

Winter/Spring 2018 Newsletter

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Message from Section President

Patrick McKinlay, Morningside College

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Political Science Education Section Executive Committee, I hope this note finds you satisfied with your classroom and research experiences after a semester of learning and discovery. I always find the winter break to be a time for reflection on what I have learned from my students as well as a feeling of anticipation for a spring semester with new students and opportunities to grow, both personally and as an educator. I am looking forward to seeing many of you in Baltimore for the 2018 Teaching & Learning Conference (February 2-4). The Political Science Education Executive Committee include the following members:

Patrick McKinlay, President (2017- 2019)
Morningside College
Email: mckinlay@morningside.edu

Terry Gilmour, Vice-Chair | Secretary (2017-2019)
Midland College
Email: tgilmour@midland.edu

Joseph Roberts, Treasurer (2016-2019)
Roger Williams University
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Bobbi Gentry, Editor of The Political Science Educator
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Michael Rogers (2017-2019)
Arkansas Tech University
Email: mrogers6@atu.edu

Sherri L. Wallace, Ex-officio Immediate Past President (2017-2019)
University of Louisville
Email: sherri.wallace@louisville.edu

The 2018 APSA Annual Meeting Section Program Chair: Michael Rogers, Arkansas Tech University. I want to thank all of the officers for their time and talent helping to manage the Section's business between meetings.

We warmly welcome our new officers recently elected in 2017: Terry Gilmour as Vice-Chair and Donald Gooch, as we gratefully acknowledge the years of dedicated service of our immediate past officers: Renee Van Vechten (University of Redlands) and immediate past-president, Sherri L. Wallace (University of Louisville). We also appreciate Terry Gilmour and Joseph Roberts outstanding efforts as program co-chairs for the Section's 2017 Program.

At the business meeting, the section welcomed Steve Smith and Renee Van Vechten to discuss the merits of the new TLC format: a bi-annual separate TLC (Baltimore 2018) and bi-annual Conference within a Conference TLC as part of APSA Annual Meeting. They emphasized the experimental nature of this format as well as the Association's commitment to TLC and teaching and learning generally. They emphasized the importance of the Political Science Education Section's role in helping to promote and participate in these Association initiatives. The section also discussed a proposal from the APSA Committee on the Status of Graduate Students regarding graduate student fees for the section. The decision regarding fees will be considered for action by the new section executive committee. Before adjourning the meeting to celebrate the new APSA *Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines*, the Section announced several awards to exceptional colleagues.

We are looking forward to the **Teaching and Learning Conference: Teaching Politics as a Public Good: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the Classroom in Baltimore, MD February 2-4, 2018**. There were a significant number of proposals for this year's conference, so we expect it to be an exciting and engaging event. Next year's theme for the APSA Annual Meeting is "Democracy and Its Discontents." We hope that you will submit a proposal and plan to attend the meeting to support our section. Please remember the deadline is January 16, 2018. Finally, our award committees are in place and ready to receive (self) nominations/submissions for our 2018 Awards.

Below are the committee chairs and committee members who will receive your (self) nominations/submissions DUE by **APRIL 1, 2018**:

The Craig L. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and Mentorship

Chair: Michael Rogers (Arkansas Tech University)
mrogers6@atu.edu

Committee Members: Tressa Tabares (American River College) and Maureen C. Feeley (University of California, San Diego)

The Best APSA Conference Paper Award

Chair: Terry Gilmour (Midland College)
tgilmour@midland.edu

Committee Members: J. Cherie Strachan (Western Michigan University) and Erin Richards (Cascadia College)

The Lifetime Achievement Award

Chair: Sherri Wallace (University of Louisville)
Sherri.wallace@louisville.edu

Committee Members: Executive Committee

The Distinguished Service Award

Chair: Joseph Roberts (Roger Williams University) jroberts@rwu.edu

Committee Members: Executive Committee

We are excited about the new opportunities that 2018 holds for Section. Of course, its success relies on the engagement and creativity of our members. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions at any time.

Wishing you much success in the new year,

Patrick McKinlay, President

Editor's Note

Bobbi Gentry, Bridgewater College

Based on the growing number of Community College faculty, and the initiative of both the Section and Association to include faculty across institutions. I thought that this would be a good time to begin a new part of the Newsletter dedicated to Community College faculty. The column will feature Community College faculty and will emphasize similarities and differences in

teaching at Community Colleges. This opportunity gives the Section more insight into the diversity of teaching within the profession and connects us with each other in a more meaningful way. I hope you enjoy the new Community College Voices contributions.

The Teacher-Scholar Column

Existing Assessments Measuring Civic Learning Outcomes among College Students

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

Before designing a program, curriculum, activity, or assignment designed to promote civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, or engagement, one should clarify the learning objectives and other desired outcomes. Once specific learning outcomes have been identified activities can be created to advance these objectives and assessment tools can be developed to measure whether or not the desired outcomes have been achieved. Fortunately, one need not start from scratch when creating such tools. Many assessment tools already exist and it is wise to start with these existing tools when setting out to assess civic learning outcomes.

There are many examples of assessment tools designed to assess civic learning outcomes at the course-level and campus-level.¹ The [Bonner Foundation Network Wiki](#), the [IUPUI Center for Service and Learning website](#), and the [National Service Learning Clearinghouse website](#) provide useful sample materials. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, [CIRCLE](#), provides a set of [survey measures of civic engagement](#) that can be used without permission (though consultation with CIRCLE staff is available). The [Teaching Civic Engagement website](#) provides links to other assessment materials including the American National Election Studies ([ANES website](#)), which provides high quality survey data on voting, public opinion, and political participation that is useful for comparison purposes when studying student political behavior. In addition, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) published [a](#)

[research report](#) in 2015 entitled “Assessing Civic Competency and Engagement in Higher Education. Research Background, Frameworks, and Directions for Next-Generation Assessment.” The report, [available free online](#), provides useful tables summarizing terms and definitions, assessment frameworks, item formats, and existing assessments related to civic competency and engagement. The paragraphs below features descriptions of several of the most useful assessment instruments for college campuses and provides direct links to free online versions of each instrument.

- ✓ [AAC&U Civic Engagement Value Rubric](#) – a rubric for judging written material designed to measure diversity of communities and cultures, analysis of knowledge, civic identity and commitment, civic communication, civic action and reflection, and civic context/structures. The Civic Engagement Value Rubric is one of sixteen Valid Assessment of Learning and Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics available as a free download from the AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) website. The site lists rubrics sorted by learning objectives within the broad categories of intellectual skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning.
- ✓ [AASCU Campus and Community Civic Health Matrix](#) – a rubric for assessing the civic health of a community. The rubric assesses political engagement, public work, volunteering and giving, group participation, online engagement, social trust, civic knowledge and agency, and social connectedness. A [copy of the rubric](#) is available free online. Additional information about the [Civic Health Initiative](#) is available on the AASCU website.
- ✓ [Activism Orientation Scale](#) – a survey measuring activism orientation. This 35-item Likert-type survey measures two aspects of activism orientation: low-risk/conventional activism and high-risk activism. Respondents answer each question by circling how likely it is that they will engage in each of the listed activities in the future. Response options range from extremely unlikely to extremely likely. The survey’s creators at the University of Notre Dame provide a formatted [ready-to-administer survey](#) free online.
- ✓ [Civic Literacy Exam](#) – a survey measuring civic literacy or knowledge of critical facts and concepts related to U.S. history, government, and economics. The survey’s sponsor, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) National Civic Literacy Board, provides a free version of the [2008 survey](#) online.
- ✓ [College Senior Survey](#) – a survey measuring academic, civic, and diversity outcomes along with a comprehensive set of college experiences. Activities from campaigns to demonstrations to volunteering are included, as are questions about awareness of global events and political agency. The survey also includes an eight-item subscale of Civic Values. The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA provides direct links to the [paper version](#) and the [web version](#) of the 2016 survey.
- ✓ [Diverse Learning Environments \(DLE\) Survey](#) – a web-based survey measuring student perceptions regarding the institutional climate, campus practices, and student learning outcomes. Diverse student populations are at the center of the survey (which studies issues including social mobility and intergroup relationships).ⁱⁱ Measures of institutional climate, campus practices, and student

learning outcomes include civic actions, social action, and pluralistic orientation, as well as important civic values (social agency), skills (perspective-taking, negotiation, cooperation), and knowledge. A copy of the [complete 2017 survey instrument](#) is available free online.

- ✓ [National Civic and Political Health Survey](#) (CPHS) – a **survey measuring 19 indicators of civic engagement** divided into three main categories including: **civic activities, electoral activities, and political voice activities** (e.g. contacting elected officials). The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement administers the survey to young people ages 15-25 and adults 26+ in the continental United States. College students are not the target audience, but the survey design makes it possible to compare college and non-college youth. Data is collected using yes/no and Likert-type telephone and web interviews. The [2006 report](#) includes complete wording for all survey items. CIRCLE also provides a pen-and-paper [Civic Engagement Quiz](#), available free online.
- ✓ [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) – a **14 item topical module** on civic engagement **measures students' self-perceptions of their conflict resolution skills and** examines **student engagement in campus, local, state, national, and global issues**. This survey-based module complements the core NSSE survey questions regarding service learning, community service, and campus engagement. Campuses administer the survey to first-year and senior-year college students. A facsimile of the [core NSSE survey](#) and a [copy of the module](#) are both available free online.
- ✓ [Political and Social Involvement Scale](#) – **survey measuring the importance**

students place on volunteering, promoting racial understanding, and influencing political structures. The 11-item Likert-type survey is administered by the Center of Inquiry as part of the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, a large-scale longitudinal study to investigate critical factors that affect the outcomes of liberal arts education. [Free copies of all survey instruments](#), including the Political and Social Involvement Scale are available online.

- ✓ [The Civic-Minded Graduate \(CMG\) Scale](#) – a survey identifying the specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions required to develop civic-mindedness (defined as a person's inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community and to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community). The conceptual framework for the CMG includes three dimensions: **identity, educational experiences, and civic experiences**. The Center for Service and Learning at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis provides free access [Civic-Minded Graduate assessments](#) links to the [CMG scale](#), [CMG narrative prompt](#), [CMG narrative rubric](#), [CMG interview protocol](#), and [CMG interview rubric](#).

Other assessment instruments of potential interest to campuses, especially those seeking measures of political engagement, include the Carnegie Foundation Political Engagement Project (PEP) survey,ⁱⁱⁱ the National Youth Civic Engagement Index Project, the Youth and Participatory Politics Survey, and the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale. Information about these surveys and how to obtain copies of these (non-published) surveys is included in the notes sections for this essay.^{iv}

Community College Voices

Survey Seeks Information to Aid APSA Outreach

Eric Schwartz

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As economic and social changes continue to boost enrollment in community colleges around the nation, an APSA status committee is actively researching how the organization can better serve – and learn from – community college faculty.

The Committee on the Status of Community Colleges in the Profession is in the final stages of preparing a 40-page survey that will be sent to community college faculty around the country, seeking their opinions on issues such as compensation, workload, internships, professional autonomy, and educational background. The survey design should be completed in January, and be distributed to community college faculty early in the Winter Term/Spring Semester.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 9 million undergraduates were enrolled in public two-year colleges in 2015-16. Of these, about 3.9 million were attending college full time. Nearly 40 percent of the nation's undergraduates attended public two-year colleges in 2015-16.

Sara Parker, chair of the Committee of the Status of Community Colleges in the Profession, pointed out that despite the growing percentage of political science students attending community colleges, community college faculty only make up about one percent of APSA membership.

The APSA survey, which is based on a previous survey from the American Sociological Association, should help inform the committee about why so few community college faculty members choose to join APSA, she said.

From informal discussions, it appears that the “number one” reason why community college faculty members do not join is because “there is no funding or there is no incentive to do so,” said Parker, who is the dean of social sciences at Chabot College in Hayward, CA.

“The large number of the faculty are adjunct, which exacerbates the problem,” she said.

Elsa Dias, another member of the committee, said distributing the survey to community college faculty will also assist APSA in “reaching out” to community college educators.

“We can come up with ideas in committee, but that’s not necessarily what people need. We’re hoping that this better inform us and will let us better serve this group,” said Dias, who teaches at Pikes Peak Community College in Colorado Springs, CO.

Parker pointed out that the relationship between APSA and community college faculty is a “two-way street.” Not only can community college faculty benefit from participating in APSA conferences, other faculty can also learn from community college faculty. Getting community college faculty more actively engaged in APSA activities will aid the organization and the college faculty.

Parker said she hopes to have the results in place by the time her term expires in August 2018. The survey data in hand should help guide policy as the committee crafts initiatives for the next year.

“I want to leave with a wealth of information that will inform the direction they take in the future,” she said. “It should also help raise the visibility of the community colleges within the organization.”

APSA Committee has composed a survey as a first step toward crafting organization policies that respond to the needs of a growing sector of higher education in the United States. The survey will be distributed early in 2018.

Featured Essays

Changes to APSA T&L Resources and How these Concern the PSE Section

*Renée Van Vechten, APSA Council Member
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In the famous words of one of our better-known members, Mark Twain, “Rumors of the death of the TLC are wildly exaggerated,” but it is true that changes are afoot. As the Teaching and Learning Conference enters an experimental phase, I write to explain the rationale behind the shift and discuss what to expect.

In August 2017, APSA Council voted to move the Teaching and Learning Conference to a biennial schedule and to integrate a mini-TLC (or a conference-within-a-conference) at the annual meeting in the “off years.” Thus, after TLC in Baltimore in February 2018, we will pilot a mini-TLC at the annual APSA conference in 2018, hold the first biennial mini-TLC at the 2019 annual conference, and reconvene the major conference in 2020. Stated differently, TLC will be held in even-numbered years, and the mini-TLC will be grafted onto the annual APSA conference in odd-numbered years.

The point is that we’re trying something new to better address our collective, overarching goal, which might be expressed as: *to distribute*

helpful, meaningful, effective teaching and learning resources to as many APSA members as possible on an ongoing basis, for the long-haul. Because APSA resources are not infinite, we need to build the capacity to reach more members and make the TLC more sustainable. Moving to a biennial schedule should attract more conferees, and integrating the TLC with the annual conference may attract a different set of attendees—effects that ought to be encouraged.

There are pros and cons to sticking with the annual TLC, and these were pointed out to APSA Council in the TLC Review Committee report. I am a firm believer in the TLC’s irreplaceable benefits, which include the following among this abbreviated list:

1. Face-to-face meetings in which networks are expanded, camaraderie and community grows; professional and interpersonal networks expand. The setting at the TLC is unlike research-heavy conferences; it’s special, and there’s no substitute for personal interaction. It’s hard to replicate those effects.
2. TLC represents a set of opportunities for SOTL research, important to promotion and tenure, especially for underserved constituencies.
3. TLC is a training ground for leadership – for this section, in the association, on campuses.
4. Has reached about 2,000 unique individuals since its inception. It has had an impact on a lot of people, a good percentage of the membership – not with the same level of meaning for all, but we can imagine that many hundreds of people over time have benefitted from the TLC.
5. Signals our profession’s support for teaching and learning initiatives.

Downsides have also been identified: namely, the relatively small conference, which attracts an average of 275 people, absorbs a

huge amount of resources per capita. To make it “revenue neutral,” APSA would either need to raise registration fees for current number of people to \$500, or raise number of attendees to 625. Historically the highest number of attendees was just over 300. Also, coordinating and planning the TLC tends to monopolize the APSA staff member’s time, leaving little space for other initiatives or projects that could benefit different teaching-oriented constituencies.

The total amount of money spent on the conference isn’t the problem, and designing a conference that is revenue-neutral also isn’t the issue. The *concentration of resources*, which works out to about \$400 per attendee and intensively involves APSA staff, is the issue. The question driving the change: *is the TLC the BEST way to invest APSA resources to help as many members as possible with respect to teaching and learning?*

About 10,000 political scientists are members of APSA. Many people only attend the TLC only once, or once in 10 years. Shouldn’t more members benefit from teaching-related initiatives and resources, and do so on an ongoing basis? Are there broader ways to spread and disseminate T&L resources throughout the discipline?

APSA Staff, Leadership, and Council decided it was time to try something new. This did NOT mean eradicating the TLC. They recognize the benefits, and members of Council universally believe it’s worth supporting. This includes the past and current presidents, along with the president-elect. It’s safe to say that TLC is an entrenched interest.

Beyond TLC, APSA’s commitment to teaching and learning interests is reflected in staffing, programs, and funding, all of which have

recently been deliberately enhanced. There are now *two staff and two assistants* dedicated to coordinating teaching and learning programs and diversity and inclusion initiatives. There is now a *TEACHING* pull-down menu on APSA’s homepage. APSA *increased the number of teaching-related panels* at the annual conference. We are currently *planning the 2018 mini-conference* pilot. The 2018 TLC *format has been reconfigured* to reignite interest and draw new attention. Our section also nominated members for *representation on Council* (me, and I also serve on the Executive Council as the chair for the Teaching and Learning Policy committee, along with other members who are similarly interested in advancing our interests), and Erin Richards is the *first-ever community college representative*. APSA is also the official sponsor of *JPSE* and *new book on civic engagement*, both of which are online and widely accessible to ALL members.

Other projects you may not know about are that APSA recently increased the amounts of funding available for *travel grants* to TLC and annual conference (Council doubled that budget last year). Staff have designed “Centennial Center Projects” in the form of day-long *workshops* on simulations and games for small groups, hosted at APSA headquarters. There are APSA-sponsored workshops or *short courses at the annual conference*, and more are being developed. *Syllabi collections* continue to grow. The opportunity to develop an online library of teaching-related materials now exists through APSA Connect. APSA is readying workshops to deploy at *regional conferences*.

There is one more initiative of which you should take note. APSA will soon be announcing an association-sponsored “*special projects*” *fund* for the purposes of seeding activities that will have wider benefits for the profession. This is a golden opportunity for you to propose local

teaching and learning conferences (i.e. create a T&L conference on your campus), day-long professional development workshops, or pedagogy-related projects. In fact, we will NEED you to apply!

This growing portfolio of resources and changes should enable the development of initiatives that can reach more members, enliven your SOTL research, and draw new members into the professional association. However, no change is a panacea. As these new initiatives take shape, we will actively and consciously assess how they are affecting you, the members, and will make adjustments as needed. It may turn out that a stand-alone, annual TLC conference is the best way to invest in and promote teaching and learning, but these changes will help us make that determination. In the meantime, we hope you attend the TLC in 2018—both in Baltimore *and* at the annual meeting in Boston!

Finally, if you have any lingering questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me: renee.vanvechten@redlands.edu.

Faculty Reflections on Teaching Since the 2016 Election

*Inger Bergom, Senior Researcher
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At the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE), we seek to support college and university educators to teach students the knowledge and skills necessary for informed, engaged participation in a democracy. Faculty are crucial players in achieving these outcomes. Political science instructors have an especially critical role, as they are often on the front lines to moderate or lead discussions on campuses about divisive political topics and to teach

foundational concepts such as democracy and distribution of power and resources.

Since the 2016 election, some faculty have reported that classroom climates have become more tense, and faculty in general have been increasingly accused of being partisan and indoctrinating students, sometimes by those in the highest levels of U.S. government. What does this mean for faculty and their teaching, particularly those in political science departments? Classroom discussions about topics deemed partisan are challenging and carry risks, especially in today's highly polarized political climate. Do faculty feel equipped to teach for informed and engaged citizenship? How have their teaching and classrooms changed since the 2016 election, and have their views about the question of instructor neutrality shifted?

This past summer, I asked political science faculty about these topics through interviews and a survey. In particular, I asked how the political climate of the past year affected their teaching. I also asked whether they make it a point to hide or disclose their own political viewpoints to students, and whether this has changed since the 2016 election. Ninety-eight political science faculty across the U.S. completed the survey, and interview participants included 10 political science tenured or tenure-track faculty members from different regions of the country.

First, faculty shared a variety of comments about how the wider political climate has affected their teaching since the 2016 election. In list form and with illustrative quotes, here are a few ways in which they noted their experiences in classrooms have changed:

More difficult to remain neutral in eyes of students; more debates about facts

- “Had to work harder to avoid appearing partisan.”
- “It was harder to take a position of ‘I’m just giving neutral facts,’ when the content of the facts became more politicized.”
- “We had so much fighting about facts. And it became harder for me to say, ‘I’m just giving you the factual information without a view’ because now facts are having ideology attached to them.”

Avoidance of topics

- “Made me slightly less likely to discuss controversial topics or adopt controversial perspectives.”
- “I largely avoided talking about domestic politics during the election season.”

Students less inclined to speak, more hesitation and tension

- “Some students are less inclined to speak and often will stop engaging due to some of the language/rhetoric that was being used.”
- “There is much more tension in the classroom among the students.”

Reflection on teaching practices

- “The current political moment has heightened my sense of the importance of teaching about both institutions and norms.”
- “It has made me think about the challenges of teaching students to use empirical facts and information.”

- “It has reminded me of the importance of developing skills of deliberation and respectful dialogue.”

Second, I wanted to know whether faculty make an effort to be neutral on issues they care about, and whether this has changed recently. Most faculty I interviewed said that, in general, they make a point not to share their personal political views or ideologies with students. Survey respondents agreed with this. The average response to the statement, “In my classes, I make an effort to appear neutral on political issues that I have an opinion about” was 4.4 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. A faculty member I interviewed said that withholding personal viewpoints is a mark of professionalism. She explained, “I am...a political scientist which means my personal political views stay out of the classroom. I am never more proud than when my students guess wrong about my politics.”

Some faculty saw the question of neutrality differently. One person said sharing his own political viewpoints helps to “break down to some extent the barrier between student and professor” and “de-mystify the idea of me as professor and see that I’m also human.” Another instructor took a realist perspective, explaining that “trying to pretend that I’m a totally unbiased observer is misleading because none of us is. I try to make myself as open and accommodating to political dialogue from all sides of the aisle as possible, but I certainly don’t go out of my way to hide [my own views].”

Several faculty felt that the 2016 presidential election and its aftermath has shifted their attitudes about this question of neutrality in the classroom. They explained that due to democratic norms, values, and institutions being threatened and eroded, they have moved away from what they see as being neutral to taking

stances about political topics or events. One person commented, “I feel like my job is to say what do we know that makes democracy work? If I see something that I think is threatening to democratic procedures or rights, the protection of civil liberties...I’ll speak up about those things.”

Another person explained that the line between neutrality and non-neutrality has come into sharper focus for her. She commented, “A lot of political scientists are of the opinion that I am that you should be professional and not impose your politics on students. [In the past year] we had to redefine the lines... You don’t have to go to a classroom and be neutral about whether or not to kill people. Take last week [Charlottesville]. Do we have to be neutral about white supremacy and nazi ideology, or the view that it’s okay to run over people who are expressing their political views? I draw my line somewhere in there.”

In view of this feedback from faculty across the country, it seems clear that for many instructors the wider political context outside the classroom shapes teaching and learning inside the classroom. This presents new challenges, as some respondents described, but it could offer learning opportunities for students, too. Do faculty feel equipped and supported to lead divisive discussions or handle classroom conflict arising from conversations about heated political topics? For the most part, faculty respondents I spoke with felt confident in their abilities to lead discussions about divisive political topics. Eighty-one of 98 survey respondents (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are equipped to do this. But now may still be a good time for department chairs, deans, and faculty themselves to take stock of the ways in which instructors handle conflict and divisive political topics in their teaching. Are they avoiding difficult topics and ignoring conflict, or are they

using these moments as learning opportunities to challenge students in productive, meaningful ways?

How can departments, teaching centers, and faculty members support instructors who want to use moments of conflict and divisiveness as teaching opportunities but are not sure how to do it? When I asked faculty what specific professional development activities related to teaching divisive topics have been most helpful to them, several answered that hearing about colleagues’ experiences was most valuable. One replied, “What I find most useful are discussions of how various instructors approach topics and why.” Another response I heard from several faculty was that they wanted strategies or tools for reaching more students. For instance, an instructor responded, “Tools for maintaining a civil classroom and understanding the needs of underrepresented students.” To provide this support, department chairs or faculty may consider organizing informal meetings such as “lunch-and-learn” gatherings to share teaching experiences, perhaps in partnership with campus teaching center staff.

Our research at IDHE underscores the significant role that classroom teaching plays in fostering student political and civic learning. Although divisive topics cut across disciplines, political science faculty are in a unique position—and are often called upon directly—to lead discussions and teach about complex, difficult sociopolitical issues such as partisanship, inequality, and racism. Teaching students to develop the skills and foundational knowledge to participate in these discussions is part of the task and responsibility of preparing students to become informed, engaged civic actors in a democracy.

Additional Resources from Tisch Institute:

- 1) A chapter by our staff in an APSA-published 2017 book, *Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines*. The chapter is called “The Politically Engaged Classroom,” and the book is a free download here:

http://web.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/10/Teaching-Civic-Engagement-Across-the-Disciplines_opt.pdf

- 2) A short piece by our director Nancy Thomas on “The case for academic freedom: Student opinions, faculty standards.” Available here: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/dap.30352/abstract>

Writing a College Textbook: Proposals and Negotiations

David L. Weiden, MFA, J.D., Ph.D., Metropolitan State University of Denver
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Many of us have considered writing an academic textbook at some point. Perhaps it is the chance to influence the teaching of a political science subfield or perhaps it is the thought of earning royalties on the manuscript. Whatever the reason, this essay will discuss several relevant issues that may assist you if you choose to go down this road. By way of background, I recently signed a contract with Rowman & Littlefield publishers to write the first introductory college textbook in the discipline of Native American Studies, tentatively entitled *Introduction to Native American Studies* (I teach and research in this discipline as well as political science). Although I am still writing the book, I’ve learned a great deal in the early stages of this process.

The first issue to consider is the competitiveness of the textbook market. Before you dedicate a great deal of time writing a formal proposal, I

recommend that you first speak with the acquisitions editor at the potential press. They should be able to tell you what the press is looking for, and how to draft your proposal if you choose to go forward. In my experience, writing a textbook proposal differs somewhat from a proposal for a work of standard scholarship. Generally, you will focus more on existing competitors to your proposed volume, and a lively writing style is recommended for the book proposal, as opposed to the dry tone usually used for university press book proposals. You should expect to make several revisions to the proposal before it is sent out for peer review.

After peer reviews are returned, you’ll almost certainly need to respond to the suggestions and criticisms made by the reviewers. As in any scholarly publishing project, you’ll likely agree with some critiques and disagree with others. You’ll have to decide, of course, which changes you’re willing to make and then make a formal response to the press.

If you are fortunate enough to receive a publication contract for the text, you should pause before you sign and return the document. Many professors are so delighted to receive a contract that they do not think the terms through. Textbook contracts vary widely depending upon the field and the sales potential of the book. Some of the terms are negotiable, while others are not. For example, the permissions costs for photographs may be partially funded by the author although this can sometimes be negotiated. Royalties are another area where there may be some room for negotiation.

I recommend that you consider joining the Textbook and Academic Authors Association (TAAA). This organization has a number of resources to assist with all stages of the textbook writing and publication process. Another

strongly recommended resource is the book *Writing and Developing Your College Textbook: A Comprehensive Guide* by Lepionka, Wakely, and Gillen (3rd ed., 2016) published by TAAA. This book contains excellent advice on all stages of the textbook process, including a solid chapter on contract negotiations. The organization also offers a standalone volume, *Guide to Textbook Publishing Contracts* by Stephen Gillen (2016) that offers even more detailed advice on the contract process and how to negotiate a reasonable agreement.

The final issue is retaining an agent. It has been said that academic authors are the most underrepresented group of authors in all of publishing. It is standard, if not essential, to be represented by a literary agent in fiction, nonfiction, and children's publishing. However, very few college textbook authors consider retaining an agent and may not even be aware that this option exists. There are a growing number of literary agents that represent textbook authors, and these agents can be discovered via a Google search.

What can a literary agent do for you? Generally, an agent can help you find the most suitable press and help negotiate more favorable terms in the contract. An agent can also assist with strategies for marketing plans and publicity. Many academics prefer not to deal with the business side of publishing and a literary agent will be invaluable in this circumstance. A textbook contract's terms remain in force for the life of the book, so it is important to negotiate reasonable provisions at the outset. In addition, an agent can help an author develop additional opportunities for writing and publishing. A good agent will assist an author with career development as well as provide support for the initial project. Not all textbook authors will need a literary agent, but it is worth at least considering this option. In general, an agent is

recommended for textbooks that have substantial sales potential, or when there is the potential for a crossover book intended for the general nonfiction market. If your textbook is intended for a niche market or a smaller specialized course, there is likely little benefit to be gained from contacting a literary agent.

Obviously, agents do not work for free, and the standard fee is a 15% commission for all compensation received as part of the textbook project. While this may seem steep, a solid agent will provide value by ensuring that the financial terms benefit the author over the life of the project. Many agents are former editors with the large textbook companies, and so they obviously have insider knowledge that helps to even the playing field between the author and acquisitions editor. However, it must be noted that literary agents are selective in the clients they choose to represent, and many will only represent authors with projects that have strong commercial potential. If you are considering using a literary agent for your textbook project, you should contact the agent early in the process, even before you've received a contract from the publisher. Generally, aspiring authors write what's known as a query letter to potential agents, but many textbook agents will respond to short email queries.

In conclusion, writing a college textbook can provide a professor with the opportunity to reach an audience much larger than that of the typical specialized monograph and influence the subfield and the way in which it's taught. However, the forces of commerce are much more prevalent in the textbook publishing world, and so the would-be author should proceed with caution and an awareness of all possibilities.

Book Reviews: Additional Resources for Senior Thesis/Capstone Writers

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Senior thesis and capstone seminars vary widely between colleges and departments, and so it can be hard to find resources that exactly match the project students are undertaking. While The Craft of Research, The Craft of Political Research, and others often assigned in earlier methods courses remain useful here, a few slightly less obvious resources from related disciplines may also have promise in supplementing them. Below are three that seem especially helpful, with some suggestions about sections that might be most appropriate for undergraduates encountering large research projects for the first time.

Becoming an Academic Writer (Patricia Goodson, 2017 2nd ed., Sage)

Goodson's guide is designed for the academic whose primary self-image is not as a writer, but rather someone who writes when it is necessary or when the time is available—which she says ensures the time is never available. Following the philosophy of Peter Elbow, she sets up the 50 exercises in the book as a way to put the writer back in control of the writing process. The intended audience is those in a doctoral program or already faculty, yet the exercises in the book are applicable to anyone developing regular writing habits or needing to develop greater confidence in a particular academic writing skill.

The book suggests taking a week for each exercise, in order to allow a full week's deliberate practice in the highlighted habits or skills. The exercises begin with simply scheduling writing time, then expanding that

time, then making time to read about writing and to practice letting drafts flow with less immediate self-editing. After the first eight habit-forming exercises, it moves sequentially into building academic vocabulary, grammar, seeking feedback, and editing one's own work. It finishes in the last 20 exercises by modelling specific aspects of academic writing such as literature reviews and describing one's research design.

Useful for Thesis Writers/Capstone Projects?

This would be useful for many senior thesis writers, and would fit especially well into departments where a thesis/capstone seminar spans the entire year. Goodson's initial exercises on developing regular writing habits may be a way to encourage students who, at the beginning of the year, may not yet be far in their actual research or literature review—and for whom the prospect of putting a major paper together is still both unsettling and distant. Exercises in later chapters that model specific sections of research papers would provide students (and instructors) with helpful models. While the entirety of the book may cover too much for an undergraduate in a single year, the standalone nature of each exercise would allow instructors to customize excerpts to a department's specific expectations or to perceived problem among a particular group of students. The book would also be a worthwhile investment, likely to be revisited, for senior thesis writers considering graduate programs.

The Sociology Student's Guide to Writing (Angelique Harris & Alia R. Tyner-Mullings, 2017, Sage)

This is designed as a broad reference guide for undergraduates at different stages of their exposure to college writing in sociology. The book starts by immediately addressing basic writing mechanics, with short guides on how to

put together effective paragraphs, e-mails, letters, and lecture and reading notes. It moves on to chapters covering literature searches, writing questions for data gathering (mostly qualitative), the types of assignments expected in an undergraduate course, and editing and revising. Because the book is written as a manual rather than a thematic overview, individual sections are effective in their specific topic, but rarely flow easily from one to another. The target audience also varies from section to section, with chapters on mechanics and editing aimed at first-semester or first-year students, while the chapter on writing for data collection assumes students already have a well-developed research question; the process of developing that question is largely skipped over.

Useful for Thesis Writers/Capstone Projects?

With the exception of the chapter on the literature search, the material translates easily for political science. Students taking on capstone projects will likely have some exposure to these more basic ideas, making it a less obvious fit. It may be useful in an introductory seminar or a sophomore required survey with considerable guidance from the instructor on what to read (and when). Nonetheless, the specific chapter on writing a capstone project (pp. 135-156) does an excellent, concise job of explaining two major concepts thesis writers may struggle with: the larger goal of each individual section in a research paper, and how to construct sentences and paragraphs within each section that fit its specific purpose.

Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences (Kristin Luker, 2008, Harvard)

In this book, Luker tries to provide a general research (and lifestyle) philosophy for graduate students facing anxiety about finding a research

question, or about having found one that doesn't easily fit into traditional, quantitative methods. Her approach is that canonical social science methods are embedded in the larger culture and address specific goals, namely, explanations of larger populations from representative samples. The book does not take issue with traditional methods for these kinds of questions, and encourages students to engage with them. However, given changes in the structures of society and information, and given disciplines which no longer assume that every process is linear and causal, canonical methods are no longer the only effective approach.

Luker encourages students to establish a research question early on and to make a practice of constantly reflecting on it. Rather than strictly testing hypotheses, she encourages students to engage in a process of pattern recognition, constantly making inferences about where to look next based on what can be gleaned from each and every source. The book combines relatively informal advice about how to practice being a graduate student or early-career academic with specific, detailed research strategies; some short chapters on specific methods fall somewhere (perhaps less effectively) in between.

Useful for Thesis Writers/Capstone Projects?

Two chapters may be especially useful for undergraduates: Chapter 4 on turning a research *interest* into a research *question*, and Chapter 5 on how to start a literature review given too many sources. The end-of-chapter exercises may be also be useful models for seminar leaders looking for interim scaffolding assignments. The rest of the book, however, may be too general or too focused on graduate students.

Announcements

Archived issues of *The Political Science Educator* can be found here:

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

Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to Bobbi Gentry at bgentry@bridgewater.edu. Submission deadlines are **June 15** for the **Summer/Fall newsletter**, and **December 15** 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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Bobbi Gentry, Newsletter Editor

ⁱ This essay is excerpted from Elizabeth A. Bennion, "Moving Forward with Assessment: Important Tips and Resources," in *Teaching Civic Engagement across the Disciplines*, ed. Elizabeth M. Matto, Alison Rios Millett McCartney, Elizabeth A. Bennion, and Dick Simpson (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 2017).

ⁱⁱ <https://www.heri.ucla.edu/dleoverview.php>

ⁱⁱⁱ For an overview key assessment instruments and survey findings from the PEP project see Elizabeth Beaumont, "Political Learning and Democratic Capacities: Some Challenges and Evidence of Promising Approaches," in *Teaching Civic Engagement: From Student to Active Citizen*, ed. Alison Rios Millett McCartney, Elizabeth A. Bennion, and Dick Simpson (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 2011), 41-55. The chapter includes survey scales, items, questions, and response options regarding political understanding, political motivation, civic and political skills, civic identity, and civic and political involvement.

^{iv} Other assessment instruments of interest to campuses, especially those seeking measures of political engagement, include the **Political Engagement Project (PEP)** survey, an extensive college student survey measuring civic knowledge, skills, values, volunteerism, interest, motivation, efficacy, and involvement. The complete survey is not available to the public, but the authors provide (partial) survey scales and results in *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement*. Another good model for measuring political engagement includes the **National Youth Civic Engagement Index Project**, a telephone survey of individuals (not only college students) age 15 and older measuring cognitive engagement in politics, civic activity, political engagement, and indicators of public voice. Results of this study are documented in the book *A New Civic Engagement: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. The MacArthur Foundation Research Network's **Youth and Participatory Politics Survey** measures politics-driven, interest-driven, and friendship-driven dimensions of online participatory civic/political cultures as well as democratic habits, skills, and commitments. A copy of the [2011 data can be requested](#) by agreeing to the terms of use online. A final well-known assessment tool is the **Socially Responsible Leadership Scale**, a survey measuring eight dimensions (the 8 C's) of The Social Change Model of Leadership including: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, citizenship, and change. Persons interested in obtaining a copy of the survey instrument must contact the [National Clearinghouse of Leadership Programs](#).