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# The Project Report

*A Quarterly Report on The Political Theory Project at Brown University*



## From the Director

Friends,

We at Brown's Political Theory Project think of ourselves as entrepreneurs in the world of ideas. Our marketplace is the academy. Our products are hard questions and, sometimes, new ideas. Our customers are students, colleagues and anyone willing to think in a rigorous way about the basic questions of political life. As entrepreneurs, we assign great importance to the value of accountability. Out of respect for that value (and also, frankly, because we like to brag), we are pleased to present the first *PTP Quarterly Report*.

The purpose of the *PTP Quarterly Report* is to update you, the Project's friends and investors, about the Project. As the etymology of our title suggests, the *Report* will be issued four times each year: Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. As ever, detailed information about the Project, our mission, our activities, and our contributions to the intellectual life of Brown, can be found at our website: [www.politicaltheoryproject.net](http://www.politicaltheoryproject.net).

While we expect to be experimenting with the format of the *Report*, this, our beta version, has six sections. *Thinking Uncomfortable Thoughts* provides an update about major campus events sponsored by the Project's dynamic student group, the Janus Forum. You can read an interview with the teacher of a course recently sponsored by the Project in *Spotlight on a Course*. *By the Numbers* provides fast facts about the Project. We celebrate the successes of Brown graduate students and the Project's postdoctoral fellows in landing academic jobs in a section entitled *Champagne Launchings*. Finally, we update you on the Project's fundraising efforts and financial standing in *The Bottom Line*.



On behalf of the Project's staff, Faculty Associates, Postdoctoral Research Associates, graduate fellowship holders and, especially, on behalf of the hundreds of Brown undergraduates who have chosen to enroll in Project-sponsored courses, attend Project-sponsored events and participate in our workshops and study groups, I thank you for your interest and support.

John Tomasi



## Thinking Uncomfortable Thoughts

The Janus Forum Lectures are sponsored by Brown's Political Theory Project. The Lectures are part of the Project's Janus Forum, a student-run initiative that encourages, facilitates, and develops active thought, debate, and discussion around political ideas. The Janus Forum seeks to actively promote critical thinking and discourse by exposing students to a variety of perspectives regarding relevant social and political issues. In addition to hosting political forums at Brown, the Janus Forum also sponsors a student group of Janus Fellows, which participate in related student activities.

The inaugural Janus Lecture, entitled "Ideology in the American Academy," featured speakers Stanley Fish and James Piereson. The second lecture was a discussion of gender, featuring speakers Harvey Mansfield and Catharine MacKinnon.

The next Janus Lecture scheduled for March 1, 2007 is entitled "Self-Evident Truths: Religion, Reason and the US Constitution," featuring speakers Robert P. George from Princeton and Kent Greenawalt from Columbia University. A final lecture on Globalization is also planned for April.



James Piereson speaks at the Political Theory Project's inaugural Janus Lecture

## Spotlight on a Course

Ross Corbett comes to Brown from the University of Toronto where he completed his PhD in Political Science. His education at Toronto focused on careful attention to primary texts. Ross brings that same skill to Brown where he currently resides as a PTP Research Associate. In fall of 2006, Ross taught a freshman seminar entitled "Philosophy of the American Founding." Here's what he has to say.

**Tell us about your course.** The course was a freshman seminar that emphasized the broad philosophic context in which our Founders justified the Revolution and debated the Constitution. I tried to make it more than just an analysis of the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Federalist Papers*, but also to trace the development of ideas such as rights, limited government, checks and balances, and revolution, and to understand the underpinnings of these concepts.

**What major texts are students reading in this course?** We began with the *Declaration* and the *Federalist Papers*, and then turned to the works

of three philosophers particularly important to the development of classical liberalism, viz. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, John Locke's *Second Treatise* and *Letter Concerning Toleration*, and Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. We concluded with Alexis de Tocqueville's analysis of the American regime in *Democracy in America*.

**Was there any topic or text that generated a discussion that particularly surprised or pleased you?** The class as a whole was eager to follow the arguments wherever they might go. Several students were disheartened to discover how easily conformism and philistinism can result from the application of even the best arguments, according to Tocqueville's analysis. This prompted a great discussion about the American educational system and the goals of the Enlightenment.

**What do you hope your students will take away from this course?** I hope that students will come away with a greater appreciation of the subtlety that undergirds the arguments behind the American Constitution. Having traced through and questioned these ideas for themselves, it is possible that they will be in a better position to answer challenges to them and to think critically about their own opinions.



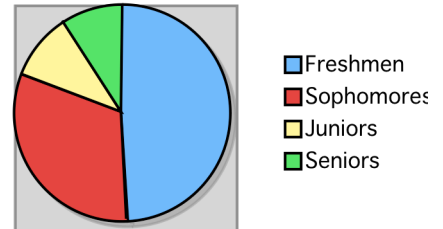
## By the Numbers



On the evening of October 5, 2006, 160 students attended the Project's inaugural Janus Lecture event ("Ideology in the American Academy"). The Project's second Janus event held in November ("Justice, Gender and the American Dream") drew 310, and most recently on February 7, 500 students attended a Project co-sponsored talk by Nonie Darwish ("The Road to Peace: Women's Rights").

During the Fall of 2006, the Project sponsored five new courses at

Brown, with a special focus on freshman seminars. The total number of students enrolled in Political Theory Project-sponsored courses for the Fall 2006 semester was 122 (see graph for breakdown by class).



## Champagne Launchings



We are delighted to announce that Jermaine McCalpin (pictured left), a Brown graduate student who held a PTP graduate fellowship during 2005-6, has won a tenure track job at the University of the West Indies. He begins teaching there Fall 2008. [Note to Jermaine: please invite us to conferences soon and often!].

McCalpin wrote his dissertation on transitional justice in racially divided countries—completing his Ph.D. in just five years. Many scholarly discussions

of truth commissions and race-based reparations take the moral grounds of such policies for granted. McAlpin's dissertation was distinctive for the careful and balanced analysis he provided of the moral controversies that underlie such proposals.

The PTP Fellowship "afforded me the opportunity to concentrate exclusively on the intellectual task of writing and reformulating my dissertation," says McCalpin. "The funding and academic resources available to me as a PTP Fellow were extremely helpful in finishing my Ph.D. in a timely manner."

## The Bottom Line

To run the Political Theory Project at full strength for the 2007-8 academic year, the Project must raise \$750,000 by June 30, 2007.

As of this writing, the Project has won grants from foundations toward our goal totaling \$175,000. These include: Searle Freedom Trust, Anthem Foundation, the ISI's Jack Miller Center for the Teaching of America's Founding Principles, and

the Veritas Fund of the Manhattan Institute. So far, the Project has received gifts and pledges from individuals for 2007-8 totaling \$290,000. All told, we have raised \$465,000 towards next year's goal of \$750,000.

Therefore, by June 30, 2007, the Project is seeking to raise an additional \$285,000.

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*The Political Theory Project is funded on a current use basis. For all direct costs, the Project relies on grants and the generosity of individuals.*

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## About the Political Theory Project

The mission of the Political Theory Project is to invigorate the study of the fundamental principles of human social life. Distinctively, the Project brings to this study not only the conceptual concerns characteristic of the humanities, nor only the empirical and institutional methods of the social sciences, but instead a novel and powerful synthesis of humanistic and social scientific tools. In this way, the Project drives beneath the familiar and easy ideological labels. We focus on questions about what actually works in the world. The Project creates at Brown

a space where students of good faith, and diverse viewpoints, can come together to debate one another other, freely and passionately, about the most pressing political problems of our day.

The Project sponsors a variety of activities: new courses for undergraduates, a university-wide lecture series, weekly Open Seminar Luncheons for undergraduates, academic conferences, research fellowships for graduate students, support for faculty research, and a postdoctoral fellowship program.

*"While other types of communities devise covenants so as to avoid conflict, our covenant is rooted in quarrel, in opposition. We encourage ideas and opinions to collide in the service of learning.*

*We freely trespass boundaries, criticize each other's views, test every theory. No idea is beyond range or out of bounds...I believe that learning at its best is the antithesis of comfort."*

*Ruth J. Simmons, President of Brown University*

**VISIT US ONLINE:** [www.politicaltheoryproject.net](http://www.politicaltheoryproject.net)

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