Winners),” Kenneth Shepsle provides a moving account of William Riker’s development from dissatisfied graduate student to lonely assistant professor to powerful inventor of a new subfield of political science (iconoclasts, take note!)—and then goes on to show why Riker and that subfield have become so important to our discipline. Shepsle’s prose is as elegant and incisive as his equations always are, and he explains how Riker’s concept of heresthetic elucidates a wide array of actions that political losers throughout history have taken in order to become winners. I have already passed this article on to colleagues and students, and experts are already quarreling happily with some of Shepsle’s conclusions.

In “Beyond the Butterfly,” Richard Niemi and Paul Herrnson dissect a surprisingly simple and effective way of ensuring that some voters remain political losers. The seemingly trivial mechanics of voting can matter a great deal. American states and even localities fiercely protect their autonomy in running the mechanics of elections, with consequences ranging from amusing to appalling. Candidates’ names are misspelled; instructions are

misleading or flat-out wrong; voters are subtly encouraged to move in one direction or another or simply to stay away from the polls. Even though balloting procedures seldom determine who will be president of the United States, they may affect more outcomes than we have realized, almost always to the detriment of those with the least education and resources and the most need of gaining political influence.

I turn next to a symposium that grew out of a review essay. Matthew Evangelista wrote such an interesting set of reflections on Joshua Goldstein's *War and Gender* that the editors were inspired to seek an additional essay from a different type of feminist scholar. Elisabeth Prugl responded with a spirited argument about how to move to the next stage in analyzing the relationship between war and gender. Elizabeth Kier, in turn, was invited to comment on both essays and the book as well. Among the three essays and Goldstein's book, there ensues a dialogue about how biology opens up an array of possibilities and culture constrains them; how bellicosity, politics, and gender roles all invent one another; and how feminist scholarship does or should differ from more traditional political science scholarship. The first issue of *Perspectives* featured a terrific review essay by one scholar about many books; this symposium, composed of multiple authors focusing on one provocative book, is an equally exciting model. *War and Gender*, its discussants, and the works they cite place gender analysis firmly in the front lines of the political science of international relations.

The essays in the "Perspectives" section come from sympathetic and knowledgeable, if somewhat bemused, observers of the academic scene; the writers represent the kind of actors with whom Putnam's presidential address encourages us to engage. In "Political Science and Political Practice," former member of Congress and current professor Mickey Edwards—who describes himself as both bug and entomologist—asks why political scientists so often ascribe cynical motives to elected officials or simply refuse to consider their motives for acting. He defends the integrity of legislators and the value of a democratic electoral process, and he identifies ways of studying the legislative process so that democracy can be bolstered rather than undermined. Abstraction and quantification are fine, he concludes, so long as they are rooted in an understanding of the world as legislators themselves see it; the entomologist may classify, but only after viewing the world from the bug's vantage point.

Judge Patricia Wald moves in the opposite direction in "Scholars in the Arena." She chastises her fellow jurists for not sufficiently taking into account the facts and analyses generated by social scientists, arguing that they would often make better legal decisions if they did so. Explanations for this lacuna range from the frustratingly mundane—not enough time, too many publications—to the substantively grounded; for example, when social scientists come to different conclusions, it is very difficult for an outsider to evaluate the quality and objectivity of their work. Judge Wald concludes with an insightful meditation, based on her many years as a jurist in the United States and Europe, on how judging a particular case necessarily differs from seeking to

discern a broad pattern in or explain the causes of disparate events or processes.

Judge Wald and her two commentators, Kim Lane Scheppele and Sally Kenney, nevertheless offer suggestions for how to bring academics and jurists into more fruitful conversation with one another. Kenney explicitly echoes Putnam's call for engagement, and both she and Scheppele show how it might happen: social scientists should present their work more clearly, construe it with an eye toward its possible contribution to the public arena, and offer their own time and expertise to the courts. States and legal organizations, in turn, must train judges to evaluate and appreciate social science.

The last essay before the book reviews develops the new genre of syllabi review essays started in the first issue of *Perspectives*. In "Studying Democracy and Teaching Classics," Paulette Kurzer takes on the brave—or foolhardy—task of making sense of the comparative politics survey course. She comes to two main conclusions: these courses demonstrate more sophistication than they used to in their ability to intermingle themes and case studies, but the dominant themes of democratization and institutional design leave out too much of what really matters in the world. The world is changing out from under our course designs, and our students as well as our own intellectual work will suffer if we do not pay more attention to nondemocratic states, the role of ideas and passions in politics, and even the unfashionable neo-Marxist issues of political economy. Our use of classic works too often, Kurzer suggests, coincides with a failure to recognize how the world is changing. The essay concludes with a list of the courses she examined—an invaluable resource for anyone interested in constructing or reconstructing this subfield.

Finally and importantly, this issue of *Perspectives* contains even more book reviews than usual. Authors await these reviews eagerly, readers use them, and departments often treat them as benchmarks; we take the enterprise of reviewing books very seriously.

We are well under way with Issue 3; it will include articles on the complicated and vexed struggle for power between the president and Congress, the relationship between political theories of group identity and the psychology of actual group identities, policy dilemmas in public education, and much more.

I want to thank the many people who have contributed so much to the quality of this issue of *Perspectives*. They include the authors, who responded constructively to our many requests for revisions; the reviewers, who are helping us to figure out how to broaden out without dumbing down; the associate editors, whose wisdom and knowledge is essential in supplementing my own deficiencies; the book review editors, who enable us all to stay intellectually connected; the student editorial assistants, who provide invaluable and cheerful service; and our managing editor, who keeps it all going and is the watchdog for quality and precision. I look forward to hearing from you about what is working well in *Perspectives on Politics*, what could be improved (and how), and what innovations you would like to see. Above all, we depend upon your proposals, articles, and reviews.