



# WSSA NEWS

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SPRING 2013

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## "Myth: Political Scientists Are Politicians"

*by Ross Burkhart,  
Boise State University*

When meeting people for the first time (especially outside the academic arena), and upon their hearing that I'm a political scientist, their reaction to that description of my livelihood is typically "You must love this time of year, with the elections taking place!" and "When are you running for political office?" These are pretty common myths about what political science is all about, and what political scientists do. Many political scientists do study elections closely, but quite a few do not beyond having a general interest in this political event. Political scientists study many things: governmental institutions, the exercise of power in foreign policy, revolutions, and court case decisions, among others.

What is more, nearly all political scientists would venture to say that they are not interested in being politicians. A tiny few have made the leap into politics, such as President Woodrow Wilson (Princeton University professor) and U.S. House Rep. David Price (D-NC & Duke University professor). But most political scientists have no desire to be practitioners of the political craft. In short, there's a fair bit of disconnect between the general public's view of political science, and a practicing academic's view of the discipline.

Generally speaking, political scientists avoid acting like the subjects they study, politicians. To advocate a political position or ideology, whether in the classroom or



Denver Skyline

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## Myth: Political Scientists Are Politicians

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in published research, removes the cloak of objectivity that is draped around the shoulders of the scholar. This doesn't mean that political scientists do not have personal opinions about the issues and candidates of the day. The word "study", though, connotes a removal from the subject at hand, and for political scientists this means not only a "hands off" attitude toward advocacy of political points of view in the classroom, in the journal, and in the community. It also compels a scholarly devotion to uncovering the truth, as best as it can be ascertained, about political behavior, using social science methods.

In this spirit, political scientists are careful to test hypotheses about political behavior using painstakingly-collected data and making use of appropriate analytical techniques that elicit fair results, not biased toward one ideology or another. It is these results that political scientists teach their students in the classroom, publish in peer-reviewed outlets for consumption by their students and colleagues, and state in media interviews and community speeches.

Utilizing the scientific method does not make political science be value-free, but instead infuses it with an ecumenical sense of exhausting as many rival causes in explaining, say, election outcomes or revolutionary events or public policy directions. Political science thus operates within the cautious and thorough traditions of social science research, and not the heat (and occasional hot air) of political rhetoric. Loud voices do not convince social scientists. Logical conclusions, from well-considered research designs informed by the scholarly literature, do.

## Future Conferences

**2014 Albuquerque, New Mexico**  
4/2/14 through 4/5/14

**2015 Portland, Oregon**  
4/18/15 through 4/21/15

**2016 Reno, Nevada**  
4/13/16 through 4/16/16

## Registration Reminder

Attendees may pre-register for the Denver conference with a bank card by submitting an online preregistration form (*preferred*), or with a check by mailing in a paper form.

### **Regular Online**

**Pre-Registration** will be available on our website, at <http://wssa.asu.edu/conferences/default.htm>, until March 27, 2013.

### **Late Online Pre-registration,**

costing an additional \$30 for regular registrants and an additional \$15 for students and retirees, will be available from March 28 through April 5, 2013.

**Paper Pre-Registration forms** are available, [click here to download](#).

Paper pre-registrations must be received by March 27, 2013, for the regular pre-registration price, or by April 3, 2013, for the late registration price.

There will be no registration activity between midnight, EST, on April 5 and 3:00pm CST, on April 10, when **On-Site Registration** opens at the conference site.

## Food Bank of the Rockies

*By Heather Albenesi, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*

At the annual conference in Houston this April, the Western Social Science Association revitalized our organizational mission of service by hosting a fund drive for a local charity.

Conference attendees gave generously and we were extremely pleased to raise over \$2,100 for the Houston Food Bank.

We are looking forward to another successful fund drive next April at our annual meetings in Denver, Colorado. We have again selected a local charity, **Food Bank of the Rockies**, [www.foodbankrockies.org](http://www.foodbankrockies.org) as the beneficiary of next year's fund drive.

Once again, attendees of the Denver annual conference will have the opportunity to donate at our Friday breakfast and poster session (April 12th, 2013).

WSSA has committed to make a double-matching donation, with a minimum of \$500 and maximum of \$1000 portion of the contribution coming from the WSSA.

Food Bank of the Rockies (FBR) is the largest private hunger-relief organization in the state of Colorado. Nearly half of their clients are children. Food Bank of the Rockies is an efficient organization, using only about 4 cents of every dollar for administration. It has received a 4-star Charity Navigator rating for three consecutive years.

### *Announcement*

*From the Latin American Studies  
Section*

*The Latin American Studies Section will have a CD for sale at the registration table in Denver. The content includes extended papers selected from the presentations in the Latin American Section in Houston last year.*

*Jesús Ruiz Flores,  
Latin American Studies  
Coordinator with Ignacio Medina*

## SSJ Report

*By Scott Carson, Editor, The Social Science Journal*

Every so often it is worth it to sit down and take stock of where you are. So, I want to take a few minutes and evaluate where the Western Social Science Association is with *The Social Science Journal*.

The Journal is in excellent health. Since taking over as editor in July of 2011, I have come to appreciate the effort N. Prabha Unnithan put into transforming The Journal into an online modern serial published by Elsevier, one of academics premier science publishers.

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# WSSA NEWS

## 2012-2013 WSSA OFFICERS

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THE WESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION is a professional educational organization committed to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship, service, and collegiality. The Association's mission is to foster professional study, to advance research, and to promote the teaching of social science. Founded in 1958 as the Rocky Mountain Social Science Association, WSSA draws on scholars and others in some 30 disciplines, or "sections," from across the United States, Canada, and Mexico; convenes an annual conference; conducts research competitions for faculty and students; and publishes *The Social Science Journal*, a juried, quarterly research journal, and WSSA News, the Association's newsletter, two times a year. WSSA annual membership dues are included in the annual conference registration. For those who will not be joining us at the conference, but would still like to be voting members and to receive the publications, subscription only memberships can be purchased from our website. Prices are \$40 (individual); \$50 (includes spouse); \$25 (student); \$25 (retired). For information, contact Larry Gould, Executive Director, WSSA, c/o Northern Arizona University, Larry Gould, Executive Director, WSSA, c/o Northern Arizona University, Yuma Branch Campus, P.O. 6236, Yuma, AZ 85366-6236 (Phone: 928-317-6475; Fax: 928-317-6419; E-mail: [larry.gould@nau.edu](mailto:larry.gould@nau.edu))

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Editor: Kate Herke. For more info on WSSA News, contact Larry Gould, Executive Director, WSSA, c/o Northern Arizona University, Yuma Branch Campus, P.O. 6236, Yuma, AZ 85366-6236 (Phone: 928-317-6475; Fax: 928-317-6419; E-mail: [larry.gould@nau.edu](mailto:larry.gould@nau.edu)).



## Pet Peeves, for Social Scientists

Everyone has a "pet peeve" : some small thing that other people do that is very irritating – in this case something that is by, for, or about social sciences or social scientists.

### What's yours?

#### Tom Isern,

*North Dakota State University* : Whenever I hear someone say "history proves" this or that, or make an argument on the basis of the "lessons of history", I wince, visibly. Because it gives me a tiny little pain in the temples.

Although I named my Labrador retriever Toynbee, I do not perceive any definite cycles in history. Although, like Parrington, I commenced my academic career in Emporia, Kansas, I lack confidence that there is a definite direction, progressive or otherwise, to history. As for the patronizing positivism of the new social historians who held court during the early years of my scholarly career, it now appears as hilarious to me as the hair styles in my high school yearbook. History, as social science, is not about laws. It is about possibilities. The past I read from the archives is populated with people exercising agency in moments of contingency. I partner with those people to extract meaningful narratives from the chaos that is human experience. And then that little pain in my temples goes away.

### To submit your own pet peeve,

send an email to

[WSSA.Admin@nau.edu](mailto:WSSA.Admin@nau.edu).

## Welcome to Denver !

The last time the Western Social Science Association (WSSA) met in Denver, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of WSSA. Plan on coming to Denver April 10-13 of 2013 and help us celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Social Science Journal (SSJ), the official journal of WSSA.

Denver offers many opportunities to explore the city, the Colorado Front Range, and the mountains, as well as many varieties of entertainment in the city itself. Our AAA Four Diamond conference hotel, the Grand Hyatt, will give you easy access to all that the vibrant city of Denver offers. At the conference itself, the wide variety of sessions/research topics presents an excellent opportunity for you to share your ideas and explore the many disciplines that make up the social science field of study.

April weather is typically mild, usually ranging from 60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. For a more in-depth look at the areas, check the Visit Denver website at [www.denver.org](http://www.denver.org). You may want to come early or stay after the conference ends to enjoy all that Denver has to offer.

### See you there!



U.S. Mint

[www.usmint.gov/mint\\_tours/index.cfm?action=StartReservation](http://www.usmint.gov/mint_tours/index.cfm?action=StartReservation)

## Things To See In Downtown Denver



**Colorado State Capitol**

[www.state.co.us](http://www.state.co.us)



**Denver Art Museum**

[www.denverartmuseum.org](http://www.denverartmuseum.org)



**16th Street Mall - Pedestrian Mall**

Restaurants & Outdoor Cafes

Shopping

Pubs

Galleries

Horse-drawn Carriages (after dark)



**The Clyfford Still Museum**  
[www.clyffordstillmuseum.org](http://www.clyffordstillmuseum.org)



**Confluence Park**  
<http://www.greenwayfoundation.org>



**History Colorado Center**  
[www.historycoloradocenter.org](http://www.historycoloradocenter.org)

## **VINE DELORIA, JR. STUDENT PAPER AWARD**

The Vine Deloria Jr. Student Paper Award was established to honor Vine Deloria, Jr., and his significant contribution to the field of American Indian studies.

Vine was an active member of the Western Social Science Association (WSSA), and he was instrumental in the development and success of its American Indian Studies section, one of the largest units of the association.

The Vine Deloria Jr. Student Paper Award is open to graduate and undergraduate scholars. Students are encouraged to submit a 25 page paper on a topic related to American Indian Studies. The papers will be reviewed by a panel of scholars and overseen by the American Indian Studies section of WSSA.

The annual winner receives a cash award of \$500.00 and is recognized at the WSSA Presidential luncheon.

### **Submissions Welcomed**

The WSSA News accepts proposals for articles from members.

“Articles” refers to pieces ranging from one or two paragraphs to one or two pages; topics should be matters of general interest to a wide variety of social scientists. Acceptance for publication is at the sole discretion of the editor.

We also encourage members to submit 1-3 sentence notices, acknowledging the accomplishments of other members, for the “Kudos, Laurels, and Milestones” column.

See <http://wssa.asu.edu/activities> for copies of past issues and for submission guidelines.

# New Incentive Grants & Awards for Students

## ***Local Participation Grants***

For local area students who are traveling **less than 250 miles** to the Annual Conference site. WSSA will provide free Conference registration (which includes automatic WSSA membership, subscription to the *Social Science Journal*; and, a ticket to the President's Luncheon). Grantees must participate (by way of either presenting a paper or a poster, or by serving as a member of a panel) in the Conference program. Any authorized Dean of a higher education institution within the designated local area may certify up to five students from his or her institution to receive these awards. The list of certified students must be forwarded to the WSSA Administrator by January 15 of the Conference year.

## ***Travel Grants***

For students who are traveling **more than 250 miles** to the Annual Conference site. WSSA will make a grant of \$500 each toward defraying the awardees travel expenses. Grantees must participate (by way of either presenting a paper or a poster, or by serving as a member of a panel) in the Conference program. The student will complete an application letter [Send to Prabha Unnithan: [prabha@lamar.colostate.edu](mailto:prabha@lamar.colostate.edu)] that confirms his or her participation in the upcoming Conference and the need for the amount of the grant to defray travel expenses. Recipients for grants will be selected by a Grants & Awards Committee that will be constituted and chaired by the Vice-President of WSSA. Up to ten (10) awards may be made by this Committee. The list of grantees will be forwarded to the WSSA Administrator by January 15 of the Conference year. Grantees will be recognized at an appropriate WSSA function during the Conference. Checks for the grant amount will be issued by the WSSA Administrator following participation by grantees in the Conference.

## ***John Wicks Dissertation Paper Award***

For the author of a selected paper to be presented at the Annual Conference which is based on a dissertation in progress or completed before January 15 of the Conference year. WSSA will provide a stipend of \$1,000. The awardee must participate by way of presenting the dissertation-based paper in the Conference program. To be considered for this award, a candidate will complete an application letter [Send to Prabha Unnithan: [prabha@lamar.colostate.edu](mailto:prabha@lamar.colostate.edu)] that confirms his or her participation in the upcoming Conference and provide an endorsement from his or her dissertation advisor or chair that the paper is based on a dissertation. The winner will be selected by a Grants & Awards Committee that will be constituted and chaired by the Vice-President of WSSA. The winner's name will be forwarded to the WSSA Administrator by February 15 of the Conference year. If selected as a Wicks Award winner, the awardee agrees to forego any other WSSA award that Conference year. The winner of the Wicks Award will be recognized in the Conference Program and at an appropriate WSSA function.

## **SSJ Report**

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The WSSA bylaws establish that a portion of its 18 Associate Editors rotate every year. This year we welcome Darren E. Sherkat of the University of South Illinois, Heather Albanesi of the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Adam S. Chamberlain of Coastal Carolina University, and Thomas N. Maloney at the University of Utah. Each brings their unique talents to our editorial team. We thank Janis Johnston, Ruben Martinez, Marriane Neilson, Daphne Pederson, and Dhirenda Vajpeyi for their service to *The Social Science Journal*.

A journal's quality is gauged by its impact factor, and the impact factor is a measure that reflects the average number of citations for articles published in scientific and social science journals. Higher impact factors represent better quality, and between 2011 and 2012, *The Social Science Journal's* impact factor increased by 13 percent.

The number of submissions has also increased, and this year, for the first time, will exceed 300. The Journal continues to welcome book reviews, and as the interim book review editor, we are actively looking for members of the Western Social Science Association to pen reviews of the most recent social science books they have read.

So, this self-evaluation of The Journal finds it moving in the right direction, and the foundation is laid to continue our present upward march to greater influence and recognition in the social sciences

## **In Denver's City Park**

### **Denver Museum of Nature & Science**

[www.dmns.org](http://www.dmns.org)



The fourth largest museum in the U.S. is a maze filled with treasures of the earth – dinosaurs, dioramas, space exhibits, science experiments, a digital planetarium, IMAX theatre and touring shows.

### **Denver Zoo**

[www.denverzoo.org](http://www.denverzoo.org)



Denver's largest park has several lakes, spectacular mountain views, flower gardens and a hiking/jogging trail that is exactly one mile high.



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### **Student Conference Participation Awards**

**Denver, Colorado  
April 10 – 13, 2012  
Hyatt Grand  
Welton Street, Denver, Co.**

As part of our mission to increase and promote the Social Sciences, the Executive Council of WSSA is sponsoring awards to both graduate and undergraduate students recommended by their educational institution. These awards provide free conference registration and free admission to the President's Luncheon on Friday of the Conference week. It is preferred that the student nominated for these awards present a paper or participate in the poster session. Up to five nominations per institution are allowed.

If you wish to nominate a student please complete the following:

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Graduate Student    \_\_\_\_ Undergraduate Student

Name of Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information for student:

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print)

Title of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

Please scan this document into a pdf and send it to: [WSSA.AdminAsst@nau.edu](mailto:WSSA.AdminAsst@nau.edu), by no later than April 7, 2012. (*Earlier is preferred*)

# WSSA 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference

## Program Overview

Denver, Colorado

### April 10<sup>th</sup> --Wednesday

WSSA Executive Council Meeting  
7:30am to 4:00pm

Conference Registration  
&  
Book Exhibit  
3:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

WSSA Welcoming Reception  
*All Attendees Invited*  
6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

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### April 11<sup>th</sup> --Thursday

Conference Registration  
7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Concurrent Panel Sessions  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Publishers' Book Exhibit  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Coffee Break  
9:15 a.m.

Coffee Break  
2:30 p.m.

### April 12<sup>th</sup> -- Friday

Full Breakfast  
*All Attendees Invited*  
7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Poster Session  
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.  
*held in conjunction with  
Full Breakfast*

Conference Registration  
7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Publishers' Book Exhibit  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Concurrent Panel Sessions  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Presidential Luncheon  
WSSA President  
Tom Isern  
*Ticketed Event*  
11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Coffee Break  
2:30 p.m.

WSSA Business Meeting  
4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Section Coordinators Meeting  
*All Current and New Section Coordinators  
Are Required to Attend*  
5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### April 13<sup>th</sup> --Saturday

Conference Registration  
7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

WSSA Executive Council Meeting  
8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Publishers' Book Exhibit  
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Concurrent Panel Sessions  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Coffee Break  
9:15 a.m.

WSSA President's Reception  
*All Are Invited*  
Music and Refreshments  
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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Information regarding special events and Section business meetings may be found in the conference program, online, on the Conferences page of our website

<http://wssa.asu.edu/conferences/default.htm>

## *Advertisement*

Dear colleagues,

We are delighted to announce a new journal, "Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest " <http://contentionjournal.org/>

Contention is a new fully open access, peer-reviewed journal that promotes disciplinary cooperation and interdisciplinary integration while broadening the scope of academic work in the fields of social movements and protest. Contention is published by Punctum Books and is administered by an international and interdisciplinary editorial board.

This new journal pursues two objectives: 1) Becoming an on-going forum for debate and discussion across the social sciences and humanities on the topic of Social Protest, in its many shapes and forms 2) Expanding multidisciplinary cross-fertilization and increasing dialogue across disciplines and fields

Submissions: Contention welcomes submissions of high quality theoretical essays, research articles with novel findings, critical reviews as well as commentaries aiming at increasing interdisciplinary debate between authors, and book reviews. The Journal aims to present original perspectives and points of view across disciplines and areas of investigation. Articles should be between 5,000-7,000 words. To submit a paper, please read the detailed guidelines found here: <http://contentionjournal.org/authors>; then use the online submission form. (For information, and to propose a Special Issue, please contact the editors:

Editors: Giovanni A. Travaglino and Eugene Nulman

Editorial Advisory Board: Professor Dominic Abrams, Professor Christopher Rootes, Dr. Gianni Piazza, Professor Chris Pickvance

In addition to the open call, we would like to draw your attention to the Call for Papers for the Special Issue: "Research and Methods in the Study of Social Protest: Towards a Crossdisciplinary Dialogue"