APSA Comparative Politics
The organized section in Comparative Politics of the American Political Science Association

Vol XXXVI Issue 1
Spring-Summer 2025

CONTACT
Department of Political Science
University of Florida
234 Anderson Hall
P.O. Box 117325
Gainesville, FL
32611 USA
Tel: +1 352.392.0262
Fax: +1 352.392.8127

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM SECTION CHAIR

By Ellen Lust

Ellen Lust

Director, Einaudi Center for International Studies, Cornell University

Founder and Director, Governance and Local Development Institute at the University of Gothenburg and Cornell University

Professor, Jeb E. Brooks School of Public Policy, Cornell University

Professor, Department of Government, Cornell University

Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg

Her email address in ellen.lust@gu.se

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this finds you all well, even as we navigate today's ever-changing and challenging landscape of higher education. These challenges have set me (and I expect many of us) behind, and I apologize for having thus delayed the newsletter's publication.

However, the challenges we face have also led me to reflect on the importance of academic communities, including the APSA Comparative Politics section. We may hold different views–debating what questions are important, what constitutes good research, and even how much and how to respond to the critical, "real world" issues facing us today. But we are united in our determination to strengthen our field and support our colleagues, and many donate valuable time and energy to do so.

In this vein, I want to thank the outgoing APSA Comparative Politics section editorial team for their service. Ben Smith (editor-in-chief), Hannah Alarian, Sebastian Elischer, Andrew Janusz, Nicholas Kerr, and Juliana Restrepo Sanín at the University of Florida have done a wonderful job over the past three years. During their term, the section has enjoyed symposia on a wide range of issues - such as assessing area studies, advancing research on military coups, and exploring the impact of gender quotas. If you have missed past issues, I encourage you to explore them here!

I also want to welcome the new editorial team and thank them for taking on this important responsibility. The team, based at NYU-Abu Dhabi, consists of Leo Peisakhin (editor-in-chief), Andy Harris, Gabe Koelher-Derrick, Giuliana Pardelli, and Melina Platas. I am excited to see them build on the excellent foundation the University of Florida team has laid, continuing to use the newsletter to strengthen our community.

Finally, I want to note these are just some of the many activities the section engages in to make the community stronger. Thank you as well to all who engage in other aspects of the section–serving on award committees, as conference section chairs, officers, and many other ways. And to those who want to be more involved but have not found the opportunity, I invite you to reach out to me. It is a pleasure to work together.

Sincerely,

Ellen Lust

LETTER FROM EDITOR

By Benjamin Smith

Benjamin Smith

is Professor and Chair of Political Science at the University of Florida. His email address is bbsmith@ufl.edu

When I began the process of submitting a proposal to edit APSA-CP, the world did not yet have a vaccine for Covid, and there had not been an attack on the US Capitol since the US Civil War. So that proposal process feels like a long time ago.

Our first issue as editors here at the University of Florida featured a symposium on things that happened long in the past and how we show they influence the present. It has been exhilarating since then to edit the newsletter–comparativists are doing remarkably good, and broad, work today–and it has been a privilege. Our final symposium revisited the debate over area studies and social science that drove much of the debate in this newsletter in the late 1990s. Both of these topics have been central to my own work in comparative politics, and with the symposia we featured in between gave me wonderful opportunities to learn at close range what our epistemic community of scholars is up to.

I thank three section chairs with whom we worked–Scott Mainwaring, Prerna Singh, and Ellen Lust–and my editorial colleagues here at UF, as well as all of the scholars who joined us in contributing to symposia, to presenting and reviewing new data resources, and to reflecting on the research projects and mentoring recognized with section prizes.

This final short issue showcases our 2024 APSA Comparative Politics award winners. As we hand off editing duties to our colleagues at NYU-Abu Dhabi, let us embrace that interconnectedness across time and space that is what we in comparative politics do best.

Sincerely,
Ben Smith

Winner of 2024 Gregory Luebbert Prize for Best Book in Comparative Politics

Violent Victors: Why Bloodstained Parties Win Postwar Elections

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022)

An interview with the author, Sarah Z. Daly

Sarah Z. Daly

is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Columbia University and faculty fellow of the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies (SIWPS) and Institute for Latin American Studies (ILAS). Her email address is sd2623@columbia.edu

What motivated this project?

My book studies elections after civil wars and answers the question: Why do so many voters support parties that engaged in mass violence against civilians during wartime? And what are the implications of these elections for peace, democracy, justice, and governance?

The seed for the book was planted while studying the politics of human rights in Chile. Having learned about the mass atrocities of the Pinochet's regime, I assumed that all Chileans would naturally reject Pinochet. I then discovered that 44 percent of Chileans were pro-Pinochet, even after democratization. I was struck by this pattern.

I was struck again while researching my first book on why half of peace processes fail while half succeed. In Colombia, I spent 18 months interviewing hundreds of rebels, paramilitaries, and their victims. Former fighters and their victims told me about the indiscriminate massacres, rapes, torture, kidnappings, and homicides that armed groups had carried out. Yet in many places, populations supported the former fighters and their allied politicians even after they had surrendered their weapons and demobilized.

This puzzling behavior proved widespread. Globally, between 1970-2015, bloodstained parties gained a majority of the vote. Around the world, after winning peace, populations voted for parties with deep roots in the violent organizations of the past. They did so in the aftermath of nearly every civil war, in all regions of the world. Understanding why this is the case became the central question driving my research.

What surprised you most as you were doing the research for it?

Three findings surprised me while researching this book. First, I expected that how violent the parties were would influence their electoral success. But examining all cases of civil war globally since 1970, I found that indiscriminately violent rebels and militaries did just as well in elections as those that exercised restraint. Even more surprisingly, victims themselves proved equally likely to vote for their perpetrators as for parties unstained by war.

Second, I initially thought it must be a story of coercion–that people were voting with a gun to their head. But the evidence showed that bloodstained parties equally won free and fair democratic elections and won those voting freely, without fear.

Third, I anticipated that there must have been a fog of war, that voters were ignorant about the atrocities or did not know who the perpetrators were. But many elections came after truth commissions had reported so the populations often knew the facts of the violence. I was struck by the ability of winning belligerents to use credit for peace to mitigate the attribution of blame for past atrocities.

What do you hope will be the most lasting conclusion from this book in 10 or 20 years?

The book reveals how war outcomes fundamentally shape post-conflict democracy. War-winning, bloodstained parties can successfully campaign as the best providers of future societal peace and

stability, counterintuitively selling themselves as the best protectors of voters. They do this by laundering their military records and campaigning as "Restrained Leviathans" such that they emerge with a reputation for security provision going forward. In this way, the book weaves together literatures on political violence and political behavior in a novel way. It demonstrates how models of party and voter behavior can explain electoral patterns when security dominates, helping us understand why politicians may be willing to be linked to violence, and how individuals, when feeling unsafe, favor iron-fist security approaches.

Against often-cited fears, I find that post-conflict elections are not necessarily destabilizing or lead to war recurrence. Instead, the strong military position of civil war winners reduces incentives for remilitarization by their rivals. Peace thus tends to consolidate. However, this creates a crucial tradeoff: in electing peace and security, voters often forgo immediate justice and accountability for past atrocities.

The election of bloodstained parties tends to preserve basic democratic electoral rules, as parties maintain the system that brought them to power. But their elections do not advance liberalism; rather, the parties may cause democratic backsliding. While citizens gain in security, they often lose on welfare as parties prioritize law and order over social development.

Over time though, as security concerns fade and belligerent party power may erodes, demands for justice emerge and accountability becomes more possible. These findings raise vital questions about how to achieve both security and justice in post-conflict societies, a challenge that remains deeply relevant as countries continue to navigate difficult transitions from war to democracy.

Winner of 2024 Gregory Luebbert Prize for Best Article in Comparative Politics

"Tilly Goes to Church: The Religious and Medieval Roots of European State Fragmentation" in *American Political Science Review* 118(1): 88-107. 2023.

An interview with the author, Anna Grzymala-Busse

Anna Grzymala-Busse

is the Michelle and Kevin Douglas Professor of International Studies in the Department of Political Science, director of the Europe Center, a Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute at Stanford University. Her email address is amgbusse@stanford.edu

What motivated this project?

Like everyone else, I had read Charles Tilly's canonical account of early modern state formation in Europe. It is a brilliant argument, but I had always been interested in medieval history, and something that stuck out to me was that many of the institutions we think of as the result of seventeenth-century warfare (parliaments, taxation, etc.) had been around in the Middle Ages. I then took a look at maps of Europe, and it seemed that Europe had a.) consolidated in some areas (Spain, France, England) before the early modern period, and b.) had remained fragmented in others (the Holy Roman Empire) well into the nineteenth-century. These empirical incongruities led me to write *Sacred Foundations*, a book on how the medieval Church shaped state formation in Europe. This paper digs in deeper into one aspect of the church's impact: the continued fragmentation of territorial authority in Europe.

What surprised you most as you were doing the research for it?

The extent to which the Church influenced territorial authority, the rule of law, parliamentary procedure and representation, and administration. Concepts from Church councils and legal reforms were freely borrowed by temporal actors and were taught at law schools as part of the legal revolution and the rediscovery of Roman law. So many modern institutions that other scholars have found to be critical to political and economic development, such as impersonal office, the sanctity of contracts, binding representation, and "no taxation without representation" all have their roots in the medieval Church.

What do you hope will be the most lasting conclusion from this article in 10 or 20 years?

Simply that state formation, like so many political phenomena, is complicated and not reducible to a single cause. Europe was taken as the archetype of bellicist state formation: "states makes war and the war makes states." But it appears not only that European state formation is *sui generis*–but that even there, war alone did not make the state.

Winner of 2024 Sage Prize for Best Paper in Comparative Politics

"When Economic Elites Support Democratization: Evidence from Argentina."

An interview with the author, Anna F. Callis

Anna F. Callis

is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research (CIPR) and research associate at the Center on the Politics of Development, Tulane University.
Her email address is acallis@tulane.edu

What motivated this project?

The motivation came some years ago while reading about Latin America's political and economic development in the early twentieth century. During this period, economic elites across the region were deeply concerned about exercising control over labor. Yet, even within a single country case, elites diverged in their approaches to labor control. While some relied on heavy-handed repression–often with the assistance of an authoritarian government–others instead relied on alternative, less inherently coercive approaches to controlling workers, such as company unions. I became interested in understanding why elites pursued these distinct forms of labor control and how these approaches shaped elite divisions over other critical issues of the period, particularly democratization. The project examines these questions in the case of historical Argentina.

What surprised you most as you were doing the research for it?

A key outcome of interest is economic elites' support for democratization. Few empirical opportunities exist to systematically measure elites' preferences over regime type. Scholars have sometimes relied on indirect measures of elite support, such as the voting behavior of authoritarian legislators on specific democratizing reforms. However, it can be difficult to determine whether these legislative votes reflect the preferences of economic elites or individual legislators.

Delving into archival data from early-twentieth-century Argentina, I was surprised by the unique and detailed information about elite preferences over regime type. For instance, the project's primary measure of elite support for democratization is based on lists of elites who joined pro-democracy committees backing the politician who championed democratization in the Argentine case. Other data includes a contemporaneous survey of economic elites reported in one of Argentina's national newspapers. The survey asked elite respondents a battery of questions, including whether they supported universal suffrage in Argentina. This novel data offered rare insights into elite preferences over democratization and proved invaluable to the project's development.

What do you hope will be the most lasting conclusion from this paper in 10 or 20 years?

This project contributes to longstanding debates about the role of economic elites in struggles over regime type. It stands alongside other recent research that suggests economic elites can play a pivotal role in supporting democratic transitions. Going forward, I hope it will encourage scholars to continue to critically examine elites' role in democratization and further investigate the conditions under which these elites may be compelled to support democratic transitions.

I am also hopeful it will serve as an enduring example of the value of turning to history to gain purchase on fundamental questions in the social sciences. Historical cases, such as early-twentieth-century Argentina, provide additional empirical settings to test political science theories, offer novel data unavailable in contemporary contexts, and present unique opportunities to apply design-based empirical approaches to assess causal relationships. Historical research can thus play a critical role in deepening our understanding of politics and political processes.

Winner of 2024 Lijphart/Przeworski/ Verba Data Set Award

"Comparative Campaign Dynamics Dataset (CCD)"

An interview Marc Debus, Zeynep Somer-Topc, & Margit Tavits

Marc Debus
is a Professor of Political Science and Chair of Political Science, Comparative Government at the University of Mannheim. His email address is polwiss3@uni-mannheim.de

Zeynep Somer-Topc
is an Associate Professor in the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin Her email address is zsomer@utexas.edu

Margit Tavits
is Dr. William Taussig Professor in Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis. Her email address is tavits@wustl.edu

What motivated you to build this dataset?

All of us would identify ourselves as political party and political behavior scholars. Leading up to this project, we all had been publishing on political party strategies and their electoral consequences in advanced democracies. However, to understand how party strategies affect party performance, we first had to study how voters perceive and interpret party issue positions. In 2011, when we started thinking about this project, the only work on how voters perceive party positions comparatively used parties' election manifestos to measure party strategies (Adams, Ezrow, Somer-Topcu, 2011). While the Manifesto Project dataset is a great resource to understand how parties present themselves to the public in advance of the elections, the data would not allow us to answer questions like whether parties follow manifesto promises in their campaign rhetoric, how they discuss their issue positions in the campaign, how they discuss other parties' positions, and how the media reports these interactions, all of which we believed should affect voters' perceptions of party positions and their electoral behavior. To be able to answer these questions, we needed to measure party messages and interactions with rivals in a more dynamic and fine-grained manner than what was possible with manifestos. We learned a lot from the Manifesto Project and tried to model out data collection after them so that our data could easily be linked. In the end, our interest in the specific questions about voter perceptions of party positions led to us constructing the CCD.

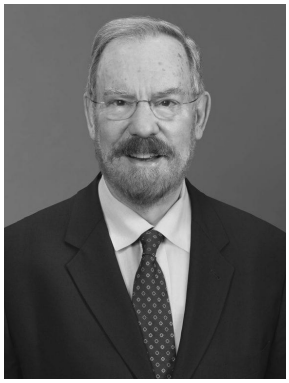
Do you have plans for a next research project using these data? If so, could you tell us about it?

Some of our ongoing projects examine how rival parties' distortions of party positions affect voter perceptions and behavior, whether political parties stick to their manifesto policy emphases during election campaigns, and, if not, what the perceptual and behavioral consequences of these shifts are. In addition, we are currently compiling an edited volume that combines research using the CCD data to study when and why political parties resort to negative campaigning and what some consequences of the negative campaigning strategies are. Research questions that can be explored with our data are endless, and ideas for new projects emerge constantly.

What do you wish you had been able to include in the dataset that you weren't?

Our dataset codes the political parties' campaign strategies in a very thorough manner using the newspaper coverage of the one-month election campaign period in 10 European democracies. Given that we had to hire native speakers to hand-code the newspaper articles using an extensive survey, we had to limit our data collection to the two highest circulating newspapers in 10 countries. If we had unlimited resources, we would love to extend the data collection to other advanced democracies and include more newspapers. In terms of the variables, while we know how political parties discuss their and each other's issue positions and valence characteristics, given the prevalence of coalition governments in parliamentary systems, it would have been interesting to learn more about the statements of party representatives on their preferred coalition partners or their coalition strategies in general .

Winner of 2024 Powell Graduate Mentoring Award



Peter A. Hall

is Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies and a resident faculty member of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University. His email address is phall@fas.harvard.edu

What for you is the most important thing in mentoring graduate students?

I think that the most important thing one can offer graduate students might be called "constructive candor." By "candor," I mean the provision of honest criticism. Bland support is not useful enough. "Constructive" means trying to understand where students are coming from with a view to guiding them toward viable topics about which they will be passionate. The idea is to go beyond criticism toward proactive efforts to help students construct concepts and research topics out of the ideas they bring to the table.

And the most challenging?

That last thing is the most challenging. It goes beyond spelling out the precepts of research design or identifying the problems in a person's work, and calls for active, sometimes very concerted, imagination about someone else's project.

The discipline has evolved since you began mentoring graduate students. How have these changes affected your mentoring, if at all?

I think the most significant change is the emphasis that hiring committees now put on publications. To some extent, that reflects how statistical the discipline has become. Many more students have articles because it is easier to publish statistically-oriented articles. But this also reflects the difficulties hiring committees have making judgments about what are now large numbers of applicants. Whether they really want to or not, they now put more emphasis on a student's publication record. As a result, I now urge my students to try to publish parts of their work before they complete the dissertation. When I started teaching, I also resisted co-authoring articles with my students because I wanted them to get full credit for their own work. Today, I look harder for ways to co-author with them in order to build their publication records.

What in your graduate mentoring career surprised you the most? Why?

Receiving this award surprised me the most because there are so many others out there who do what I do, just as well as I do it, all the time, every year. However, I am not counting the times when I was surprised that someone actually finished an excellent dissertation despite apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Would you change or do anything differently if you went back and began your graduate mentoring career from scratch?

I don't really think of graduate mentoring as a career, but rather as something that just comes along with the teaching enterprise. The one thing I might have done differently would be to hold more collective gatherings of my graduate students. I believe that what graduate students need most is intensive bilaterial advice focused on their own projects. But, in some years, I have sponsored collective gatherings–most recently to offset the isolations of Covid–and it has been gratifying to see the intellectual relationships that grew out of those meetings. Currently, I hesitate to add yet another meeting to the many workshops for graduate students at Harvard but, in retrospect, I could have done that more often.

What is the main thing you want to be remembered for as a mentor 20 years from now?

I will be happy if my students remember me as a kind person, reasonably generous with his time, who sometimes had some good ideas. I would also like them to know how much they continue to mean to me as people. Only after I had begun teaching did I realize how much I had probably meant to my own dissertation advisors.

Section Officers

CHAIR

Ellen Lust
Cornell University
University of Gothenburg

ANNUAL MEETING DIVISION CHAIR

Didi Kuo
Stanford University
Veronica Anghel
European University Institute

SECRETARY

Dominika Koter
Colgate University

TREASURER

Dominika Koter
Colgate University

VICE CHAIR

Anna Grzymala-Busse
Stanford University

ABOUT

The Organized Section in Comparative Politics is the largest organized section in the American Political Science Association (APSA). The Section organizes panels for the APSA's annual meetings; awards annual prizes for best paper, best article, best book, and best data set; and over- sees and helps finance the publication of this newsletter, APSA-CP.

Section Website: http://comparativepoliticsnewsletter.org

Past newsletters: http://comparativepoliticsnewsletter.org/newsletter

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

Subscription to the APSA-CP Newsletter is a benefit to members of the Organized Section in Comparative Politics of the American Political Science Association. To join the section, check the appropriate box when joining APSA or renewing your Association membership. You may join the APSA online at https://www.apsanet.org/becomeamember

American Political Science Association
1527 New Hampshire Ave, NW Washington, DC 20036-1206

(202) 483-2512 (202) 483-2657 apsa@apsanet.org