

2024 Political Geography Specialty Group Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 12:10pm

318A, Third Floor, Hawai'i Convention Center, Honolulu, HI (Hybrid)

I. Call to Order & President's Report (Meredith DeBoom)

Welcoming remarks, presentation of agenda, and introductions.

The minutes of the 2023 business meeting (available online) were approved.

PGSG Membership and Annual Meeting Participation

- The PGSG has 425 members as of April 1, 2024. For comparison, the PGSG had 570 members last year and 751 in 2015, the year in which overall AAG membership peaked.
- The PGSG is sponsoring 44 sessions at the AAG main conference this year, plus two plenary-type events (inaugural Brunn Early Career Lecture and *Political Geography* plenary).

Preconference

- We hosted a new event this year: a **DeTour** focused on militarization and political geographies of Hawai'i with Kyle Kajihiro on Sunday, April 14, for early arrivals.
 - There were 24 participants in two vans, with a significant waitlist
 - Thank you to Reece Jones for helping to organize the detour and driving a van, Kyle Kajihiro for sharing his knowledge with us, and Meagan Harden for driving a van.
 - The DeTour paid for itself (participant fee of \$25 offset van rental, gas, and an honorarium for Kyle).
 - We will look for similar opportunities in the future.
- The **Preconference** was held on Monday, April 15, at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, with Reece Jones as local host. There was a catered dinner at UH Geography afterwards.
 - There were 88 attendees (vs. 64 last year) and 28 papers presented.
 - 23 TT faculty attendees were charged \$35/person, including dinner.
 - All others enjoyed free attendance.
 - Kawēlauokealoha Wright also performed an opening oli.
 - The plenary focused on Hawai'ian political geographies. It was organized by Reece Jones (local host) and featured three speakers: Kahiokalamekawena'ula Elkington (Dept of Geography & Environment), Aurora Kagawa-Viviani, (Dept of Geography & Environment), and Kawēlauokealoha Wright, Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies.
- Preconference **costs** included a small charge for rooms/tech, food and drinks for dinner, and nametags. Tenure-track faculty registrations were used to subsidize the meal and event costs for non-TT participants. After participant fees, the cost of the preconference to the PGSG was roughly \$170 (vs. \$400 last year).
- **Thank you** to all who participated and attended, Reece Jones for serving as local host, Kate Coddington for organizing the program, UH for hosting us, the plenary speakers, and all the

event volunteers, including Borjana Lubura-Winchester, Meagan Harden, Joon-Ho, Ryan Ahn, Mary Mostafanezhad, Orhon Myadar, John Nightingale, and Abigail Hawkins.

- **Next year's AAG annual meeting** will be in Detroit, MI (March 24-28). We have started discussions with potential local hosts at Michigan State University.

Early-Career Article Workshop Series (new this year)

- The PGSG hosted a virtual early-career article workshop series for the first time this year.
- Our goals were to provide an alternative feedback opportunity for those unable to travel to Honolulu, build community among early-career political geographers, connect early-career scholars with established scholars, and introduce mentors to potential collaborators, authors, reviewers, etc. for journals.
- There were 29 registrants and 24 final participants.
- Thank you to the 10 mentors who each led a workshop: Nick Crane, Kara Dempsey, Kevin Grove, Ted Holland, Galen Murton, Caroline Nagel, Tom Narins, Lindsay Naylor, Richard Nisa, and Emma Norman.
- Kate collected data from participants and mentors. Based on that feedback, we plan to host this workshop series every other year. We hope this format will facilitate meaningful networking and feedback opportunities for early-career scholars without overtaxing mentors.
- If you are interested in being a mentor in the future, please let Kate know!

Brunn Early Career Lecture (new this year)

- We hosted a new AAG main conference event this year: an early career lecture to honor the prior year's recipient of the Stanley Brunn Early Career Scholar Award. We hope to make this a new annual tradition to showcase early-career scholarship in our subfield.
- This year's lecture was delivered by the 2023 recipient of the Brunn Award, Azmeary Ferdoush. His talk was titled: "On the example: Giorgio Agamben, the exception, and the flip side of the coin."
- Thank you to Azmeary for being the inaugural speaker and to Kate for assisting with the Q&A.

AAG Updates

- Expected attendance is 5000 this year, 80% of whom are in person. There are 1086 sessions.
 - Last year: 6000 attendees, 80% in person, 1300 sessions.
- The AAG is hosting a student day on Thursday, with a focus on networking.
- The AAG budget is now balanced, after running a deficit the last few years due to Covid-19 cancellations and the uncertainty and costs of hybrid formats.
- AAG expects a large turnout next year in Detroit.
- AAG will distribute a new volunteer form shortly, with opportunities to join task forces, etc.

Recognition of Members Who Passed in Prior Year

- Fred Shelley (University of Oklahoma), Richard Morrill (University of Washington), Karen Bakker (University of British Columbia)

- John Heppen shared a few words honoring Fred Shelley.
- If you're interested in organizing or participating in a memorial session in Detroit, please contact Meredith. She's happy to help connect folks, coordinate an event with AAG, etc.

II. Elections

- Elections were held virtually between March 27-April 5. There were 51 votes registered.
 - Congratulations to:
 - New Faculty Board Member: Edward Holland (University of Arkansas)
 - New Student Board Member: Olivia Meyer (University of Hawai'i)
- Thank you to our continuing board and committee members:
 - Board
 - President: Meredith DeBoom
 - Vice President: Kate Coddington
 - Faculty Board Members: Azmeary Ferdoush, Chris Lizotte, Mark Ortiz
 - President Emeritus: Kara Dempsey
 - Committees
 - Student Travel Awards: Erinn Nicley (Chair), with Beth Nelson and Kalyn Rossiter
 - Murphy Dissertation Enhancement Award: Fiona Davidson (Chair), with Kevin Grove and Lindsay Naylor
 - Grad Student Paper: Chris Lizotte (Chair), with Mia Bennett and Galen Murton
 - Undergraduate Research Award: Sara Salazar Hughes (Chair), with Ilaria Giglioli and Stephanie Wildbrand

III. Budget Update (Kate Coddington)

- Financial Activity (2023-24)
 - Carry-forward from prior year: \$7419 (dues 7/1-12/31/23: \$1,662)
 - Awards: \$3900
 - Morrill: \$300
 - Travel: \$2250 (10 x \$225) *priority this year given AAG cost*
 - Papers: \$350 (1 undergrad; 1 graduate)
 - Dissertation: \$1,000
 - Preconference: est. \$170
 - Estimated carry-forward balance: \$3,349
- Over the past couple years, we have thoughtfully spent down a 'Covid cushion' created due to the lack of student travel awards for three years (2020-2022).

- Our current dues (~\$2500/year) are outpaced by awards (~\$3,000-3,500/year). We're also facing some headwinds, including declines in total membership (reflecting broader AAG trends) and an increasing percentage of student members (who pay less in dues). As a result, we are proposing an increase to faculty dues, to be discussed during new business.

IV. Awards

Student Awards

- **Travel:** We awarded 10 travel grants this year. Many of the awardees attended the preconference and/or detour. Recipients were: Katherine Brown, Mehmet Eroğlu, Shaun Johnson, Tatsuki Kohatsu, Jia Ling, Morsaline Mojid, Jessie Stein, Cassidy Tawse-Garcia, Sharif Wahab, and Benjamin Weinger.
- **Undergraduate Research:** Sam Stoltz (Colorado State University) for his story map "Waste Management in Tunisia: A Human Rights Promise Left Unfilled."
 - This is first year that non-paper submissions were eligible, per the vote at last year's business meeting. Sam was mentored by Meagan Todd.
- **Graduate Paper (PhD):** Benjamin Weinger (UCLA) for "Thirty years on: Planetary climate planning and the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee"
- **Alexander B. Murphy Dissertation Enhancement Award:** Jill Thornton (University of South Carolina) for research on geopolitical imaginaries among missionaries in Germany

Non-Student Awards

- **Stanley Brunn Early Career Scholar Award:** Galen Murton (James Madison University)
Excerpt from Nomination: "Since receiving his PhD in 2017, Dr. Murton has established himself as an important voice in the geography (and broader social science) community focusing on questions of infrastructure and disaster. His focus is on China and its relationships with Himalayan countries. The field of "Chinese infrastructure" studies is beyond crowded and vast, yet Dr. Murton's work stands out because it is theoretically informed and grounded in careful "on the ground" research. Hence, he combines the ability to capture local voices with critical engagement with the conceptual academic conversation. Notably, he has played a leadership role in the field through his role in editing special issues of journals (notably *Political Geography*) and an Amsterdam University Press book."
- **Richard Morrill Public Engagement Award:** Rebecca Theobald (University of Colorado-Colorado Springs)
Excerpt from nomination: "Dr. Theobald has been instrumental in creating and advancing the GeoCivics project at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS). The project

provides accessible resources to educators, students, and community members to foster understanding of the apportionment and redistricting process in the United States. While GeoCivics is aimed at the national level, these important concepts can be applied to state, county, and municipal governing bodies, as well. The goal of GeoCivics is to support people as they engage in difficult conversations. During the recent redistricting process here in Colorado, Dr. Theobald’s GeoCivics initiative provided engaging and effective resources to help many of us model and understand the various scenarios being considered.”

- **Virginie Mamadouh Outstanding Research Award:** Meredith DeBoom (University of South Carolina) for “Climate Necropolitics: Ecological Civilization and the Distributive Geographies of Extractive Violence in the Anthropocene.” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*.
 - Special Recognition: Azmeary Ferdoush (University of Eastern Finland) “Showcase Citizens: Citizenship in the Making Along the Borders of Post-Colonial South Asia.”
- **Julian Minghi Distinguished Book Award:** Natalie Koch (Syracuse University) for *Arid Empire: The Entangled Fates of Arizona and Arabia*. Verso.
 - Special Recognition:
 - Karen Culcasi (WVU) for *Displacing Territory: Syrian and Palestinian Refugees in Jordan*
 - Jared Marguiles (University of Alabama) for *The Cactus Hunters: Desire and Extinction in the Illicit Succulent Trade*

V. New Business & General Discussion

Proposals

- **Dues Increase:** Meredith DeBoom and Kate Coddington proposed increasing faculty dues from \$10 to \$13 given declining membership trends, strong demand for student awards (particularly travel awards), and the year-over-year trend of award costs outpacing membership dues (shortfall = roughly ~\$1100/year). Student dues would remain unchanged.
 - **Background**
 - Making the budget sustainable in the long term (i.e., dues roughly cover the cost of awards) is a priority. Our ‘Covid cushion’ may be exhausted in the next two years.
 - PGSG spending is almost entirely for student awards, and we boast one of the AAG’s most generous student awards programs. The preconference is rarely subsidized more than \$500 from the PGSG budget, and we strive to break even. That said, room expenses are increasing, and we should allow enough budgetary ‘cushion’ to cover preconference costs in an expensive year without needing to cut student awards.
 - If we don’t raise dues, our other options are to cut student awards (likely travel grants) or to start charging non-TT faculty and/or students a fee for the

preconference. We've already increased the faculty fee from \$20 to \$25—\$35 this year due to dinner being included.

- Some of this year's membership decline may be due to members not attending this year's AAG letting their memberships lapse, but the long-term trend is a declining membership base with a larger proportion of students.
- The last dues increase was in 2013 (\$7 to \$10). A dues increase was last proposed during the 2022 virtual meeting. At that time, the membership preferred to pursue a third payment tier option (i.e., an optional donation upon renewing membership), but this is not possible using AAG's current system.
- We've received donations in the past, but they're highly unpredictable (e.g., \$900 last year, \$0 this year).
- Similar specialty groups currently charge the following dues: Economic Geography, \$15; CAPE, \$12; Legal, \$10; Urban, \$8. Several groups mentioned raising dues at the Specialty Group Chairs Meeting, so the PGSG is not alone.
- **Discussion:**
 - Members expressed strong support for increasing dues rather than reducing awards or charging non-TT attendees for preconference attendance.
 - Given the above trends, several members suggested that faculty dues be increased to \$20 rather than \$13.
 - Meredith expressed concern that members may 'opt out' of rejoining the PGSG if its dues are significantly higher than similar groups (particularly given the AAG's current limit on the number of groups a member can join) and suggested \$15 as a 'middle ground' roughly in line with similar groups.
- **Members voted to increase annual faculty dues from \$10 to \$15, effective as soon as the AAG processes the change. Student dues will remain unchanged at \$3.**
 - The PGSG Board can revisit the dues increase if revenues prove insufficient.
- **Looking Ahead**
 - **Preconference in Detroit:** We're working with Kyle Evered, Mehmet Eroğlu, and Katie Brown at Michigan State University to explore options.
 - There are two initial location options: Lansing (easier to book free rooms, but would require a bus ride) or Detroit (harder to book free rooms, but easier for attendees to join).
 - Detroit-Lansing bus takes roughly 2.5 hours, costs \$50-60 round trip
 - Lansing is directly connected with Chicago via Amtrak
 - We discussed two timing options: Saturday (may lead to lower attendance) or Sunday (may be difficult to secure rooms, particularly in Detroit).
 - Attendees expressed a general preference for a Saturday event in Detroit over a Sunday event in Lansing.
 - Further information will be distributed via the PGSG listserv once details are finalized.

VI. Announcements

- Carl Dahlman encouraged members to consider donating to the PGSG to support student awards. Meredith shared the link to do so via the 'Donate' button on the AAG PGSG website.
- Corey Johnson reminded lifetime AAG members that they must separately renew their specialty group memberships, as this does not happen automatically. Meredith will send a reminder to the listserv in the fall.

The meeting adjourned at 1:10pm.