

Communications

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

For several years now the configuration of subject areas treated at the Annual Meeting, especially in comparative politics but in other areas of the discipline as well, has been largely the same. We have "Western Countries" and "Developing Countries," "Western Countries" and "Eastern Countries," "Developed" or "Developing" countries and then the American polity, as though there were no linkages, intermediary stages, common or comparative themes, or dynamics of convergence among and between these various kinds of systems. International relations is separated from comparative politics as if it were still possible for a nation to exist independently of world market and other forces, and political theory is divorced from the rest as if those who study comparative politics or other areas were not also, often preeminently, theorists. While the present system assures some balance between the various fields of the discipline, many of us find the old categories and divisions to be tired and often arbitrary, sometimes stultifying newer ideas and research instead of encouraging them, and based on typologies some two decades old and no longer realistic or even interesting.

I have recently returned from a national professional association meeting where an alternative method of fashioning the program was used with astounding results, and which deserves the

serious attention of the APSA. A year before the meeting the Program Committee solicited suggestions for topics, panels, whole sections and subject areas from its membership. The myriad of suggestions was then put to the acid test: the full membership was polled to see which panels it found interesting enough to attend; at the same time members could volunteer suggestions and papers to be considered for inclusion in the various panels. These votes, proposals, and suggestions were then weighed and correlated by the Program Committee and the panel chairpersons with the aim of achieving both balance among fields and topics that were interesting, innovative, and relevant to the research interests of its members.

The result was perhaps the most exciting national meeting many of us have ever attended: panels that were actually interesting and well attended, attendance overall up more than 100% from any previous meeting, and a significant (20%) rise in membership in the association itself. This method served not only to democratize the program but to bring in fresh ideas and approaches, to make the panels interesting and relevant to meeting goers, to reforge the links between the association and its members, and to help revive what sometimes appear to be rather tired, often moribund programs and associations. The system merits the serious consideration of the APSA.

Howard J. Wiarda
University of Massachusetts

SHORT COURSE ON RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL WRITING

with **Richard E. Dawson, Washington University**

This course will deal with the fundamentals of preparing research grant proposals for funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation. The course will employ a combination of lecture and discussion to develop and communicate basic information on the preparation and evaluation of political science research proposals.

We shall discuss what should be included in a good research proposal and how it should be organized as well as what reviewers and those making decisions look for in making decisions on whether or not to fund a specific project. Examples from recently funded NSF projects shall be used to illustrate important points. The instructor will draw upon his two years experience as director of the NSF Political Science Program. Many of the ideas and criteria will be applicable to other funding sources.

Please mail this form, along with the short course fee, at least two weeks prior to the short course so that materials may be sent to you prior to the date of the short course. A continuation of your reservation and acknowledgment of the fee will be sent to you.

Name _____

Department _____

College/University _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

After participation in the short course, a letter will be sent to the president (or your chairman or dean if you so desire) of your institution. Please list below the name, title, address of the individual to whom you wish the letter sent:

Return to:

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