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Mission Statement

Paul Frymer, *Princeton University*
Marie Gottschalk, *University of Pennsylvania*
Kimberley Johnson, *New York University*

We are honored to have the opportunity to serve as the latest editors of *Studies in American Political Development*. We wish to thank and credit Anthony Chen and Eric Schickler for their outstanding service and contributions. First established by Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek in 1986 as a space for theoretical, methodological, and substantive commitments intrinsic in the study of American political development (APD), we look forward to maintaining the journal's esteemed reputation as a place for important questions and empirically rich and theoretically innovative answers.

As an intellectual, theoretical, and methodological marker, APD has always comprised many different pieces, not all of them in sync with one another. Some APD scholars see themselves as theorists, emphasizing either the importance of multiple ideological traditions within the nation's historical trajectory following the likes of Tocqueville, Du Bois, and Hartz, or a more general neo-Marxist understanding of power and institutional representation following in the footsteps of Hegel, Weber, and Foucault. Others see themselves more directly as historical and institutional methodologists in search of innovative techniques to make sense of historical data, whether with quantitative or archival materials, and to understand the ways in which institutions and policies maneuver and unfold at varied paces in response to multiple processes.

Understanding the development of key public policies has been a longstanding concern of the subfield, from initial questions about the early development of the regulatory and welfare state to later analyses of movements around labor rights, civil rights, and, most recently, the carceral state. Many scholars have been drawn to the big tent of American political development because they find the APD community more receptive to studying topics, substantive and theoretical, that do not readily fit in the existing mainstream of political science and related disciplines.

E-mail: pfrymer@princeton.edu
E-mail: mgottsch@sas.upenn.edu
E-mail: kj37@nyu

Much of the dynamism of APD comes from its eclecticism. We are proud to continue this vibrant tradition, and particularly the ways that the subfield offers a counter to the dominance of specific methods and positivism within mainstream American political science. APD has innovated greatly over the years, making methodological rigor and innovation much more central to its core; but the mission remains distinctive from subfields that are either more formal or that demand causal inference at every turn. In particular, we wish to continue to highlight APD's skepticism towards reductionist models, as well as its distinctive emphasis on mechanisms and theories of power and political formation and construction.

As the new editors, we wish to push the field to go even further in interrogating its theoretical assumptions and methodological priorities, and to expand its substantive understandings of American politics. APD has always been a subfield that has sought to address the biggest questions in politics, whether related to class and capital; race, gender, and sexuality; the formation and development of national ideologies and welfare policy; or the varied sources of political activism. Our strengths are historical and contextual, but the subfield has always had an eye for the present and future.

Today's leading policy concerns and disputes—including global warming, immigration policy, record levels of income inequality, the "deep state," and the extent and limits of democracy in America, to name just a few—can be better understood by placing them in the context of political and institutional developments from the past.

In today's polarized and fraught political environment, Americans are reexamining their origins and their "story" to establish and legitimate the priorities of the modern era. They are debating fundamental questions, including the meaning of the Constitution, the role of political parties, the legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the expansion of industrial capitalism, and whether the country is an exceptional democracy, a nation of immigrants, or a settler imperial state. In light of federal and state government struggles to respond adequately to

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COVID-19, policy officials and scholars are also raising questions about institutional capacity and government responsiveness and representativeness to central concerns of employment, health, and the home. The nuanced historical analyses of the kind pioneered by APD scholars can play a pivotal role in illuminating these debates.

We have established a new editorial board that we plan to rely on for guidance on intellectual and production issues. We sought a board that was simultaneously distinguished and representative of our community. We expect to revise the board more frequently than in the past so as to continue bringing new voices in conversation with the field's legacies.

We are currently working with our publisher, Cambridge University Press, to modernize the journal's format and to make its website more timely and engaging. We plan to publish some special issues on a single topic and to encourage review essays based on new books on a key issue. We also hope to publish more work that situates the United States in a comparative perspective, especially since some of today's most pressing political issues are hardly exceptional to the United States.

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