



April 2013

## Letter from the Department Chair

James Simeone  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Simeone, James (2013) "Letter from the Department Chair," *Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research*: Vol. 18

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol18/iss1/3>

This Prefatory Notes is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by editorial board of Res Publica and the Political Science Department at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

---

## Letter from the Department Chair

## LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Welcome to *Res Publica* Volume XVIII!

This year's editors Zoe Gross and Yelei Kong use the trope of the chess game to draw attention to the competitive, strategic and rule-bound aspects of the study of politics. The papers collected here each in their own way show just how apt the metaphor is.

Politics is about power, Abby Carter and Nick Desideri remind us, and the powerful compete mightily for control over government and resources. Multicultural states, divided into national majorities and national minorities, often succumb to the temptation of partition when the option of sharing power appears either unthinkable or inconvenient. Abby's paper argues that the partition strategy yields diminishing democratic returns, while Nick argues that the South Koreans are playing the international reputation game more effectively than the Japanese.

One rule of the political chessboard is that trust in government and civic worth vary inversely. When trust is low, elites are tempted to use policy-based or identity-based appeals strategically as instruments to solidify their authority. In the process they can feed nationalistic and authoritarian conceptions of worth. Ted Delicath shows how policy entrepreneurs build their careers around specific programs; he maps the skewed pattern of overall trust in government which results. Ryan Winter delineates the ways authoritarians build images of worth around fear.

The two final papers, written by the co-editors, focus precisely on the degree of institutionalization in the competitive political game played between parties and ethnic groups. They highlight that the game of politics is not always routinized in a rule-bound way. Zoe emphasizes that while party systems can lend stability to democracy, elite leaders are faced with difficult trade-offs when deciding to enter any particular set of rules. Yelei develops his own indice of ethnic conflict to determine what prompts linguistic minorities to adopt a strategy of mobilizing a movement calling for more group autonomy.

All in all, the papers offer strong corroboration of the department's pride in its students' capacities as knowledge producers. If obtaining a political science degree can be framed as a kind of chess game, these students have obtained a checkmate.

**Jim Simeone**