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## Letter from the Department Chair

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It is a great pleasure to introduce the 2022 issue of Res Publica, the Political Science department's journal of student research. This is the twenty-seventh consecutive year that we have published the journal, which is written, edited, and produced entirely by students. We are proud of this record, and I would like at the outset to extend the department's thanks to our authors and editors for the effort, intellectual seriousness, and attention to detail that they have brought to maintaining it. Without their work, I would not be composing this introduction.

As I write, the tectonic plates of world politics appear to be shifting. A brutal and unexpected war has erupted in Europe. Research agencies are reporting sixteen straight years of decline in the quality of democracy worldwide. In a provocative formulation, the international relations scholar Randall Schweller has suggested that the world is entering an era of 'disorder and entropy' in which there will be no determinate power centers and political relations will shift unpredictably. Against this background of quieting uncertainty, this year's Res Publica authors tackle weighty questions through which to interpret contemporary politics: citizens' rights and the status of democracy; climate change and citizens' action; international conflict and justified humanitarian intervention; poverty crime and wrongful conviction. Their analyses share a common interest in questions of justice and injustice, and the editors have selected that as the organizing theme for this edition of Res Publica.

As engaged scholars, the authors present their arguments with a judicious mix of analytical acuity and passion. The first three articles are drawn from our Senior Seminar and focus on contemporary challenges to the health of democracy in rich and poor countries. First, Sofia Papoutsis draws on state-level voting records to assess the impact of different types of restrictive voter laws on voter turnout in the United States. Next, Kate Berman uses polling data to explore the faultlines of social cleavage that drive political polarization in the United States. And third, Carlo Chávez Linares analyses party organization and the geography of parties' voter bases to explain the fragility of democracy in contemporary Peru. In the next two, shorter, papers, Emile Ottinger and Zach Burhans analyze signature law cases to demonstrate the ways in which engaged citizens are able to shift legal norms of climate protection through organized collective action. Brynn Mitoraj then shifts focus to international security and law, using the case of US and Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war to make a plea for a robust Responsibility to Protect doctrine as the organizing principle of humanitarian international peace and stability. And finally, Melinda Burgin brings the analytical eye back onto the United States, offering a sobering account of how poverty and wrongful convictions can drive a vicious cycle of deprivation and marginalization in underprivileged communities.

Our editors, Amber Anderson and Rachel Williams, are to be commended for assembling a collection of articles that range so broadly across the intellectual terrain of political science, that address challenging analytical questions, and that offer consistently thought-provoking, rigorous explanations. It is particularly at times of uncertainty and turmoil that we look to our discipline for insights on how to understand, analyze, and (perhaps most importantly) improve the world we inhabit. We congratulate our contributors and editors for having once again risen to the occasion. I hope you enjoy the fruits of their labors.

Thank you for reading!

William A. Munro  
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Chair, Department of Political Science