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116th APSA Annual Meeting & Exhibition

San Francisco, CA

September 10–13, 2020



Democracy, Difference, and Destabilization

Join APSA in San Francisco, CA, for the 116th annual meeting to address the latest scholarship in political science exploring the theme: “Democracy, Difference, and Destabilization.” APSA and the 2020 program chairs, Efrén Pérez (University of California, Los Angeles) and Andra Gillespie (Emory University), look forward to your participation in panels and sessions prepared by APSA’s divisions and related groups at the 2020 annual meeting.

In response to member feedback, this year’s annual meeting has been moved to the weekend following Labor Day. APSA hopes that this change will allow more political science students, faculty, and scholars to attend the meeting.

The call for proposals for divisions, related groups, TLC-at-APSA, and pre-conference short courses will close at 11:59 p.m. PST on January 14, 2020. Learn more about the specific participant rules, limitations, and exemptions, as well as submission options on the 2020 APSA Annual Meeting website: connect.apsanet.org/apsa2020. The website also features transportation and housing tips and group rates. Registration for the 2020 annual meeting will open in late March, 2020.

2020 THEME STATEMENT

The 2020 Theme Statement was written by program chairs Efrén Pérez and Andra Gillespie.

In the United States, democratic institutions are generally thought of as bulwarks against manifold threats, both inside and outside of the American polity. Indeed, the assumption has been that our nation’s constitution is solid and prescient enough to thwart—or at the least contain—the more authoritarian impulses of citizens and elected officials alike. Donald J. Trump’s election to the presidency of the United States in 2016 has dramatically called into question this working assumption. Yet, President Trump’s ascendance to executive power is more epilogue than prologue to the inclusivity of American democracy. In the decades leading to Trump’s momentous election, there were already countless signs of democracy displaying illiberal tendencies in the United States.

Indeed, although constitutional amendments extended the franchise to women and African Americans, the right to vote for these groups—and many others—has not been unfettered. The Supreme Court’s abandonment of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act has made it possible for states to suppress the ability of citizens of color to register and vote. The practice of gerrymandering continues to enable one political party to maintain control of state legislatures and congressional delegations,

regardless of the intensity of their electoral support. Doubts have been raised anew about birthright citizenship, which was first established through the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution to formally incorporate black Americans into the body politic. These misgivings are finding fresh expression in new questions about constitutionally guaranteed rights for non-citizens in the United States, including those who are undocumented.

The antidemocratic tendencies intended to limit the rights of marginalized groups serve as an overall barometer of our health. In addition to the limits of racial and gender equality in the United States, institutional and behavioral practices can serve to limit democracy’s efficacy. By many accounts, America is as polarized now as it was on the cusp of the Civil War because of forces that polarize Americans into ideological, hyper-partisan camps. This phenomenon affects individual behavior and the norms and functioning of our most cherished political institutions. The tribalism that emerges from such sorting predicts policy preferences and could serve to tear the fabric of social and political cohesion. As a result, norms that once seemed sacrosanct—like freedom of the press—are now routinely doubted, denigrated, and downplayed. This list goes on, but the general concern is the same: how inclusive and representative of our country’s diversity are democracy’s institutions and practices?

The United States is not alone in peering down this deep dark well. Brazilians have ushered in President Jair Bolsonaro, who openly disdains democratic principles. Poland's citizens have been witness to their conservative party attempting a dismantling of the judiciary and separation of powers. In Egypt, repression and authoritarian control have tightened substantially under the political control of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Hong Kong's emerging democracy has stalled, though signs of democratic resistance emerged in summer 2019.

For the 2020 annual meeting, scholars in all areas of the discipline are invited to investigate questions related to the threats and stresses experienced by democracies worldwide, the importance of diversity as a strength of democratic performance, the limits of achieving equity and inclusivity in heterogeneous publics throughout the world, and their implications for the resilience of democratic institutions. Many questions are raised by the growing pressures faced by democracies, including, but certainly not limited to:

- How do citizens react to democratic threats?
- Who, within democratic publics, endorses illiberal tactics and practices?
- Who, within mass publics, staffs the barricades against democratic threats?
- When do democratic nations turn away from core principles?
- When do individuals perceive a threat to their position within a democracy and how do they respond politically?
- Where, across the globe, do mass publics best reconcile capitalism with support for democratic institutions?
- Where in the world do we see people agitating to gain or maintain rights?
- Why do some individuals interpret demographic changes as threats to their rights, rather than a plus for democratic governance?

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted many women the right to vote—yet women of color were excluded from the amendment. Accordingly, panels celebrating women's suffrage and exploring the exclusionary aspects of the 19th amendment are encouraged at the 2020 annual meeting. ■

Additional Highlights from the 2019 Annual Meeting

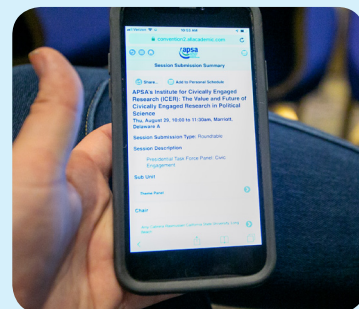


Above: The APSA Exhibit Hall
Above Right: An attendee presents at a panel.

Right: APSA president Paula D. McClain and past-president Rogers Smith

Below: The 2019 APSA Awards ceremony.

Below Right: An attendee makes use of the mobile program.



Left: The APSA Lounge desk.
Below Left: Attendees gather at the 2019 opening reception.
Below: The APSA Council.

