

one is holding their breath for that. In the absence of a complete transformation of the political media, we like to think that our podcast can make accessible some political science insights to audiences that are not sitting in our classrooms and reading journals like this one. Ideally, the podcast provides not only specific information and insights to our listeners but also serves as an exemplary model of the types of conversations that are possible when people decide to look at politics through a political science lens. ■

### POLITICAL SCIENCE, PUBLIC INTELLECTUALISM, AND PODCASTING

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Our experience in podcasting has had a profound impact leaving us convinced that there is much to be gained for the field of political science and for political scientists in particular. We launched our podcast, *Barstool Politics*, in the fall of 2016 during the final months of the presidential campaign. Our goal was to offer insight and reflection on the dramatic social and political upheaval taking place. We watched as our political system was catapulted into a fundamentally new era, and it felt as if the field of political science had been left on the sidelines. Essentially, we had ceded the role of “public intellectual” to pundits and others who may not have the same academically based understanding of political institutions, behaviors, and policy outcomes. We thought podcasting, in a small way, could help to fill that gap. Since then, we have realized the tremendous potential that podcasting can offer political scientists as a medium to provide evidence-based and theoretically grounded analysis to a broader nonacademic audience. In particular, political scientists can take the empirical and theoretical knowledge that our field has generated and use it to make sense of day-to-day political developments. This is, in essence, exactly what we do as teachers in the classroom: we take complex research and make it accessible to our students. Podcasting simply expands our reach to a wider audience.

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We broadcast weekly, organizing each episode around the major political developments of the week. Prior to taping, we review what we perceive as the most important news stories and then develop an outline with introductory comments for each topic. The podcast is divided into two segments. We open with a deep dive into one topic for 30 minutes of discussion. The second half of the episode follows a “speed-round” format in which we briefly examine five additional topics for roughly five minutes each. Our intent is to offer a fun, lively, and engaging podcast that bridges the gap between punditry and political science by bringing

the insights of our field to the general public. As a result, we often find ourselves touching on relevant political science literature as a way to provide context and structure to a current political issue. For instance, in 2019, we discussed President Trump’s difficulty in passing his legislative agenda through Congress by referencing Skowronek’s (2011) concept of disjunctive presidencies. Utilizing this framework makes sense of a fragmented Republican Party and allows us to think about what might be next for American politics. In another episode, we discussed the growing elements of isolationism in contemporary US foreign policy. We found ourselves turning to Roskin’s (1974) “generational paradigms” as a way to talk about gradual shifts in US policy in response to previous failures in interventionism. More recently, we referenced hegemonic stability theory to provide perspectives on growing economic tensions with China and Just War Doctrine to explain political violence in *Game of Thrones*. These references to the literature generally are not preplanned but rather arise organically and conversationally. We try to avoid anything that feels like a typical lecture, instead attempting to show how our field is useful, illuminating, and approachable. In addition, we regularly feature disciplinary subfield experts to push past overly simplistic partisan interpretations and to provide deeper context about political campaigns, election results, foreign policy, and Supreme Court decisions. In our perspective, this is markedly different from the approach that a pundit might take. Our purpose is not to argue for argument’s sake but instead to wrestle with and better understand the key issues and dilemmas in the world today. Our listeners provide regular feedback noting how the podcast has helped them to appreciate the complexity of a political question and to move past conventional partisan explanations.

At a deeper level, we believe podcasting can help political scientists deliver on one of their core responsibilities: civic education. In Robert Putnam’s 2003 presidential address to the American Political Science Association, he argued that political science has two mutually important and reinforcing obligations: “attending to the concerns of our fellow citizens” and “pursuit of scientific truth” (Putnam 2003, 250). He did not argue that we are “philosopher-kings” or even problem solvers but rather experts who have a responsibility to “shed light” on public problems (Putnam 2003, 252). In 2011, Smith noted that our discipline has failed to become more relevant since Putnam’s call to action. He argued for political science research to be “presented in ways that

at least have the potential to be understood, assessed, and perhaps even utilized productively in the public sphere” (Smith 2011, 17). This debate continues: Desch (2019) outlined the push–pull between rigor and relevance in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, defining relevance as “whether scholarship contributes to the making of policy decisions.” Although certainly important, we do not believe that peer-reviewed publications directed at policy makers should be the only measuring stick for relevance. As we all know, political scientists are not regularly contacted by practitioners, public officials, or the media. This is a loss for the public because our

expertise is overlooked and ideas—especially bad ideas—are spread unchallenged. Podcasting stands as an ideal medium for filling that gap and, in the process, fostering civic engagement and education.

In his explanation for why political science has been unable to fully break into the ideas industry, Drezner (2017) asserted that the current marketplace of ideas is flooded with thought leaders, or what Berlin (2013, 8–10) called hedgehogs, as opposed to public intellectuals or foxes. The fox (i.e., public intellectual) is an expert who knows much about many things, whereas a hedgehog (i.e., thought leader), by contrast, knows one big thing and it is value-laden. Drezner's characterization of public intellectuals as critical, skeptical, and deductive thinkers speaks to the very core of what political scientists can offer and what our political discourse so desperately needs. Victor (2016) called political scientists to action with a list of responsibilities, particularly when we were at the beginning stages of a Trump presidency. She wrote: "Political scientists may also have common values on which we can agree. It would be appropriate to make observations and express judgment when it appears political actors or institutions are violating those values" (Victor 2016). This is how we remain "foxes" while also breaking into the marketplace of ideas—and podcasting provides the platform.

In the current political climate, it is more important than ever for political scientists to embrace the role of public intellectual and find venues to share our disciplinary knowledge and expertise. Our growing audience, positive podcast reviews, and social media feedback indicate that there is genuine public interest in the type of deeper political analysis that political scientists can provide. Listeners describe the podcast as "thoughtful and entertaining without being overly partisan," and they emphasize the way in which we are able to bring political science concepts to a discussion of current events, leaving the listener more informed and engaged. In addition, local media outlets have reached out to us for commentary on political events as a direct result of the podcast, thereby further expanding the impact that it has on a broader audience. Our academic institutions also have been supportive and encouraging of our podcasting endeavor. All told, our experience of podcasting has pushed us out of our comfort zone and empowered us to fully embrace the role of public intellectuals. In the process, it also has allowed us to break down the conventional boundaries of teaching and to reevaluate who we think of as our students. ■

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## PODCASTING POLITICS IN AN ERA OF FATIGUE

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Condoms and conflict. Henry the VIII and maternal mortality. Mariah Carey and population aging. These are only some of the seemingly disparate topics that podcasting legitimates juxtaposing in the good name of sharing research about the ways that population shapes our world, the tagline of my podcast: *Everybody Counts*. As one devoted to the liberal arts who teaches at a college with that very mission, I have been struck by how ideal podcasting is as a medium for using the trove of literary and popular references accumulated during years of reading Shakespeare, sci-fi, and *People Magazine* to hook listeners from outside academia and get them to listen to 20 minutes of research findings.

These days, there is an equal sense of fatigue about and hunger for politics; I am feeling fatigued so I wanted to avoid producing a podcast overtly in that genre. Instead, I wanted to trick my listeners into reflecting on politics by drawing them in with good stories and by showing them how fundamental political science questions about who gets what, when, where, and why connect to their own lives. I have found that everyone knows a little about demographics but not quite enough to understand the full range of implications. My podcast aims to build on that initial interest in population but to share some of the research that explains why population trends matter (or do not), connecting to both historical and contemporary issues.

I have been most gratified when listeners with little experience in either higher education or politics have praised the podcast. The birth-dearth episode, in particular, seemed to resonate with a wide audience. If framed in political science terms, it was an episode about the political, economic, and social consequences of low-fertility societies, such as Japan and Germany. However, it also was about a personal issue to which most people can relate: whether to have children and how many? In that episode, I interviewed the author of a trade book on fertility who had herself suffered through seven miscarriages, eight fresh in-vitro fertilization (IVF) cycles, two frozen IVF attempts, five natural pregnancies, four IVF pregnancies, nine years, and \$200,000. In political science, we often see how individual decisions such as whether to have children aggregate to produce large-scale outcomes. However, in traditional scholarly outlets, there is little room to engage across those levels of analysis or across disciplines. In a podcast, I am finding, we can do exactly that.

If I use Serena Williams or Megan Markle to hook listeners and then lead them down the path of peer-reviewed scholarship, that bait and switch is morally justified in my mind. I see my podcast as a way to make some of the most interesting aspects of my research and teaching on political demography—which are available to only a narrow audience—accessible to those outside my area of specialty and academia in general. I believe that as a political scientist, I am obligated to broadly share my work, which is why my podcast is aimed not at experts in the field but instead at voters, business leaders, students, and advocates. Each episode interweaves interviews with my own commentary to provide context and synthesize what we are learning.

My mission of sharing scholarship on political demography with a broader public drives each episode. There are many fascinating connections between population trends and politics, but there is much misinformation—and the gulf between peer-reviewed work