

Winter/Spring 2014 Newsletter

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1) Message from Section Chair

January 2014
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As another semester gets underway, I want to thank you for your membership in the Political Science Education (PSE) section, and as the new section chair I'm here to offer some reasons to gloat, points to ponder, and invite you to make waves.

New watermarks were reached at the 2013 APSA annual meeting in Chicago, where paper authors and discussants were spread across seven panels and over 15 poster presentations. Your colleagues will be looking for you in Washington, D.C. 2014 (August 28-31), not only at panels, but also at our annual PSE business meeting. Thanks to Alison McCartney, outgoing section chair, we have a new and more sanguine meeting/reception model: plates should be immediately loaded

with great food, glasses filled at the open bar, and then seats should be taken as the meeting is launched!

A buoying message to emerge from last year's annual conference was that teaching and learning as an area of focus and inquiry has "arrived" and continues to institutionalize within the profession. Because of the sustained leadership of your colleagues, we have had – and continue to have – robust representation on APSA Council. Those members have helped the Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC), annual teaching awards, and publications such as the *Journal of Political Science Education* (JPSE) attract firm and growing support. PSE membership is burgeoning, and the involvement of APSA Presidents Jane Mansbridge and John Aldrich as TLC track participants are but one sign of new energy and interest being invested in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). Notably, your APSA proposal submissions led to an increase of two additional panels at this year's conference – a relatively big jump where "real estate" at the conference is at a premium.

Yes, SOTL is gaining momentum, driven not only by our desire to improve, but also macroforces such as the commodification of higher education, or the general slope toward rendering higher education a pricey "public good" that consumers and policymakers want to shape. Along with the competition that for-profit education systems provide, these forces compel greater public scrutiny, accountability, and (sometimes forced) justification of our work. Our collective response to these social thrusts matters more than ever. We must continue to hone our skills and knowledge, and assert our power, by educating others about the merits of our discipline, and implementing and spreading best practices at all levels, from

teaching institutions, to community colleges, to "Research I's."

What will you do by next week? This month? This year? I ask you to identify just one new way you can help hone and promote our craft. Can you lead a teaching workshop on your campus? Perhaps you will organize a reading group with your colleagues or students, or will ask a student to help write a TLC conference paper. Implement an innovative technique in a class. Attend the TLC or annual APSA conference. Submit a paper proposal next year. Find a colleague who will collaborate with you on a research project you've been meaning to undertake. Reorganize a class and share the results. Establish a blog for like-minded professors. Write an editorial. Submit your work to an education-oriented journal like *JPSE*. Use APSA Connect to share your good news. Identify one peer and suggest that he or she join PSE! *Build this community.*

How can PSE better serve your professional goals and aspirations? Our section exists to promote your voice. While we can't promise to give you one thing we all want more of (time!), together we can help make our work more efficient and effective. Please email me at renee_vanvechten@redlands.edu with your ideas, reflections, and announcements, or respond to the semi-annual call for newsletter contributions.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank Dr. Alison Millet McCartney for her vigorous leadership as section chair (2011-13). Our membership has hit new highs, circulation of our section's journal has widened, and section business receptions have met new levels of satisfaction. A tireless champion of political science educators across all types of institutions, Alison has helped reawaken others to the importance of professional involvement;

she has made indelible contributions to the discipline through her participation in TLC conference tracks, as well as workshops and roundtables at annual conferences, including APSA; and her passion for teaching excellence is visible in her co-edited book, *Teaching Civic Engagement* (available through the APSA website). Thank you, Alison.

On behalf of your section officers, may you find new reserves of energy so you can continue to make an impact wherever you can.

The Teacher-Scholar

2) From the Classroom to the TV Studio: A New Approach to Civic Education

Elizabeth A. Bennion, PhD, Indiana University South Bend, ebennion@iusb.edu

As a regular PSE columnist who writes “The Teaching Scholar” column, I have urged PSE readers to take risks inside and outside of the classroom while experimenting with a variety of approaches to active and experiential learning. In issue 15(1), I encouraged readers to give up the “sage on the stage” approach to teaching and assume a facilitator role in guiding students through active learning opportunities. In issue 16(1), I encouraged readers to more fully integrate their teaching, service and scholarship to maximize personal fulfillment and professional success. In issue 17(1), I urged readers to find new ways to teach outside the classroom, stressing the importance extra-curricular approaches to civic education and engagement. And, in issue 17(2), I noted the importance of challenging students’ current beliefs and worldviews to promote lasting learning. Throughout each column, I have stressed the importance of engaging students in *political* debates and *political* activity, particularly given the discipline’s surprisingly limited research on political engagement and

skill development pedagogies (Bennion and Dill, PSE 17(2), 5-6).

In this column I introduce you to a new approach I have undertaken in an attempt to follow all of the advice referenced above. This approach requires me to take risks and recast my role in the classroom in order to facilitate active learning, student research and important – though sometimes difficult – political debates. This approach requires that I fully integrate my teaching, research, and service, and connect classroom activities to off-campus engagement with our local public television station and with local, state and national political leaders. The risks are substantial. The results of my work with students are broadcast live every week to a 22-county viewing area containing 1.2 million people. Students’ video and fast facts are displayed on a show featuring members of the U.S. Congress, state legislators, mayors and other well-known public officials. And yet, it is this risk – this real world application – of our work together that makes this approach so exciting and rewarding for me and my students – all of whom, at semester’s end, have offered enthusiastic endorsements of the course and its learning outcomes.

What: POLS Y380, Politically Speaking: Make Live TV!

When: Twice per week class meetings, plus call-screening, camera work and video production.

Why: To gain new knowledge and skills in politics and mass media. To educate and engage the public in political affairs.

How: Through hands-on experience producing a live one-hour public affairs show on the local public television station. (WNIT-TV Sundays, 2-3 p.m., Mondays, 3-4 p.m. and online.)

Who: Local, state and national elected officials, along with civic leaders and practitioners.

Topics: Indiana state legislature, Michigan state legislature, healthcare policy, economic policy, drug policy, gun control, immigration policy, education reform, school safety, same-sex marriage, domestic violence laws, and more. . .

Requirements: Weekly episode reviews, weekly episode preparation assignments (i.e. background research on the topics and guests), plus call screening, camera work and citizen video clip production (two of each per semester).

Results: A high-quality public television program featuring student-produced “fast facts,” student-influenced discussion topics and student-produced video clips. A student research team, whose members report greater knowledge of national, state, and local politics, as well as an increased understanding of themselves, their political views, local opinions on politics and the need to stay engaged in the political process.

More information about this unique campus-community partnership will be available at the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference in February, and in a forthcoming book. In the meantime, you can contact me directly at ebennion@iusb.edu. Check out what my students and I have been up to lately and share your stories with me! You can also check out past episodes online at <http://www.wnit.org/politicallyspeaking>. And, of course, you can “like” us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/WNITpoliticallyspeaking>.

Consider creating your own public television partnership. Use your research and teaching skills in service of the public good. Teaching beyond the classroom has the potential to be

transformative. Transform your students into researchers, yourself into a public intellectual, and your campus into a critical community partner.

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Featured Essays

3) Aaaahhhhhhh, Zombies! Using the Undead to Resurrect Students in the Political Science Classroom

Craig Douglas Albert, PhD, Georgia Regents University, calbert@gru.edu

The following brief essay describes classroom activities designed to teach students several political science concepts using popular culture to resurrect their interest in learning. The popular culture theme utilized is “Zombies!” This activity is a semester-long experience focusing on getting students to understand international relations theory, key events, and themes within today’s complex world, though other learning objectives are achieved. Some

pedagogical inspiration is drawn from Blanton (2013).

I focus on two activities: the first involves understanding and then applying international relations theory. To begin, the first order of business is to read a couple of chapters from Drezner's *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (2011). There is a shorter article version of the book (Drezner 2010) if you wish to make this a weeklong objective in an introductory class rather than having an entire class devoted to it. After explaining and discussing the first couple of theories Drezner identifies in his book, move on to the novel *WWZ*, by Max Brooks (2006). I suggest dividing this book into rough sections and reading a few chapters at a time with each theory Drezner presents.

After discussing *WWZ* and making sure students understand the story itself—with the side effect of increasing reading comprehension—have the students explain, through short essay assignments, some of the actual events occurring through the international relations theory discussed that week. It really does not matter how the theories are paired with the novel; a good IR scholar will be able to explain each security situation through any IR theory. It is important to let the students know this—we have multiple tools in the bag each capable of doing the same job, though some are better and certain jobs than others. Most will complain when the class starts focusing on non-traditional security theories, such as constructivism and feminism, because they have a harder time explaining security through critical theories than through more traditional theories. However, feminism, post-modernism and other non-traditional theories are crucial elements to understand security studies, especially human security, and thus, professors must push their students to see the world

through these theoretical lenses. Everyone will love and have a great time explaining *WWZ* through realism and neoconservatism. The point, however, is to demonstrate to students the utility of each theory.

What questions or points should the popular culture oriented class focus on? Here are a few examples specific to this exercise: What are the key points in each situation that each theory can explain? What would each theory focus on that differentiate it from all other theories? How did the states respond to the situation in theoretical terms? Did they choose properly? (This question particularly lends itself to game theory and rational choice in operationalizing the term “properly.”)

Additionally, it is beneficial here to seize upon the types of regimes and current political contexts Brooks presents. The events and politics of the book are not necessarily perfectly accurate, though they are close (minus that whole Zombie thing . . .). You can have the students, for example, discuss why North Korea, South Africa, Cuba, and Israel are each more successful than more democratic regimes in responding to the Zombies. (We really don't know about North Korea; it just doesn't let anyone know how the Zombies are handled there . . . which is a lesson students will enjoy in and of itself.) Why are authoritarian regimes more capable of dealing with a Zombie outbreak than more liberal societies?

It is useful here to explain Aristotle's regime types and give his famous characteristics. This helps situate the novel's politics in a more philosophical way, and introduces students to another field of our multifaceted discipline. Through this activity, students will start to appreciate how IR theory may not help us predict war, but certainly helps us explain its occurrence; additionally, it will help students

appreciate the differences in political regimes and how different regimes base their foreign policy on different theories. Furthermore, you will lure students into really loving IR politics by manipulating their love of Zombies!

A final activity I have is used for their final project. I assign the students a 15-page creative writing assignment. The students have no rules for the paper format as far as technical APSA standards go. Instead, there are certain parameters the students must meet: the project must illustrate a keen understanding of international relations theory; it must illustrate an understanding of current international events; it must depict other themes we covered in the class (not mentioned in this essay but presented in the class), such as race, gender, class, identity, etc. And, it must be about Zombies! Other than this, it is up to the students to decide what the project is: students have designed a video game; written a play; developed a movie script; and one even wrote a graphic comic! Nevertheless, overwhelmingly, students write a short story resembling Brooks' tale.

I also found the following suggestions useful in designing an entire special topics course around the Zombie theme. Make sure you discuss the details of each theory through Socratic discourse rather than through a lecture. Drezner's book is detailed enough that a lecture will only duplicate his work. Interactive class discussion will force students into a more nuanced, self-educated understanding of the theory. Make sure you analyze a key event through IR theory first to demonstrate to the students how such an endeavor is accomplished in a scholarly way. For the creative writing assignment, do not grade too harshly. This assignment is to increase creative energy, not academic rigor. You must adjust your expectations for the objectives in mind. Other

shorter essay assignments throughout the semester can focus on the academic rigor.

Helpful References

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Suggested Course Readings

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4) Classroom Innovation with “The Hunger Games”

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After nearly 15 years working as administrative staff in our college’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, I retired in spring 2013, but agreed to teach a class on “American Political Issues” during the fall 2013 semester. I had taught the course as an adjunct many times before, but I wanted to use the results from years of research and assessment activities to address various student needs previously identified in our research in support of grant proposals. During the last ten years, the college had received multiple multi-million dollar grants as an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), as well as grants focused on career-technical programs. Like most comprehensive community colleges, many of our students need significant “developmental” work in reading, writing and mathematics before they are able to be successful in the general education courses, like my class, that they must take for their degrees. In order to address these needs, multiple innovations were simultaneously introduced into the fall 2013 course, including use of the university’s online learning management system to supplement traditional face-to-face classroom experiences; the presence of an “embedded tutor” to assist students who were still enrolled in “developmental” or “remedial” reading and writing courses; and use of the pedagogical technique of “flipping” the classroom away from the traditional lecture format.

Course design also incorporated insights gained from discussions with colleagues teaching developmental writing courses and those offering the “College 101” (College/Life Success) course. This introduction helped me understand the college’s expectations for incoming

students, the skills that would be introduced or reinforced for these students, and the timeline the students would encounter during the semester. I adapted my own class structure and timeline to reinforce the student learning that was expected of the incoming students that fall semester.

Prior to the semester, a tutor was requested from our Academic Support Center, who could routinely attend class to offer support (on a daily basis if necessary), for students needing help with reading and writing. *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins, was used as the course text to facilitate access to political discussion by students having a broad spectrum of reading abilities. This “young adult” novel has a vocabulary and reading level accessible to nearly all incoming freshmen, even those at some of the lowest reading levels. Students viewed the “Hunger Games” movie in class as well as *The Big Lebowski*, which was included as a result of J. Wesley Lechrone’s piece in *PS* of January 2013 “Hippies, Feminists, and Neocons: Using *The Big Lebowski* to Find the Political in the Nonpolitical.” The class also viewed *A Place at the Table*, a 2012 documentary on hunger in the United States. The decision to emphasize issues related to hunger and poverty was not only due to the centrality of these themes to *The Hunger Games*, but also because the star of *Lebowski*, Jeff Bridges, is a long time advocate on hunger issues, founding the “End Hunger Network” in 1983. He was extensively interviewed in the documentary as well.

Detailed course planning proved to be of only limited relevance as the actual classroom experience mirrored both the research findings from my previous work and the limitations imposed by institutional bureaucracy and habits. For example, there were a limited number of computer classrooms available for general education courses. The classroom

ultimately used for the course had limited space: virtually no space for small group discussions or one-on-one tutoring --both essential to the success of the course's basic plan for student learning. Another major stumbling block was the assignment of a "peer tutor" to the course rather than a "professional tutor." Peer tutors are fellow students who are at an accelerated level relative to the students in the class and so are available to help others with reading and writing difficulties. However, mostly because of potential liability issues, these peer tutors are not allowed to meet with the students in the class without a regular staff supervisor in the same room. This severely limited the potential for providing support for students having low reading and writing skills, support they would need on an almost daily basis.

One additional problem that could not be anticipated was the government shutdown in October. Much of the data for the examination of hunger and poverty issues became inaccessible or very difficult to access during the shutdown. The basic course design included the idea of the "flipped classroom," which de-emphasizes or eliminates class lectures in favor of in-class research done by the students using active learning or project-based learning strategies. Much of the reason for locating the course in the computer classroom was nullified as limited access to federal government data ensued. Although the actual disruption lasted about three weeks, it was not clear how long it would continue as the shutdown unfolded. This resulted in the need for a mid-course redesign. I scrambled to get local officials and activists to talk to the class in-person instead of relying on the students' in-class, computer-based research. The guest speakers also proved to be good contacts for the students who needed to find an organization they could volunteer to

help as part of their "community service" requirement for the course.

Together, the students and I learned a great deal about the issues of hunger and poverty in our rural county setting. The concerns I had heard from faculty over the years about problems with classrooms, instructional support, and student motivation and perseverance were substantiated as well. Many students in the course had personally encountered the consequences of poverty in their own lives and educations. In fact, several faced those same problems and consequences in their college studies that fall semester. Although the course did not meet my hopes for addressing the variety of student learning issues that my research had previously identified, the actual experience in the classroom reinforced the research findings. The course also highlighted poverty's impacts on student learning at both the institutional and the personal levels, and their ongoing relevance for the day-to-day college classroom experience.

5) Traditional Teaching Approach –No! Creative and Critical Thinking –Yes!

*Melvin A. Kahn, PhD, Wichita State University,
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After years of teaching Political Science, I engaged in serious introspection. My conclusion was --while my students did a fairly good job of mastering knowledge and explanations, I realized that, except for my introductory class, where I used the "Game of Politics Simulation" by Don Jansiewicz, there was not strong evidence that my teaching had encouraged much creative or critical student thinking.

Fortunately, Don Jansiewicz had sent me a copy of his unpublished manuscript, *Terra Nova*, which focused on students constructing their own society "after they had traveled on a

spaceship to establish a new world after Earth became doomed.” This inspired me to use his idea in my political theory course, but I modified it. Instead of a doomed earth, I created a scenario for 2060 when the United States realized the perilous threat of its rapidly growing population. Thus, it used a lottery to select a state with a two to three million population to establish a new nation-state on another planet. The purpose --to create a successful politico-socio-economic society that, if successful, would serve as a model for other threatened states to follow.

The state selected was Mississippi and the national government provided 100 super-sized space ships and the necessary astronauts and fuel for travel to location on the newly discovered planet, Libertonia, containing an area similar to Mississippi’s topography and climate. The Mississippians were also provided with tools, an initial food supply, and other first-year necessities. This totaled 11.1 billion dollars based on the \$37,000 per capita annual income of the state’s three million residents.

One month prior to the end of the political theory course, each student was assigned to write a 14- to 16-page paper creating the most feasible politico-socio-economic system possible. I also gave each student a copy of Mississippi’s demographics to consider in creating and establishing a new viable nation. Moreover, students were free to use any of the political philosophers we had studied, others they knew about, their own reasoning, or any combination of these. Since I thought students would find it less challenging if they duplicated the more familiar U.S.A. or Locke, they were barred from creating a system that came anywhere close to either.

The result was a wide variety of thoughtful and unusually creative papers accompanied by oral

comments such as, “This was really interesting,” and “I really had to do some hard thinking on this paper.” A week after all assignments had been turned in - but not yet returned - I required a new, but previously unannounced three to four page written assignment. Students, regardless of how well satisfied with their original papers, were to assume they were “intelligent critics.” Moreover, in their new roles, they were expected to write strong and credible attacks on their original papers. While two complained at first that they had worked hard on their papers and could not see any weaknesses, almost all found credible flaws in their initial work.

One caution - even though I teach students mostly from the local metropolitan area -- I will probably only do the self-critique aspect every other year since the “grapevine” could forewarn students about what’s coming after the creative paper. Overall, I feel this approach viable since it involves students engaging in both creative thinking and the experience of critically evaluating both their analytical and written efforts.

6) Using Presidential Daily Diaries as an Instructional Tool

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For the past several years, I have used presidential daily diaries as an instructional tool with students during the study of the presidency in my AP U.S. government classes. Some years, I had my students explore the daily diaries so they understood what a typical day was like for the president. Other years, I provided students with more direction. What I have found is that the presidential daily diary can be used as an effective instructional tool when studying the presidency.

What are Presidential Daily Diaries?

The Presidential Daily Diaries are minute-by-minute accounts of the president's day. Details include people with whom he meets, phone calls he makes and receives, and other information as noted by White House staff. Some daily diaries are more detailed than others, but for the most part, one can get a clear picture of what the president has done on a particular day by reading the daily diary.

Not all presidential daily diaries are created equal. Daily diaries for some presidents are more accessible and better maintained than others. The daily diaries of Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson are the only daily diaries with a search function, although other daily diaries are searchable PDFs. Most daily diaries are housed at their respective presidential museum websites, but a few are housed at the University of Virginia's Miller Center website. The Reagan Library has done a fine job of combining President Reagan's personal diary with the official daily diary on its website. The daily diaries available online cover Franklin Roosevelt's presidency through the first two years of the George H.W. Bush administration.

Using the Daily Diary to get a Taste of the Presidency

In the past, I have directed students to select ten days of a president's daily diary, usually using the student's birthday as the starting point. Students were asked to analyze the daily diaries, looking for patterns, in order to summarize what a typical day is like for the President of the United States. In order for students to gain greater insights into the presidency, I advise student to Google the names of people meeting or talking with president along with the president's name, such

as "Gerald Ford and Richard Cheney" to know with whom the president is interacting.

Instructors can also direct students to specific daily diary dates by having student look for specific information. This can be done via daily diary websites, or instructors can print copies of the dates of interest for students to examine. Much depends on what instructors wish to gain from students interacting with the daily diaries.

Using the Daily Diary as a Case Study Tool

The "Lyndon Johnson Selected Interactive Daily Diary" site includes eight case studies. These case studies combine LBJ's daily diary with key documents, recorded phone calls, and audio/video resources. The way the LBJ Library has constructed the case studies, instructors can use them as they are presented as case studies, or instructors can use the case studies as a template for case studies instructors wish to create on their own.

Using the Daily Diary in Term Paper Research

Presidential daily diaries are rich with ideas for student term papers. Besides providing primary source material for more traditional research paper topics, the daily diaries can be used to spark non-traditional research paper topics as: "Church Attendance and the Chief Executive," "The Vacationing President," "The Sporting President," "The Intersection of Celebrities and the President," "State Dinners as a Means of Diplomacy," "Foreign Travel and the President," and "The Films Presidents Watch."

Links to the daily diaries of the respective presidents:

[Franklin Roosevelt](#)
[Harry Truman](#)
[Dwight Eisenhower](#)
[John Kennedy](#)
[Lyndon Johnson](#)
[Richard Nixon](#)

[Gerald Ford](#)
[Jimmy Carter](#)
[Ronald Reagan](#)
[George H. W. Bush](#)

Textbook Review

7) William E. Hudson. *American Democracy in Peril: Eight Challenges to America's Future*, 7th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2013. 431 pp. ISBN 978-1-4522-2675-0

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In recent years, the essential question asked by those interested in effective teaching and learning has shifted from “What do our students need to know?” to “What do our students need to be able to do?” Skills and aptitudes, not just content, are what our undergraduate students need in order to succeed, both during their college career and after graduation. Yet, there is very little evidence of this shift found in most traditional introductions to American government textbooks. Undergraduate students, particularly those at the introductory level, who may be getting their first exposure to political science, often come to the subject with the assumption that to “know” American politics is to learn a definitive set of facts about it. Most traditional textbooks confirm this assumption by neatly dividing topics and concepts into seemingly obvious and uncontested chapters. But American politics is messy and complex; it demands context and interpretation. And importantly, it demands a critical approach. Most traditional textbooks eschew putting the pieces together and critically reflecting on the big picture that emerges; but our students should recognize that all is not well with the American political system.

The primary contribution of William E. Hudson's text is that he says so, unambiguously: American democracy is “in peril.” His critical approach offers eight in-depth analyses of formidable challenges, each normatively assessed in light of four models of democracy that are outlined in the introduction—protective democracy, developmental democracy, pluralist democracy, and participatory democracy. Rather than artificially dividing key topics and concepts that are essential to an introductory course (e.g., federalism, civil liberties, interest groups, etc.) into chapters, Hudson contextually situates them within and among the eight identified challenges—separation of powers, the imperial judiciary, radical individualism, citizen participation, elections without the people's voice, the “privileged position” of business, economic inequality, and the national security state. As a result, some of the topics and concepts appear in more than one chapter, as the text's argument-driven approach demands. Pedagogically, this contextualization suggests to students that it is not enough to “know” key concepts; instead, it asks them to interpret the meaning and significance of these ideas in the context of arguments. If we want to help our students develop into critical thinkers, then struggling through arguments, rather than artificially-structured textbook chapters, is the practice they need.

Even when unrecognized by their authors, all textbooks have a normative element, implicit in authorial and editorial choices (e.g., what information to include or exclude, how to present and organize it, etc.). An additional strength of *American Democracy in Peril* is the transparency with which Hudson acknowledges his arguments and invites students to challenge them. The best example of this transparency and its educational value are the annotated

“Suggestions for Further Reading” that appear at the conclusion of each chapter, which clearly mark certain sources with the notation: “Presents a point of view that disagrees with the arguments presented in this chapter.” Doing so not only sends the important message to students that well-developed argumentation *must* consider and contend with opposing views, but also identifies the material with which they can directly challenge Hudson’s contentions.

In my experience, students in introductory American politics courses find this book to be demanding, but engaging. The author’s critical approach and normative assessments are, at first, foreign to most students’ ways of thinking; but they ultimately seem to be captured by Hudson’s provocations (and relieved to discover that it is not typical textbook reading). The book achieves an effective balance between accessibility and theoretical and empirical depth, placing it in a sweet spot between a standard textbook and a purely scholarly text. As a result, it provides undergraduate students with an opportunity to read and think critically, as well as develop their own arguments about American politics, without overwhelming them with technical jargon. Of course, this book can’t teach for us, nor will it speak to every instructor and student. But if your primary objective is to help students develop into critical “thinkers” and “doers,” rather than just “knowers,” Hudson’s text can serve as a valuable teaching tool.

Film Review

8) “Gaining Ground: Building Community on Dudley Street” (2012), Directed by Mark Lipman, New Day Digital, 58 minutes.

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It is very rare that I am hooked on a film after just 15 minutes. Yet, just a quarter of an hour

into Mark Lipman’s documentary, *Gaining Ground: Building Community on Dudley Street*, I found myself amazed by the achievements of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston. At a time in our discipline where so much of the discussion is focused on the importance of civic engagement, political participation and active citizenship, the film shows that political efficacy can work, especially at the local level.

The documentary focuses on the years 1984 to 2009 – 25 years – and the efforts of the DSNI to resurrect an economically distressed and crime-ridden community. Faced with the prospect of a neighborhood on the verge of collapse, the residents, many of whom were immigrants, decided to form a community association that did more than just meet monthly: the focus was always on ameliorating their lives through economic development, community policing, political participation and youth leadership. *Gaining Ground* takes us on a journey of humble beginnings for the DSNI, culminating in a revolutionary home ownership program and a somewhat rocky partnership with the Salvation Army and the City of Boston to build a new community center.

The highlight of *Gaining Ground*, and perhaps the most valuable lesson to be gleaned from this documentary, is the role of youth. Unlike traditional community associations, which have a tendency to be helmed by those over 35, the focus of the DSNI always seems to be on nurturing the talents of the youth and making them involved in every political process. These efforts ranged from youth-led rallies for more employment opportunities, the Dudley Youth Council and its weekly radio show, to the Young Architects Council, whose early vision of a community center manifests itself later in the actual design; and youth running for office.

Two of those youth leaders, John Barros and Carlos Henriques, are interviewed extensively throughout the documentary and their experiences seem to be the norm on Dudley Street. Both grew up in the same multicultural neighborhood – a mixture of White, Black, Latino and Cape Verdean immigrants and native born – and both were encouraged from an early age to be active in local politics and to even run for office. What makes their stories unique, however, is that after leaving the community for college, they both returned and are now active in their neighborhood initiative and local government.

I cannot begin to emphasize how important this documentary is in the context of educational materials that are perfect for the political science classroom. While the documentary clocks in at 58 minutes, it is hard to think of a better use of an hour, particularly from an educator's perspective. This makes for a perfect classroom viewing and like any good activity, should be followed up with students' reflections or a take-home essay.

In Memoriam:

Craig Leonard Brians, 1962 -2013

With wishes for safe travels and warm smiles, Dr. Craig Leonard Brians bid farewell to his colleagues at the APSA annual meeting in Chicago last September, but no one anticipated these would be among his last goodbyes. On Sunday, November 10, 2013, Dr. Brians passed away suddenly at his home in Blacksburg, Virginia. He was 51.

Craig Brians was born in California and raised in the Central Valley on his parents' organic farm, where he learned to "fix anything and everything," and to persevere. After graduating

from California State University, Fresno, he became a police officer with the Fresno Police Department, a job he loved because, as he told his wife, "I knew I could help people. I had the ability to go into any terrible situation and contain it and make it better, even if only for a while." He later suffered a devastating fall while on duty, experiencing a spinal injury from which he would only partially recover; he learned to walk again, but extreme pain would be his constant companion until his last day. He turned to academia, and with his methodical habits of mind, trademark cushion and cane, and tireless affability, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California at Irvine.

Dr. Brians joined the faculty at Virginia Tech in 1998 where he became engrossed in teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in American politics, political communication, and research methods, and was honored by his students and colleagues with awards for outstanding mentoring, teaching, and research. He was known for his attentiveness and exuberance, and he enriched others' lives as Associate Chair of the Political Science Department, chair of many committees, advisor to student groups, and frequent contributor to local and national news stations. He drew students – undergraduates and grads – into research projects, and invited many to present papers with him at annual conferences, including the Teaching and Learning Conference.

A prolific scholar with insatiable curiosity, Dr. Brians published in several subfields, including parties, campaigns, and elections, research methodology, public opinion research, voting behavior, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and even political theory, with notable publications in the discipline's leading journals, including the *American Political Science Review*,

Presidential Studies Quarterly, *Journal of Political Science Education*, and *Public Choice*, among others. He principally revised and authored recent editions of a popular textbook, *Empirical Political Analysis*, to make it more accessible to undergraduates.

Dr. Brians played key roles in helping to develop a vibrant teaching and learning community within Political Science, often in quiet ways. He was the person who emailed those up in front with ideas, suggestions, and textual references to improve our collective work. He actively promoted the TLC almost from its inception as a track discussant and presenter, served as a council member in the Political Science Education section, and as he did in virtually all six of the APSA sections of which he was a member, volunteered regularly for awards committees. He made small gestures that had large impacts, such as providing conference panelists with his discussant's notes, and becoming an active participant in OPOSSEM research consortium, then writing some of the

free-on line material, and then serving as a member of its advisory board.

As a member of the APSA Standing Committee of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Brians sought to make APSA's annual conference more accessible to graduate students and teaching faculty, and to ensure that the discipline would be more responsive to their needs, voices, and interests. He also worked to make the online syllabus collection vibrant, relevant, and accessible to political scientists who might be isolated from like-minded scholars, and was instrumental in establishing an annual teaching award.

Dr. Brians's rich contributions to our profession are too numerous to recount, but his kind and energetic spirit, enduring patience, humor, caring habits, radiant smile, impeccable honesty, intellectual wealth, and gentle but transformative ways are counted among his legacies. He will be remembered for the goodness he embodied and inspired.

Announcements

- Past issues of the *Political Science Educator* are now archived online: <http://community.apsanet.org/TeachingCivicEngagement/additionalteachingresources/new-item> Thanks very much to Elizabeth C. Matto, Rutgers University, for making this possible. This is a tremendous service to the Section. Again, thank you!
- Congratulations to Ryan Claassen and Quin Monson for receiving PSE Section's Best APSA Conference Paper Award presented at the PSE Section meeting in Chicago in 2013. We gratefully acknowledge the generous sponsorship of this award by the Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars.
- **Upcoming Submission Deadlines for Teaching Awards:**
 - The Thomas Ehrlich Civically Engaged Faculty Award, sponsored by Campus Compact. **Deadline: April 1** (<http://www.compact.org/events-jobs-grants-more/awards/the-thomas-ehrllich-civically-engaged-faculty-award/18188/>)
 - Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty, Sponsored by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education. **Deadline: End of April.**

- PSE Section's Best APSA Conference Paper Award, sponsored by the Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars. Nominations deadline: **Spring (TBA)**.
 - APSA Teaching Award Recognition. Submission deadline: **Summer (TBA)**.
 - APSA Michael Brintnall Teaching and Learning Award http://www.apsanet.org/content_87679.cfm **(TBA)**.
 - TLC Teaching and Learning Conference Paper Proposals. Deadline: September.
 - APSA Annual Conference Paper Proposals. Deadline: **December (TBA)**.
 - APSA CQ Press Award for Teaching Innovation. Nomination deadline: **January (TBA)**.
 - APSA Distinguished Teaching Award: Nomination deadline: **February 1 (each year)**.
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- **APSA 2014, Washington D.C., August 28 – 31:**
 - We anticipate 8 panels this year, most co-sponsored with Teaching and Learning. Please remember that section panels for the 2015 meeting are allocated on the basis of attendance at this year's panels, so please attend as many of the section's panels as you can.
 - Also, please make plans to attend the **Political Science Education section business meeting** (and reception – with open bar!) at the annual meeting. If you have any items that you would like to place on the meeting agenda, please let Renee Van Vechten know by August 1.

Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to Maureen Feeley at mfeeley@ucsd.edu. 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.