Political Institutions and Challenges to Democracy: America in Comparative Perspective

New York City  |  January 31–February 1, 2019

CALL FOR PAPERS

The “Political Institutions and Challenges to Democracy” conference, co-organized by the Social Science Research Council’s Anxieties of Democracy program and Stanford University’s Global Populisms project, will bring together scholars of comparative and American politics to present research on the role of parties, the legislature, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and other institutions in moments that challenge democracy. Questions addressed at the conference will include:

- What role, if any, do democratic institutions play in enabling or exacerbating the growth of antisystem sentiment and/or populist appeals? How do the responses of mainstream parties and politicians affect the electoral chances of antisystem candidates?
- Can unresponsive or underperforming democratic institutions contribute to the popularity of populist or antidemocratic candidates? If so, what causes institutions to become unresponsive? What reforms can address these concerns?
- What role do party primaries and other electoral rules play in the electoral success of antisystem politicians? How do the roads to power for populist candidates vary between electoral systems?
- What are the consequences of populist leaders in power for state institutions, such as the bureaucracy, the courts, and other branches of government? What are the consequences for democracy of hollowed-out bureaucracies?

WHO SHOULD APPLY

We seek applications from scholars of American and comparative politics interested in a dialogue across subfields. For example, comparative papers that engage the United States as a comparative case, or that rigorously apply comparative theories to the United States, are welcome. In addition, we welcome Americanist papers that illuminate broader themes related to democracy and populism, even if they do not include an explicitly comparative component. We welcome applications from both junior and senior scholars in all relevant subfields, using a variety of methods. Accepted participants’ travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the organizers.
HOW TO APPLY

Applications are due by August 1, 2018, and should be sent to democracy@ssrc.org. Please make the subject line of your email “Application for Political Institutions and Challenges to Democracy Conference.”

All applications should include a C.V. and a 250-to-500-word abstract of the proposed work to be presented at the conference.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

The conference is organized as a collaboration between the Social Science Research Council’s Anxieties of Democracy program, which encourages academic research, practitioner reflection, and public debate on the role of US institutions in a polarized era, and Stanford’s Project on Global Populisms, which seeks to understand the causes and consequences of surging populist movements across established democracies. The organizers include Anna Grzymala-Busse (Stanford University), Frances Lee (University of Maryland), Nolan McCarty (Princeton University), Kris-Stella Trump (Social Science Research Council), and Didi Kuo (Stanford University).

This conference is made possible by the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York.