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Letter from the Department Chair

Greg M. Shaw

Illinois Wesleyan University, gshaw@iwu.edu

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Letter from the Department Chair

LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

The students' production of *Res Publica* over the years has brought them and the political science faculty a great deal of satisfaction and pride. Every year for a quarter of a century our students have showcased their work in this venue, one of the few undergraduate political science journals in the country. This departmental journal has featured senior seminar research papers, and work from a variety of other classes, including short essays that call for authors to make significant points in limited space. Call the latter the elevator speeches of our discipline – brief, but with high impact.

This year's issue of *Res Publica*, like so many other parts of our lives in the spring of 2020, was assembled remotely in the midst of a pandemic. While this posed some challenges, the students rose to the occasion, showing just how adaptable they can be. To someone who relentlessly coaches our students to confront challenges and find ways to work around them, I found this very rewarding. Congratulations to Megan Baker and Oscar Romero for their excellent work.

The contributing authors have brought us four papers that originated in our fall 2019 senior research seminar under the guidance of Professor Kathleen Montgomery. Jordan Baker, in what turns out to be a very timely piece, examines the use of populist rhetoric during the 2016 presidential campaign. Whether such tropes are used more or less in states that have experienced more or less economic stress and dislocation poses an interesting puzzle for Jordan to work on. Also looking at populist politics, Kayley Rettberg examines voters' attitudes and their support for populist notions that have become not only common but also damaging in recent times. As you make your way through these two articles you might consider just how much *of the people* populists actually tend to be. It's one thing to invoke the populist trope in the heat of campaign battles; it's another to strive to build a broad coalition of the disposed once in government.

Pooja Patil, one of our December graduates, was busy running out the door in order to help run a female candidate's congressional campaign in the spring of 2020. But before she left she penned a thoughtful research paper asking about how running for office *as a woman* makes a difference in the outcome. The confluence of theory and practice in Pooja's work is emblematic of what we encourage all of our students to do. Sophia LaMore rounds out the longer papers here with hers on the complexity of divorce law. As a law-school-bound student, Sophia has already launched her running start with this project.

The remainder of this issue of *Res Publica* consists of shorter essays by Jonathan Panton, Graham Dano, and Oscar Romero. These thoughtful pieces deserve a good home, and we are quite pleased to see them land here in our department's journal. Thanks for reading.

Greg Shaw