Interview with PEWS Chair Bill Robinson

What would you like to accomplish as chair of the PEWS section in the upcoming year?

In terms of the long-term health of the section I would like to see us stabilize membership at 400 or more. Part of the explanation for the decline, I believe is the creation of several new sections over the past few years (esp: Transnational and Global Sociology, Development) whose substantive focus overlaps with ours. We have a membership committee looking into possible long-term solutions, beyond the scramble each year to get membership back up to the 400 mark. While these new sections are certainly a welcome development, we need to make clear our section’s unique contribution to these overlapping areas, among them, the deep historical and macro-structural (and political economy) focus that the world-system perspective brings to bear on the problems with which we are engaged. I also want to bring to the forefront through our panel offerings in Chicago several topics that I believe are overdue for exploration or re-exploration, among them, Palestine, global class relations, and race/ethnicity in the capitalist world-system.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Dear PEWSers,

Our Section is off to an excellent start this year. Through an “emergency” members drive we succeeded in increasing membership following the San Francisco ASA meeting from a low of 378 members to 427 current members - above the 400 we needed to assure three Section panels in Chicago. Many of the new members are graduate students who have joined the Section for the first time.
Interview with PEWS Chair Bill Robinson

Finally, I would like to see us continue to develop an orientation towards scholar-activism and socially committed scholarship, although any number of my predecessors have already moved us in this direction, and many colleagues in the Section are quite engaged on this level (e.g., International Network of Scholar Activists, INoSA, at http://www.scholaractivist.org/)

What do you find are the biggest gaps today in the literature on political economy?

Well, certainly one is the political economy of race and ethnicity in world or global perspective. One the one hand, the sociology of race/ethnicity is extremely U.S. centric, too driven in recent decades by issues of identity, liberal politics, and ahistorical, even essentialist, conceptions and often vacuous in terms of political economy and class analysis. On the other hand, world-systems scholars continue for the most part to neglect race and ethnicity as critical categories. A generation ago there was a rich scholarship on the political economy of race and ethnicity and we need to bring that back, but now with a global and transnational (and always deeply historical and materialist) perspective. A second and a third are class analysis in global political economy and the political economy of the state. On the other hand, there has been some really brilliant works on the political economy of gender (see, among many, Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch*), yet the “race, class, gender” matrix is for me problematic because it deals with these three as external relations that intersect rather than as relations internal to each other. There was a very rich research agenda in the 1960s into the 1980s on the political economy of the state. That needs to be revived, but now in the context of capitalist globalization. It has been refreshing to see the rise of political economy research on the environment and ecology. Finally, we need to continue thinking about the political economy of a really viable and achievable – including green and feminist - socialist alternative to world capitalism.

Continued on pg. 4

A FEW WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Our goal now is to sustain membership at 400 or more going into 2015 when it is time for membership renewal. Our membership committee is looking into long-term solutions for sustaining and increasing what has been a declining membership in recent years. Meanwhile, we want the new members to discover that PEWS offers a broad and accommodating umbrella for their research on matters of world political economy and a welcoming environment for intellectual exchange and debate, networking and professional development. And a call out to all current members: remember to renew Section membership in January!!!

The calls for nominations for the *PEWS Distinguished Book Award*, the *PEWS Beset Article Award*, and the *PEWS Terence K. Hopkins Student Paper Award* will be out imminently, so send in your nominations! Remember: self-nominations are welcome, and according to new ASA regulations, both authors and nominators must be members of the Section at the time of nomination.

It is also time for nominations for next year’s Chair-Elect, for three open Council positions – two regular members and one student member – and for Secretary General. Nominations are due at ASA by December 31 and bios by January 31. More information will be sent out soon on the Section listserv and available at the ASA website.
A FEW WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Make sure to read editor Jackie Smith’s important update in this newsletter on our efforts at Open Access and the Creative Commons with regard to our Section’s official Journal of World-Systems Research (JWSR).

Finally, our Section has an exciting lineup of panels for the annual ASA meeting in Chicago:

1) Business meeting and Roundtables. The roundtables are *open submission* and also will be open to those whose papers are bumped over from other panel submissions. There should be a home here for everyone. Oriol Miosa and Rob Clark are the organizers.

2) Section Session: "Palestine in the Capitalist World-System." Organizer is Yousef Baker. This is an *invited panel*. Here is the panel description:

As a crossroad of world-systems both ancient and modern, Palestine has historically played a critical role in the Mediterranean, Middle East, North Africa and beyond. Today the political economy of Israeli colonialism and the Palestinian struggle for justice and liberation is central to understanding regional and global geopolitics and economics.

3) Section Panel: "One World-System or Many? A Critical Appraisal of the Work of Christopher Chase-Dunn". As you know, Chris received this past August the PEWS lifetime achievement award. This panel is *invited* and is being organized by Jeffrey Kentor. Here is the description:

The scholarship of Christopher Chase-Dunn has made a major contribution for nearly four decades to the development of world-systems theory and analysis. This panel offers an assessment, both celebratory and critical, of his *Oeuvre* from diverse perspectives.

4) Section Panel: "Global Class Relations and the New Precariat". The panel organizer is William I. Robinson. This panel is *open submission*.

5) PEWS Regular Session. As part of the general ASA program we are given this additional panel every other year. This panel is *open submission*, and if there are a lot of good submission I can request that there be a second panel, and even a third one, if the number and quality of submissions justifies this......and I certainly plan to request this so please submit! One topic I would like to see highlighted (and revisited from earlier ASA meetings) and that I will try to bring together is *Race and Ethnicity in the Capitalist World-System*.

6) Reception. This year the reception will be on-site in Chicago and jointly sponsored with the Marxist Section.

The deadline for submission to open submission panels is January 7, 2015. Check on line at the ASA website for submission information.

My best wishes to everyone a wonderful holiday season,

William I. Robinson
Interview with PEWS Chair Bill Robinson

Continued from pg. 2

What is the purpose of political economy scholarship beyond the pursuit of theoretical and empirical knowledge? Do we, as researchers and teachers in political economy, have a moral obligation toward the groups most harmed by economic globalization? If so, what is it?

Surely there is an ethical obligation on the part of intellectuals but what is moral conduct is itself determined by historical social struggles that set the prevailing ethical conceptions and standards of justice. In other words, what is ethical or moral is itself an object of struggle, and one in which intellectuals – political economists included – play a key role. Epistemologically we cannot know the world without participating in it. All intellectual labor is organic in the sense that studying the world is itself a social act committed by agents with a definite relationship to the social order. We are all public intellectuals. The question is, for whom – for what social groups and classes – do we do the thinking; whose mandarins are we? The idea of independent, free-floating intellectuals is an illusion. By teaching, publishing, and participating in the administration of our universities and other social institutions we engage in forms of social communication that influence the development of public consciousness, public understanding of social processes and political life, appraisals of the purpose and potential of social action, and imageries of alternative futures.

Objectivity and neutrality are distinct. As scholars of political economy we are bound by the canons of social science, in particular, logical consistency and empirical verification. Nonetheless, there is no such thing as knowledge (either theoretical or empirical) for knowledge’s sake, not in the natural sciences and even less in the social sciences. All knowledge is produced with a definite relationship to the social order in which it is produced and the social class and power relations therein. Political economy as the study of the collective production and reproduction of human life itself and the structures we create in this process plays a particularly critical role in either mystifying or elucidating the inner workings of the social order and the power relations that adhere therein. Intellectuals must chose between legitimating the prevailing social order and providing technical solutions to the problems that arise in its maintenance or exposing contradictions in order to reveal how they may be resolved by transcending the existing order.

We are living in times of severe crisis – grotesque inequalities, increasing levels of exploitation, a global war economy, the rise of a global police state, ecological devastation. Global capitalism is actually leading us towards a mass extinction – the sixth in the known history of the planet and the only one caused by human activity – what the environmental social scientists refer to as the convergence of the Earth-system and the world-system. Either we transcend global capitalism or we go extinct. What do intellectuals have to say about this? System change (as opposed to collapse) can only come from the collective intervention of millions of people. Masses of people navigate their intervention in reality on the basis of how they understand the nature of that reality and of crisis. Such understanding and what alternative realities can be achieved are shaped by organic intellectuals in the media and culture industries and the state, but also in the academy.

I may step on people’s toes in saying this, but there are way to many intellectual mercenaries in the academy, whose research, agenda setting, and social action is shaped by the search for funding, status, and career advancement, goods which in turn are obtained by offering intellectual service, including research and theoretical work, to the system-maintenance agendas of the powers that be. And the resources come ultimately from those most harmed by economic globalization – the global working class and those displaced by the new wave of worldwide primitive accumulation unleashed by capitalist globalization.
Interview with PEWS Chair Bill Robinson continued

Do you think that political economy scholars or scholarship has done enough to influence or assist social movements or other anti-neoliberal organizations advance their agendas? If not, what more needs to be done?

The question is too big and significant to do it justice here. But let me observe that many intellectuals abandoned social movements and anti-systemic or counter-hegemonic projects in the wake of the late 20th century crisis of the left worldwide, the “neo-liberal counterrevolution,” the so-called “End of History,” and the claims to TINA (“there is no alternative”). Every collective agent of social change – in this case, in the broadest sense, the global working class - needs its own organic intellectuals. The unity between socially committed and radical intellectuals and diverse social movements from below and left struggles broke down in this recent era of neo-liberalism, identity politics, and TINA. In my view such unity needs to be reestablished in these new conditions of capitalist globalization and crisis. Historically, it is the mass social movements that set the mood in the major social institutions such as in higher education (with academics usually trailing in the wake of the general social mood), yet in times of intense social ferment and struggle intellectuals have always played a critical role in injecting theoretical insight and broader (generalizing and historical) perspective into the practical and particular concerns of grassroots social movements.

Political economy scholars have a crucial role here. What is often missing in the collective thinking of today’s social movements, in many although not all parts of the world is precisely a political economy critique of global capitalism. At the same time, historically intellectuals who make critical contributions to mass social movements have some organic linkage to political parties of the left. But we now face a crisis of political parties and a regrettable rejection on the part of many social movements of political organizations. There seems to be no effective model for a three-way relationship between social movements, (socialist) political organizations of the left, and the state.

Do you have any advice you’d be willing to share with graduate students working in the area political economy?

I am not sure what I can say that would be useful, especially in such short a space, other than to stress how crucial it is to reinvigorate political economy in the social sciences and in turn to make research “relevant” to the burning matters of our epoch. If you do critical political economy you will run up against the hegemony of both liberal and post-modern/post-structural paradigms, including identity paradigms, so this is something you will need to navigate. More power to you.

What do you see as the biggest change we might expect in the world-system in the coming decades? Do you see China, Russia, or any combination of the BRICs significantly altering the world-system?

If we put aside the possibility of system collapse and a “new Dark Ages” (and we cannot rule that out), the world capitalist system is already being altered in a very significant way. The ongoing globalization of production, finance, and services, the transnational integration of what at one time we used to consider national capitalist classes, and the ever more dense and overlapping network of national state, inter-, trans- and supranational institutions, among other developments, changes the terrain upon which we study world capitalism and should lead to substantial conceptual reconsiderations, including moving once and for all beyond realism. The world capitalist system is a unity whose most fundamental component parts in the first instance are not some 200 odd nation-states as fictitious macro-agents but structures created, reproduced, and transformed by the collective agency of social classes and groups that operate through a multiplicity of institutions.
Also, the current crisis is clearly a structural crisis deeper than earlier such crises and could well be considered a systemic crisis. The late Giovanni Arrighi raised that matter of a prolonged period of “system chaos” and I concur but do not see such chaos as an interregnum between a declining and a rising “hegemonic power” as much as it is a crisis of a world capitalism whose reserves are becoming exhausted (that is, whose internal contradictions cannot be managed within the bounds of the system).

With regard to the BRICS, any serious study of what those governments are proposing leads us to conclude that BRICS protagonism is aimed less at challenging the prevailing international order than at opening up space in the global system for more extensive integration and a less asymmetric global capitalism. By misreading the BRICS phenomenon as some anti-systemic or counter-hegemonic challenge to world capitalism critical scholars and the global left run the risk of becoming cheerleaders for repressive states and transnational capitalists in the South. We would be better off by a denouement of the BRICS and siding with “BRICS from below” struggles of popular and working class forces.

Interview by John McCollum- Senior PEWS News Correspondent, Graduate Student at UCI

*Journal of World-Systems Research* Move to Online Submissions Stalled at the ASA

Jackie Smith, Editor JWSR

For the past couple of years the PEWS Council and *JWSR* editorial team have been working in earnest to move the journal to an online submission system and to allow our authors creative commons license. This will both streamline our review process and improve the journal’s visibility in scholarly indices. However, while this seems like a straightforward and practical decision, we’re finding that the political economy of academic publishing has made this a much more contentious decision than we had anticipated. As we reported at the August 2014 PEWS business meeting, we submitted a proposal to the American Sociological Association’s Committee on Publications in February of 2014, requesting authorization for both the use of creative commons license (to replace current practice where authors must assign copyright to the ASA) and to move the journal to an online, not-for-profit publication and manuscript submission platform operated by the University of Pittsburgh’s University Library System. This proposal had been discussed at length by PEWS Council members, who supported a move to this not-for-profit system as opposed to accepting an offer from SAGE to publish within their online platform.

The Publications Committee met at the ASA meeting in August and they accepted our request for Creative Commons licensing, but they denied our request to move to the University of Pittsburgh’s publishing platform. Their response to us did not provide any serious justification for their overturning of what we felt was a thoughtfully made decision of our Section, and so we responded with a detailed letter asking the Publications Committee to reconsider its decision (text of this letter included on page 11). At the center of this controversy is whether we move the JWSR into SAGE’s online submission and publication platform rather than to the not-for-profit system we have selected, which is committed to the principle of Open Access publishing and designed and run by university librarians. As readers may know, the ASA has a contract with SAGE to publish its official journals. Because we are an online journal, we have not worked with SAGE. However, we are being pressed to move the journal into SAGE’s online publishing platform, a move we have considered and rejected for a variety of reasons.
Journal of World-Systems Research Move to Online Submissions Stalled at the ASA
continued

Our response to the Publications Committee led it to determine that it lacked jurisdiction over matters related to the processes of supplying and distributing journals, and therefore they were referring us to the ASA’s Committee on Executive Office and Budget (EOB). Thus, in mid-October we contacted members of the ASA’s Committee on Executive Office and Budget and have asked them to review this matter. Our message pointed out that there have been important changes in academic publishing, including both the expansion of Open Access publishing and the concentration of the commercial academic publishers, which may require some modification of ASA operations. We will be approaching individuals on the EOB to help familiarize them with our concerns, and we will report to PEWS members about the outcome of these discussions.

Needless to say, PEWS Council members and the JWSR editorial team—which includes Scott Byrd, Jennifer Bair and myself—have been extremely frustrated that our collective decisions about how we manage our journal (in particular our desire to follow our principled commitment to reducing inequities in access to scholarly publications) have been challenged by the ASA. The more we have worked on this issue, the more we realize that this matter goes far beyond our own journal and section, and it affects all ASA members and the larger public.

In short, the consolidation of the academic publishing industry has triggered rapid increases in the costs of academic journals. This in turn has reduced access to scholarly publications and led libraries to cut subscriptions. Our Section members are particularly aware of the detrimental effect this has had on scholars and publics outside the well-resourced universities in the United States. Changes in U.S. laws earlier this year now require that publicly funded research be reported in Open Access sources that are readily available to the public whose tax dollars support research. There are very important issues at stake here as commercial publishers seek to maintain their market shares while Open Access journals like the Journal of World-Systems Research, authors, and readers are seeking ways to reverse more than two decades of increased enclosure of the knowledge commons. For more detail on this, see my contribution to ASA Footnotes’ Forum The Open Access Movement and Activism for the “Knowledge Commons”, or for an even more direct statement, see George Monbiot’s Academic Publishers Make Murdoch Look Like a Socialist.

We hope to be able to report some positive news in the next PEWS News, and in the meantime we hope PEWS members will take some time to inform themselves (if not already) about these trends in academic publishing. Needless to say, these developments and the ASA’s reticence to accept our proposal to operate outside of the Association’s publishing arrangement with SAGE, suggest that we all need to get more engaged in the struggle to defend the knowledge commons. We’ve won a victory in gaining authorization to use creative commons, but we need one more win to move us into the next generation of Open Access scholarly publishing. As many Section members may know, the Journal of World-Systems Research began in 1994 as one of the very first online, Open Access scholarly journals. I’m very honored and proud to be part of our Section’s tradition of leadership in Open Access publishing, and I’m grateful for the leadership the PEWS Council has demonstrated in the face of the resistance we’ve encountered.
Section Awards Presented at the 2014 ASA

PEWS Book Award


Postcolonial theory has become enormously influential as a framework for understanding the Global South. It has also become popular as a school of thought because of its rejection of the supposedly universalizing categories of the Enlightenment, often including such basic categories of political economy as class and capital. In Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital, Vivek Chibber focuses on the Subaltern Studies project to mount a powerful and devastating critique of post-colonial theory. He demonstrates that it is possible to affirm a universalizing theory without succumbing to Eurocentrism or reductionism. Written with great clarity and conviction, this work advances bold and erudite arguments in defense of the centrality of a materialist political economy to social analysis and historical accounts of world capitalism. Sure to be controversial, Chibber's study provokes precisely the debate that we need in these trying times as the capitalist world-system slips into ever deeper crisis.

Terence K. Hopkins Award (Best Student Paper)


In this paper, Roberts tackles long standing questions about the structural forces behind the persistence of the informal economy in the face of economic growth and variation in its relative size across countries and over recent time. While there have been plenty of theoretically appealing answers to these questions, systematic research that would reveal the best answers has been stymied due to lack of comparable data across more than a handful of countries and time points. Taking advantage of efforts that have recently provided valid and reliable data for a large number of countries, Roberts employs random and fixed-effects regression models using multiple measures of countries’ world-system position, structural economic dependence, and appropriate controls. His results show convincingly that the development and persistence of the informal economy are driven by the structure of the world economy and processes of economic globalization. Congratulations to Anthony!

PEWS Article Award


The first co-winner is Paul Almeida at the University of California, Merced, for his article “Subnational Opposition to Globalization” published in Social Forces. Almeida seeks to explain the uneven geographic distribution of local-level protest against neoliberal privatization in the global periphery. To study this variation at the municipal level, Almeida created an innovative database of geo-coded protest events – such as marches, sit-ins, roadblocks, rallies, hunger strikes, or labor strikes – within two major campaigns against public sector privatization in El Salvador and Costa Rica in the early 2000s. He has also collected information about the resources available at the municipal level for protest. These resources are state infrastructure (state administrative offices, transportation, and higher education branches) and community infrastructure (nongovernmental organizations and local chapters of oppositional political parties) located within municipalities. He assembled this database from local newspapers and archival sources, as well as from interviews.
Section Awards Presented at the 2014 ASA continued

From this novel database, Almeida demonstrates that state and community infrastructure at the local level facilitate collective action beyond the actual impact of privatization on these localities. Significantly, the developmentalist state helped form this infrastructure until its demise in 1980s debt crisis. Thus, the nature of globalization today depends on the policies realized by the developmentalist states, in all their variety, of the past.

The second co-winners are Jennifer Bair at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Phillip A. Hough at Florida Atlantic University for their article “The legacies of partial possession: From agrarian struggle to neoliberal restructuring in Mexico and Columbia” published in International Journal of Comparative Sociology. Bair and Hough ask, “How was neoliberalism accomplished politically?” and why have Latin American publics not protested but rather acquiesced to, or even supported, neoliberal market reforms that cause privation? To answer these questions, they mobilize historical data through incorporated comparison, a method that does not assume that cases are autonomous from each other but rather understands cases as differentiated moments of the historically integrated process of neoliberal restructuring. They specifically study rural producers in two subnational regions of Latin America – La Laguna, Mexico and Viejo Caldas, Colombia. Bair and Hough insightfully question whether neoliberalism is the historic rupture that many assume and look at the conditions prevailing at the time of the reforms. The analysis of their two cases demonstrates that the dependence of rural producers since the 1930s on government-supported institutions, such as the Ejido Bank that provided subsidized credit to rural producers and Mexico and the National Federation of Coffee Growers that integrated rural producers into global markets in Colombia, created political conservatism and support for neoliberalism. Thus, in contrast to Polanyian interpretations, marketization was not the key motivation for or against neoliberal policies since it characterizes both neoliberalism and the decades before. Instead, state-based clientelism, various forms of exclusion, and new claims to inclusion shape neoliberal reforms.

We congratulate Paul Almeida, Jennifer Bair, and Phillip Hough on their excellent scholarship that contributes greatly to PEWS.

Article Awards Committee: Johanna Bockman, Matthew Mahutga, Michael Timberlake.

Distinguished Career Award

Chris Chase-Dunn

At this year’s PEWS business meeting in San Francisco, members ratified the council’s resolution to give an award that the section presents only occasionally. It was that the Distinguished Career Award be given to Christopher Chase-Dunn for his many contributions directly to world-systems scholarship, indirectly, with his collegiality and his mentoring, and to the birth and sustenance of the PEWS section. This was the 5th time the award has been given. Chris has been “at it” about 40 years, beginning with his dissertation, some of which was published in a 1975 ASR piece that brought the PEWS perspective to the center of the discipline and led the way for a stream of comparative international research on foreign direct investment that continues. Since then he has made a great number of significant contributions to PEWS scholarship, and highlights include his book, Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy, his work with Tom Hall published as Rise and Demise: Comparing World-Systems, and his NSF-funded research on structural globalization which was published in the ASR’s first issue of the Millennium and helped to resolve foundational debates between critical globalization scholars and PEWS scholars about the structural and historical foundations of forms of globalization.
Section Awards Presented at the 2014 ASA continued

Chris helped to establish PEWS as a section in ASA, serving as its second chair in 1982, and in the mid-1990s he founded the section’s journal, the *Journal of World-System Research* (which is in its 20th year). And again, Chris has influenced a great number of PEWS members through his mentoring and generous collegial advice. In fact, at the business meeting, those present were asked to stand if they felt they owed thanks to Chris for his collegial support, and most the people in the room stood.

At the business meeting, council member Matthew Mahutga presented Chris with an engraved plaque on which is inscribed, “For his exceptional contribution to the intellectual project of world-systems analysis, and to the development and continuity of PEWS. The American Sociological Association on The Political Economy of the World-System presents the Distinguished Career Award to Christopher Chase-Dunn, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, University of California, Riverside.”

in Memoriam: George Modelski

George Modelski, born in Poland in 1926, passed away on February 21, 2014 in Washington, D.C. at the age of 88. He is survived by his wife of many years, Sylvia Modelski. Trained at the London School of Economics (BSc. in Economics) and the University of London (PhD in International Relations), he was Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington and had been a professor of political science there between 1967 and 1995. His main earlier appointment had been as a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University. Visiting appointments at various points were held at the University of Chicago, Princeton University, Harvard University, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, the University of Stockholm, and the University of Catania. Throughout his career, George contributed to an impressive number of different research questions. His dissertation, completed in 1954 and published in 1962 as a Theory of Foreign Policy, was a very early attempt to treat foreign policy issues theoretically, as opposed to the then standard reliance on descriptive accounts. No doubt reflecting in part his Canberra position at the time, Modelski wrote several monographs in the early 1960s on southeast Asian international relations. But he also wrote around this time early analyses of the international relations of internal war, Kautiya’s international relations, the differences between agrarian and industrial systems, and the communist international system that were conspicuous in their attempt to treat these questions in a theoretical fashion. They also underlined his very early interest in comparing types of international systems.

His main contribution to the study of international relations, nonetheless, has to be founding a research program on leadership long cycles. Modelski began developing this original perspective around 1974 (first conference paper) and published the first article in 1978, following a slightly earlier effort to begin developing a systemic interpretation of world politics (Principles of World Politics, 1972). Responding to the destabilized international system of the 1970s, George constructed an interpretation of world politics that was based on the emergence of lead economies, their rise and fall, and implications for global war and order. His core writings on these processes, some co-authored, came out at about the same time (Exploring Long Cycles, 1987; Long Cycles in World Politics, 1987; Sea Power in Global Politics, 1494-1993, 1988; Documenting Global Leadership, 1988; and Leading Sectors and World Power, 1996). It is fair to say that the perspective that emerged over time came to be one of the leading schools of thought in world systems analysis.
in Memoriam: George Modelsiki continued

Some of George’s other work was highly complementary to the long cycle interpretation. Transnational Corporations and World Order (1979) focused on MNCs while North/South Relations (1983) examined dependency reversal processes in international political economy. The co-edited World System History: The Social Science of Long-term Change (2000) reflected the interest he and others had developed in the 1990s to push the study of world politics back to its origins. In addition to an edited special issue of International Studies Quarterly in (1997), Globalization as Evolutionary Process (2008), also a co-edited work, highlighted his commitment to harnessing evolutionary perspectives to the study of long-term international processes. Another major venture in this vein was his effort to develop a better empirical and theoretical understanding of historical urbanization processes, as reflected in World Cities, -3000 to 2000 (2003). Written after he had retired, this book represents a major contribution to the data base on city sizes in the ancient world, which he viewed as indicators of an evolving city network that undergirded world economic growth. The long-term trend towards democratization was another special interest, culminating in several articles on the subject.

George Modelsiki contributed to the International Studies Association in various ways. He was President of the ISA-West in 1982, a long-time member of the IPE Section’s World Historical Systems group, and winner of the Susan Strange Award in 2006. He also chaired the University of Washington’s Pacific Northwest Colloquium on International Security from 1982 to 1991. In 2012, he was awarded a bronze medal by the International Kondratieff Foundation and Russian Academy of Sciences for his contribution to the social sciences. Throughout a long and distinguished career, George Modelsiki emphasized the need to bring together theory, evidence, and history in the unraveling of world political processes. Although never widely cited or known in IR circles, his contributions were always distinctively different and original.

Publications


Text of Letter to ASA Publications Committee

Sept. 10, 2014 Letter from PEWS Section Chair William Robinson and Journal of World-Systems Research editorial team to ASA Publications Committee—Responding to the Committee’s August 2014 decision to overturn Section Council petition to move to not-for-profit, university-based online manuscript submission and publication platform.

Dear Members of the ASA Committee on Publications,

We write in response to the decision made at your August meeting in response to our Section’s proposal to begin using Creative Commons Licensing for The Journal of World-Systems Research content and to move the journal to an online submission and publication platform run through the University of Pittsburgh’s Library system.
We appreciate the Committee’s approval of our proposal to move to Creative Commons Licensing, but we were disappointed that our request to use the University of Pittsburgh’s ULS system was denied, and surprised that the reasoning behind that decision was not elaborated in any detail. To review, the Committee issued the following statements about the second part of our proposal:

1. “We did not approve the move to the University of Pittsburgh's ULS system.”
2. “Instead, we urge the section to consider a move to the HighWire platform, where all the other ASA journals are hosted. This is the SAGE system/platform that the other ASA journals use and the benefits would include easier submission/review tracking and indexing in one of the largest online social science databases.”
3. “The Committee is not requiring a move to the SAGE HighWire system, though we felt it would benefit the journal and its presence in the larger social science public arena, but we cannot support moving ASA journal content to a separate system.”

We have a number of concerns about this decision. The Section publications committee and council both deliberated on this question at length, and we are concerned that our Section’s internal democratic process has been over-ridden by the Committee without a significant explanation or rationale. In fact, there are some unsubstantiated if not erroneous assumptions behind the decision we were issued, so we want to clarify what we fear may be some misunderstanding on the part of the Committee about the details of our proposal.

First, in regard to point 2 above, the Committee should be aware that the University of Pittsburgh ULS platform provides for all of the things SAGE’s does in terms of facilitating manuscript submission, tracking the review process, and indexing content. The fact that SAGE is “one of the largest online social science databases” is not necessarily connected with these goals or with those of our journal or of our profession. Our research has convinced us that the nature of publishing has changed dramatically, and that the key to visibility and access is a journal’s presence in inter-linked databases and search networks, not necessarily the association with the biggest publisher. In short, we do not believe that using SAGE’s platform would provide any benefits in terms of our journal’s visibility in the profession that would not also be available via the ULS system. We are confident, however, that the relationship with SAGE may well limit access to the journal for some of our intended audience—i.e., those outside the United States and in low-income countries and institutions—both now and over the long-term. Also, while it is true that commercial publishers currently have an advantage in the metrics used to assess scholarly impact, this is changing quickly and has the potential to change even more over time.

At the same time, the University of Pittsburgh platform will actually bring benefits that the SAGE platform doesn’t offer and that will help us achieve some goals that are very important to our particular journal. For instance, it will allow us to improve our integration with the World Historical Dataverse, which supports researcher collaborations on data collection and analyses in research areas relevant to our journal. The ULS is actively implementing new methods for simultaneous submission of research data along with research articles and automatic deposit in the Harvard Dataverse Network, a globally accessible data repository. Through the ULS publishing program, alternative metrics will be imbedded in the record display for each article, allowing us to demonstrate the scholarly and social impacts of published works through traditional citation counts as well as a wide range of new measures of impact for electronic media. Most importantly, in addition to these and some other important benefits, it will also expand our access to international readers who are dependent upon Open Access content.
Text of Letter to ASA Publications Committee continued

Also in regard to the relative merits of each platform, the Committee also seems to have weighed the differential fees associated with the SAGE versus the University of Pittsburgh options. The PEWS Council also discussed this matter. We recognized that SAGE’s offer to provide us with free access to its HighWire platform stems from its current business model and its relationship to the ASA, both of which are subject to change and could lead to a potential increase in costs later on. The University of Pittsburgh ULS’s nominal fees are guaranteed not to change, and the operating logic of this (nonprofit, education-oriented) system lends credibility to this assertion.

Second, we are somewhat confused by what the decision means for us concretely. If the Committee is not approving the University of Pittsburgh ULS system, but is also not requiring us to use the SAGE system, then what other options would you like us to consider? The Committee states a concern with “moving ASA journal content to a separate system,” which fails to recognize that JWSR is currently and has always been housed on a server that lies outside the ASA. In fact, when the current editorial team took over the journal, we sought to move the journal from the University of California Riverside server to the ASA server and were encouraged to go elsewhere, due to limited capacity in ASA. We have done this, and it has not seemed to be an issue prior to this point.

We are also puzzled by what it means to be in the ASA “system.” The Committee decision seems to suggest that this means publishing within SAGE’s system, a suggestion with which many of our Section members have important professional and ethical objections. Is it in the interest of ASA members to have all of our content housed in a single company’s ‘system’? If so, what is the benefit? We appreciate the idea of having a standard system for archiving content of ASA journals, but this does not require publishing under a single commercial provider; especially for online journals. For instance, we can easily make arrangements to place a copy of the journal archive on the ASA server, if that is what the Committee thinks is advisable.

The Committee on Publications is no doubt aware that Open Access publishing is an evolving and important area of publishing, and it has been made even more consequential by the decision with the 2014 U.S. Government budget that required federally funded research to be published in Open Access journals. We do not believe that resorting to commercial publishers is the only avenue for disseminating the type of scholarly work that that appears in JWSR. On the basis of the considerable research we did in advance of submitting our proposal, we are confident that librarians at the University of Pittsburgh and elsewhere have the interests of our authors and readers in mind, and that the system they have built and that is supported at the University of Pittsburgh is equipped to help us enhance the journal’s reach as well as its recognition and legitimacy in terms of the conventional metrics used for tenure and promotion.

Finally, we want to point out that our proposal to move to the University of Pittsburgh platform stems from the fact that this option aligns more fully with what we see as the broader aims of our Section members and of our profession to ensure that all people have access to scholarly resources and that authors are able to reach the widest audience possible. Our members’ deliberations led us to the conclusion that the University of Pittsburgh option best suits the interests of our Section (whose dues help support the journal) and may be essential to securing commitments from future editorial teams, whose volunteer time and energy is essential to producing ours and other ASA journals. A professional and political commitment to innovation in the area of Open Access publishing has been a major motivator for those who have built the JWSR. Our Section takes pride in the fact that our journal was one of the first scholarly, peer-reviewed online journals. We believe that a move to a commercial publisher would undermine our ability to recruit the best editorial teams for our journal.
The proposal we submitted to the Committee on Publications was, admittedly, an abbreviated version of our internal deliberations and the evidence on which these were based. We had attempted to reach out to Committee members to provide additional details on the rationale behind our proposal, but we were not asked to do so nor were we given the opportunity to make our case. For this reason, we feel that the Committee was unable to appreciate the extensive amount of time and research that was put into developing and discussing the proposal prior to its submission. We respectfully request an audience with the Publications Committee or its representatives in order to review these matters, seek clarification, and have the Section's proposal reconsidered. Given the importance of beginning our journal’s transition to an online submission and publication platform, and given the important concerns we raise here, we ask that this happen quickly and that we will not be further delayed by having to wait until the formal gathering of the Committee on Publications. In any case, we would like to have the opportunity to respond directly to any questions or concerns Committee members might have, and we are prepared to meet via conference call or Skype if that is necessary to resolve this matter in a timely way.

We thank you for your work, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

William Robinson, PEWS Section Chair & the editors of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, Jackie Smith, Jennifer Bair, and Scott Byrd

Thank you to the contributors that helped to produce this newsletter.

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Look for the Spring Issue of PEWS NEWS in March/April 2015.