In Memoriam

John (Jack) Gunnell

Jack Gunnell, one of the most beloved and respected members of the political science department at the State University of New York at Albany and a major voice in the field of political theory passed away in his family home in Georgetown, Maine on Jan 15th 2024 at the age of 90. Jack received his BA in political science from Tufts University, and after flirting with the idea of becoming a geologist, he came out to UC Berkeley to pursue a PhD in political science and there discovered political theory. He received the PhD in 1964 with a dissertation that quickly became a book on *Political Theory and Time in Plato* and immediately took a position at the State University of New York at Albany where he taught from 1964 to his retirement in 2008.

Jack was a graduate student when political science at Berkeley was developing into one of the major departments for the study of political theory in the US with its emphasis on recovering "the political" from the ordinary functioning of modern professional politics and political science. His own work was in part a dialogue with this approach out of which he developed an independent scholarly voice all his own. On the one hand, he vigorously advanced its criticism of mainstream behavioral and functionalist political science's claim to be a science, and in 1968 Jack launched a frontal attack in the lion's den of that approach, the *American Political Science Review*. In his article, "Deduction, Explanation, and Social Scientific Inquiry," and subsequent rebuttal he argued that it was a mistake to understand the "deductivist model" of explanation derived from logical positivism and embraced by much of mainstream political science as the authoritative model of scientific explanation given that what counts as a good explanation and the reasons supporting it are context dependent—especially for politics. More significantly, he argued, this embrace of deductivism overlooks the fact that, as Thomas Kuhn and Stephen Toulmin argued, explanation in the natural sciences itself does not follow the logical positivist model either of explanation or evidence. *The Review* mobilized two respondents to defend this model, and while the responses were fierce and in one case totally dismissive, Jack stood his ground defending a notion of a more context-bound notion of explanation and paradigm-driven philosophy of science. Subsequently, even many political scientists came around to this argument though they often rechristened their old approaches as "paradigm shifts."

On the other hand, Jack did not simply embrace the superiority of political theory as **the** model of genuine political science (as many in the subfield did). Instead, in a series of articles and his 1979 book *Tradition and Interpretation*, he criticized those commentators who organized textual interpretation around "the tradition of political theory" understood as a dialogue among a select number of great texts and then deployed as a way of criticizing modern politics and modern political science. Against this trend, he argued that the concept of the tradition as a dialogue among canonical political texts invoked by some of the more significant commentators in the field was a "myth" constructed to view academic commentary as continuous with primary canonical works. Once again, invoking the context dependency of political understanding of his earlier criticism of positivist political science, he argued that political theory should stop using the tradition of political theory as a higher authority to criticize modern political science and instead construct political theories to criticize contemporary politics from within. Obviously, others in political theory disagreed, but his criticism fostered a needed self-reflection on how the subfield might engage with politics and interpret texts without this fiction.

These two projects became the basis for Gunnell's life-long work of engaging critically with the steadily expanding new strands of argument that developed both in the subfield of political theory and in political science more generally. His scholarly output in assessing these many directions was simply voluminous. I can only give a sense of its many directions here. They included a criticism of behavioral political science for operating with a flawed theory of human action; a criticism of both political science and political theory in his books *Between Philosophy and Politics: The Alienation of Political Theory* (1986), *The Orders of Discourse: Philosophy, Social Science, and Politics* (1998), and *Political Theory and Social Science* (2011) for having turned toward the meta-theoretical concerns of methodology and philosophical justification of norms as a substitute for engaging with the first order subject matter common to them both: political practice rooted in conventions and usages; in *Descent of Political Theory* (1993) an internal history of the evolution of political theory in the United States as a distinctive sub-discipline of political science and how political theory went from being at the turn of the twentieth century the core of the field of political science to a specialization all its own, first critical of the field then an internal specialization cut off from it; a parallel inquiry in *Imagining the American Polity: American Political Science and the Discourse of Democracy* (2004) into the development of the field of political science in the United States as always focused on buttressing American democracy even when claiming scientific neutrality; numerous articles and chapters on the role of the German speaking émigrés of the 1930s and 40s in shaping the political theory attack on behaviorialism, liberalism, and pluralist democracy; and finally an exhaustive study of *Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn* (2014) that made explicit the underlying foundation for his many criticisms of political science and political theory—rooted in the work of Kuhn and Wittgenstein, Gunnell argued the latter offered a kind of social science of conventional conduct and meaning that described the "reality" in which all social and political life was inescapably embedded.

All of these works provoked dialogues, debates, and criticisms, especially in the field of political theory. Though Jack vigorously defended his views, he also welcomed the responses of his critics since his aim was to encourage a dialogue over what political theory had become and how it might reengage both with political science and with the ordinary practice of politics.

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Jack Gunnell's distinctive approach to his own sub-field of political theory and the broader field of political science was in fact driven by a strong personal ethic that is all too rare in academia. While much of his work was driven by debates with parts of the subfield of political theory and of political science more generally, Jack was anything but combative in his personal relations to his colleagues, friends, and students. Indeed, he was unstintingly loyal to those around him, uncommonly cheerful, and always ready to engage in discussion on a moment's notice. Above all, he was a great friend to so many of us, always available for support both personally and intellectually

For those of us who knew him, he will be much missed.

—Peter Breiner, University at Albany, State University of New York

Althea Nagai

Independent scholar Althea Keiko Nagai, aged 70, passed away on August 21, 2024, in Rockville, Maryland after a short battle with gallbladder cancer. Born on June 30, 1954, in Hilo, Hawaii, Althea was a revered scholar, a dedicated researcher, and a loving presence in the lives of her family and community.

Althea grew up on a plantation in the rural town of Keaau, on the big island of Hawaii, 45 minutes outside of Hilo. She was the eldest daughter of Kaoru and Yaeko Nagai and grew up alongside her younger sister, Natalie. An alumna of Hilo High School, Althea's pursuit of knowledge led her to the University of Hawaii and later to the University of Chicago, where she earned her doctorate in political science. There she met and married Robert Lerner, who was also earning his doctorate in sociology. Their only child, Joshua, was born in November of 1989, and, following in his mother's footsteps, earned his doctorate in political science and is now a social scientist at NORC (National Opinion Research Center) at the University of Chicago.

Her career was distinguished by her time as a professor at Smith College, where she collaborated with political sociologist Stanley Rothman and co-founded Lerner-Nagai Quantitative Consulting. Her scholarly work, particularly her seven co-authored books with her late husband, ranged in topics from elite public opinion formation, the organization and funding of nonprofits, to the efficacy of different adoption laws—which captured the breadth of her interests and expertise.

Althea's most prominent political and intellectual legacy includes her time as a Senior Fellow at the Center for Equal Opportunity, where her research contributed to exposing the breadth and depth of racial preferences in college admissions. This work helped shape public opinion and laid the groundwork for nine statewide ballot initiatives to ban racial preferences. Her work provided the cornerstone for the landmark Supreme Court cases against Harvard University and the University of North Carolina prohibiting the use of racial and ethnic preferences in college admissions. Moreover, CEO, led by then-General Counsel Roger Clegg and Chairman Linda Chavez, provided Althea with an environment in which her statistical and analytic talents could flourish.

Her personal attributes—her kindness and her thoughtful and caring nature—were the heart of her family's life. Althea's love of music, whether playing the piano or guitar, was a source of great pleasure and the foundation of many cherished family memories. As she was proud to point out she was a professional musician, having played lounge piano and served in a backing band during college and graduate school. She also loved to watch and argue about sports and politics, two of her favorite pastimes.

Her life exemplified love and dedication, particularly in her role as a mother and grandmother. The happiness she derived from her family, especially her granddaughter Eliana, was unmatched.

After Robert's passing, Althea later married political scientist Ken Masugi and adopted his Boston terrier, Yoda, as her own. She also became close with Ken's daughter, Vera Yevsukov, who was a great source of comfort and support throughout her battle with cancer.

Althea was preceded in death by her parents, Kaoru and Yaeko Nagai, her sister Natalie Nagai, and her first husband, Robert Lerner. She leaves behind her husband, Ken Masugi; her son, Joshua Lerner; daughter-in-law, Catherine Lerner; and her beloved granddaughter, Eliana Lerner.

Althea was a lifelong member of Puna Hongwanji, her hometown Buddhist temple, where she found spiritual solace and community. In recollecting her life and contributions, a memorial conference will be held in the greater DC area in late March. This seminar will pay homage to Althea's impact on others and celebrate her rich and meaningful life. She will be interred at the Puna Hongwanji alongside her parents and grandparents at a private family ceremony next year.

— Joshua Lerner, National Opinion Research Center and Ken Masugi, Claremont Institute

Sven Steinmo

Sven Steinmo, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, passed away unexpectedly in July due to a rapid development of ALS. Political science, and the social sciences in general, have lost an extraordinary scholar, a great teacher, an admired mentor, and a beloved colleague. Steinmo was a leading scholar in establishing what became known as historical institutionalism in the discipline and played a decisive role in developing this approach.

Sven Steinmo was born in 1953 in Minnesota, to parents who had just emigrated from Norway. His first language was Norwegian, and he always remained attached to his Scandinavian "Viking" roots. After receiving his BA from the University of California Santa Cruz in 1976, Steinmo moved to Norway to work on an oil platform in the North Sea. His experience there sparked a life-long interest in comparative politics. This interest led him to the graduate program in political science at University of California-Berkeley, where he took the advice given to him by Aaron Wildavsky, to "take a comparative look at taxation." The result earned Sven APSA's highest award for a dissertation in comparative politics (the Gabriel Almond Award). It also resulted in his first book, *Taxation and Democracy: Swedish, Brit-*

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