

2025 Political Geography Specialty Group Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 11:40AM

411C, Level Four, Huntington Place, Detroit, MI

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 roughly 400 members as of March 15, 2025. This is roughly equal to last year, but, like overall AAG membership numbers, it is about 70-80% of peak membership.
- The PGSG is sponsoring 70+ sessions at the AAG main conference this year (vs. 44 last year), plus the *Political Geography* plenary.

Preconference

- We hosted three events this year: a preconference, a post-preconference dinner, and a D-Tour.
- **Preconference** (Saturday, March 22) at the University of Michigan Detroit Center
 - It was a collaborative event, with Bilal Butt (University of Michigan) and Katie Brown, Mehmet Eroğlu, and Kyle Evered (Michigan State University) as local hosts.
 - There were 85 attendees (vs. 88 last year) and 45 papers presented (vs. 28 last year)
 - 31 TT faculty attendees (vs. 23 last year) were charged \$25/person
 - All others enjoyed free attendance.
 - The dinner was hosted at Buddy's pizza, with 57 attendees at a cost of \$24/person. Huge thanks to Katie and Mehmet for securing a reservation on a Saturday during March Madness with Michigan playing!
- **D-Tour** (Sunday, March 23): co-organized with collaborators Willie Jamaal Wright and Jessi Quizar and led by Detroit's official historian, Jamon Jordan.
 - There were 53 participants on one coach bus, plus a significant waitlist.
 - We also partnered with the Black Geographers on Film project, which recorded segments from the tour to include in their project.
 - The D-Tour paid for itself (\$35/participant fee plus \$1000 donation from *EPC* offset van cost, honorarium for Jamon Jordan)
- **Costs** totaled \$3500, including dinner and the D-Tour. Expected participant revenue is just over \$2500. We received a \$1000 donation toward the D-Tour cost from *Environment and Planning C: Politics & Space* (thanks to Eugene McCann!), which lowered the D-Tour participant cost by \$15/person. The University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability provided breakfast treats and coffee/tea (thanks to Bilal Butt!).
 - **Total cost to PGSG: break-even or slight surplus** (vs. ~\$170 cost last year)
 - Donations, including from journals, may be a viable mechanism for reducing preconference costs to the specialty group in future years, particularly as we exhaust the 'Covid cushion' we've had for the past several years.

- **Thank you** to all attendees and participants, Kate Coddington for organizing a brilliant program, our collaborators, our local hosts (Bilal Butt, Katie Brown, Mehmet Eroğlu, Kyle Evered), UM Detroit Center and UM SEAS, *Environment and Planning C*, the PGSG board, our volunteers (Bianca Malkoc, Cheyenne Morris, Kara Dempsey, Jessica Flach, Jill Thornton, Leo Baldiga, Madison Moore, Mark Ortiz, Marlotte De Jong, Olivia Meyer, Ted Holland), and our session chairs (Ariel Otruba, Austin Crane, Evangeline McGlynn, Karen Culcasi, Ben Forest, Kara Dempsey, Kate Shields, Kenneth Madsen, Kevin Grove, Mark Ortiz, Megan Dixon, Reece Jones, Ruth Trumble, Sara Koopman)
- **Next year's AAG annual meeting** will be in San Francisco. If you have ideas regarding potential local hosts or connections to the city, please contact Kate! Details will be shared via the PGSG listserv.

Early Career Article Workshop

- Based on feedback and the discussion at last year's business meeting, we plan to host the workshop every other year. Look out for details regarding a future workshop.
- If you are interested in being a mentor in the future, please let Kate know!

Brunn Early Career Lecture

- This year's Brunn lecture is postponed to San Francisco next year due to circumstances beyond the speaker's control.

AAG Updates

- Projected Detroit attendance is 6000 (5585 advance registration). There are 1374 in-person sessions and 498 hybrid sessions. 46% of registrants are students.
- AAG membership appears to be stabilizing at about 3000 fewer members vs. pre-pandemic (7100 vs 10,900 in 2019). Retention is improving.
 - This membership level is slightly below the AAG's budgeted projection.
- AAG is monitoring the federal budget situation. The AAG has several grants under review, but it was not counting on them for budget purposes.
- The AAG's JEDI Committee has posted resources for defending geographic inquiry and our communities: <https://www.aag.org/aag-jedi-committee-resources-for-defending-geographic-inquiry-and-our-communities/>.

Recognition of Members Who Passed in Prior Year

- Julian Minghi (University of South Carolina)

II. Elections

- Elections were held virtually between February 28 and March 7. There were 137 votes registered (vs. 51 last year). It seems political geographers were particularly excited to participate in electoral democracy this year.

- Congratulations to our **new** board and committee members:
 - Vice President→President: Kate Coddington (University at Albany, State University of New York)
 - Vice President: Lindsay Naylor (University of Delaware)
 - Faculty Board Members: Benjamin Forest (McGill University), Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen (Yale University), Devran Koray Öcal (Universität Bern)
 - Student Board Member: John Nightingale (University of Hawai‘i)
 - President→President Emeritus: Meredith DeBoom (University of South Carolina)
 - Committees:
 - Dissertation Enhancement Award: Stephen Przybylinski
 - Graduate Paper: JD Van Ramshorst, Jonathan McCombs
 - Undergraduate Research: Stefan Chavez-Norgaard
- Thank you to our **outgoing** board and committee members:
 - Faculty Board Members: Azmeary Ferdoush, Christopher Lizotte, Mark Ortiz
 - Student Board Member: Olivia Meyer (University of Hawai‘i)
 - President Emeritus: Kara Dempsey
 - Committees:
 - Dissertation Enhancement Award: Lindsay Naylor
 - Graduate Paper: Mia Bennett, Galen Murton
 - Undergraduate Research: Stephanie Wilbrand
- Thank you to our **continuing** board and committee members:
 - Board
 - Faculty: Edward Holland
 - Committees
 - Student Travel Awards: Erinn Nicley (Chair), Beth Nelson, and Kalyn Rossiter
 - Murphy Dissertation Enhancement Award: Fiona Davidson (Chair), Kevin Grove
 - Grad Student Paper: Chris Lizotte (Chair)
 - Undergraduate Research Award: Sara Salazar Hughes (Chair), Ilaria Giglioli

III. Budget Update (Kate Coddington)

- Financial Activity (2024-25)
 - Carry-forward from prior year: \$6347 (vs. \$7419 last year)
 - Revenue appears modestly up after increase to faculty dues last year (\$10→\$15)
 - This year, 9/1-12/31: \$1804; Last year, 7/1-12/31: \$1662
 - Awards: \$3525
 - Morrill: none
 - Travel: \$2025 (9 x \$225; 1 additional award unused)
 - Papers: \$500 (0 undergrad; 2 graduate)

- Dissertation: \$1,000
 - Preconference: est. break even, but could be up to \$200 surplus
 - Estimated carry-forward balance: \$2,822 (vs. \$3,349 last year)
- Over the past few 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 annual dues revenue (~\$2800-\$3200/year) is a bit lower than awards spending (~\$3,000-3,500/year). We’re also facing headwinds, including declining total membership (reflecting broader AAG trends) and an increasing percentage of student members (who pay less in dues). We will need to continue to monitor the budget to ensure long-term sustainability.

IV. Awards

Student Awards

- **Travel:** We awarded 10 travel grants this year, out of 22 applicants. Almost all of the awardees attended the preconference and D-tour. Recipients were: Ang Liu, Anne Della Guardia, Baichuan Liu, Benjamin Weinger, Devika Ranjan, Jewon Ryu, Jill Thornton, Lauren Herwehe, Luisa Caye, and Tay Villasenior,
- **Undergraduate Research:** No award this year
- **Graduate Paper:** Two awards: Amrita Kumar-Ratta (University of Toronto) and Fedor Popov (CU-Boulder)
- **Alexander B. Murphy Dissertation Enhancement Award:** Suad Jabr (UNC-Chapel Hill) for “Doing Queer Resettlement: LGBTQ+ Forced Migration in the U.S. South”

Non-Student Awards

- **Stan Brunn Early Career Scholar Award:** Emily Mitchell-Eaton (Colgate University)
Excerpt from Nomination: “I enthusiastically nominate Dr. Emily Mitchell-Eaton for the Stanley D. Brunn Early Career Scholar Award. Dr. Mitchell-Eaton is an assistant professor at Colgate University who earned her Ph.D. in Geography from Syracuse University in 2016. She is a feminist political geographer whose work focuses on human mobility in the context of US imperial and racial formations. Her contributions to political geography are rooted in 1) her thoroughgoing feminist approach to study, which is infused with feminist care ethics, 2) her contributions to theorizing the US empire as a transpacific region, and 3) her interdisciplinary interventions. Across her work, she foregrounds colonial formations of race-making, which I view as an imperative contribution to political geography.”
- **Richard Morrill Public Engagement Award:** No award this year
- **Virginie Mamadouh Outstanding Research Award:** Pallavi Gupta (UH-Mānoa) for “Geographies of Waiting: Politics, Methods, and Praxis—A Case Study of Indian Railway Stations.” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers.*

- **Julian Minghi Distinguished Book Award:** Shaina Potts (UCLA) for *Judicial Territory: Law, Capital, and the Expansion of American Empire*. Duke University Press.

V. New Business & General Discussion

Proposals

- **Morrill Engagement Award Eligibility Expansion:** Meredith DeBoom and Kate Coddington proposed changing the eligibility for the Morrill Engagement Award to allow the award to be granted to student recipients (it is currently limited to post-graduate/professional nominees). This will provide an additional funding opportunity for graduate students, many of whom are doing exceptional public engagement work, and it is expected to increase the pool of nominees.
 - **Background**
 - This award has a record of exceptional recipients, but we often struggle to solicit nominees.
 - The number of nominees has remained small despite the addition of a monetary prize (\$300) to support preconference attendance at the 2022 business meeting. The award criteria was also broadened at that time to include more arenas in which candidates might “affect change.”
 - Current criteria: “This award will be given to an individual who has used their political geographic work to affect change (in the discipline of geography, public thought, or public policy).”
 - Submission requirements: 500-word paragraph describing the impact of the nominee’s scholarly or public work; link to the nominee’s institutional or personal website.
 - **Discussion**
 - Carl Dahlman offered a friendly amendment to allow for two awards (one graduate, one post-graduate), if there are sufficient nominees, so that graduate and post-graduates do not directly compete against one another (which could discourage post-graduate nominees). **The amendment was adopted.**
 - **Members voted to change the award criteria to create a student category for the Morrill Award, in addition to the current professional/post-graduate category.**
 - The nomination criteria will be updated in the bylaws and on the website for the 2025-26 cycle.
 - The PGSG Board can revisit this decision in the future as the nomination pool and/or budgetary situation dictates.
- **BDS Resolution:** Yousuf Al-Bulushi presented a proposal for the PGSG to endorse the BDS resolution as a specialty group and/or to support the AAG holding a membership meeting to discuss the resolution.
 - There was significant discussion of both proposals. Members shared arguments and points in support of and in opposition to the proposals.

- Members requested that the vote be broken into components (i.e., one vote to endorse, one vote to support the AAG holding a meeting).
- Some members expressed concern that a relatively small portion of the PGSG membership (39 members) were in attendance at the business meeting. There was a proposal to instead hold an online vote on both measures following the AAG meeting. Other members expressed concerns with such a delay, given ongoing discussions at the annual meeting.
- A vote to vote at the business meeting (vs. online) was called. The measure to vote at the business meeting passed (20 for, 17 against, 2 abstentions)
- The measure to support endorsement passed (20 for, 15 against, 4 abstentions).
- The measure to support the call for the AAG to hold a special meeting to discuss the resolution passed (25 for, 11 against, 3 abstentions).

The meeting adjourned at 12:43pm.