

The World as Seen from the Desk of the Editor

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Co-Editor

Baseball legend Yogi Berra once said, “You can observe a lot by just watching.” I also think you can learn a lot by reading and listening to others. As a *JPAE* editor for more than 6 years, I have had the opportunity to read many compelling manuscripts and listen to many talented and insightful people at the NASPAA annual conference as they discuss public affairs pedagogy. There is no question that our field is challenged by many issues, problems, and trends that are not going away. The articles in this issue capture many of the topics that public affairs teaching needs to consider.

John L. Daly, Roger E. Hartley, and Bruce J. Neubauer lead off this issue with “Toward a Shared Services Model for the Delivery of Public Affairs Education.” They examine the feasibility of NASPAA-accredited schools’ allowing for the transfer of credit earned in online courses taught by another institution. To what extent, they ask, is it possible for public affairs schools to share resources and offer classes they might not otherwise be able to provide alone? Nadia Rubaii reflects on such collaboration in “Bringing the 21st-Century Governance Paradigm to Public Affairs Education: Reimagining *How We Teach What We Teach*.” She discusses the ways that governance has changed in the last few years and to what extent our curriculum addresses these changes.

Role models and mentoring are important not just for our students but also for faculty. Joselynn Fountain and Kathryn E. Newcomer look at faculty experiences of mentoring, both as mentors and mentees, and describe what works

in “Developing and Sustaining Effective Faculty Mentoring Programs.” Student assessment of learning is another increasingly crucial component of public affairs teaching, with many measures of learning now rooted in statistical analysis. Yet how accurate are such measures of learning and what do the statistics really reveal? “Student Learning Outcome Assessment in NASPAA Programs: A Review of Validity and Reliability” by David C. Powell and Michelle Saint-Germain tackle aspects of these questions.

The United States is not the only country in the world with a federal system, but it certainly is one where shared power between national and state governments is a major variable in both the making and implementation of policy. Teaching federalism and intergovernmental relations used to be a staple of public policy, but is it anymore? This is the topic of “Is the Teaching of Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations Dead or Alive in U.S. Public Administration?” by John Kincaid and Richard L. Cole. Harold Abrams believes we need to do more to train students how to think on their feet, or at least to improve their ability to think more critically in a quicker fashion. He proposes some techniques for achieving this in “Using Mini-Cases of Real-World Quick Analyses in Analytical Techniques Courses.” Finally, the issue wraps up with a review of Becky J. Starnes’s *Challenges in City Management: A Case Study Approach* by Christopher James Green.

The articles in this issue are suggestive of some of the broad and powerful challenges that our discipline and the world of public affairs must

address. Reflecting on my years as editor, I offer here some of the topics that I consider most important and would like to see *JPAE* cover.

Globalization. In all its forms, globalization may be one of the greatest challenges that has transformed the field of public affairs teaching. It has done so in many ways. First, of course, the interconnection of national economies has made governance more difficult. Adopting isolationist policies, or building a wall along borders as one U.S. presidential candidate demands, is simply not an option. If the world economic crash of 2008 did not demonstrate the futility of trying to close borders and wish away problems as too remote, then issues such as the Syrian refugee crisis or the plight of 60 million displaced persons show that what happens half-way around the world affects us back home.

Globalization describes interconnectedness and interdependence; it indicates how governance and producing order and making policy choices take us beyond the nation-state and into the world of trans- or multinational entities such as the European Union or the World Health Organization. Globalization demonstrates that there are truly very few localized problems in the world. The Ebola and Zika viruses are proof of that too.

Indeed, invoking globalization is perhaps shorthand for recognizing that some issues or problems affect the entire world. The single greatest challenge facing the earth is global warming. Contrary to what a few skeptics may think, global warming is real and the scientific consensus is certain that humans via greenhouse-gas emissions are the cause. Evidence of our significant warming of the earth is already here: dramatic weather, melting of the polar regions, destruction of coral reefs and animal habitats, and rising sea levels are bringing the planet to the edge of catastrophes that one cannot fully imagine. Global coordination to address this threat is difficult, showing how real the tragedy of the commons is and how little the political process works across the world to address problems that require major changes in how we live.

Economic Inequality. Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has reignited the issue of economic inequality both domestically and worldwide. In the United States, economic inequality has reached levels not seen since the 1920s, and globally the gap between rich and poor countries has achieved record proportions. Many *JPAE* articles have treated this issue as one of social equity, but to think of it that way is to underestimate the scope of the problem. Addressing economic inequality is about more than public administrators thinking about justice as fairness when exercising discretion or making policy. The problems of inequality are about the challenges of economic power, the role of money in politics, the ability of corporations to leverage significant power over policy makers—and about how some people just do not have a voice in the political process because they are too poor to engage or make a difference.

Democracy. Rising economic inequality threatens democratic governance. A vast social science literature draws connections between minimum levels of economic income, economic equality, and the ability to sustain democracies. Many countries of the world remain too poor to sustain popular governments, and others are seeing their inequalities eclipse the ability of the poor to participate meaningfully. But we are also witness to the worldwide rise of authoritarian or right-wing governments. Austria only narrowly escaped electing the first far right head of state in Europe since the end of World War II. However, other countries such as France and Poland toy with far right leaders who flout the rule of law and have little respect for civil liberties. Even the United States is not immune.

Beyond North America and Europe, democracy also remains under threat. This presents an especial conundrum for public affairs pedagogy. To what extent is our field politically neutral? Or does it favor or encourage democracy? As NASPAA extends its sphere of influence to become an international organization, these are questions that cannot be ignored.

Racism. In many *JPAE* articles, racism is painted as a problem of cultural competence, but it

is more than that. Yes, we all could do a better job of understanding different cultures, but the reality is that racism is alive and well across the world as many majorities continue to persecute minorities within their borders. In the United States, it manifests in police violence against people of color, for example, but in Myanmar, China, Sudan, and many other regions, ethnic minorities are treated as second-class citizens if not outright criminals.

Technology. Technology is a multifaceted issue. Technology has made life better in many ways, but it is also vexing enough to make many of us appreciate the fears of the Luddites. Technology has led to the loss of some jobs, which has economically hurt tens of millions. Communications technologies have connected more people more quickly, but they are also the new tools of surveillance. Closer to home, technology has transformed teaching by making distance and online learning possible. In the last six years, *JPAE* has published more than its fair share of articles examining how public affairs teaching has been altered by the new learning technologies. We are in the middle of a great debate about quality, cost, competencies, and standards as education transitions to a new platform. It is not yet clear to what extent pedagogy is driving the technology innovations or vice versa, but there does to be a major experiment going on regarding how we should do public affairs training.

Corporate Universities. The last major issue I see is how the corporatization of higher education, especially in the United States, is something we must confront. This corporate restructuring affects governance, tenure, and the very notion of education in terms of seeing it as a commodity or product for sale. What does it mean to say that students are consumers, faculty are content providers, and a school is simply another business that sells its wares? The global restructuring of the world economy into one that is essentially capitalist is also affecting education—and we as professors of public affairs need to address this in terms of what we do and how the phenomenon affects our role within colleges and universities.

Taken together collectively, the above issues raise the question of, Why government? Why should we have government and what role should it have in tackling these problems? As a field devoted to public affairs teaching, we need to be part of a discussion that examines what we think government should do: Should we even have government as envisioned for the last 200–300 years? Or do we need to approach the question of government from an entirely different perspective?

I challenge authors to think big, to confront these larger issues in their courses and the articles they write for this journal. But I also encourage all of you to think big in terms of proposing symposia for *JPAE*. Think big and daring. Look to topics and emerging trends in our field or in the world that we should discuss in this journal and in the classroom. *JPAE* is only as strong and creative as our authors and readers, and as editor I invite you to propose ideas, submit articles, and envision the future. As Immanuel Kant once declared, *Sape audere!* But more importantly, *Crede audere!*

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