

Winter/Spring 2015 Newsletter

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Information

1) Message from Section Chair

Renée Van Vechten, Associate Professor of
Government, University of Redlands
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Should APSA publish and distribute an association-wide journal devoted to teaching and learning? What would be PSE's role in the process of installing an editorial board, and what form and direction would that publication take? Would it exist either alongside the *Journal of Political Science Education (JPSE)*, augment it, or replace it?

Although APSA is not actively pursuing plans to create such a journal (no plans are in the works), the association director and then-president of APSA raised this possibility at the 2014 Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC), and section members attending this year's (2015) TLC again discussed it at the informal section meeting.

Such a journal would represent a collective acknowledgement of teaching's vital role within the profession, a long-sought-after goal for many members of PSE. Marked progress has been made following decades of hard work: our section is well-rooted and boasts its own journal, the TLC has become institutionalized within APSA, teaching awards are bestowed at the annual meeting, and panels, posters, and short courses dedicated to teaching and learning can be found easily at the annual meeting. An association-wide teaching and learning journal could be the next logical step in

making research about teaching and learning accessible to more of APSA's members.

Concerns have been voiced about the potential editorial direction this journal could take; for example, would studies involving large, complex, quantitatively-based analyses be privileged over smaller-scale studies that rely on qualitative (or quantitative) methods? Would teaching faculty lose a lifeline? How might they influence the editorial board?

As with all ideas at the formation stage, questions clearly outnumber the answers. In any case, it bears remembering that an association-wide teaching journal would take shape over time—not immediately, and with input from our section leadership. As a board, we welcome your input and feedback about this possibility (my email is listed below), as the conversation is ongoing.

As a board, we also continually look for ways to create and spread knowledge about our craft and to help you strengthen your professional network. Sometimes opportunities come to us, which is the case with this year's WPSA (Western Political Science Association) meeting in Las Vegas. In addition to the regular panels that Boris Ricks has organized around this theme, our section was asked to sponsor a "conference within a conference" on teaching and learning, and we're pleased to say that will take place on Saturday, April 4th. Workshops will be offered in addition to themed panels. Both I and co-chair John Forren extend an enthusiastic "thanks" to all who will participate.

Planning for the annual meeting in San Francisco (Sept. 3-6) continues apace. We want to see all of you at our annual business meeting and reception! More importantly, many thanks to this year's APSA program chair, Sherri Wallace, and Victor Asal and Jessica Lavariega-Monforti (of the Standing Committee on Teaching & Learning), who teamed up to create this year's co-sponsored annual meeting panels. We wish all paper and poster presenters, short course leaders, and discussants godspeed with

your research. Stay tuned for information about short courses that our section will sponsor.

Finally, when you are invested intellectually and professionally in our section's activities, our collective knowledge expands and our networks grow. Higher membership signals that what we do merits resources and support. Please encourage your colleagues to join the section, because there is strength in numbers.

May the coming months be productive ones!

Best regards,

Renée Van Vechten, Section President
University of Redlands
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The Teacher-Scholar

2) *The New Science of Learning*

Elizabeth A. Bennion, Professor of Political Science, Indiana University South Bend, ebennion@iusb.edu

My previous column entitled "Challenging Beliefs to Promote Student Learning" (*The Political Science Educator, Summer/Fall 2013*) reviewed key findings from cognitive psychology and neuroscience about how people learn. Reading Jose Antonio Bowen's "Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of the Classroom Will Improve Student Learning" and Ken Bain's "What the Best College Teachers Do" led me to revise my teaching statement and think deeply about how well my instructional approach reflects what we know about how people learn. This column suggests that we should find ways to share this information with our students, and recommends *The New Science of Learning* as a valuable resource.

It is not only instructors who benefit from understanding how learning occurs; this knowledge is extremely beneficial to students. I recently joined a faculty reading group that is discussing the book *The New Science of Learning: How to Learn in Harmony with Your*

Brain. Our group has already agreed that all instructors should be familiar with the information contained in the book and should share it with students. Indeed, the book is written primarily for college students. It is filled with practical advice and describes why applying these skills and strategies works, based on what we know about the brain's design. The goal is to help students make their learning easier and more effective, and to allow them to more successfully recall new information when they need it.

Key insights include the fact that the person who does the work does the learning. A few key concepts described in ways that students can understand include:

- *Long-term potentiation.* Every time you use newly learned information or skills, the connections between the brain cells get stronger and your ability to recall the information becomes faster.
- *The distributive practice effect.* To form lasting memories, practice needs to happen over extended periods.
- *Transference.* You can demonstrate learning by using information to help you learn similar new information or by applying it to problems beyond those you have seen before.

There are several key lessons for students, including an explanation for why they forget so much of what they “learned” for an exam. Learning requires practice and a meaningful connection to other information in order to become a permanent part of memory. Cramming is not learning because a day or two of cramming is not enough time for the brain to form permanent memories. Only when students “practice, read, write, think, talk, collaborate, and reflect” does the brain make permanent connections (13). Students also learn the optimal context in which learning takes place. For example, the brain should be rested, hydrated, and not over-taxed by back-to-back classes that do not allow sufficient time for the brain to process what it has learned.

This is helpful advice for students who schedule long days of back-to-back classes, go without sleep, or neglect proper exercise and nutrition because they think their time is best spent “studying” (or, rather, cramming) for exams.

The book helps students to consider scientifically-grounded strategies for studying smarter and more efficiently, rather than longer and harder. Reading the book is also helpful for faculty. It encourages us to consider whether we are providing students with the repeated opportunities for practice learning requires, and how we can best help them to connect what they are learning in our courses with what they already know.

I encourage all PSE section members to get a copy of the book. Even better, form your own reading circle so that you can discuss the book with colleagues – and, perhaps, with students. Consider ways to share this information with students (in class, through advising sessions, at new student orientation, etc.). The advice is clear, research-based, and practical. The book includes chapters on: sleep, naps, and breaks, exercise and learning, using all your senses to learn, patterns and learning, memory, mindsets toward learning, and paying attention. Both faculty and students will benefit by considering how students (and faculty) can learn in harmony with their brains.

Works Cited:

- Bain, K. 2004. *What the Best College Teachers Do.* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Bowen, J.A. 2012. *Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Doyle, T. and T. Zakrajsek. 2013. *The New Science of Learning: How to Learn in Harmony With Your Brain.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Featured Essay**3) Reflections on Presenting a Workshop at the TLC**

Aleisha Karjala, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, akarjala@usao.edu

Much like the rest of you, I attend the TLC because it is populated by scholars who care about teaching and learning. At the 2014 TLC, I offered a workshop called *Best Practices in Teaching American Government*. Surely, in an hour long block, I felt that we could collectively tackle three big questions. What is the goal of this course? How do we accomplish this goal? And how do we know if we are accomplishing the goal? Needless to say, fellow academics, we spent almost the entire hour on question one. I was overly ambitious. It was nevertheless an hour well spent.

The goal of the basic American government class, which is still the most commonly required political science course on most college campuses, is still up for debate. At its core, the goal still seems to be terminal civic education, where students must get the knowledge and context of the political system to operate as citizens. Along with this, however, is the idea of efficacy. Almost everyone in attendance agreed that these two ideas, knowledge and efficacy, were critically important. Beyond this, however, it is hard to agree on much. Why? Because we all teach at such different institutions, with differing student populations and institutional demands.

So even though we didn't get to questions two and three, we really did. We use the methods of accomplishing the goals we set for this particular class according to the individual dictates of our class goals and our schools. Does this leave you unsatisfied?

This is, I believe, what keeps us coming back to the TLC. What we do is inherently complex. We all approach any given subject from multiple and differing perspectives. (Notice I

did not say silos. That word was very popular in my track in 2015.)

There is still much to learn from each other and continued attendance at TLC. Even though that workshop was overly ambitious, upon reflection I realize it is because I/we got stuck on the theoretical question. Next time, I might focus on the practical, everyday concerns of teaching American Government. The TLC enables us to be both theoretical and practical in our approach to teaching and learning, and that is a win/win situation.

Synopsis of Forthcoming Publication

4) Rogers, Michael T. and Donald M. Gooch, eds. 2015. *Civic Education in the 21st Century: A Multi-dimensional Inquiry*. Lexington Books.

Michael Rogers and Don Gooch have just completed an edited volume on civic education, which should be of great interest to many in the PSE community. It will be published by Lexington Books (subsidiary of Rowman and Littlefield publishing) and will be available for purchase in late 2015. Here is a brief synopsis:

"Imagine an America where politicians, governmental institutions, schools, new technologies and interest groups all work together to promote informed, engaged citizens. *Civic Education for the 21st Century* brings together scholars from various disciplines and specializations to show such a United States is possible. Inspired by Alexis de Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy in the early 1800s, this edited volume represents a multidimensional evaluation of civic education in its new and varied forms today. While some lament a civics crisis in America, *Civic Education in the 21st Century* raises hope that we can have a civically informed and active citizenry. We find the activities of a number of politicians, government institutions, schools and interest groups as promising developments in the struggle to educate and engage Americans

in their democracy. New technologies and new innovations in civic education have laid the foundation for a revitalized American civic ecology. With *Civic Education in the 21st Century*, we encourage the United States to make these practices less isolated and more common throughout the county."

"The volume is divided into three major sections. First there are 4 chapters exploring the history and philosophical debates about civic education, particularly with respect to its role in America's educational institutions. Then, the second section provides 7 groundbreaking inquiries into how politicians and political institutions (particularly governmental ones), can and are promoting civic education and engagement through their routine operations. For example, it explores such topics as how politicians through campaigns and judiciaries through community programs enhance civic knowledge or encourage civic engagement. This section also explores how new technologies like the Internet and social media are increasingly used by government and other institutions to encourage a more politically informed and/or civically active citizenry. Finally, the third section contains 6 chapters that explore programs and practices in higher education that are enhancing civic education, engagement and our academic knowledge of them. From the virtual civics campus of Fort Hayes State to citizens' academies throughout the country, this section shows the 21st century possibilities for schools to once again be civics actors and promoters."

For more information, please contact: Michael Rogers, Associate Professor, Arkansas Tech University: mrogers6@atu.edu

If you might be interested in writing a review of this book for our next newsletter (submission deadline is Aug. 1), please let me know: Maureen Feeley, mfeeley@ucsd.edu.

Honors and Awards

5) *Teaching Excellence Award*: Terry Gilmour, Professor of Government, Midland College, Midland, Texas, tgilmour@midland.edu

Terry Gilmour, Professor of Government at Midland College, received a teaching excellence award on January 9, 2015 at the College's 22nd Annual Teaching Excellence Award reception. The event is held each year to recognize outstanding faculty, who are nominated and selected by peers. Dr. Gilmour won in the Academic/Transfer category.

The Midland College press release reports that Gilmour was selected for her "quality teaching, creativity and passion for students and their subject matter." It also reports that "Gilmour holds a Bachelor of Science degree and Master of Arts degree from West Texas A&M University and a Ph.D. from Texas Tech University. She is a former landman and taught as an adjunct professor at Midland College before joining the faculty as a full-time professor in 1997. In addition to teaching government classes, Dr. Gilmour also teaches Political Geography in Midland College's College Classics program designed for Midland residents over the age of 50."

Gilmour will receive a plaque and monetary honorarium. Her name will also be engraved on a permanent plaque residing in the Pevehouse Administration Building on the main MC campus. On March 8-11, she will also represent Midland College at the 2015 National Conference of the League for Innovation in the Community College to be held in Boston, MA.

On behalf of the entire PSE community, congratulations, Terry, on this very well-deserved honor!

Source: Press release from Rebecca C. Bell, Midland College Dean, Community Relations, rbell@midland.edu

Honors and Awards (continued)

6) *Davis Educational Foundation Grant*: Chad Raymond and Traci Warrington

Chad Raymond, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, and Traci Warrington, Dean of Professional Studies, at Salve Regina University have received a \$64,600 grant from the Davis Educational Foundation. The Davis Educational Foundation was established by Stanton and Elisabeth Davis after Mr. Davis's retirement as chairman of Shaw's Supermarkets, Inc. The grant will fund research into whether changing the way a course is delivered can enhance student learning, increase faculty use of an active learning pedagogy, and reduce instructional costs.

The project involves changing the architecture of an undergraduate marketing course. Each semester, multiple instructors in the university's department of business studies teach numerous sections of the course. What students learn can vary by section and instructor, and the way in which the course is delivered limits opportunities for students to engage in active learning.

For the fall semester, the architecture of the course will be changed to a hybrid format. Students will first interact with course content online and then meet face to face in small groups to apply the content in projects,

simulations, and partnerships with external actors. Data collected from the students who take the course in the fall will be compared to data collected in the spring semester.

One of the main goals of the project is to examine the effects of the new delivery format on instructional costs, which have risen faster than inflation at both public and private universities. Recent studies conducted at Carnegie Mellon University and the University System of Maryland have demonstrated that alternative, hybrid course formats can result in student learning outcomes that are equally as good as those achieved in traditional courses, but at a substantial cost savings. It is hoped that this project will demonstrate that a significant part the university's curriculum can be restructured so that it becomes more engaging, relevant, convenient, and affordable for students.

For questions about the project, please contact Chad Raymond: chad.raymond@salve.edu.

Congratulations Chad and Traci on this prestigious award!

Announcements**Upcoming Events and Deadlines**

- The 2015 APSA Annual Meeting, will be held in **San Francisco, CA, September 3 – 6**. Applications for short courses or affiliated events (business meetings or receptions) are due **March 31st**. For more information please see: <http://community.apsanet.org/annualmeeting/home>
- **Please apply now** for the *Craig L. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research & Mentorship*; awarded by PSE Section; **deadline is April 30, 2015**. This award will be given to faculty members who demonstrate commitment to and excellence in encouraging and developing scholarship among undergraduate students, and in mentoring undergraduate students in preparation for graduate school or public affairs-related careers. Evidence for these commitments may include, but not limited to, formal and informal supervision of undergraduate student original research, collaborating with under-

graduate students on original research projects, assisting undergraduate students with public presentations and/or publication of work, and accompanying students to academic conferences. In honor of the person for whom the award is named, preference will also be given to faculty members who engage in developing undergraduate scholarship through enhancing information literacy.

New Teaching and Learning Publication

- John Ishiyama, William Miller, and Eszter Simon have just published a new edited volume that brings together cutting-edge research on teaching and learning in political science and international relations by leading scholars in these areas. The work is an invaluable contribution to our discipline; so many thanks to the editors and contributors. Please encourage your department chairs and/or university librarians to purchase this volume as a resource for your departments: **Handbook On Teaching And Learning In Political Science And International Relations (2015 Edward Elgar)**, edited by John Ishiyama, University of North Texas, US, William J. Miller, Flagler College, US and Eszter Simon, Masaryk University, Czech Republic. http://www.elgar.co.uk/bookentry_main.lasso?currency=US&id=15478

PART I: CURRICULUM AND COURSE DESIGN: 1. Best Practices in the American Undergraduate Political Science Curriculum, E. Fletcher McClellan; 2. Capstone Courses and Senior Seminars as Culminating Experiences in Undergraduate Political Science Education, Paul E. Sum; 3. Teaching Politics to Practitioners, John Craig; 4. Best Practices in Professional Development in Graduate Education Clodagh Harris; 5. Distance and Online Course Design, J Simon Rofe; 6. Student and Civic Engagement: Cultivating the Skills, Efficacy and Identities that Increase Student Involvement in Learning and in Public Life, J. Cherie Strachan; 7. Curricular and Program Assessment Techniques in the United States, Kerstin Hamann; 8. Performance Assessment in Europe, Alasdair Blair; 9. Course Based Assessment and Student Feedback, William J. Miller; 10. Multidisciplinary Approaches to Teaching Political Science, Brenda Kauffman; 11. Promoting Information Literacy and Information Research, Stephen Thornton; 12. Internationalization of the Curriculum (Bologna Process), Erkki Berndtson; 13. Promoting Employability and Jobs Skills via the Political Science Curriculum, Simon Lightfoot. **PART II: TEACHING SUBJECT AREAS:** 14. After the Apocalypse: A Simulation for Introduction to Politics Classes, Wendy L. Watson, Jesse Hamner, Elizabeth A. Oldmixon and Kimi King; 15. Teaching Conflict and Conflict Resolution, Agnieszka Paczynska; 16. Teaching about Diversity Issues, Boris E. Ricks; 17. Teaching Gender Politics, Fiona Buckley; 18. Teaching Graduate Research Methods, Mitchell Brown; 19. Teaching Undergraduate Research Methods, Cristina Leston-Bandeira; 20. Teaching Political Theory, Matthew J. Moore; 21. Teaching Controversial Topics, David Malet; 22. Teaching at the Community College: Faculty Role, Responsibilities and Pedagogical Techniques, Erin Richards; 23. Teaching International Relations, Rebecca Glazier. **PART III: IN CLASS TEACHING TECHNIQUES:** 24. Effective Syllabus Design, John Ishiyama and Robert G. Rodriguez; 25. Integrating Technology into the Classroom, Gabriela Pleschova; 26. War, Peace and Everything in Between: Simulations in International Relations, Victor Asal, Simon Usherwood and Chad Raymond; 27. Developing Your Own In-Class Simulations: Design Advice and a 'Commons' Simulation Example, Mark A. Boyer and Elizabeth T. Smith; 28. Group Work in Political Science: How To Get Collaboration into the Classroom, Bobbi Gentry; 29. Designing Team-Based Learning Activities, Andreas Broscheid; 30. Experiential Education in Political Science and International Relations, Elizabeth Bennion; 31. Best Practices in Problem Based Learning, Heidi Maurer; 32. Developing Student Scholars: Best Practices in Promoting Undergraduate Research, James M. Scott; 33. Teaching International Relations with Film and Literature: Using Non-Traditional Texts in the Classroom, Jennifer K. Lobasz and Brandon Valeriano; 34. Promoting Course Based Writing in the Discipline, Brian Smentkowski; 35. Best Practices in Undergraduate Lecturing: How to Make Large Classes Work, Kinga Kas and Elizabeth Sheppard; 36. Political Science and the Scholarship of Teaching, Jeffrey L. Bernstein; 37. Getting Students to Talk: Best Practices in Promoting Student Discussion, Michael P. Marks.

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

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

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

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Maureen Feeley, Newsletter Editor