

The Western

Spring 2010



<http://www.csus.edu/org/wpsa>

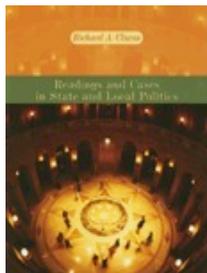
The purpose of the Association is to promote the study and teaching of government and politics, to foster research, and to facilitate the discussion of public affairs.



New Executive Director: Richard Clucas

Richard Clucas took over from long time Executive Director Betty Moulds in 2009.

Richard is a Professor of Political Science at Portland State. Richard has long been involved in WPSA having previously been local organizer of the WPSA Conference in Portland and a member of the Executive Council. His work focuses on state politics and the power of Speakers in state legislatures. He is currently heavily involved with his Department's internship program and researches and teaches on state and local politics.



[Link to Readings and Cases in State and Local Politics](#)

[Link to Oregon Politics and Government](#)



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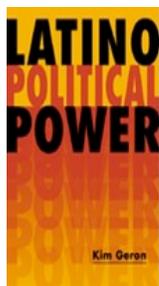
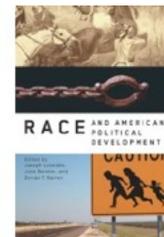
Remember to plan for the 2010 WPSA Conference in San Francisco, April 1-3.

Meet the Council

Council members come from across the Western Region.
Here are a few examples of our current council.



Julie Novkov is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Women's Studies at SUNY Albany after several years at the University of Oregon. Her interests include race, gender, and the law. Her books include *Racial Union* and *Race and American Political Development*.



Kim Geron is an Associate professor at CSU East Bay with a long-term interest in the issues of labor politics and minority politics. He has published the book *Latino Political Power*. Kim is the lead faculty member for the Public Affairs and Administration Option for the Political Science major, he advises students on the pathway to complete their major in a timely fashion. He encourages direct participation by students in research and policy analysis. He mentors students to become active members of the local and global



Pei-te Lien is Professor of Political Science affiliated with Asian American Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her primary research interest is the political participation and representation of Asian and other nonwhite Americans. Most of her recent work examines the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and nativity in political behavior, among both the governing elites and the mass. Her latest book, *The Transnational Politics of Asian*



Americans (Temple, 2009), is co-edited with Chris Collet.

Notes from the Association & the Discipline

The 2009 conference was held in Vancouver and topped attendance records. Over 1000 political scientists registered for the conference. Continuing the theme of "conference cities by the sea" our 2010 conference will be in San Francisco. [Christine DiStefano](#) of the University of Washington is Program Chair.

At next year's conference we will be able to announce a new "Best Paper" prize for participants. As befits a conference with a strong presence by those interested in environmental issues this new prize for the best paper on Environmental Political Theory.

The Western Researcher

The New Nixon Library: Research and Teaching Resources at the Nixon Presidential Library

Scott Spitzer, CSU Fullerton



In 2007, the Richard M. Nixon Library and Birthplace came under the management of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), as the 12th member of their system of presidential libraries¹. Renamed the Richard M. Nixon Library and Museum, the new NARA facility faced the daunting task of transitioning from a private museum with none of the Nixon administration's presidential archival materials, to a federal archive and museum with all of the historical records of the Nixon administration available in one place – Yorba Linda, California. This is a transition of great interest to scholars interested in the social turmoil and national politics during one of the most tumultuous periods in recent American history. By July of 2010, the collections of Richard Nixon's pre- and post-presidential records at the formerly privately owned Richard Nixon library will be joined by the vast collection of materials from his presidential years, and will be housed at the NARA Nixon Presidential library in Yorba Linda, California. Much of the presidential materials, moreover, have been unavailable for research to this point. It is not an understatement to say that the "new" Nixon library will soon house the most exciting collection in the United States for those interested in the social, economic, cultural and political experience of America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Scholars and educators should take notice that the Nixon library has become a federal institution committed to opening the historical record of Nixon presidency for researchers and the public alike. They should take advantage of the tremendous research and corresponding pedagogical opportunities offered by the "new" Nixon library and museum. This article provides scholars with background on the opening of the new NARA facility, and a review of the research and educational opportunities that will become available once that transition is completed, beginning in the summer of 2010.

Historical Background

The transition of the Yorba Linda library and museum from a privately funded institution to the 12th of 13 presidential libraries in NARA's presidential libraries system, has been long and challenging.

Since FDR's library was founded in 1940, no other modern president's records have been so contentious, and no other presidential library has taken so long since the ending of their president's final day in office to join the NARA system. This is not surprising in some ways, given the central role that political and legal conflict over White House records – especially the White House tapes – played in the ending of this presidency. The recent openings of thousands of new textual records and hundreds of hours of previously unreleased tape recordings suggests that the records of the Nixon administration have yet to be adequately explored by scholars, more than three decades since that administration ended so ignominiously.

The presidential library system that FDR inaugurated in 1939, with the founding of his Hyde Park presidential library and museum, is a quintessentially American institution for memorializing the nation's past. Presidential libraries are at one and the same time both research facilities and places to memorialize our presidents². Beginning with Roosevelt's donation of his papers to the National Archives, along with the establishment of a private museum on his Hyde Park estate, the private/public partnership model was thereby established that continues to shape the presidential library system: presidents donate their papers and a "library" to the NARA, which manages the papers and makes them available to the public in accordance with the terms of a deed of gift from the president.

In 1974, when the distinct possibility that Nixon would destroy sensitive records, including many of the White House tapes, Congress seized these archives and mandated that they remain in the possession of NARA, inside the jurisdiction of the Washington DC metropolitan area. The Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act (PRMPA) of 1974 ensured that the NARA would govern these materials and their processing. An essentially important component of the law was the requirement that NARA process and return to President Nixon any materials that were of a "personal and private nature," including those documents which were solely political, with no content related to the conduct of the president's official or Constitutional duties³. Under these provisions, President Nixon successfully sued to have 150,000 pages of his records returned to him because they were purely personal or political. A large portion of these contested or returned

documents – 78,000 pages - were returned to NARA as part of its transition agreement with the private Nixon Foundation, and on the day that the “new” Nixon library opened under the auspices of NARA – July 11, 2007 - these contested or returned documents were opened for research by the public⁴. The most politically sensitive of these contested records – the White House Special Files (WHSF) records in this collection – have been made available in their entirety online by the Nixon library as of January 11, 2010 (see below for valuable links)

The Transition

The new director of the library under the NARA is Dr. Timothy Naftali, an accomplished historian and former director of the Presidential Recordings Program at the Miller Center of Public Affairs, at the University of Virginia⁵. Naftali has spent the first several years of his tenure as Director of the Nixon library governing the transition of the privately managed library and museum into one of the largest collections of federal archival resources in the nation. In late 2009, the Nixon Presidential library completed the construction of a \$7.3 million storage facility for the Nixon administration’s archival records. According to the National Archives, by June or July of 2010 the Nixon Presidential Materials (NPM) collection of presidential records currently held in NARA’s College Park II facility in College Park, MD will be fully transferred to the Nixon library in Yorba Linda. This will involve moving over 46 million pages of textual presidential materials, of which a bit more than 7 million pages are currently open for research. The original tapes will remain in the National Archives collections in Washington DC, but digital copies of 2,017 hours of those tapes, which are currently open to the public, will be available at the library in southern California. In addition, millions of feet of motion picture film, hundreds of thousands of photographs, and thousands of videotapes will also be moved to Yorba Linda.

Moreover, while some of these archival records have been available for research in the NPM at College Park since the late 1980s, there are millions of records that have yet to be opened. In his 2 1/2 years as director of the Nixon library, Naftali has already overseen the release of thousands of previously unavailable textual records. Moreover, he’s ensured that a virtual stand-still in the processing and opening for research of the White House tapes since 2003 was finally broken when the “new” Nixon library opened on July 11, 2007. Hundreds of hours of those tapes have been opened for public access since then⁶. NARA is currently moving aggressively to ensure that many more document

collections that have yet to be released for research are being processed, and to speed the processing of the remaining tape recordings as well. This includes overseeing a special project to recover the 18 ½ minute gap in the “Watergate” tape segment⁷.

Research Openings

Since the official opening of the new library, there have been 5 major releases of both documents and tapes. On the first day that the Nixon library was officially part of NARA, the library opened approximately 78,000 pages of documents that had been returned to President Nixon in 1987 because they were private or political, were not party of his Constitutional or official duties, and were not related to abuses of government power, defined by the PRMPA. These were given back to the NARA as part of the deal between the Nixon Foundation and NARA, that made the Nixon library part of NARA’s presidential libraries system. In addition 11 ½ hours of previously unreleased White House tapes were made available for research as well. These materials include some of the most direct discussions among Nixon aides and the President himself about their overall political strategies. On November 21, 2007, another 122,800 pages were released in the College Park II facility, mostly dealing with foreign policy in the middle east, with the Soviets, and with the conduct of the war in Vietnam. On December 2, 2008, 198 more hours of the Nixon White House tape recordings, and 90,000 pages of textual records were opened – some at College Park, and some at the library in Yorba Linda. These included some very interesting documents from the Committee to Reelect the President, which had previously been unavailable for research – opened at the Library in Yorba Linda - and 3,500 pages of previously classified materials available only in College Park. On June 23, 2009 another 154 hours of Nixon White House tapes and 30,000 pages of documents were released. These documents include previously restricted materials from the White House Special Files, the National Security Files, and from Henry Kissinger’s files, all of which are available in College Park. Finally, on January 11, 2009 the Nixon library opened thousands of new documents, including: 5,500 pages of declassified documents addressing national security and 20,000 pages of previously restricted political strategy documents from Nixon’s closest advisors, including documentation of the creation of the domestic political espionage and “dirty tricks” planning for the 1972 campaign (Operation Sandwedge). The latest release also includes hundreds of thousands of records from the files of Frederick V. Malek, both from his time at the Department of

Health, Education and Welfare, and as deputy campaign manager at the Committee for the Re-election of the President (CREEP) in 1972. (See below for links to full documentation of the archival releases)

Educational Opportunities

Beyond the research opportunities, the re-opening of the Nixon library in the summer of 2010 will offer unique opportunities for educating graduate and undergraduate students throughout the west. Graduate students from multiple disciplines will find rich, unexplored archival resources for dissertations and masters' theses. Undergraduates will be able to touch the archival record of the period in ways that textbooks and classroom lectures cannot replicate.

Graduate students pursuing doctoral and masters degree level research in political science, history, sociology and other academic disciplines will find the richest archival collection for research on international and domestic politics, social conflict, and economics during the Nixon years in the United States. Because much of the documentary record has yet to be researched, the opportunities for Ph.D. and MA dissertations are immense. In addition, students of California politics in the 1970s and 1980s, of the development of contemporary conservatism and the Republican party, and of the conduct of the cold war over the 1970s and 1980s will find the nearby availability of the NARA operated Ronald Reagan Presidential Library makes the Nixon library's resources even more valuable.

For undergraduates, faculty will find the Nixon library to be an excellent hands-on introduction to the presidency, national politics in the 1970s, and the range of political and social issues of the period. The Nixon library welcomes student use of the archives and museum facility. To facilitate this, Naftali has recently hired a Director of Education, Mindy Farmer, and opened an instructional room with digital media and internet access for on-site education related to these resources. The Nixon library has already offered a competitive summer undergraduate internship program in for the last three years, and currently offers internships during the year as well. As the library holdings expand exponentially in the summer of 2010, the opportunities for undergraduate internships and graduate research assistants for visiting scholars will expand.

Finally, the "new" Nixon library offers a reconfigured museum that emphasizes historical accuracy and the use of multi-media resources. While nearly all of the presidential library foundations promote

a memorial approach to their respective presidents, the skewing of history in the Nixon library has been particularly egregious⁸. The “new” Nixon library replaces this approach with one that emphasizes the use of primary historical sources in the museum exhibits, through multi-media technology. For example a new Watergate permanent exhibit will be opening this summer, relying on digital video of oral history interviews that Tim Naftali has conducted with former members of the Nixon administration and others directly involved in those events⁹. These types of museum exhibits offer educators the opening to introduce students to the historical controversies of the Nixon era without prejudging the relevant interpretation.

In addition, Naftali has widened the public event offerings from a previous focus on primarily conservative pundits and authors, to a “big tent” approach to public programming, bringing in scholars such as Melvyn Leffler, Zachary Karabel, and Taylor Branch, former Nixon administration figures such as John Dean, Martin Anderson and William Rukelshaus, and others directly involved in the important events of the Nixon presidency, including Carl Bernstein and Richard Ben-Veniste.

Conclusions

Political scientists in the West should take note of the opening of this major research institution in their region. The opportunities for investigating important links between the Nixon era and our current politics are endless. Indeed, the continued relevance of environmental policy; welfare policy; drug policy; and education policy; conflicts in the middle east, the U.S. relationship with China; the women’s and black Civil Rights movements; the consumer rights movement; not to mention the expansion of presidential authority and power – all of these were prominent during the Nixon administration and the archival sources can yield new insights for each of these and for other areas as well. Moreover, the rise in the popularity of historical methods in the discipline should make these resources increasingly inviting for graduate students embarking on their dissertations. In addition, the efforts to broaden the museum’s public events programming, can offer scholars from the region a platform to speak of their work to a public audience, rather than the usual conference panel appearances before other professional academics. As Timothy Naftali continues to expand the archival resources available for research and develop a diverse and strong program of public events

and museum exhibits, the new Nixon library will indeed be an exciting place for scholars and their students in the coming years.

For more information consult the following resources:

Websites:

- 1) The Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
 - a. Main website: <http://www.nixon.library.gov/>
 - b. Archival resources: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/index.php>
 - c. Online archives: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/index.php>
 - d. White House Tapes excerpts:
<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/index.php>
- 2) The National Archives and Records Administration, Office of Presidential Libraries:
<http://archives.gov/presidential-libraries/>
- 3) The Ronald Reagan Library, archives: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/>
- 4) The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library: <http://www.reaganlibrary.com/>
- 5) Other Presidential Archives Resources:
 - a. The White House Tapes Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia: <http://www.whitehousetapes.net/>
 - b. The Miller Center on Public Affairs, *American President: An Onlone Reference Resource*:
<http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident>
 - c. John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, University of California, Santa Barbara, *The American Presidency Project*: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>

Endnotes

¹ The George W. Bush Presidential Center will be the 13th of these libraries, and is slated to open in the summer of 2010, at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. See <http://www.georgewbushcenter.com> for more details.

² Larry J. Hackman, "Towards Better Policies and Practices for Presidential Libraries," *The Public Historian*. 28, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 167-168.

³ Ibid., p. 88.

⁴ The Richard Nixon Library and Museum, “Donated Nixon Documents: Background,” <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nixondonated.php> (accessed on November 10, 2009).

⁵ Naftali received his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University in 1993, and has published four books, including the highly acclaimed *Kruschev’s Cold War: The Inside Story of America’s Adversary*, with Alexander Furseko. His most recent book, *George H. W. Bush*, appeared in December 2007 as part of *The American Presidents* series, edited by the late Arthur M. Schlesinger and Sean Wilentz. Naftali has taught at several universities, including the University of Virginia, where he also served as the director of the Presidential Recordings Program of Virginia, where he also served as the director of the Presidential Recordings Program at the Miller Center of Public Affairs. For a brief biography, see <http://www.nixon.archives.gov/newsandevents/naftalibio.php>.

⁶ For a summary of the history of how the presidential materials have been made available for researchers and the public, see <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/aboutus/laws/chronology.php>. For a chronology of the tapes releases, see <http://www.nixon.archives.gov/forresearchers/find/tapes/releases.php>.

⁷ Sam Roberts, “High Tech Tries to Lift Veil on 18 ½ Tantalizing Minutes in Watergate,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 2009, p A18.

⁸ On the memorializing function of the private presidential libraries, and the complicated relationship they have with the archival library collections affiliated with them through the NARA, see Benjamin Hufbauer, *Presidential Temples: How Memorials and Libraries Shape Public Memory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).



The Western Reviews

The New Political Geography of California

Frédéric Douzet, Thad Kousser, and Kenneth P. Miller, editors

2008

Berkeley Public Policy Press

Institute of Governmental Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Tim Hodson

Center for California Studies

Departments of Government and Public Policy & Administration

California State University, Sacramento

At a recent National Conference of State Legislatures meeting, I overheard a polite but sharp argument between two state legislators as to whose state had the worse budget problem. A fellow Californians suggested we enter the fray because, as Californians, we would win the argument hands down. Etiquette and facts dictated I ignore the suggestion

In fact, Arizona, Nevada and New York had worse budget deficits in 2009 than California. The collapse of the housing bubble hit Arizona harder and Nevada has a higher unemployment than California. Yet these easily obtainable facts were rarely reported by California news media or acknowledged by business or political leaders in California. There seems to be some perverse bit of human nature that relishes in being the worst. It's the corollary to the grass is also greener syndrome: not only is the grass greener over there, but the grass here is really awful.

This propensity is also present in the majority of scholarly works on California state government and politics. Apart from the obligatory passages on federalism or the role of the state in national politics, California and its problems are treated almost as a *sui generis* topic. The lack of a comparative perspective frequently leads to exaggerated assessments of our problems.

Yet as scholars we know that facts without context, beliefs without perspective, information without comparisons can all be misleading if, indeed, not dangerous. For example, tell students that California has one of the largest number of state workers in the U.S. and you'll get knowing smirks. But put that data into context and tell students that on a per capita basis California has fewer state workers than 48 other states and get disbelieving looks if not open skepticism.

It is one of the great strengths of *The New Political Geography of California* that a comparative perspective is present and not just in a token manner. Of the book's thirteen articles, six are authored or co-authored by French political scientists. For example, Frédéric Douzet, one of the editors and the author of two articles, is a professor of geo-politics at the at the University of Paris (though she was a

Fulbright scholar at Berkeley's Institute of Government Studies in 2005). The fresh perspectives and insights provided by international collaborators is perhaps best seen in Francois Vergniole de Chantal's assessment of "The Antifederalist Moment in California Politics." Professor Vergniole de Chantal (University of Burgundy- Dijon) argues that the national anti-government, anti-politics movement of the last thirty years has generated a similar movement in California. Local governments and populations see Sacramento as both oppressive and incompetent and consequently seek to limit or get around state government. Similarly, Ariane Zambiras (Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Paris) tracks the state's religious divides not just in terms of the conventional Christian Right but by examining the major changes in the growth and geography of Catholics and mainstream Protestants as well.

More conventionally, *The New Political Geography of California* recognizes that in many ways, recent developments in California politics can be understood best through geography. The formal rules of American politics — such as district-based elections and the Electoral College — make geography crucial to the political process. Where voters live is in many ways as important as how they behave. In recent decades, California's political map has changed dramatically as the state's fast-growing population has divided along racial, ethnic, economic, religious, and cultural lines. Most notably at the statewide level, these trends have caused California's traditional North-South partisan divide to be surpassed by an emerging East-West divide. In this new alignment, the state's densely populated coastal region has become increasingly Democratic, while the less-populated but fast-growing interior has become increasingly Republican. At the same time, demographic segregation within regions has also had important political consequences.

For example, Californians accustomed to regarding California as both the most diverse state in the Union and with 35 percent of the state legislature people of color with having an equal number of African-American, Asian Pacific or Latino majority district, a state that is increasing color-blind politically. *The New Political Geography of California* challenges this comforting assessment. The lead-off section details, with an admirable mixture of statistics and clear writing, the eclipse of the tradition north-south division by an east-west/inland-coastal divide. This divide has many components but striking is the racial divide. African-American and Asian Pacific populations are disproportionate in the coastal regions and while the Central Valley had significant Latino populations, the Sierra foothills and the Valley north of Sacramento do not. Morgan Kousser's essay, *Has California Gone Color-Blind*, argues that the tremendous increase in the number of Latinos in the state Legislature has more to do with Latino political mobilization than the willingness of non-Latinos to support Latinos. Similarly, essays on coalition politics in Los Angeles, racial and ethnic political tensions in Oakland and residential segregation throughout California, undermine the more sanguine assumptions of successful multi-cultural politics. On the other hand, Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams marshal data that indicates the decline of the GOP is less a function of alienated Latinos than the party's transformation into an ideologically narrow faction.

The focus on divisions and tensions is appropriate but at times over-emphasized and counter data and examples slighted. For example, it may well be true that Latino electoral succession the 1990s was rooted more in the growth of the Latino electoral than cross-over support Anglo and other voters. But it is also true that, at the district level, there was little of the White political flight that characterized the rise of African-American politics in the South and which created Republican majorities in much of the old Confederacy. This was transported to Sacramento where, for example, Bob Hertzberg was elected

Assembly Speaker with the support of the Latino Caucus just as Antonia Villaraigosa was supported by Anglo Democrats.

It is also interesting that a book devoted to political geography would largely miss the dynamic of legislative versus statewide elections. The Framers of both 1787 and 1850 created a republic based on representative legislatures. By basing the legislative branch on population and geography, the system ensures that all parts of California have a voice in Sacramento. Thus poor, Latino Bell Gardens with a handful of voters has the same number of legislators as wealthy, largely Anglo Rancho Santa Margareta with three times the voters. The statewide electorate could and did rally to backlash measures like Propositions 187 and 209, but the state's political structure – the California Republic – ensured that the backlash did not extend to the legislature.

The New Political Geography of California is student friendly. The writing is uniformly accessible and often entertaining. Some essays are a bit table-heavy but discussions of statistical methodology are confined to footnotes. The book does, however, presuppose a more than basic knowledge of California and is lacking a solid introductory essay on the state's geography, political history and institutions. Consequently, it might not serve as the only California text in a basic American Government course with the obligatory section on California. On the other hand, it would be an excellent choice for California state and local government and politics courses, especially if paired with a basic state and local text like Lawrence, DeBow and Syer, etc. It would also be a valuable addition to any course on ethnic/racial politics in California or elsewhere. As with any work on a ever-changing topic like California politics, some of the essays will have a limited shelf-life (e.g., the essay Governors, Geography and Direct Democracy is fascinating but ends with Arnold Schwarzenegger's self-proclaimed and soon terminated era of post-partisanship in 2007. But *The New Political Geography of California* also has essays that will clearly be relevant and useful for years.

In short, *The New Political Geography of California* provides fresh insights into the political dynamics of the Golden State, and potential lessons for other democratic jurisdictions adapting to rapid demographic change.

The Politics of the Middle East, 2d

Monte Palmer

2007

Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education

Kevin E. Grisham,

University of California, Riverside &

California State University, San Bernardino

In an era where the need to better understand the Middle East is paramount, *The Politics of the Middle East* by Monte Palmer provides scholars and non-scholars, alike, a in-depth analysis of the actors, events, and environment that drives modern day Middle East Politics. Unlike some of the other standard textbooks on the Middle East region, Palmer examines the region at all levels of analysis (individual, subnational, national and international). Generally, texts on the Middle East tend to either focus too much on the

nation-state or paint broad strokes of the region with a limited number of case studies. *The Politics of the Middle East* goes beyond this norm by presenting a variety of case studies that show the variability of the region and its politics. Additionally, the textbook explores the often forgotten influence of society (in particular, the role of tribes and clans in the region) on the politics of the region. In addition, the book is not written from particular methodological perspective. Instead, the reader is exposed to a variety of approaches to understand the 'whys' of Middle East politics. With all of these positive components, Palmer presents a clear picture of the modern Middle East.

The Politics of the Middle East – written by Dr. Monte Palmer, a noted scholar of the Middle East and professor emeritus at Florida State University – sketches the political systems, political actors (including political leadership, non-state actors, and civil society) and major political issues of the Middle East. In eight chapters, Palmer examines the societal background in which the politics of the region occur. Additionally, in these chapters, he explores the most pressing issue in the region – the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict. Lastly, Palmer examines the politics of the major state actors in the region – Israel and Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Each of seven case studies explores the historical development of the states and the peoples in these states. In addition, these case studies investigate the political institutions of the states and relationship between these actors and their impact of the modern politics of the case study states. For example, in Chapter Five, “Saudi Arabia: Modernizing a Tribal Monarchy,” the author examines the dual governing system of the Saudi royal family and the religious elite of the country (Palmer, 201-204). Along with this discussion, the book scrutinizes the various informal actors (Saudi opposition groups, like al-Qaeda Arabian Peninsula) and formal political actors that compose this “[...] nation of paradoxes.” (Palmer, 178) In using this approach, the author paints a complete picture of the complex nature of the state. Further, he depicts how this complexity leads to given political decisions. The same technique is used in exploring the additional case studies.

In comparison to other textbooks on the Middle East, Palmer explores the role of informal actors and informal systems. This addition allows for a more complete understanding of the reasons for some political decisions within the state. One important informal system typically not tackled by textbooks on the Middle East is the tribal and clan system. As noted by Palmer, this system is essential in understanding what potentially drives political actors and their decisions. The essentiality lies in the fact that “[...] the most enduring social relationships in the Middle East have traditionally been those of blood.” (Palmer, 7). Without a greater understanding of how this affects the politics of a Middle East country, the understanding would be incomplete. The best examples can be seen in how tribal ties have influenced the political leadership in Iraq (Saddam Hussein’s relationship with the *Tikriti* tribe), Syria (familial connections in Syria with the Assad family) and Saudi Arabia (fractionalization in the royal family between the *Sudairis* clan and non-*Sudairis* clan members).

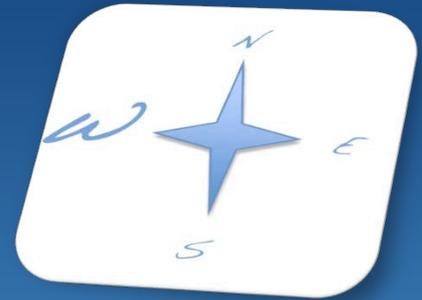
If one wants to select a textbook that will provide a comprehensive examination of the politics of the Middle East, *The Politics of the Middle East* is the best book. In using four different textbooks in seven years of teaching Middle East politics, I have found the Palmer book to be the best fit for a comparative politics class on the region. It provides enough detail for an upper divisional class, but it is also so comprehensive that it can be used for a survey class on the politics of the region. This text provides a window into the complexity that is Middle East politics.

Future Vision and Instructions for Submissions

Welcome to the first edition of the revamped newsletter of the Western Political Science Association, *The Western*. As we worked on the vision for *The Western* with Richard Clucas and Shaun Bowler, we became intrigued about what it could become. First and foremost, *The Western* will serve as an outlet for news of the WPSA. It will also serve as an outlet for scholarly conversations about political science teaching, research, and political events focused but not limited to the western region. As we develop this publication, we welcome comments, suggestions, and—of course—submissions.

The Editors:

Dr. Stephen J. Stambough Dr. Valerie R. O'Regan
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Submission Instructions

At *The Western* we encourage submissions for articles in any of our four areas: *Western Educator*, *Western Researcher*, *Western Politics*, and *Western Reviews*.

Western Educator

For the *Western Educator* we welcome submissions about controversies and innovations in political science education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These can be articles that describe unique classroom simulations, the incorporation of innovative technology into the classroom, and a wide variety of other topics. We especially welcome submissions with a focus on topics unique to the western region. All articles will undergo a double-blind review process. Articles should be no more than 10 pages.

Western Researcher

For the *Western Researcher* we welcome submissions that present innovative research techniques, data sources, and reviews of current trends. We especially welcome those with a focus on the western region. All articles will undergo a double-blind review process. Articles should be no more than 10 pages.

Western Politics

For the *Western Politics* section we welcome individual papers and organized symposia about topical issues of political events in the western United States, Canada, and Mexico. Individual papers should be no longer than 10 pages. If you are interested about proposing and editing a symposium, please contact the editors. All submissions are subject to a double-blind review process.

Western Reviews

Please contact the editors if you are interested in reviewing books.