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More online at
<http://www.politicalgeography.org/index.html>

PGSG and SSSG preconference

April 10-11, 2011

University of Washington Tacoma

More on p. 5 and online at:
http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/conference/pgs_conference.html

Political Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers

NEWSLETTER

February 22 2011

Jason Dittmer
President

Mat Coleman
Secretary/Treasurer

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Jason Dittmer, Wilmington Arms Pub, Summer 2010 [MC: *Hard at work, no doubt*]

Dear Political Geography Colleagues,

The winds of change continue to swirl. As I write this, protesters and pro-

Mubarak loyalists are squaring off in Tahrir Square and the interim government in Tunisia is allowing previously banned political movements back into national politics. The political geography of the Middle East and North Africa appears more dynamic now than at any time in recent memory. Those putting their bodies on the line (and to a lesser extent, those putting their bodies online) in support of political change are reminding us of the potential for change that always exists in social life. I struggle to imagine the shape of things to come, but for me the stakes are far lower than for those living in the region. I mostly consider the implications for my teaching; others have to calculate multiple scenarios, with each possible

outcome having implications for daily life in a variety of ways – political expression, economic possibilities, social life.

The latter offers a labored segue to a more domestic novelty. This year's PGSG pre-conference is being held jointly with the Sexuality and Space Specialty Group, offering the possibility of pushing our academic debates further into discussions of the politics of everyday life. The pre-conference is an opportunity to mix and mingle with other members of the political geography community in a friendly, engaging atmosphere. It is ideal for graduate students to give their first (or second, or third) presentation and for more senior political geographers to screen their ideas for an interested audience. I routinely get better feedback from the pre-conference audience than I do from an AAG audience, and in my mind I have inverted which is the addendum and which is the 'main event'. This year's collaboration with the Sexuality and Space group offers the chance to re-think the 'political' in political geography. I see this as a natural (if, in practice, unlinked) follow-on from our awarding of the 2009 Julian Minghi Outstanding Research Award to Pain and Smith's edited collection, *Fear: Critical Geopolitics and Everyday Life*. The pre-conference offers a chance both to take stock of recent developments and jump-start new trends. Please make time to be there.

The last bit of my plug for the pre-conference incorporates my next well-crafted segue (you can tell by the way I have to draw attention to it). Elsewhere in this newsletter is the information on nominations for this year's PGSG non-

student awards. In the past we have not always maximized the potential of these awards well enough but over the last two years I have tried to make sure that when we give an award, it makes a splash – this means telling the publishers of our award-winning books, putting the winners on the PGSG blog, etc. This increased profile has heightened the competition for the awards, which is a great thing for us as well as the winners. Please continue this trend by stopping and thinking of a slate of nominees that you would like to submit. Even if you have a nominee in only one category, please pass it on. It doesn't take long and it continues this great tradition.

With that, it is time for me to sign off from my last newsletter as president of the PGSG. Rest assured that I will not send thugs against those of you that are happy to see me go; I count myself among you. The winds of change are also swirling around the PGSG, and a new regime will soon be in place. If I leave a legacy, I believe it can be found in my efforts to raise the profile of the PGSG (spiffed-up website and new blog, enhanced awards recognition, etc.). More important though is the legacy I take with me – wonderful friends, great memories, and an appreciation for disciplinary service. If this sounds a bit funereal, rest assured I am not flying off for exile in Saudi Arabia, but will continue to contribute in whatever capacity I can. I look forward to seeing you all at the pre-conference and the business meeting.

Jason Dittmer
London, UK

LETTER FROM THE STUDENT BOARD MEMBER



**Necati Anaz, Medellin, Colombia,
Summer 2010**

Dear PGSG student members,

Greetings to everyone! I hope you had a wonderful winter break and are already enjoying a very productive new year. I am delighted to address the PSGS newsletter again in this, my final go-round as the student representative.

I'm going to keep this short, but first allow me to mention a few important things. As I'm sure is the case with most of you, I have been riveted these past few days by the unprecedented uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. The current spate of unrest first came to the attention of the world as a young man from Tunisia—26 years old and a college graduate, and vending fruit on the streets of Tunis in order to survive—had his vegetables confiscated by the police. In retaliation, the young man set himself on fire. Soon after this incident, throngs of young Tunisians, educated but unemployed, organized themselves and took to the streets of cities across Tunisia to end the corrupt

regime of Ben Ali, a tyrant who has held power for 23 years. In the unrest, hundreds of people were killed and even more were badly injured. Dubbed an “internet revolution” and decreed by many to be without precedent, this spirit of unrest soon spread to other states like Yemen, Jordan, and Egypt. Of these, the situation of Egypt stands to be the most eminent and resonating one.

Regardless of one or another revolution's relative importance, one cannot stop asking oneself “why these states” and “why now.” Several common traits of these countries immediately come to my attention. One is that these countries' regimes are very friendly to the United States. In one way or another, these states are all vital to US interests in the region, and to global security, at least “global security” as it is reckoned by the United States and its allies. The long-lived totalitarian leaders of the turmoil-wracked states have non-functioning democracies, corrupt judiciaries, and jerry-built economies that lend them tattered and disingenuous legitimacy, and yet these states perform an important role in the region. For whom they perform is the question now being answered with righteous fury by the young and the dispossessed of these political fiefdoms.

Another commonality of these countries is that they all carry left-over Cold War psychology. This means that for generations, these regimes prioritized the state's well-being over the well-being of the state's people, and neglected issues of human dignity and poverty. Even though the Cold War ended in Europe and the rest of the

world in the early 1990s, it was still waged in North Africa and the Middle East well into the present decade. Because of this continuing Cold War psychology, these countries could not complete their normalization. These countries' authoritarian structure has been justified for the sake of the state, rather than jettisoned for the sake of better jobs, better schooling, and a better attempt at fulfilling even the most basic human needs of the citizenry.

Apparently, the citizenry's state of mind has changed.

People have begun questioning things that were thought to be vital elements of the state's survival in a region seemingly held hostage by outside perceptions of regional security, militarization of the state, and strong (re: strong-arm) leadership. But where did this moment—arguably a post-US moment—in the Middle East come from, and why did it come so suddenly after years and years of the status quo? I personally don't know the answer, but what I can argue is that information and communication technology—from Facebook to Twitter, from blogging to Wikileaks and Al Jazeera—was one of the dominant push factors that set the stage for this movement and allowed the long-oppressed people of the region to rise up and undermine the totalitarian regimes that have held their countries hostage for many decades. Whether this makes it an "internet revolution" I cannot say, but I do know that the internet did not liberate the people of Tunisia and bring about the end of the Mubarak regime in Egypt. People did those things. And they did them despite the status-quo desires of the Obama administration, and as a slap in the face

to the Bush administration's imperialistic policy of forced Middle Eastern democratization in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Why do I share this? It is because I want to (again) direct geographers' attention to the importance of information and communication technologies and how they can play a vital role in shaping the political geography of the world. This also means that there are always many new avenues of investigation being opened up to students of political geography. I am emphasizing political geography because many so-called experts fail to understand the Middle East and continue to fundamentally misread the social, economic, and political dynamics of the region. Therefore, political geographers are desperately needed to step up academically and to publicly clear the mist of misinformation that too often hangs over these countries and their people.

The other topic that I'd like to mention here is this year's AAG meeting. As most of you know, it will be held this year in Seattle, Washington. This city is without question a beautiful one; it sits on the majestic rocky outcrop of the Pacific Northwest, and has many fine attractions both inside and outside the city limits. As I always argue, geography cannot be learned in the classroom alone, and I encourage all of you to take advantage of this culturally-, historically- and geographically-rich conference site. And while you're at it, see if you can't include beautiful Vancouver in your trek to the Northwest.

On that note, I would like to thank you for allowing me to be your representative these past two years. I

have enjoyed every minute of it, and gained a great deal from the experience. I wish you all a wonderful semester and a very productive year in 2011.

Peace!

Necati Anaz
Norman, Oklahoma

PGSG PRECONFERENCE

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND SEXUALITY AND SPACE SPECIALTY GROUPS PRE-CONFERENCE, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA, APRIL 10-11, 2011

This year the Political Geography and Sexuality and Space Specialty Groups are co-sponsoring a pre-conference on the University of Washington Tacoma campus immediately prior to the start of the Association of American Geographers conference in Seattle. The pre-conference will begin midday on Sunday, April 10 and will feature a Keynote Address by Dr. Lynn Staeheli, Professor of Geography at Durham University in the United Kingdom. The conference will continue through Monday, April 11. Registration details, including fee and fee payment details, will be available soon at http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/conference/pgs_conference.html. To submit a paper or session proposal, please send a title, abstract, and complete author/organizer contact information to Larry Knopp (knoppl@uw.edu) or Mark Pendras (pendras@uw.edu) no later than March 1, 2011.

The [University of Washington Tacoma](http://www.uw.edu/tacoma) campus is located in downtown Tacoma's vibrant and beautifully renovated museum district. Accommodations within walking distance include the Courtyard by

Marriott (<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/hotel-information/travel/seatt-d-courtyard-tacoma-downtown/>) and the Hotel Murano (<http://www.hotelmuranotacoma.com/>). The Best Western Tacoma Dome (<http://www.bestwesternwashington.com/hotels/best-western-tacoma-dome-hotel/>) is a very short (2-3 minute) free tram ride away. All three offer room rates that are considerably cheaper than hotel rates in downtown Seattle (including AAG conference rates). In addition, downtown Seattle and Tacoma are accessible to one another via commuter train and express busses from early morning until late evening. The trip takes less than an hour.

Special thanks to the two specialty groups, UW-Tacoma administration, and the UW-Tacoma Office of Advancement, for their support of this pre-conference. Thanks also to the local organizing committee comprised of geographers and fellow-travelers in the [Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences](http://www.uw.edu/tacoma/interdisciplinary-arts-sciences) and [Urban Studies](http://www.uw.edu/tacoma/urban-studies) programs at UW-Tacoma and the [Department of Geography](http://www.uw.edu/seattle/geography) at UW-Seattle.

2011 POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY SPECIALTY GROUP DISSERTATION ENHANCEMENT AWARD

The PGSG Dissertation Enhancement Award of \$800.00 is to be granted annually to a PGSG student member. Interested students should prepare a mini-dissertation proposal for submission to the Dissertation Awards Committee. Guidelines for the DEA are as follows:

1. The competition is open to all Ph.D. students who are members of the PGSG.
2. The DEA proposal should be 8-10 pages in length total (single or double spaced) and include sections covering the research question(s), theoretical issues, conceptual framework, methodology, relevance to political geography, and a budget describing how the \$800.00 would be used.
3. A proposal submitted for the PGSG DEA award may NOT be submitted to any other AAG Specialty group's dissertation enhancement award.
4. If a student has already incurred expenses listed in the budget by the time of the award announcement, the student may use the DEA to cover those expenses.
5. The DEA proposal should be crafted from the student's dissertation proposal which has been or will be submitted to the Ph.D. committee within the 2010-2011 academic year.
6. To enable full consideration of all submissions, entrants should send copies of their DEA proposals to each member of the Dissertation Enhancement Awards Committee listed below. Electronic submissions are welcome. Final acceptance date for submissions is 5pm, March 15th, 2011.
7. The results of the DEA competition will be announced to the winner March 29, 2011 prior to the annual AAG meeting in Seattle, WA and the winner will be invited to attend the annual AAG Awards Luncheon at the expense of the PGSG. The award will be formally announced at the PGSG business meeting in Seattle, WA, and the \$800.00 award will be distributed to the winner at that time. The winner's name and dissertation title will be forwarded to the AAG for publication in the AAG Newsletter.
8. Questions concerning the competition may be directed to the members of the Dissertation Enhancement Awards Committee.

Dissertation Enhancement Award Committee:

Dr. Robert H. Watrel, Department of Geography, South Dakota State University, 246 Scobey Hall, Box 504, Brookings, SD 57007; robert.watrel@sdstate.edu

Dr. Shannon O’Lear, Department of Geography 1475 Jayhawk Blvd, 213 Lindley Hall
University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045; olear@ku.edu

Dr. Gabriel Popescu, Department of Political Science, Indiana University South Bend,
P.O. Box 7111, South Bend, IN 466634; gpopescu@iusb.edu

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER COMPETITIONS

Description: The student paper competitions are open to all students who have written and presented a research paper on a topic in political geography. Guidelines are as follows:

1. The competition is open to all students, however a student may not receive a Student Paper Competition award more than once during her/his tenure as a student. See also 8a below.
2. The entries must be research papers and not complete theses or dissertations. Papers must not be longer than 15 pages plus bibliography.
3. Entries must be on a topic in political geography.
4. Paper entries must have been presented at a professional meeting during the period beginning with the first day of the previous AAG Annual Meeting and concluding with the last day of the next AAG Annual Meeting.
5. Hard or digital copies of papers must be submitted to all three members of the PGSG’s Student Paper Award Committee by 5pm, March 15th, 2011. No late papers will be accepted.
6. Submissions will normally be divided into Masters and Ph.D. student divisions.
7. Submissions will be judged on their written clarity, methodological and theoretical soundness, and their contributions to research in political geography.
8. All monetary prizes are awarded at the discretion of the Student Paper Award Committee. Awards will normally include:
 - A). A regional student-paper award: for a paper presented at a Regional AAG meeting; award will be \$100 for the top paper(MA or Ph.D. level, only one award); a student may not win both student paper awards;
 - B). Doctoral Student Award (\$100 + reimbursement of next year’s AAG Annual Meeting student registration fee),
 - C). Master's Student Award (\$100 + reimbursement of next year’s AAG Annual Meeting student registration fee),

D). up to three Honorable Mention awards (reimbursement of next year's AAG Annual Meeting student registration fee).

9. The results of the Student Paper Award competitions will be announced to the winner just prior to the annual AAG meeting in Las Vegas and the awardees (including any Honorable Mention awardees) will be invited to attend the annual AAG Awards Luncheon at the expense of the PGSG. The awards will be formally announced at the PGSG business meeting in Las Vegas Payment will take place shortly thereafter. The awardees' names and paper titles will be forwarded to the AAG for publication in the AAG Newsletter.

10. Any questions pertaining to eligibility will be resolved by the Student Paper Award Committee.

Graduate Student Paper Award Committee:

Darren Purcell, Chair, University of Oklahoma, dpurcell@ou.edu

Helga Leitner, University of Minnesota, helga.leitner-1@umn.edu

Katrinka Somdahl-Sands, Rowan University, somdahlka@gmail.com

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

Description: The undergraduate student paper award will go to the best paper on a political geography topic written by an undergraduate student, regardless of membership in the AAG or participation at the Annual Meetings. Papers submitted for awards to other AAG-affiliated organizations are not eligible. This competition is open to all undergraduate students who have written a research paper or senior thesis on a topic in political geography. Guidelines are as follows:

1. The competition is open to all undergraduate students, or those who have completed an undergraduate degree since the last award has been made.
2. The entries must be research papers or theses, and not reviews. Papers must be longer than 10 double-spaced pages plus bibliography, but less than 15 pages plus bibliography. Margins must be 1" on all sides and 12 point font must be used.
3. Entries must be on a topic in political geography.
4. Each university may only submit one undergraduate paper or thesis for consideration.
5. Hard copies of papers must be received by all three members of the PGSG's Undergraduate Student Paper Award Committee by June 15 to be included in that

year's competition. They must each be endorsed with the signature of the applicant's department chair. This signature will indicate that the submission is the department's chosen applicant (see #4 above).

6. Submissions will be judged on their written clarity, methodological and theoretical soundness, and their contributions to research in political geography.

7. All monetary prizes are awarded at the discretion of the Undergraduate Student Paper Award Committee.

A). Up to three Honorable Mention awards will be given (award of \$50 each).

B). The winner of the Award will receive \$100 cash and registration to the next year's AAG conference (the registration fee component is contingent on continued study of geography).

C.) If no acceptable entries are made the committee can decide to not give the award in any given year.

8. The results of the Student Paper Award competitions will be announced in the fall PGSG newsletter. The awards will be formally announced at the PGSG business meeting and the cash awards and registration reimbursement will be distributed to the awardees at that time. The awardees' names and paper titles will be forwarded to the AAG for publication in the AAG Newsletter.

9. Any questions pertaining to eligibility will be resolved by the Undergraduate Student Paper Award Committee.

Undergraduate Student Paper Award Committee:

Mat Coleman, Chair, The Ohio State University, coleman.373@osu.edu

Katherine Hankins, Georgia State University, khankins@gsu.edu

Andrew Wood, University of Kentucky, andrew.wood@uky.edu

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY NON-STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Awards are as follows:

- **Julian Minghi Outstanding Research Award.** This award will be given to the author(s) of a journal article, book chapter, or book published during the previous calendar year that makes an innovative, original contribution to the conceptual and/or methodological embrace of political geography.

- **Stanley D. Brunn Young Scholar Award.** This award will be given to an individual who has received her/his Ph.D. within the past ten years, in honor of contributions that have generated new interest in the subfield and/or opened up new areas of inquiry for political geographic research.

- **Richard Morrill Public Outreach Award.** This award will be given to an individual who has used her or his political geographic expertise to affect change (in public thought or public policy) beyond the academy.

General Information:

1. All awards will be based on nominations made to the President of the PGSG, with award decisions to be made by the PGSG Board.
2. For all awards, the field of political geography will be defined according to the breadth of topics covered in the Political Geography chapter of the “Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century” volume.
3. For each award category, a maximum of one award will be conferred each year, with the announcement to be made at the PGSG Business Meeting taking place the next Spring. For each award category, if there are no nominees whom the Board views as deserving of merit, no award will be made.
4. Each award recipient will receive a \$50 check to honor her or his achievement.
5. Decisions regarding who receives awards will be made by the PGSG Board. The PGSG Board reserves the right to determine whether a nominee (or a nominated publication) falls within the scope of political geography.
6. Nominations by Board members are permitted.
7. Awardees need not be PGSG or AAG members, although awardees will be strongly encouraged to join both groups if they are not already members.

For more details on PGSG events and competitions
(plus the PGSG blog) visit

<http://www.politicalgeography.org/index.html>
