

# NEWSLETTER: MIDWEST WOMEN'S CAUCUS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE

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## NEWSLETTER CONTENT

- I. Mission Statement**
  - II. Message from the Caucus President Brigid Harrison**
  - III. Call for Nominations: Outstanding Professional Achievement Award**
  - IV. Call for Nominations: Caucus Officers**
  - V. Call for Participation: 2009 Conference Roundtables**
  - VI. Summary of 2008 Roundtable Summaries**
  - VII. Officer Names and Contact Information**
  - VIII. Membership Form 2008-2009**
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### **I. Mission Statement**

The Midwest Women's Caucus for Political Science is a regional caucus affiliated with the Women's Caucus for Political Science of the American Political Science Association. The Midwest Caucus promotes professional equity for women in the discipline of political science by sponsoring sessions at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, working with the Association to promote the interests of women political scientists, encouraging research that acknowledges and investigates the presence and activities of women in political life, and serving as a network for members between annual meetings.

We welcome your participation and membership. To join the Midwest Caucus or to renew your membership, please complete the form provided on the last page of the newsletter and return it to the Caucus Treasurer as indicated on the form.

### **II. Message from the Caucus President Brigid Harrison**

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you all have enjoyed a recuperative and productive summer. I am delighted to be taking up the mantle of the presidency of the Midwest Women's Caucus at such a momentous time, both in national politics and within the discipline of Political Science. If you attended the American Political Science Association meeting in Boston, I am sure you shared the palpable sense of excitement as we as colleagues watched the practical side of politics unfold during the Democratic National Convention and the Republican vice presidential selection announcement.

APSA also provided numerous opportunities for Caucus members to network, share research, and enjoy each others' company, particularly during the national caucus business meetings, and during the two sponsored receptions, including the Reception Honoring Women of Color, and the reception co-sponsored by the Women and Politics Research Section. Each year when I

attend caucus meetings – whether national or sectional – I am struck by the warmth and friendliness of caucus members, who always seem to go out of their way to befriend new people.

Looking ahead to our own meeting which will take place during the Midwest Political Science Association at the Palmer House Hilton, April 2-5, 2009, I would ask that if you plan to attend that you consider organizing a Roundtable. Caucus roundtables present unique opportunities for Caucus members to mentor and be mentored on issues of professional development. This year we are interested in sponsoring roundtables that address issues across the gamut of our careers from those that provide advice to graduate students, mentor junior faculty, address the issues of mid-career colleagues, and speak to the concerns of those contemplating retirement. If there is a particular area that you would like to see addressed, you may also email me and I will add it to the list of suggestions from our last meeting.

Finally, I would remind you that the Call for Papers is currently posted online at <http://www.mpsanet.org/~mpsa/Conference/call2009.html> and that the conference's deadline for proposals is October 10<sup>th</sup>.

Wishing you a terrific semester,

*Brigid Harrison*

Brigid C. Harrison  
President, Midwest Women's Caucus for Political Science  
Professor of Political Science and Law  
Montclair State University  
Montclair, NJ  
harrisonb@mail.montclair.edu

### **III. Call for Nominations: Outstanding Professional Achievement Award**

Each year the Midwest Women's Caucus honors a woman in political science with the Outstanding Professional Achievement Award. The Caucus is currently soliciting nominations from its members for the 2008-2009 award. The award acknowledges the scholarship and service accomplishments of a senior woman in the discipline (not necessarily in the field of women and politics), who has a distinguished research record, has made significant contributions to the profession and its associations, has mentored women at her own institution or elsewhere, and has served as a positive role model for women in the profession. At the MPSA conference each year, the Caucus hosts a roundtable in honor of the award recipient. Participants on the roundtable describe the major contributions of the award recipient. Past recipients of this honor are listed at the end of this call for nominations.

To nominate a candidate for this award, please submit a letter addressing the candidate's qualifications for the award and her vita (if possible). Nominations should be emailed to the chair of the awards committee, Kathleen A Dolan (kdolan@uwm.edu) by October 31. A committee of caucus members will choose the award recipient.

## PREVIOUS AWARD WINNERS

1993-1994 Doris Graber  
1994-1995 Jewell Prestage  
1995-1996 Susan Welch  
1996-1997 Arlene Saxonhouse  
1997-1998 Diane Blair  
1998-1999 Roberta Sigel  
1999-2000 Peggy Conway  
2000-2001 Betty Glad  
2001-2002 Karen O'Connor  
2002-2003 Virginia Sapiro  
2003-2004 Catherine Rudder  
2004-2005 Pippa Norris  
2005-2006 Susan J. Carroll  
2006-2007 Iris Marion Young  
2008-2009 Mary Hawkesworth

### **IV. Call for Nominations: Caucus Officers**

The Caucus is seeking officer nominations. Serving as a Caucus officer is a great way to participate in the profession and to promote women in political science. Please consider nominating someone you know or yourself for the position of president-elect or newsletter editor (with terms to begin in April 2009). Job descriptions are included below.

*President-elect:* serves for one-year, followed by a second year as President; consults with the President on Caucus business; organizes one roundtable for the annual meeting.

*Newsletter editor:* serves for two years; assembles biannual Caucus newsletter; maintains Caucus website.

If you are interested in serving or would like to nominate someone, contact Brigid Harrison.

### **V. Call for Participation: 2009 Conference Roundtables**

For each Midwest Political Science Association conference, the Women's Caucus organizes roundtables to engage scholars at all stages of the political science career. Roundtables address professional development. Roundtable topics in 2008 included, among others, job interviews, field research, and work-life balance (see below).

The Caucus is organizing roundtables for the 2009 conference (April 2-5, 2009). If you want to serve as a chair or participant for a roundtable, please contact Brigid Harrison.

## VI. Summary of 2008 Roundtable Summaries

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY: Promoting a Healthy Work-Life Balance: Individual Needs, Family Needs, and Fairness (58-104)

*Panelists:* Valerie Hunt, Southern Methodist University; Hannah Holden, Rutgers University; Lori Poloni-Staudinger, Northern Arizona University; Elizabeth Bennion, Indiana University South Bend; Emily Gill, Bradley University

*Valerie Hunt, Southern Methodist University:*

- Hunt has served as primary caretaker for a hospitalized family member on two occasions.
- There are some things we must *integrate* into our lives to allow us to better achieve *balance*.
- Our medical and financial health must be integrated into our lives. We must prepare ourselves before a crisis arises. Otherwise balance becomes impossible.
- We must plan for the “known unknowns.”
- Key processes in getting your medical and financial affairs in order include:
  - Gather medical vital statistics.
    - Full exam, appropriate for age, requirements change each decade.
    - Blood type, self and family.
    - Medications, self and family.
    - Health care providers, self and family.
    - Medical history, self and family.
  - Know the wishes of people in your family.
    - DNR orders
    - Views on life support
    - Legal guardianship
    - Power of attorney
    - Cremation, burial, or donation
  - Identify decisions that will need to be made in a crisis.
    - Know who will make them.
    - Know the resources in your “family bank.”
  - Discuss caretaking roles.
    - Who, where, when, what?
    - Financial versus physical?
    - Home versus institution?
  - Communicate your wishes.
    - Tell one and all and often.
  - Have a re-evaluation and review procedure.
    - Changing wishes.
    - Change of status: marriage, divorce, adoption, birth.

*Hannah Holden, Rutgers University:*

- Holden entered graduate school as an older student and single mother (10 year old son).
  - Needed supplemental funding to provide for a child.
  - Had to work in addition to attending school. Support not sufficient.
- Approach graduate school as a 40 hour per week job.

- Worked when son was in school.
- Worked as much as possible before 5:00 p.m.
- Requirements of parenthood helped avoid procrastination.
- Inability to take evening classes is problematic.
  - Daytime classes not always available.
  - Sitter too expensive.
  - Child not the right age to attend long graduate seminar.
- You can attend graduate school and be a parent.
  - Pro-family policies (i.e. family leave for graduate students and faculty) help.
  - The key is to work efficiently.
- Ultimately, you decide the priorities in your life.
  - For some of us, children are a priority.
  - This need not exclude us from graduate school or an academic career.

*Lori Poloni-Staudinger, Northern Arizona University:*

- Graduate student was advised that she could “kiss her career goodbye” if she had children. This “advice” is not uncommon, but it is deeply troubling.
- Poloni-Staudinger had one child at the end of graduate school and one after.
- Husband was busy building his own career.
- Graduate school and academic life is ideal for flexible balance.
- Balancing the careers of both spouses is difficult.
- Telecommuting can help.
- If you need something to help you balance work and family responsibilities, ASK.
  - For example, no courses before 9 or after 3.
- High quality, on-site childcare is sorely needed.
- Information about local childcare is also helpful.
- Time management skills are essential.
  - You must use your time effectively.
  - You must stick to a schedule, stay organized.
- Find time for yourself!
  - Exercise, for example, will make you more efficient.
  - Schedule it!
- Pick and choose your service and voluntarism carefully.
- Balancing work and raising a family can be difficult, but children also give you freedom (to recognize the need to spend time away from academic work) and they keep you grounded.

*Elizabeth Bennion, Indiana University South Bend:*

- Bennion had three children in four years (2004, 2005, and 2007).
- Family-friendly policies are essential.
  - Paid pregnancy and family leave is important.
  - Know your campus policies.
    - Don’t like them? Work to change them!
  - Family-friendly institutional culture is also important.
    - Encourage male colleagues to take advantage of family leave policies too.
- You must consciously choose balance.

- Children give you a “mandate” to spend time away from the office
- A stay-at-home spouse increases flexibility for academic partner
- Family time can be integrated into long work days (i.e. meals together at school)
- Seek institutional support for your work
  - Summer research and teaching grants can free you from summer teaching
  - Release time can allow you to complete important research or service projects without sacrificing family/personal time
- Integrate your teaching, research, and service.
  - Find projects that advance 2-3 goals simultaneously.
- Make time for other pursuit and interests besides children and work
  - Civic engagement and voluntarism are meaningful and can be listed in your CV.
  - Social networks can advance your personal and social goals (i.e. walking partner, babysitting exchange, potluck dinner group, women’s film group, etc.).

*Emily Gill, Bradley University:*

- Unlike the other women on the panel, Gill waited until after tenure to have a child.
- A supportive partner can make all the difference.
  - Husband on sabbatical helped with baby.
  - Two incomes allowed for babysitter in the home.
  - Dual academic couple can arrange schedules to maximize time with child.
- It is *possible* to nurse and teach shortly after giving birth.
  - Note: The other members of the panel would not recommend it!
  - If you must work early on, be creative. Emily moved one course to her home.
- When children are grown, make time for other pursuits.
- Rather than simply writing about politics, get involved!
  - Stephen Ministry
  - Planned Parenthood Board
  - ACLU Board
  - AIDS Board
  - Equal Marriage Illinois
- Make time for pursuits you enjoy and find meaningful.

## ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY: Getting the Interview, Getting the Job (58-105)

*Panelists:* Barbara Burrell, Northern Illinois University; Jean Wahl Harris, University of Scranton; Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, Eastern Michigan University; Christina Wolbrecht, University of Notre Dame

*Finding the "right" job/jobs to apply for --* how does one decide where to apply (geography, type of college/university, size, and so on), resources for job postings.

- Discuss advantages and disadvantages of various settings with colleagues at meetings.
- Understand the different expectations and pressures that accompany an R1 institution versus a primarily teaching institution.
- Considerations such as geography and size of the institution may be important factors.

- A variety of resources, including APSA's eJobs listing, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website, and job listings provided in the Women's Caucus newsletter all list available positions.

#### *The components of the application*

- Cover letter – use nice stationary and only apply electronically if that medium is encouraged in the position announcement. Frame your cover letter touching on components in the position announcement. Including information about *why* you find the position attractive (what is it about the department, university, and area that are appealing to you) may make your application stand out.
- Vita (and cover letter). Explain any lapses in employment, scholarship, or education.
- Writing samples and publications – submit actual publications (books or journals) if possible, rather than photocopies. If you are just starting out, include particularly strong papers, or dissertation chapters.
- Teaching evaluations – at most colleges and universities, having teaching experience as grad assistant, TA, or even as an adjunct offers assurance that an individual is capable of teaching. Items that should be included are syllabi, a statement of teaching philosophy, the measurement tool for teaching evaluations, the statistical interpretation of those evaluations, soft comments if available, and classroom observation reports from other professors, if available.

#### *The phone interview*

- If at all possible, schedule the phone interview for a quiet time when you have access to a landline (rather than a cell phone), when you will have no interruptions (from students knocking on your door during office hours, for example), and when you will not have to rush to make the scheduled time.
- Inquire ahead of time who will be participating in the interview.
- Do your homework: refer to potential colleague's research, describe how your teaching might mesh with current programs, and discuss an item that you saw on the department website.
- Have a copy of your application handy, as the interviewers may ask specific questions about things you included.
- Be prepared to interview the interviewers: they will ask if you have any questions for them. This is a time to ask about the culture of the department, reappointment and tenure criteria, teaching load, service expectations, and the timeline for the hiring of the position, and so on. Do not ask about salary during the phone interview.

#### *The in-person interview -- what to expect*

- Most universities will use a full day to interview, with the candidate meeting with members of the department, the Dean, perhaps the Provost, a library staff member, and students.
- For a guest lecture or presentation, be certain to have back-ups of powerpoints (printed ahead of time), and bring your own lap-top if possible to increase your comfort level. Despite the presence of faculty in the room, in nearly all cases the discussion should be targeted at the students. Move around the classroom, ask students their names and use them if possible.
- Most interviews will include a meal. During this and throughout the day (and leading up to the in person interview), a friendly, accommodating personality scores more points with

interviewers looking for a collegial hire. Of course, use good manners at meals, follow the lead of others when it comes to drinking alcohol, be gracious and show good humor.

*Following up*

- Follow up with all members of the committee (including any support staff who assisted in your travel arrangements) with an immediate thank you email. Another written thank you to the department chair or hiring committee chair should follow within one week.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY: Sex, Gender and Field Research: Tales and Advice (58-106)

*Panelists:* Meg Rincker, Purdue University Calumet, Chair; Jae-Jae Spoon, University of Iowa; Frances B. Henderson, Maryville College; Marshall W. Thompson, Northeastern Illinois University; Gina Yannitell Reinhardt, Texas A & M University

This roundtable assembled a variety of scholars who use field research methods in a diverse array of countries to better understand political outcomes of interest. Panelists discussed how their age, gender, class, race, and nationality affected their ability to do their fieldwork, cope with long periods away from loved ones, and ultimately interpret the rich data collected.

- *Access is the first hurdle.* Field researchers in any location have to contend with people's prejudices about who "looks like" and "doesn't look like" a typical social scientist. These prejudices range from interviewees' surprise or condescending remarks like "you are too young to be a researcher" to outright discrimination "I was expecting to meet with someone white" or "black people are not allowed to stay at this hotel." These assaults on basic human dignity can create a difficult environment for researchers of color, women researchers, young researchers, etc. to do field research. In countries where mixed-sex social interactions are frowned upon, researchers may find real difficulties setting up appointments with interviewees of the opposite sex, or finding the appropriate spaces for such meetings. None of these experiences are easy, even if you have been warned of the possibility of discrimination or social awkwardness, but warning helps researchers plan better and cope with situations as they arise.
- *Letters of introduction,* in the appropriate language, and signed by a scholar from the country of study, are invaluable for all researchers, but particularly so for grad students, young women, and researchers of color who "don't look like typical social scientists" to have credibility. A letter helps you get your foot in the door with possible interviewees, and to have some standing in country and to get interviews. Panelists discussed how they sought connections to in-country scholars, by talking to their dissertation advisors or colleagues here to find personal connections in country, or by cold-calling/emailing scholars abroad with a brief description of their research to ask for use of an in-country scholar's name on such a

letter. *Personal Business cards* with your university's seal (in the country's format) are also very useful so interviewees can call you back, etc.

- *Persistence is key.* Sometimes calling and trying to set up appointments with individuals does not work and you will get the run around. Showing up in person may do the trick. It is harder to deny a researcher an interview when he/she is standing in front of you than during a phone or email conversation. Gender can sometimes be an asset: women for instance can be seen as “non-threatening” and allow interviewees to open up quickly once you have crossed the hurdle of credibility. Being pregnant when doing field research can be an asset in some situations, as men or women are likely to feel a bit guilty refusing an interview to a person with child.
- *Small tokens,* such as pens from your university, chocolate, candy and flowers, a small gift appropriate to local culture can help interviewees or fellow participants also gain access and demonstrate your friendliness. For first time researchers it is helpful to ask someone from the site of field study what kind of gift is appropriate, and to know about these side costs, which can add up, in advance. Be sure to factor this cost into your research budgets that you submit for grants.
- *Paying it forward is vital.* Once you have established yourself as legitimate to people in your field country, respect those relationships and of course individuals' requests as far as anonymity or requests to see the research published from the study. Consider sending brief thank you notes to your interviewees. This is important to make similar field work experiences possible for other researchers in the future, as well as for your own individual research when you return to your location of study.
- *Use snowball techniques* for growing your sample of interviewees and connections at your site of field research. At the end of every interview, remember to ask the interviewee for suggestions of other people to contact for interviews or related data.
- *Daily living* during field research can be fun but also exhausting and challenging. In cultures where women, or particularly American women, are the objects of “cat-calls,” being a field researcher abroad and knowing how to react can be complex. A community of people to talk to in country and at home can help in dealing with such issues. Nationality can impact your experiences as a field researcher abroad. Panelists discussed the challenges of being in the field and responding to foreigners' views of American women during the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal.
- *Technology helps.* Field research can be a lonely enterprise, working in a country where you know few people and are far from loved ones. Before you go into the field, check out opportunities for instant messaging, cheap phone rates, etc. so you can keep connected with

loved ones. Before you go into the field, also check out ATM rules and inexpensive alternatives for transferring money internationally, either for yourself or to research assistants after you leave. PayPal, iTunes or Amazon purchases may be ways of compensating research assistants in country without paying large wiring fees.

- *Reverse culture shock* can arise when you return from the field. Being in touch with other scholars or friends from your field study site can help you readjust to your former life. Many panelists echoed the feeling of returning with tons of data but then wondering “what do I do with it now?” We talked about the growing field of qualitative methods and discussed some outside resources for Political Scientists.

#### *Recommended Resources*

- Katherine Cramer Walsh. 2003. *Talking about Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*. University of Chicago Press.
- Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds. 2008. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. M.E. Sharpe.

## **VII. Officer Names and Contact Information**

### **President**

Brigid Harrison  
Montclair State University  
harrisonb@mail.montclair.edu

### **President-Elect**

Tracy Osborn  
University of Iowa  
tracy-osborn@uiowa.edu

### **Secretary**

Valerie F. Hunt  
Southern Methodist University  
vhunt@smu.edu

### **Treasurer**

Lori Poloni-Staudinger  
Northern Arizona University  
Lori.Poloni-Staudinger@nau.edu

### **Newsletter Editor**

Candice Ortals  
Pepperdine University  
candice.ortals@pepperdine.edu

### **VIII. Membership Form 2008-2009**

We invite you to join the Women's Caucus. Please complete the form on the following page and return it to the Caucus treasurer, Lori Poloni-Staudinger.

**MEMBERSHIP IN MIDWEST WOMEN’S CAUCUS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE**

If you would like to renew your membership or become a member, please complete this form and return it with your payment to:

Lori Poloni-Staudinger\*  
Northern Arizona University  
Department of Political Science  
P.O. Box 15036  
Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5036

*\*Make checks payable to “Midwest Women’s Caucus”*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

University Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Is this a new address within the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

(We need an accurate e-mail address so that you will receive the newsletter.)

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

New member \_\_\_\_\_                      Renewing member \_\_\_\_\_

**MIDWEST WOMEN’S CAUCUS DUES:**

Student/Unemployed      Free \_\_\_\_\_  
Low Income                \$2.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
One-Year Membership    \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
Two-Year Membership    \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

**You also have the option of joining and paying your**

**NATIONAL WOMEN’S CAUCUS DUES:**

*(These dues will be forwarded to the Treasurer of the APSA Women’s Caucus)*

Student/Unemployed/Retired      Free \_\_\_\_\_  
Salary under \$15,000                \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
Salary \$15,000 - \$40,000            \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
Salary over \$40,000                 \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation to Midwest Women’s Caucus:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please enter the amount you would like to contribute)*

**TOTAL:** \$\_\_\_\_\_ Please make checks payable to “Midwest Women’s Caucus.”