



# The Modest Scholar

The Official Newsletter of the Association of Graduate Students of Politics

## From the President's Desk

Modest Scholars,

The spring semester always arrives with a slightly different energy from the fall. At the start of the school year, three restful summer months reenergize and invigorate us for a full semester, which we dive into, eager to reconnect with professors and classmates and rekindle research left aside in favor of beach days.

As usual, the end of the semester comes much too quickly, and we are soon faced with that final week which often finds us huddled over our computers, with a crazed look in the eyes, carpal tunnel forming in our fingers and a posture frighteningly similar to the Hunchback of

Notre Dame, fiercely typing away at those thirty pages that stand between us and a glorious month of freedom.

As a result, we come back to the spring semester rested but, still wary and perhaps already looking forward to the longer, summer break. The break will be here soon enough but, the opportunities presented in the Spring semester will pass by if we do not take advantage.

The spring semester hosts a variety of conferences, from MPSA (where many of our own are presenting posters and papers) to IPSA, and many paper proposal deadlines, conference applications and scholarship/fellowship appli-

cations for the next year have deadlines in the spring. So draw upon your courage, fellow classmates, and dive into this semester as if it was the fall. Take advantage of all the conferences that are available, the talks hosted by our department and others on campus, the fellowships and opportunities available to graduate students, and, of course, don't forget to take the time to socialize with your cohort and those outside of it. Be present in the department, and perhaps you'll find the meaning in the words of the Petite Prince: "in the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer".

-Anahit Gomistan

## A Modest Editorial

You have in your hands the 2011-2012 Omnibus edition of the Modest Scholar. Your editorial board has worked hard putting together this jam-packed issue. From book reviews to reflections on research, the Modest Scholar continues to provide the single best outlet for UIC's political science graduate students to present their own work and insights.

This year, the Modest

Scholar has been produced by an editorial board, rather than a single editor so that more people can participate in the process. In the next few years, we are interested in expanding the book review section of the Modest Scholar, so those book you read? Write up a review and have it published here. In addition, we are interested more peer-reviewers for next semes-

ter's issue. So if you are interested in helping produce an in-department peer-reviewed graduate newsletter, please become a part of the Modest Scholar editorial board next year.

So quit being so shy and speak up about your accomplishments. No one will proclaim your own successes but yourself. Don't be so modest!

-The Editors

### Inside this Issue:

Research In Brief	2-3
Images from Research	2-3
Book Reviews	4-5
New Graduate Students and Congratulations	5
Recent Publications	6
Conferences	7
Window On Research	7
Interview: Yue Zhang	8

TMS graciously accepts all comments, critiques, and suggestions. Please contact the Editorial Board via email at [ealejo2@uic.edu](mailto:ealejo2@uic.edu)

All current and past issues of TMS are available through the AGSP website: [http://www2.uic.edu/stud\\_orgs/gov/agsp/](http://www2.uic.edu/stud_orgs/gov/agsp/)

### Editorial Board:

Eduardo Salinas,  
Liz Alejo,  
Clifford Deaton,  
Amy Schoenecker

## Summer Research in Jaipur

By Amy Schoenecker

This summer I had the honor of being awarded a Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) to study the Hindi language in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. The CLS program is run by the State Department in order to train students in languages that the U.S. deems important for foreign policy purposes. I applied for the scholarship based on a planned comparative study of informal economies and gender between Mumbai and Chicago. The summer experience gave me not only a kick start into Hindi, but allowed me the chance to make some important initial observations about this study. The ILO estimates that 92% of the workforce and 96% of all women workers in India labor in the informal economy, a staggering statistic. Awareness of these numbers was immensely different than seeing the vast reach of the informal economy in the Indian cities and towns that I visited.

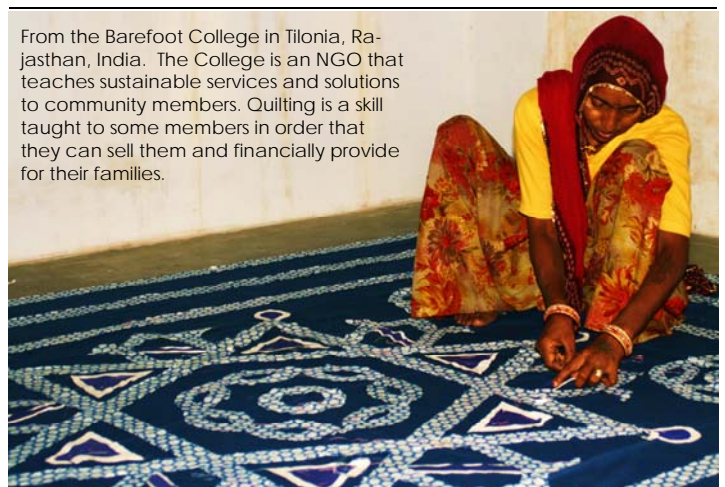
After I overcame the initial shock of researching such an ostensibly formidable phenomenon, I began to make some interesting observations. First, it seems that social stratification takes on similar arrangements in the informal economies of the U.S. and India, and in many ways mirror the stratifications of the formal economy. Second, and as an extension of the first point, these stratifications seem to be more pronounced in the informal economy than in the formal economy. Although gender norms and roles are different in India and the U.S., these differences seem to be downplayed in the informal economy. In both countries women are usually relegated to the lowest-paid positions, and segregated from men in work or doing typical 'women's work' (although the way this specifically plays out seems to be different in each country).

During a trip to Mumbai I visited an NGO working in Dharavi, one of Mumbai's largest slums where an estimated one million people live (yes, Slumdog Millionaire was filmed there) and where BBC News estimates that business output is around \$650 million a year, with most of it from informal work. Dharavi is striking in many ways, too many to recount here, but one of its most striking aspects was the way in which it amplified the two points made above. While touring a local business, a gentleman drove up in a BMW. It was a bit shocking to see a BMW in the slum area, so I asked the NGO worker about it. He told me that it was the owner of the business we had just toured—a business where we walked by a row of welders working in sandals, mostly shirtless, wearing no protective gear, with

metal materials lying all around (we literally had to step over all the random pieces to 'tour' the business). In most of these businesses labor was segregated by sex. One business we visited was an open concrete building where woman squat on the ground separating bundles of plastic straws which were being recycled for various purposes. While much of what I saw in the commercial side of Dharavi was discouraging, in terms of worker rights, it presents a unique opportunity: To be reminded of the importance of what we do as aspiring and established social scientists. As graduate students, I think it's easy to get bogged down in the words, texts and abstractions of what we study, all the while forgetting that we have the opportunity to make policy prescriptions that have real impacts on real people. Thus the summer was more than learning an amazing language and being immersed in a captivating culture, it was also a humble reminder of the great potential we have as political scientists to influence the world we study for the better.



A man and his little "store" in Jaipur. Vendors often wheel them to the market in the morning and wheel them home at night.



From the Barefoot College in Tilonia, Rajasthan, India. The College is an NGO that teaches sustainable services and solutions to community members. Quilting is a skill taught to some members in order that they can sell them and financially provide for their families.

# Hiking the Inca Trail

By Doug Cantor

Over winter break, I traveled across Peru. Incan history has always been a personal hobby of mine, as I find the narrative completely fascinating. One of the greatest empires that the world has ever seen sprouted up and was destroyed all within the timespan of 100 years. Within that time, they created an entire culture, left some of the most gorgeous ruins on the planet, and gave an identity to a entire continent that still echoes throughout the cities and jungles of almost all of South America. Hiking the Inca Trail and seeing Machu Picchu has been a lifelong dream of mine, and finally the time came to pack up my trekking gear and hit the Andes.

Upon arriving in Lima, I headed straight to the city of Cusco, (originally spelled Cuzco, and still spelled that way in many parts of the country), which was established as the original Incan capital in the 15th and 16th centuries. Cusco is the starting city for anyone wishing to hit the trails, as it is the main transportation hub. It is about a 50 minute flight from Lima (or a 22 hour bus ride, if you can bear it), and quite frankly, it is the scariest plane ride one can ever go on. Cusco rests at a very high altitude right next to the Andes, and is in the middle of several mountains. Rather than a straight descent, the pilot uses a corkscrew technique, guiding the plane down to the landing strip. Throughout all of this, you can look out the window and conveniently witness mountain peaks about 10 feet from the wing of the plane. So, if you've ever seen the movie *Alive*, and you remember the part where the one guy asks: "Are we supposed to be flying this close to the mountain?" This your worst nightmare come to life.

After a night's rest in Cusco, I took a bus to the start of the trail with a group consisting of five people, all of whom were coincidentally Danish. The first day of the trail is quite easy, there's a few steep parts, but nothing major. The ascent up the Andes begins generally during day two and into day three.

The second day of the Inca Trail is one of the most physically exhausting trails any trekker can complete, particularly during the beginning of the rainy season (during our winter). At a length of about 16 kilometers, it is almost entirely uphill, a problem only exasperated by mud and the stomach bug that I caught right when the tough part was starting. I was blessed not to suffer any altitude sickness, but I did pass some people along the way who did, and I did not envy them at all. The highest point of the trail,



which you reach towards the end of day two, is almost 14,000 feet above sea level. At this point you're basically eye to eye with many of the peaks along the range, high above many clouds, and you also get a good sense for just how much you've climbed on that day. Physically exhausted, with a good stretch of descent to camp to go, many people rest here for a while taking in the view and reflecting on the gigantic mountain they just climbed. When ready, you descend a few thousand feet down the other side for a much deserved, (and much needed), night's sleep in your tent.

The third day starts out very similar to the second day, immediately going up steep hills. This is short lived though, as the ascent only lasts about two hours, after which it is all downhill. The Inca Trail has a very rocky terrain, built from large stones with very steep steps, making it, in my opinion the hardest part of the trail. This goes on for miles and miles, for almost the entire trail after day two's high point. As exhausting as all the ascents were, descents on this type of ground are more physically challenging, and take a toll on one's knees and back. However, the third day also offers some of the best scenery, as you trek through rainforest, see countless flora and fauna, and are privy to some of the most beautiful ruins one can ever hope to see.

The fourth day is what makes the whole trip worthwhile. The last leg of the trail takes you to a legendary overpass called the Sun Gate, which gives you your first view of Machu Picchu. I'm not sure I've ever had such a satisfying feeling, especially with how tired one's body is at this point. You then make your way down the last leg of the trail, about another 40 minutes or so with Machu Picchu in sight.

No picture can ever capture how massive this city is. Originally built as a vacation spot for the first Incan king, Pachakutik, the city stretches over the entire mountain and across the entire face of it as well. Most pictures you find of Machu Picchu are taken from the angle of the first view one encounters as they emerge on to the mountain, but what most people don't know is that the city also stretches over the entire other side of that mountain, and behind where that photographer would be standing as well. I have been to several countries and seen some beautiful sites in my life, and I don't think it's even a question that this is the most beautiful place on earth.

The rest of my trip was spent traveling throughout the country. Traveling is a personal passion of mine and I've always loved immersing myself in different cultures, even if I don't speak the language very well. Peru is a fascinating country and offers so many different landscapes. I traveled across snow capped peaks and several days later I was sand boarding across massive dune ranges in the desert. There are rainforests and tropical beaches, ancient cities and new ones. My only regret is that I was only there for three weeks. For a country like Peru, I think you need at least two months to really experience everything. With the constrained time, I was on the move faster than I would have preferred, but such is life. I would recommend the country to anyone in a heartbeat. It's very affordable, easy to get around, and offers tons of adventure and variety. I certainly plan on heading back to South America in the future to experience other parts of the continent.

**Book Review: Agamben et al. 2011. *Democracy in What State?*. Columbia University Press, New York.**

The central question of *Democracy in What State?* rises up like the Hydra, generating even more questions in its answering. Is it meaningful to call oneself a democrat, if not then why not, and if so then how do you interpret the world? It is helpful to break down this inquiry into its descriptive and prescriptive parts; in their own ways, each essay deals with explaining the condition of actually-existing democracy, and offers suggestions towards the amelioration of the perceived problems at the heart of the democratic project. The book is a collection of short essays by some of the most imminent philosophers and social theorists of our time, from Giorgio Agamben to Jacques Rancière, and from Wendy Brown to the prolific Slavoj Žižek. Agamben introduces the question above, and points out the 'amphibiology' of democracy, that democracy is simultaneously a constitution of government 'by the people', and a technique of governance by representative party systems (5). When we talk about democracy we simultaneously mean rule by the people, and a type of state based on representation. If one holds with Joseph Schumpeter that democracy is only the competition for elective vote, then perhaps there is no tension here. But for the writers of this book, such an anorexic description of democracy is simply unacceptable. A better explanation is needed for the disconnection between the populace and governance.

At the heart of the question posed by all of the essays in this book, is the tension between these two halves, the constitutive gap between rule by the people and state governance. Daniel Bensaid, argues that representation, while problematic, is inevitable and "rather than try to deny the problem, it would be better to tackle it head on" by searching out new and more representative forms of representation (36). Kristin Ross points out the alternative position in exploring the 2008 referendum to approve the European Union constitution. She (along with some Irish constituents) argues that representative legislation is purposefully written to "communicate to voters through its very form that it was best to leave such complex matters of governance up to the experts" (84). How can we reconcile a representative system when the issues of governance are too complex for the 'rulers' to understand?

One of the most popular and widely commented upon attempts at reconciliation is found in the writings of Hannah Arendt, particularly her focus on the 'council system'. Articulated most clearly in *On Revolution*, Arendt suggests that the democratic spirit can be embodied through small-scale, locally organized and active citizens. Jean-Luc Nancy argues that this form of government "may be possible or desirable on a small or intermediate scale, it is simply not practical for society as a whole" (67). What he misses in Arendt's analysis is that the council system should not be viewed as a singular form of government, but rather as a fourth layer of the 'true gift' of the American revolution, the federal model. The council system was never articulated in isolation, but rather as the participa-

tory bedrock of a council-local-state-federal pyramid of power. Moreover, since it has never been applied to an entire society, how could Nancy or anyone else know of its practicality? It is not that the council system failed to produce viable governance, but rather that Jefferson's ward system was never instituted in the United States, and the *soviets* were actively destroyed by the Bolshevik party in the case of the Soviet Union. The question of whether or not the council system is theoretically viable is quite different from its actual application to a twenty-first century capitalist world.

Another stab at the question of democracy comes as some of the serious, and potentially fatal influences of capitalism on democracy. Wendy Brown articulates it most clearly. "Powerless to say no to capital's needs, [the populace] mostly watch passively as their own [needs] are abandoned...neoliberalism then snatches the term for its own purposes, with the consequence that 'market democracy'...is now a descriptor for a form that has precisely nothing to do with the people ruling themselves" (47-48). Not only does representation remove the people from 'active governance, but capitalism has further reified the people from the political realm, and in doing so the market has supplanted the people as the purpose for the state. Slavoj Žižek's response to this loggerhead is an appeal to the 'divine violence' of the people, the ultimately true injunction that no one will *give* the populace back their democracy, that democracy must be *taken*, if it is to be had at all. The specter Žižek conjures dances on the knife-edge of Louis-Antoine St. Just, the 'Angel of Death' and his democratic terror, and right-wing agitation by the American 'Tea Party' movement. To paraphrase Max Horkheimer, is this democracy so desirable?

Ultimately the question posed by *Democracy in What State?* is one of potentiality. What can be done now, in the present, to improve democratic participation and foster real rule by the people? With popular revolutions underway in North Africa and the Middle East, and political economic crisis threatening the Global North, this question grows in importance. It is at this point where the book lapses into a problematic silence. Alain Badiou criticizes the potential return to past moments of republican democracy as inspiration for the future. "Its the same old story; nostalgia is always nostalgia for something that never existed" (9). Ultimately he is right that one must critically interrogate the past, but this mindset risks ignoring the power of tradition, history, and collective memory to inspire populations. Jacques Rancière sees 'traditions of emancipation' as the central avenue for reconstituting democracy. "[History] isn't some entity that acts or speaks; what we call history...is woven by people as they construct a situation in time out of their own lives and experiences...Sooner or later a new generation arrives that tries to reinvent certain words with meaning, certain hopes linked to those words, but in different contexts and with differing, indeed aleatory, forms of transmission" (80-81). In creating their own lives, people act and live with history, both its making and its realization. If, as Rancière suggests, the hope for democracy is in future generations activating vital strains of political memory, then a lonely democrat can only hope that such a generation comes along sooner, rather than later.



**Esly Sarmiento** comes to us with a BA from DePaul University in International Studies and Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies. She is pursuing her MA and concentrating in Latino Studies. She grew up in Humboldt Park, and this summer was able to visit Mexico where she was born. She is a proud mother of two and credits her children as the keys to her success.

**Doug Cantor** is a Jersey City native with a BA from Rutgers University and a Masters from the University of Baltimore. He is pursuing his PhD in comparative politics and political theory. Trained as a competitive boxer, he also enjoys relaxing summers in south Florida.

**Dianne Selden** is from Cedarville, Ohio, where she received her BS in journalism and MA in political science from Ohio University. She is pursuing her PhD in International Relations and Comparative Politics, and is inter-

ested in European nations, nationalism, and identity politics. She was inspired by an internship at the National Assembly for Wales in the United Kingdom. We did not ask if her loveable mutt and ornery cat were her inspirations...

**Roberto Rincon** is from Chicago and has a BA in Philosophy and an MA in Political Science from Northeastern University. He is pursuing his PhD and his research interests include Comparative Politics, Latin American Studies and Political Theory.

**Leslie Price** is self-admitted farm girl from Indiana with a BA from Indiana University and did graduate work at UT-San Antonio. She is pursuing her MA in International Relations. This summer she was able to travel and work on research projects. She loves when people text her back with the letter "k."

---

## Special Congratulations

The Modest Scholar would like to recognize **Zachary Gebhardt, Matt Berry, Melanie Mierzejewski**, and all the others who have taken their preliminary exams. If you have any questions about prelims, these folks are the ones to go to for advice!

Congratulations to **Mitzi Ramos** and **Anthony DiMaggio** for successfully defending their dissertations. They are one step closer to becoming a newly minted Ph D. **Amy Schonecker** and **Liz Alejo** were awarded the 2011

Milton Rakove Research Award for their project "Street Vendors: Unpacking the Political Agency of Informal Workers". **David Sterret** also received the Rakove for his research proposal "What Impacts Opinion on Health Care Reform Policies?"

The John Echols Memorial Award for best paper went to **Amy Schoenecker** for her work "Shaping the Informal: Uncovering the Processes that Mold Informal Economies in Developed Countries"

---

## Worse than War By Anahit Gomtsain

**Book Review: Daniel Goldhagen 2009 Worse than War (Public Affairs, 2009, 672 pages)**

In *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*, Daniel Goldhagen launches a ruthless examination of genocide, and an attack on not only those who wage it, but on the world at large for its pigeonholed understanding of the concept and lack of action in the face of mass killing. Goldhagen's work is at times extraordinarily insightfully, and at others, a literary 'pointed finger' supported only by vague assertions and idealistic diatribe.

*Worse than War* provides an encompassing history of eliminationism, a term Goldhagen develops to describe mass killing such as genocide—a history that is covered purposefully so as to show there exists a recurring pattern of genocidal killing. The Holocaust is often placed outside of history, an atrocity unlike any other. Yet Goldhagen's chronology demonstrates that the institutions associated with the Holocaust, and the concept of mass extermination itself, were present long before the Nazis devised their ideology – in the Ottoman Empire, in Stalin's Russia and Mao's China, in colonial Kenya and Guatemala.

Goldhagen argues that eliminationism poses the largest threat to humanity in the modern world. More significantly,

unlike other scholars in the field, Goldhagen asserts that those perpetrating mass murder are completely rational, and operate on a conscious level. Even the worst atrocities begin with a series of lucid, conscious calculations—not only by leaders but, by followers as well. "Eliminationalist politics, like the politics of war, is a politics of purposive acts to achieve political outcomes, often of ultimate ends and often of desired power redistribution." Goldhagen asserts the need to understand genocide as eliminationism, a concept which should be analyzed in political, ideological and moral terms rather than as a structural feature of the world.

A shortcoming of Goldhagen's work is his prescription for a world devoid of eliminationism, which he prescribes rather hazily. He calls for the abolition of the United Nations (an organization Goldhagen accuses to be cynical, neglective, and inactive), the adoption of a death penalty by the International Criminal Court, a creation of a union of democracies which would work to employ force to prevent mass murder, and the distribution of a handbook to every world leader that would lay out the costs of failing to meet acceptable human-rights standards. He fails to convince, at least this reader, of the feasibility, much less the benefit, of his prescriptions. If the United Nations were to be abolished, what would take its stead? What countries would form the democracy union? These questions are left unexplored.

Despite its shortcomings, *Worse than War* aptly continues the debate on the nature of genocide, and the international response to and prevention of mass killing. Perhaps the most evocative lesson in Goldhagen's work is his echoing of Albert Einstein's assertion that "the world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing"

## Recent Publications

Wael J. Haboub. 2012. "Demystifying the Rise of Hamas" *Journal of Developing Societies*, 28(1): 57-79. (forthcoming)

**Abstract:** Most scholarly and popular writings portray Hamas as either extremist or anti-systemic and as a threat to democracy. Expected utility theory assumes that voters will reward centrist parties because voters are risk averse, while prospect theory expects extremist parties to be supported by voters since they tend to become risk takers when in loss. After contrasting Hamas's ideological distance from other Palestinian political parties, I will argue that the secret of Hamas's electoral success in 2006 lies not in its extremism but in its ideological centrist domestic message, consistent with expected utility theory. Palestinian voters supported what they saw as a centrist Hamas although it was viewed as extremist in the West. More importantly, the participation of Hamas in the democratic process has moderated its domestic and foreign policies, while its exclusion has destabilizing and radicalizing effects.

Melanie Mierzejewski *Review of Origin, Ideology and Transformation of Political Parties: East-Central and Western Europe Compared*, by Vit Hlousek and Lubomir Kopecek. *Political Studies Review* (forthcoming).

Melanie Mierzejewski *Review of Democratization by Elections*, by Staffan I. Lindberg. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (forthcoming).

Luciano Da Ros "Judges in the Formation of the Nation-State: Professional Experiences, Academic Background and Geographic Circulation of Members of the Supreme Courts of Brazil and the United States" *Brazilian Political Science Review*. (4)1: 102-10.

**Abstract:** This article compares the career profiles of judges from the highest bodies of the Judiciary in Brazil and the United States of America, examining the biographies of all the ministros of the Supreme Court of Justice (Empire) and of the Supreme Federal Tribunal (Republic) in Brazil, and of all the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, appointed until 2008 in both cases. Based on the sociology of political elites perspective, the article examines data concerning academic background, geographic circulation and the different professional experiences — legal, political and linked to the administration of the State's coercive activity (police or military) — lived through by future members of the Supreme Courts of Brazil and the United States so as to identify the types of individuals recommended to join the top bodies of the Judiciary in the two countries. In this sense, different state-building processes are identified on the basis of the examination of Brazilian and US judicial elites, suggesting a more fragmented and diverse trajectory in the case of US justices, and greater homogeneity and centralization in the case of their Brazilian counterparts.

Eduardo Salinas. 2012. "Micro-social and Contextual Sources of Democratic Attitudes in Latin America" in the *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, (3)1: 29-64.

**Abstract:** Many Latin American countries democratized between 1975 and 2000, and research has confirmed that contemporary Latin Americans hold democratic political attitudes. Using Americas Barometer surveys of 18 countries from 2008, we examine the commitment of Latin Americans to three democratic attitudes – preference for democracy over other forms of government, support for general participation rights, and tolerance for participation by system critics. We also explore the impact of personal resources, crime and corruption, evaluation of system performance, social capital, and the sociopolitical context on democratic attitudes. A preference for democracy and support for citizens' participation rights are strong, but tolerance is lower than the other attitudes. Evidence is found for acculturation – that Latin Americans acquire democratic attitudes by living in democratic regimes and through education.



# Conference Presentations

**Vanessa Guridy** "From Chocolate Cities and Vanilla Suburbs to an \*Horchata\* Nation?: Political Consequences of the Increasing Latino Population and the Blurring of the Urban/Suburban Divide" Midwest Sociological Society Annual Conference in Minneapolis, March 2012.

**Vanessa Guridy and Laura Nussbaum-Barbarena** "Emerging Latino Civil Society in New Destinations" to be presented at the Second International Sociological Association's Forum of Sociology in Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 2012.

**Melanie Mierzejewski** "Ukraine in Global Context" and "Charismatic Parties and the Anti-Democratic Challenge in Ukraine and Georgia" to be presented at the 2012 bi-annual International Graduate Student Symposium, Toronto.

**Melanie Mierzejewski** "More than Elections: Public opinion, institutional bias, and democratic assessment in Poland and Ukraine" presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, 2011, Seattle.

**Clifford D. Deaton** "The Memory of Resistance: Situationist Detournement and the Atelier Populaire of 1968" to be presented at the Politics of Irony/Irony of Politics Conference, McGill University Montreal, April 2012.

**Clifford D. Deaton and Aviral Pathak** "Coup D'etat and the Onset of Civil War" to be presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago, April 2012.

**Hank Noll and Liz Alejo** "The Road to Civil War: Infrastructure as Motivation and Opportunity" to be presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago, April 2012.

**Amy Schoenecker and Liz Alejo** "Street Vendors: Unpacking the Political Agency of Informal Workers" to be presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago, April 2012.

**Leslie Price & Dianne Selden.** "The EU, Human Rights, and Ethnic Minorities: the case of the Romani" to be presented at the 2012 Midwest Political Science Association (poster presentation) and the EU Graduate Student Conference at the University of Pittsburgh.

## Window on Research:

The EU is often assumed to increase democratic principles such as equality and political accessibility for citizens, especially for minority groups traditionally discriminated against by their states. With more than ten million Roma in at least eleven of the twenty-seven EU member countries, the Roma are the EU's largest ethnic minority. However, the Roma have faced discriminatory laws that exclude them from enjoying their full rights as citizens within member states. A September 2011 resolution passed by the European Parliament states that, "Roma people have suffered systematic discrimination and are struggling against 'an intolerable degree of exclusion' as well as human rights violations, severe stigmatization and discrimination in public and private life." As citizens of the EU, the Roma are entitled to immigrate, work, and live without discrimination within EU member states, as spelled out in both the Treaty of Lisbon and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. While certain guidelines regarding the treatment of minorities are laid out in accession agreements, the EU has limited ability to enforce these policies within individual countries. But does the prospect of membership in the European Union drive countries to develop and uphold human rights policies, especially those rights of the Roma who live within the country?

Drawing on theories of democratization and identity politics, as well as theories of narratives (such as framing and discourse), we will attempt to answer this through a comparative study of states with Roma population to determine if the length of time in the European Union enhances or expands rights of this minority group. This is a study of cultural, historical, and institutional factors in order to explain the policies of countries toward the Roma, as well as a comparison of how many "rights" the Roma enjoy as members in individual countries. Attention will be given to cultural, historical, and institutional factors concerning the Roma in three Central and Eastern European countries: Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Serbia. Each of these countries has a Roma population that is at least five percent of the total population and had historic interactions with the Roma. Slovakia and Bulgaria joined the EU after an extensive application period, and Serbia recently applied to join.

Intuitively, one might think that the longer a state remains a member of the European Union, that the level of rights enjoyed by a minority population would be enhanced due to the protections laid out by EU. However, we predict that the EU is more effective at combating discrimination when European states first attempt to gain membership than when member states have settled into the Union. States which are anxious to join the EU due to economic advantages (as well as other benefits) are more willing to comply with accession standards; however, once a member of the Union, there is no punishment for not continuing to uphold minority rights. While the European Parliament has recently called for more local, state, and national involvement to ensure the rights of the Roma within the EU, it is difficult to say whether new policies would truly enhance minority rights in individual Member States.

# An interview with Professor Yue Zhang

By Eduardo Salinas

***What was your experience growing up in China, and what are some major differences you notice between Chinese and U.S. academies?***

"I am teaching an undergraduate course on Politics in China this semester, and the funny thing is I don't know nearly as much about China as I thought I did. Teaching this course helps me 'rediscover' where I am from, in a sense. The biggest difference that I've noticed between Chinese and U.S. academies is that, in the U.S., there is a higher emphasis on student/teacher interaction and a tendency to encourage students to question the received instruction and make up their own minds. In Chinese universities it is more of a one-way street, with students accepting professor expertise without much criticism. Also, there is less student/teacher interaction; however, classes also tend to be quite large, which may partly account for that."

***You have an impressive list of grants, awards, and fellowships; what's the secret to writing a successful grant/fellowship proposal?***

"The best piece of advice I can give is to write and apply to awards that interest and move you; if you are moved by the research you are proposing, it is easy to excite others. Also, you want to emphasize how your project fulfills any sort of real world significance, this is very useful in making others see your topic as important. Lastly, you want to make sure you have tailored your application to the program to which you are applying. What questions are they looking to see answered in your essays? How does your proposal advance the goals of the institution, etc.? These are areas you want to explicitly address."

***What influenced your deciding on a career as a political scientist?***

"The main influence was probably growing up in Beijing during the time in which large-scale policy changes were really restructuring the city, from 1990 to about 2002, and still continuing today. I witnessed firsthand the relationships between policies and the use of urban space."

***Your graduate specialization at Princeton was comparative politics, how did you come to have an interest in urban politics?***

"I do not think comparative politics and urban politics are two totally separate kingdoms. Most comparative studies focus on nation-states, but there are in fact many different levels or units of analysis in comparative research, and municipal/metropolitan is one of them. There are lots of theoretical and methodological connections between comparative politics and urban politics. In most American research institutes, urban politics is considered as a subfield of American politics and scholars usually focus on American

cities, but this has begun to change. There are some really good scholarly works published in recent years studying cities in different world regions. The comparative lens helps us better understand the politics and policy issues in our own urban setting."

***What can our readers take away as the main ideas of your research that they would not be able to learn by reading the UIC website or your CV, for example; and how do you explore these ideas in your book *The Fragmented City: Politics of Urban Preservation in Beijing, Paris, and Chicago*?***

"In essence, I am interested in making the linkage between comparative methods and the urban setting as the unit of analysis. My book focuses on historic preservation within cities as the main topic. It is by nature a comparative work; discussing the similarities and differences in three cities, and exploring how policy discourse shapes urban preservation. The University of Minnesota Press recently contacted me to finalize the contract. They will release the book in their Urban Studies Series."

***What trends do you see in contemporary political science, and where do you see the field heading in the near future?***

"A trend I see in the field is an overemphasis on minute matters, such as methodological rigor and typologies, and a tendency to overlook a project's social significance. I believe political science can be both scientific and have some real world importance; however, I stop short of saying political science research should have normative prescriptions."

***Many in the humanities claim there is a hiring crisis for tenured and/or tenure-track positions, with many new hires finding only part-time or non-tenure track positions. Having undergone the hiring process yourself relatively recently, do you see a similar crisis in the social sciences? What about political science specifically?***

"Due to the economic downturn there is a general job crisis, yet things are getting better; as evidenced by some recent hiring within our own department. Also, I believe the situation within the social sciences is more favorable than the humanities."

***Finally, what advice do you have to UIC graduates students that would help them better compete with graduate students from Ivy League universities?***

"Publications matter. However, the difference between 1 and 2 publications is not as drastic as between 0 publications and 1. Also, take advantage of the non-Ivy League atmosphere. In well funded universities there are usually armies of graduate students for each professor and mentorships can be a hard thing to come by. Here at UIC, for example, it seems much easier to get a faculty member to take you on as a mentee. Also, be aggressive; work out a timeline of when you should take comps, when you should have a complete dissertation proposal, when and where to publish, etc. And seek out advice on these matters from faculty."

